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Delaware Receives 2013 ECS Frank Newman Award for State Innovation

State recognized for its comprehensive education reforms and successful model of collaboration

Denver – The Education Commission of the States (ECS) will honor the state of Delaware with the prestigious Frank Newman Award for State Innovation at the 2013 National Forum on Education Policy in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 26. The award recognizes the state’s bold approach to comprehensive education reform and its successful model of collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders.

The recipient of $119 million in the first round of the Race to the Top competition and $50 million in federal Early Learning Challenge grant funds, Delaware has emerged as a national leader. Governor Jack Markell worked with education, government, business, and civic leaders, including leaders engaged in the forward-thinking group Vision 2015, to lay a foundation for successes to transform Delaware's public education system.

The state incorporated several innovative elements in its reforms, including the creation of unique student identifiers that follow children from pre-K through higher education, educator access to student assessment data and demographic information, computer adaptive testing, data coaches for educators, a peer network of “early adopter” schools and districts, evaluation of teacher performance based on achievement, and a statewide teacher satisfaction survey.

“Our ability to win in a fast-moving global economy hinges on our effectiveness in preparing our students to out-compete and out-innovate people around the world,” Markell said. “If we accept the status quo and don’t move forward, it means we’re falling behind. I’m proud that in Delaware we have committed to seeking out every avenue to improve educational opportunities for all of our people, from preschool through job training programs.”

The state recently ranked third in the nation in improving math, reading, and science achievement over the last 20 years. Since 2011, reading
and math state assessment scores have steadily increased. In addition, the state has recognized the importance of knowing more than one language in a global economy. Last year, Delaware started a world language immersion program in which students, beginning in kindergarten, spend half of their class time learning in Chinese or Spanish.

“Comprehensive, statewide education reforms are difficult. Delaware overcame these difficulties by bringing education stakeholders to the table to develop a sustainable, long-term plan. Delaware is a great example for the rest of the country to see how innovative approaches can improve education, even in today’s political climate,” said ECS President Jeremy Anderson.

Since 1998 the ECS Frank Newman Award for State Innovation has recognized states and U.S. territories for innovative education reforms or programs that improve student outcomes on a large scale. Criteria for this award include initiatives that are bold, replicable, and hold valuable lessons for other states, and have bipartisan, broad-based support.

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ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan organization that works directly with governors, legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials, and other leaders across all areas of education, from pre-K to college and the workforce. Since 1965, we have tracked policy, translated research, provided unbiased advice, and created opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another. ECS is located in Denver and maintains the nation’s most extensive clearinghouse on education policy.

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