



EDUCATION TRENDS

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Governors' Top Education Priorities in 2018 State of the State Addresses

ERIN WHINNERY AND SARAH POMPELIA

A governor's State of the State address is an opportunity to outline policy priorities, highlight past accomplishments and reflect on the condition of the state and our country. In 2018, 17 governors are serving their last year in office, having reached the end of their term or deciding not to seek re-election. Many of them used their State of the State addresses to emphasize the importance of collegiality among policymakers. When governing bodies function well, the state and its citizens reap the benefits — a principal benefit being an education that prepares citizens for well-paying jobs. Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead summed up many governors' thoughts when he said, "By spending neither too much nor too little, by continuing to invest in the future of our state ... by responsibly taking on education funding, we will serve the citizens of our state well this session."

Each year, Education Commission of the States tracks, analyzes and identifies trends in education policy proposals featured in governors' State of the State addresses. To date, 44 governors have delivered their 2018 addresses, and these are the top six education priorities across states:

- At least 28 governors spoke to the importance of improving or maintaining current investments in **school finance**, consistently a top concern.
- Anticipating future workforce gaps, at least 23 governors encouraged expanding **workforce development** efforts.
- At least 19 governors remarked on the need to improve **postsecondary affordability**.
- Closely related to workforce development, modernizing **career and technical education** (CTE) is a priority for at least 16 governors.
- Policy solutions to promote **teacher quality** — such as compensation, training and recruiting — were proposed by at least 16 governors.
- Governors in at least 11 states highlighted the importance of providing high-quality **early learning** (K-3) opportunities.

There is rarely a child who will not or cannot be taught. The key is not trying to pour knowledge in, but rather opening eyes and imaginations and letting eagerness and fascination out.

SOUTH CAROLINA
Gov. Henry McMaster

For complete summaries of education policy priorities outlined in each governor's State of the State address, visit www.ecs.org.

School Finance

School finance remains a high priority for governors, as funding for K-12 schools makes up a significant percentage of state budgets. This year, at least 28 governors mentioned school funding in their State of the State addresses. Many governors were specific about where they wanted to make additional investments — highlighting programs focused on equity; special student populations; and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. Other priorities included funding for all-day kindergarten, teacher recruitment and retention, CTE, and technology. Governors also placed emphasis on updating school facilities and meeting the demands of funding formulas.

 We need to prioritize funding and standards for the kind of learning that educates the hearts and minds of our children so that they can flourish in our highly competitive global marketplace.

Gov. Gary Herbert ^{UTAH}

Highlights

COLORADO Gov. John Hickenlooper	Proposed that the budget should maintain increased allocations for rural schools.
DELAWARE Gov. John Carney	Proposed additional funding to more-than-triple the number of schools currently receiving Opportunity Grants that provide additional resources to support low-income students, English-language learners and students exposed to stress and trauma.
RHODE ISLAND Gov. Gina Raimondo	Lifted a freeze on school construction, added funding for high-priority construction projects and proposed spending \$1 billion over the next five years to fix public school buildings.
TENNESSEE Gov. Bill Haslam	Invested more than \$1.3 billion in K-12 education in the last seven years and proposed spending \$200 million more on K-12 education in the 2019 budget.
VERMONT Gov. Phil Scott	Proposed increasing public investments in important services, like K-12 funding, by renewing efforts to grow the state's tax base and working-age population.
WISCONSIN Gov. Scott Walker	Offered plans to help rural schools keep more money in the classroom by increasing Sparsity Aid, which benefits low-revenue school districts.



Interested in learning more about funding for at-risk students? This [report](#) analyzes how states fund at-risk students and how much additional money at-risk students receive from states.

Workforce Development

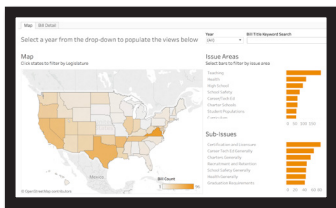
In at least 23 states, governors noted that there aren't enough skilled workers to fill current workforce gaps, let alone meet anticipated workforce demands. Failing to maintain an educated workforce can leave local employers without qualified employees, and dissuade new businesses from entering the state. Governors looked to support workforce development by aligning P-20 education, as well as expanding access and opportunities in high-demand programs. Educating more health care professionals was of particular interest to many governors; new proposals looked to incentivize health care professionals to work in rural areas with limited access to health care services. These proposals highlight the complementary role education policies play in advancing other state priorities, like increasing access to health care and supporting rural economies.

