FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: July 17, 2008
Contact: Mary Ann Strombitski: 303.299.3609, Ashley Zaleski: 303.299.3698
e-Mail: mstrombitski@ecs.org, azaleski@ecs.org
FAX: 303.296.8332
ECS Web Site: www.ecs.org

ECS Responds to National Demand for Science and Math Workforce
Denver, Co—Today, the Education Commission of the States, (ECS) launches two key resources for policymakers. The first focuses on increasing the workforce in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The second responds to a projected, growing national demand for students with advanced skills in career and technical fields.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, America “continues to suffer from a shortage of qualified IT workers with flexible and portable skills who can readily adapt and respond to ever-changing IT demands and processes.”

“STEM and career and technical education (CTE) both address burning issues for policymakers today,” said ECS Senior Policy Analyst Jennifer Dounay, manager of the organization’s High School Policy Center. “STEM and CTE programs respond to the outcry for more highly-qualified workers to meet growing state and national technical workforce needs. At the same time, CTE and STEM courses answer many high school students’ call to bring relevance and real-world applications into the classroom.”

Traditionally, technical careers have not been seen as academically rigorous. However, to be successful today, these jobs require considerable knowledge in math and science — most of these skills on par with what are required for traditional four-year degrees. The new ECS resources put the right pieces in place for policymakers to ensure broad access and maintain high-quality instruction and curriculum for STEM and CTE programs.

One of the resources is a STEM database, [http://www.ecs.org/hsdb-stem] providing 50-state information on 10 indicators related to quality of and access to high school-level STEM programs. The database also offers information on state programs targeted at STEM achievement among female, low-income and minority students — often underrepresented in STEM classrooms and state support for pre-Advanced Placement alignment programs.

Another tool for policymakers is the CTE database, [http://www.ecs.org/hsdb-cte] which provides 50-state data on 13 state policy indicators linked to program access and quality, including: the use of employability skill assessment tools, the inclusion of CTE courses in graduation requirements, and funding mechanisms, among others.

“STEM and CTE programs at the high school level are growing and evolving in response to public and policymaker demand,” said Roger Sampson, ECS president. “These ECS databases provide policymakers with just the tools they need to make sure students, regardless of the communities in which they live, have access to these exciting programs and that the instruction and curriculum are at a level to adequately prepare students for life after high school or college.”

###
The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is an interstate compact created by the states, territories and the U.S. Congress that helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonpartisan organization, ECS was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado. ECS is the only nationwide interstate compact devoted to education.

Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas