Tennessee Named Recipient of Education Commission of the States’ Frank Newman Award
State Recognized for Strides in Classroom Achievement

DENVER, CO – This July, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) honors the state of Tennessee as winner of the 2009 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation. Steadfast and far-reaching, Tennessee’s well-executed commitment to education reform resulted in: expanded pre-K instruction, increased teacher pay, revamped curriculum and standards, and support for a host of programs to improve classroom achievement.

Traditionally, the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation has recognized states and territories for demonstrated excellence in shaping education policy. In 2005, ECS named its State Innovation Award in honor of the late Frank Newman, who served as ECS president for 14 years.

“I'm pleased Tennessee has received national recognition for its work in this regard,” said Governor Phil Bredesen. “This is good news, and affirms the hard work we've done to make and keep education Tennessee's number one priority. Our commitment has been to thinking outside the box to give students the very best education while, at the same time, giving our state a 21st century educated workforce, and this honor reflects that commitment.”

Nationally recognized for excellence in pre-K education, Tennessee’s focus on education seems both timely and accurate. Since 2003, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has recognized the state for requiring “stringent quality standards” for its pre-K program. Tennessee is one of eight states that meet nine of 10 quality benchmarks.

Tennessee also worked to toughen the state’s education standards and better aligned them with the needs of business and college entrance requirements. The fall 2009 school year will include a focus on increased graduation requirements, 21st century workforce skills and new assessments.

Supplementing early and high school reform efforts, this spring, the United States Distance Learning Associated (USDLA) recognized Tennessee’s online curriculum as a “leader in best practices in distance learning.” The online program offers courses to students throughout the state.

“Governor Bredesen’s comprehensive approach to improving Tennessee’s education system is commendable. Connecting critical transition points of early learning and college/workforce readiness with rigorous standards and teacher compensation reflects system changes supported by aligned policy,” said ECS President Roger Sampson.

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The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

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