Heads Up on Current Education Issues
July 2013

Heads Up comes to you as a complimentary service from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and is a monthly compilation of recommended research and reading on critical public education issues.

New from ECS!

High-Quality Service-Learning Opens the Door for Students’ Entry into STEM Fields - Based on a project that examined 19 schools, the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) gathered information on the relationship between STEM-focused service-learning and student interest and performance in STEM-related courses and careers. The findings of this evaluation suggest that STEM-related service-learning is a powerful tool for schools to use to drive student performance and interest in STEM fields.

Reimagining Business Involvement: A New Frontier for Postsecondary Education - Business thrives on the sure thing -- the in-demand product, the new technology, the well-educated worker. Yet while new technologies and products have revolutionized the economy and our way of life, college graduates' workforce readiness has not kept pace. This issue of the Progress of Education Reform explores new models of business involvement that could substantially decrease private sector training costs and presents ways that policymakers can integrate these approaches into a coherent statewide engagement strategy.

Open Enrollment is on the Menu - But Can You Order It? - This paper concentrates on one aspect of school choice—open enrollment. Depending on the policy, open enrollment can offer a student's choice of schools within district boundaries (intradistrict choice) or schools outside of the boundaries of the district (interdistrict). State policymakers decide whether schools may choose to participate or whether they are required to participate. This report provides a 50-state analysis of open enrollment policies across the United States.
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- **Teacher Preparation**: Teacher Prep Review: 2013 Report
- Charter Schools -

Public Charter School Facilities: Results from the NAPCS National Charter School Survey, School Year 2011-2012 – This study finds that more than half of charter schools are located in facilities that will be too small to allow for their current rate of growth in five years. In response to the findings, the Alliance and the Colorado League of Charter Schools have launched the Charter School Facilities Initiative.
Source: National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

- Common Core State Standards -

Out of Sync: Many Common Core States Have Yet to Define a Common-Core Worthy Diploma - According to this report, most states that adopted the Common Core math standards lack high school graduation requirements that ensure all students will get the coursework they need to meet the new expectations. Only 11 Common Core states fully meet the definition of math alignment set out in the report and another 13 states are partially aligned.
Source: Change the Equation

Early Warning Data Systems

Using Early Warning Data to Keep Students on Track Toward College and Careers: A primer for State Policymakers - The authors of this report suggest that early warning systems (EWS) will be helpful in alerting teachers, parents, and students that a youth is veering off the path to college- and career-readiness. According to the report, state policymakers can take action now to encourage the use of EWS, support the development of research-based warning indicators, ensure that early warning data are timely, and establish a culture in which stakeholders have timely access to early warning data. States are in various stages of building capacity to develop and implement EWS and a map is provided to see what different states are doing.
Source: Data Quality Campaign

- Economic Development/Humanities -

The Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences for a Vibrant, Competitive, and Secure Nation - This report argues that a workforce lacking robust humanities and social science education could be just as detrimental to the country's future economic competitiveness as one deficient in science and technological expertise. The report aims to highlight the importance of humanities and social sciences to economic development and of a well-rounded education.
Source: American Academy of Arts and Sciences

- Expanded Learning Opportunities -

More and Better Learning: Year One Report on ExpandED Schools - A demonstration started in 2011 in 11 elementary and middle schools in New York City, Baltimore, and New Orleans shows that after adding three hours to the school day, elementary and middle school students improved their academic achievement, attended school more often, and benefitted from improvements in school culture. The ExpandED Schools framework offered some structure but allowed school communities to customize the learning day.
Source: TASC
High School – AP Courses

The Road to Equity: Expanding AP Access and Success for African-American Students – This report finds that of 75 school districts whose demographics make them eligible for the Broad Prize for Urban Education, only six have student populations in which African-American students are improving their passing rates for Advanced Placement (AP) exams while keeping participation levels steady. Only one of those districts has been increasing participation and pass rates for African-Americans and Hispanics at levels outpacing their white peers. The authors explore strategies used by all six, among them: cast a wider net for academic potential, impose a rigorous curriculum in elementary school, apply gifted strategies to all children, open AP to everyone, offer a broad array of support, and place a premium on teacher training.
Source: The Broad Foundation

- P-3 School Leadership -

Leading for Early Success: Building School Principals’ Capacity to Lead High-Quality Early Education - This report describes how governors can build effective school leadership to promote high-quality P-3rd education and specifies state policy strategies to accomplish this goal. State leaders have an opportunity to build elementary school principals’ capacity to promote high-quality early education. Specifically, state leaders can: redefine measures through improved state leader standards and licensure requirements; develop more stringent state accreditation criteria for principal preparation programs; and support professional development opportunities for existing principals on how to promote quality P-3rd grade instruction.
Source: National Governors Association

- Postsecondary Access-

The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low Income Students – This study finds that low-Income, high-achieving students who don't apply to selective colleges come from districts too small to support selective public high schools. Also, these students are not in a critical mass of fellow high achievers and are unlikely to encounter a teacher or schoolmate from an older cohort who attended a selective college. (New to the ECS Research Studies Database)

- Postsecondary Success - Latino Students -

Supporting Latino Community College Students: An Investment in Our Economic Future - Latinos make up the fastest growing population group in the country, yet their completion of an associate's degree or higher is half the rate of all U.S. adults. Latinos are thwarted by college cost, lack of college knowledge, increased family responsibilities, and the need to work. This report argues that if the United States wants to increase its percentage of degree-carrying citizens, policymakers and institutions will need to consider strategies to raise the rate of Latino completion. The authors suggest federal policymakers use Higher Education Act reauthorization to encourage colleges to implement student services aligned with retention, completion, and employment and that information about financial aid and services should be better targeted, and antiquated eligibility rules should be addressed.
Source: Excelencia in Education, Single Stop USA
**- Prenatal Health - Low Birth Weight -**

**The Effects of Poor Neonatal Health on Children's Cognitive Development** - This study finds that the effect of birth weight on cognitive development from kindergarten through schooling is significant, and that there is a limit to the effect remediation by schools or parents can have on lowering those negative effects. (New to the ECS Research Studies Database)

**Science Standards**

**Final Evaluation of the Next Generation Science Standards** - This report finds that the existing science standards in 12 states and the District of Columbia are "clearly superior" to the Next Generation Science Standards developed by a coalition of states and national organizations. The authors say that the common standards omit important science content knowledge, but some supporters questioned the report's conclusions.
Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute

**- Student Data -**

**Promoting Data in the Classroom: Innovative State Models and Missed Opportunities** - This report examines two states—Oregon and Delaware—that are working to equip teachers with the skills they need to analyze student data and to apply it in the classroom. Both states are using federal funds to implement their plans, and they can be models for other states seeking to make relevant the many data points they collect each year. But for federal policymakers, the most valuable lessons may come from the funding each state used.
Source: New America Foundation’s Education Policy Program

**- Teacher Preparation -**

**Teacher Prep Review: 2013 Report** - Based on this long-awaited and contested independent review, only a small number of teacher preparation programs are designed so that new teachers are adequately prepared. The authors grade programs on up to 18 standards on a scale of zero to four stars and conclude that about 160 programs were deemed so weak that they were put on a "consumer alert" list by the council.
Source: National Council on Teacher Quality

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What is YOUR State Doing?

Send along any information or state analyses you consider useful for your fellow legislative staffers, and we will see that it is included in the next issue of Heads Up.

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