Heads Up on Education Issues

July 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.

Help Us Help You

We are attempting to get ahead of the game with research for interim studies and task forces. I am sure it isn’t a surprise to learn when other LESN offices are facing similar issues. Please let us know the topics of your special task forces or interim studies and the timelines for reporting. Send the links or details to Melodye Bush at mbush@ecs.org.

And We Need Your Help, Please

Please click HERE and tell us: What is the biggest problem facing education today?

Accountability

The message from the nation’s governors to higher education is: Accountability. A new report from the National Governors Association restates their interest in improving graduation rates and increasing the "efficiency and effectiveness" of higher education to meet states’ economic needs.

Assessment


At-Risk

This ECS StateNote highlights the statewide early warning indicator systems in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama as well as the Philadelphia Public Schools system.

Some students overcome their socio-economic background. Some use that background as a springboard. This OECD report covers one key ingredient.

The bombshell of the month award goes to the Council of State Governments and the Justice Center and Public Policy Research Center at Texas A&M for their report showing how disciplinary actions relate to students success and juvenile justice involvement.
Choice

In this study, the National Center on School Choice took a twofold approach to examine the leadership practices of school principals across school choice types and traditional public schools.

Common Core

There has been a lot of interest around the Common Core Standards in K-12. This WICHE report looks at the implications of the Common Core in postsecondary education in the western states.

Education Reform

The Center for American Progress and the American Enterprise Institute recently hosted a gathering of several current and former chief state school officers to discuss the topic of state education agencies as agents of change. The report might interest you.

Employability

Legislation signed in May 2011 in Georgia authorizes the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development to establish certifications in soft skills—skills relating to punctuality, ability to learn, ability to work in a team—as a discrete and complementary component to the current WorkKeys assessment used in the state.

ESEA Reauthorization

The Alliance for Excellent Education reports on the ways that Title I shortchanges high schools and what the reauthorization can do to correct it.

Family Involvement

A newly entered research study examines the effects of family literacy programs on children’s literacy development

Finance

A joint resolution in Montana requests an interim study of performance-based funding for K-12 education, the development of a performance-based funding design, and an implementation plan for consideration by the 63rd legislature.

The National Institute for Early Education Research released a Policy Brief on ways to improve public financing of early learning programs.

Financial Aid

This MSNBC video investigates the practice of determining the college tuition cost by the major.

A good companion piece for the video might be the Center on Education and the Workforce’s report entitled What’s it Worth: The Economic Value of College Majors.

High School Issues

The latest issue of ECS’ Progress of Education Reform is focused on credit recovery and proficiency-based credit.

International Comparisons

The latest OECD publication reviews PISA results for the strongest national performers in successfully reforming education and points out the lessons for the United States.
Latino Issues

With funding from The Kresge Foundation, NCSL has been engaged in a national effort to help state legislators become more aware of the trends and issues surrounding Latino educational attainment as well as effective policy strategies that serve these students. As a part of this effort, NCSL is releasing two new briefs. *Investing in Higher Education for Latinos: Trends in Latino College Access and Success* provides state-by-state demographic and education-related data. *Investing in Higher Education for Latinos: Payoffs for State Economies* focuses on how improving college completion rates for Latino students can be a catalyst for stronger economies.

Learning Time

The National Center on Time and Learning and the Education Commission of the States partnered on the following: *Trends to Reform the American School Calendar: A Snapshot of Federal, State, and Local Action* and *A State Policymaker’s Guide to Expanding Learning Time*.

P-3 Initiatives

New law in Oklahoma requires schools to screen K-3 pupils for reading difficulties and provide help if they aren’t on track. A *companion bill* that became law in April 2011 requires all teachers of reading in K-3 to incorporate in their teaching the five key elements of reading instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary.

Remedial Education

What are the myths on the street about remedial education? Bruce Vandal and Jane Wellman discuss five of the common myths in this Inside Higher Education article.

Rural Issues

The Education Commission of the States convened the first National Summit on the Role of Education in Economic Development in Rural America in May 2011. Click here for the event summary and recommendations.

Students with Disabilities

This *brief* on Neuroscience and Special Education provides an overview of how findings from neuroscience are being applied to special education and discusses how institutions of higher education and others are creating interdisciplinary links between the two. While you are at the site, look at some of the other Project Forum reports.

The U.S. Department recently released a *report* which provides national data about postsecondary students with disabilities, the services and accommodations provided to these students, how institutions keep track of students with disabilities, institutional policies regarding disabled students, and various aspects of institutional accessibility.

STEM

Identifying effective approaches to the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and providing all students with access to high-quality education in STEM is important to their futures and that of the U.S. The National Academies Press released a *report* from the Committee on Highly Successful Schools or Programs in K-12 STEM Education.

Taking on STEM in smaller pieces, IES’ What Works Clearinghouse, looks at the curriculum for grades 6-9 at the University of Chicago’s School Mathematics Project. The program is designed to allow schools to offer students appropriate math, regardless of grade level.
Students

Students are most likely to succeed and graduate when they attend the most academically demanding institution that will admit them--yet data show that too many students (particularly low-income and minority) apply to less-selective programs-- coined "undermatching." This MDRC report responds to this phenomenon.

Teacher Issues

Research has documented differences in the distribution of teacher characteristics across schools serving different student populations, few studies have examined how teacher sorting occurs within schools. This CALDER report reveals some interesting patterns.

This National Council on Teacher Quality report claims that about 75% of student-teaching programs in the U.S. are inadequate. Although controversial, this certainly is a conversation starter, and in the full report you can check out the institutions in your state. You also can access the executive summary or the appendices.

Happy reading!

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

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