Heads Up on Education Issues

August 2011

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.

Access and Success

2010-11 General Appropriations Act directed the Texas Legislative Budget Board to conduct “a statistical study of the predictors of access and success in higher education.” This report reflects the Board's findings.

Accountability

This report exposes a potentially corrosive gap between the way leaders in government, education, business and health care define accountability and the way typical Americans think about it.

Child Welfare

Since 2000, the child poverty rate has increased by 18%, meaning that the economic recession of the past few years effectively wiped out all of the gains we made in cutting child poverty in the late 1990s.” Check the data for your state and the nation at this link.

Discipline

This ECS presentation outlines anti-bullying policies in the 50 states and District of Columbia. The presentation was made by ECS’ Jennifer Dounay Zinth at the NCSL meeting in San Antonio.

Legislation enacted this year in North Carolina limits the use of long-term suspension and expulsion. Under the new provisions, students should only receive long-term suspension or expulsion when they pose a serious threat to the safety of students, staff and school visitors or substantially disrupt the educational environment.

The U.S. Department of Education announced the launch of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, a collaborative project between the Departments of Justice and Education that will address the "school-to-prison pipeline" and the disciplinary policies and practices that can push students out of school and into the justice system.

ECS National Forum Videos

For those of you not able to attend our July 6-8 meeting in Denver I am including a couple of videos. The first is from the incredible presentation by Temple Grandin, How Thinking in Pictures Provides Perspective. Temple Grandin, Associate Professor at Colorado State University, discusses how an autism spectrum disorder has helped her deeply understand what it is to be smart, yet different.
The second video: **What is Holding Back Reading Achievement** – Robert Pondiscio, Communications Director at the Core Knowledge Foundation in Virginia, talks about reading — how we teach it, how we test it and why it is critical for education reform.

**Employability**

The southern U.S. has a shortage of workers to fill middle-skills jobs such as medical technicians, according to a National Skills Coalition study. Such jobs require education and training beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. In North Carolina, for example, 51% of available jobs fall into the middle-skills category, but only 43% of job seekers are able to meet the qualifications.

**ESEA Reauthorization**

You may want to view this video about the forces and factions involved in educational reform at the federal level from Brown University's Russ Whitehurst. He proposes some simple solutions for improving education policy.

**High Schools**

In ECS' Research Study Database, a newly entered research study examines teachers', school leaders' and students' perceptions of three large, traditional urban Texas high schools that have been unusually successful in math and science, compared to similar Texas high schools.

Each year, 390,000 young drop out of school. According to this report from the National Governors Association, re-engaging dropout is a challenge for school systems.

**Hispanic Issues**

A 24% spike in Hispanic college enrollment has brought the number of Hispanic young people attending college to an all-time high and made them the largest minority group of 18- to 24-year-olds on campuses in the country, according to a Pew Hispanic Center report. The number grew by 349,000 from 2009 to 2010.

**Interim Studies in the States**

**Nevada** has two studies of note. The first (SB 11) directed the Legislative Council to appoint a committee to conduct an interim study concerning the development of a new method for funding public schools in Nevada. The report is due prior to February 2013. The second (SB 374) created a Committee to Study the Funding of Higher Education with a report of findings due prior to the 2013 legislation session. This committee is tasked with considering: (1) How other states fund higher education; (2) How different institutional missions might affect funding; (3) The funding of remedial courses and how they are delivered; (4) How the different tuition and fee structures support operating budgets; (5) Funding based upon completed courses versus enrollments; and (6) Possible reward structures for institutions achieving defined goals for graduating students.

**Arkansas** Interim Committees on Education are currently considering: (1) whether or not foreign language should be a requirement for eligibility for an Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship and (2) increasing the minimum teacher salary schedule.

*Thanks to LESN members recognizing the importance of sharing studies from state to state.*
Video from Education Next discusses a paper examining the proficiency of U.S. students from a global perspective translating state-by-state NAEP scores and demographic subgroup NAEP scores into PISA scores to determine how states and nations stack up. Here is the link to the paper.

Learning Time

A new ECS report looks at each state’s school calendar, answering questions such as how long is the school year, when does school begin and how long does the day need to be to count as a full-day of instruction.

Leadership

The Wallace Foundation continues to provide funding for major improvements in education. The latest will result in more effective school leadership.

A new report by the National Center on School Choice and Vanderbilt University's Peabody College examines the leadership practices of school principals across school choice types and traditional public schools.

NCLB Waivers

The Center on Education Policy has launched an online resource to track developments related to the federal government's decision to offer waivers to states from some No Child Left Behind requirements. The status of the waivers changes almost daily as states express interest, formally submit requests and receive responses from the U.S. Department of Education.

Postsecondary

Based on interviews from two dozen leaders from public and private four-year institutions, this report from the College Board includes several examples of four-year colleges making transfer from community college an integral component of an institution’s overall student enrollment strategy.

Rural Education

I just received a news release and release of the report from a July meeting on rural education issues sponsored by the Southeast Regional Education Summit. The report covers six topics of concern for rural schools and suggests action steps to policymakers and officials, business and community leaders, and educators.

School Improvement Grants (SIG)

This report from the Government Accountability Office on the School Improvement Grant programs looks at obstacles being faced in the SIG program.

Standards

A newly entered research study in ECS’ Research Studies Database examines how much change the Common Core standards represent for state content standards and assessments.

Student Achievement

The American Youth Policy Forum, Gateway to College National Network, and the National Youth Employment Coalition have produced an issue brief to encourage states’ use of extended-year
graduation rates in adequate yearly progress calculations and incorporation of these rates into their state accountability frameworks/systems. This brief aims to inform states of the flexibilities that currently exist to use extended-year graduation rates as a policy mechanism to encourage schools and districts to continue to work with overage, under-credit students.

One Degree of Separation, a recent report from Public Agenda, explores the question of how young Americans who don't finish college see their chances for success. The report presents findings from a national random sample survey of more than 600 young Americans, asking them for their views on jobs, college and their own economic prospects.

Teacher Issues

A new ECS report updates a 50-state look at teacher tenure and continuing contract laws. The document addresses modifications to state tenure or continuing contract policies, including using teacher performance evaluations in tenure decisions and the distinction between renewal at the end of a teacher's contract and dismissal during term.

A new report from the Data Quality Campaign looks at the use of data in improving teacher effectiveness.

The National Center for Education Information has released Profiles of Teachers in the U.S. 2011. Teachers strongly oppose many current education reform proposals, but the teaching profession is undergoing a profound transformation due to an influx of new teachers coming from non-traditional backgrounds.

Value of an Education

The Center on Education and the Workforce just recently released The College Payoff, a new report on the value of higher education.

A new report from American Institutes for Research examined earnings and tax payments for 493,000 full-time students who entered college in 2002 but didn't complete college. As a total, they missed out on an estimate of $3.8 billion in earnings in 2010 alone.

Vouchers

The Center on Education Policy released a report describing major (mostly state-level) voucher programs and synthesizing 10 years of research on school vouchers.

If you have questions or comments about “Heads Up on Education Issues” please contact Melodye Bush at ECS.

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