Heads Up on Education Issues

February 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). Some pieces we’ve produced. 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
Two new reports from the Education Trust show that some public colleges and universities are doing better than others in ensuring that minority students earn bachelor’s degrees. Top Gainers and Top Gap Closers highlight institutions that have made the biggest improvements since 2002.

ECS staff prepared a summary of the research included in Crossing the Finish Line. Very informative.

Afterschool Activities
The Afterschool Investment project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services allows readers to drill into 50 state profiles of the status of afterschool activities.

Charter Schools
This brief from the Center for Mental Health in Schools finds that arguing about charters vs. “traditional” schools masks the failure of school improvement policy and practice to enhance equity of opportunity. The brief then examines what type of policy shift is needed to stimulate development of a comprehensive, cohesive and coherent system to replace the prevailing piecemeal and marginalized approach to student and learning supports.

Developmental/Remedial Education
Check out “Getting Past Go” on ECS’ site. Don’t miss the State Reports on Development/Remedial Education.

Early Learning
The Progress of Education Reform looks at two recent research studies on the issue of chronic early absence and addresses the following: 1) What are the impacts of chronic early absence? 2) Why has it been overlooked? What contributes to chronic early absence? 3) What can be done to reduce chronic absence in the early grades? and 4) What can be done to reduce chronic absence in the early grades?

A new policy brief looks at Transition and Alignment — two key components for creating continuity across early learning and the early grades and provides examples of successful state efforts.

Updated 50-state information on state policies relating to kindergarten can be found here. By going to the ECS StateNote page you can select any of the 50-state views you want, rather than having to scroll through everything. By the way, the finance piece was not updated.
Economic/Workforce Development

This new ECS paper engages education, policy and workforce leaders to explore how to effectively align education, workforce and economic development policy to meet state and regional workforce needs. It provides a comprehensive view of alignment that addresses the various pathways students pursue through the education system and into the workforce.

Gifted and Talented

A new report from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy reviews national and state assessment data for the existence of “excellence gaps,” differences between subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement in all 50 states.

Federal Policy

The Center on Education Policy has released a report containing its recommendations for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act. The recommendations are based on a two-year review of current and past federal policies and a wide range of research, including CEP’s own comprehensive studies of NCLB and student achievement in all 50 states.

Middle Grades

What district and school policies and practices are linked to higher student performance in the middle grades? To find out, a research team led by EdSource spent 18 months conducting the most extensive study ever of middle grades. This link will take you to the various products resulting from the study.

Readiness

The following is from Michael Kirst’s “College Puzzle” blog at Stanford University and shares the “Seven Key Actions For Students to be Admitted to Selective Colleges” Hone in on each of the seven keys on Montgomery County Public Schools at www.mcps7keys.org.

Special Education

Summary of Seclusion and Restraint Statutes, Regulations, Policies and Guidance By State and Territory: Information as Reported to the Regional Comprehension Centers and Gathered From Other Sources. This U.S. Department of Education Report includes the descriptive information verified by each state and territory.

Teacher Quality

A recent report from Dr. Robert Marzano and his colleagues explores the importance of creating an aligned system in the development of great teachers within the guidelines of the federal Race to the Top initiative.

Top Education Issues for 2010

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education has released a report that examines the issues they predict will be the most important to the public education sector in 2010. The report--while Georgia-specific--focuses on several issues that have urgency at the national level. 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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