Heads Up on Education Issues

March 2010

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). Sometimes you'll find that we produced a document, but we've also reviewed many other recent reports for you and selected these as relevant and reflective of information you can trust.

If there’s something you’d like to recommend for the next issue, please let us know.

Access and Completion
A new analysis from the American Enterprise Institute looks at the data surrounding Latino college graduation rates and confirms that Latino students trail their white peers at all types of institutions. The report also reveals wide variation in the relative success of institutions with similar student bodies. The analysis found that 51% of Latino full-time students earn a bachelor's degree within six years, compared to 59% of white students.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning published a research study on the academic outcomes of students who earn credit for prior learning—the largest scale look at prior learning assessment credit earning and academic outcomes that has ever been done.

Accountability
A report by Education Sector and the American Enterprise Institute claims that the new Voluntary System of Accountability needs to be more complete, comparison-friendly and designed to highlight institutional differences.

Adequate Yearly Progress
Drawing on data from state departments of education and other public sources, this report from the Center on Education Policy estimates the number and percentage of public schools that did not make adequate yearly progress. The report finds that approximately one-third of the nation’s public schools did not make adequate yearly progress in the 2008-09 school year. A table outlining the percentage of schools not making AYP by state is included.

Economic/Workforce Development
This Bureau of Labor Statistics site includes this document showing the fastest growing occupations in the nation through 2018.

K-12/Postsecondary Alignment

Federal Initiatives
(i3 Grants)
In case you missed it, ECS recently released two Alerts on the Investing in Innovation Fund. The first Alert looks at the recently released final priorities. The second provides the timeline, the application grading scale and information about the cost-sharing or matching.
(Race to the Top)
For those who might want more details on the Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010 – the one that helped get the state selected as a Race to the Top winner – it’s Public Chapter No. 2
In addition, here is a link to the bill information page.

For the applications, scores and reviewers comments for each state applying for Race To The Top click here.

Guidance/Counseling
Can I Get a Little Help Here? is based on a national survey of young adults ages 22-30 asking young Americans how much help they received from the high school guidance system when it comes to choosing a college or career or getting financial aid for college

Middle School
Gaining Ground in the Middle from EdSource is one of the largest studies of its kind. What is particularly interesting is that the findings suggest schools with high-functioning leadership teams that focus the school community on a shared “future oriented” mission are far better off.

Online Learning
SREB has released Overcoming Doubts About Online Learning. This report looks at common concerns about online learning and cites available research that shows online students often match — or even outperform — their peers in traditional classrooms.

Postsecondary
In this seventh annual report, the State Higher Education Executive Officers’ study of state higher education finance analyzes state and local funding, net tuition and enrollment trends to provide a comprehensive view of state higher education finance.

Reading
A new study from the Center on Education Policy finds that, overall, male students in every state where data are available lag behind females in reading. In certain states, the gender gap for reading proficiency was 10% or higher. In mathematics, the percentages of both genders scoring “proficient” or higher were roughly the same.

The latest NAEP reading results indicated that reading scores stayed flat for 4th graders and rose only slightly for 8th grade students. Some found the results very disappointing after many years of intensive efforts by states and the federal government to improve student reading skills.

State Data Systems
This issue brief from the Data Quality Campaign captures the current status of states’ ability to link data across agencies, the opportunities and challenges they face, and how leading states are breaking down silos to ensure data follow individual students over time to improve success.

STEM
Check out this great state data tool from the National Science Foundation (part of the 2010 Science and Engineering Indicators).

Student Achievement
MetLife has released the second report from the Survey of the American Teacher. Part Two examines views about student achievement: factors both within and beyond the classroom and school that have the most impact on improving student achievement and to what extent schools are addressing them.

Here is the link to the state policies which have been added so far in 2010 to the ECS state policy database.
If you have questions or comments about “Heads Up on Education Issues” please contact Melodye Bush at ECS.

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