We can do more to help our community colleges bridge the skills gap that exists today. There is little doubt that our employers consider an educated and skilled workforce as their top priority. To meet this demand, we have targeted certain industries and emphasized training for these needs.

MISSISSIPPI
Gov. Phil Bryant

Highlights

ALABAMA Gov. Kay Ivey	Proposed funding a loan repayment program for dentists and physician assistants who agree to work in underserved, rural areas.
GEORGIA Gov. Nathan Deal	Established the HOPE Career Grant, which covers 100 percent of tuition for students enrolled in an identified, strategic industry or high-demand field.
MICHIGAN Gov. Rick Snyder	Introduced the Marshall Plan for Talent, a new way of producing talent in the state.
KENTUCKY Gov. Matt Bevin	Proposed investing an additional \$100 million in workforce development.
OREGON Gov. Kate Brown	Announced Future Ready Oregon, an initiative to close the workforce skills gap.
PENNSYLVANIA Gov. Tom Wolf	Announced a new program, PA Smart, that will consolidate workforce development efforts into what was called a "one-stop shop."



To see more examples of pending workforce development policies, visit Education Commission of the States' [State Education Policy Tracking](#) resource.

Postsecondary Affordability

How much should it cost to attend college? This question continues to dominate conversations about postsecondary access and completion, and the answer continues to evolve — in part, because it is difficult to talk about college affordability without considering housing and food stability, child care, transportation needs and internet access. At least 19 governors expressed concern about the cost of a college education in their State of the State addresses. Because the most expensive college experience is one that ends without a degree, many governors proposed new scholarship programs to support near-completers.

“...[I]f they get into college, they will not be denied because they can’t afford it.”

NEW YORK
Gov. Andrew Cuomo

Highlights

CALIFORNIA Gov. Jerry Brown	Proposed the California Online College to provide working adults with a convenient and low-cost postsecondary education.
FLORIDA Gov. Rick Scott	Expressed support for legislation to provide free tuition to families of fallen first responders, state law enforcement officers and military members.
IDAHO Gov. Butch Otter	Requested an additional \$5 million for the Opportunity Scholarship program and \$5 million for Adult Completion Scholarships.
IOWA Gov. Kim Reynolds	Proposed a grant program for people who started, but never completed, a four-year degree.
MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Charlie Baker	Continuing expansion of the Commonwealth Commitment plan, wherein students can earn a four-year degree for less than \$30,000.
WEST VIRGINIA Gov. Jim Justice	Proposed making college tuition-free at community and technical colleges.
WISCONSIN Gov. Scott Walker	Partnering with financial institutions to help students refinance student loans.



Interested in learning more about near-completers? This [report](#) reviews legislative action and additional policy considerations to help students complete their college degrees.

Career and Technical Education

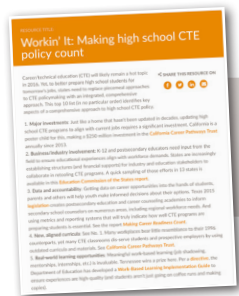
Policymakers and educators are faced with a unique challenge – anticipating the skills students will need for jobs that don't yet exist. Governors in at least 16 states emphasized the need to prepare today's students for tomorrow's jobs through CTE that emphasizes the workforce readiness skills desired by employers. Proposals focused on aligning CTE courses with burgeoning career fields by creating new apprenticeships and skills-based training opportunities. Governors were particularly interested in expanding CTE opportunities in junior high and high schools by increasing the number of CTE courses and dual enrollment opportunities available.

Let's leave a legacy of opportunity for all our students by expanding career-connected learning.

WASHINGTON
Gov. Jay Inslee

Highlights

<p>IOWA Gov. Kim Reynolds</p>	<p>Proposed investing \$500,000 to expand work-based learning opportunities.</p>
<p>INDIANA Gov. Eric Holcomb</p>	<p>Establishing a state work-based learning and apprenticeship office that will increase opportunities from 12,500 to 23,000 by the end of 2019.</p>
<p>RHODE ISLAND Gov. Gina Raimondo</p>	<p>Proposed the creation of Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center to provide hands-on training and a path to jobs for people without a college degree, and proposed \$300,000 to fund two new Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools.</p>
<p>HAWAII Gov. David Ige</p>	<p>Made vocational training opportunities available through the department of labor and industrial relations.</p>
<p>SOUTH CAROLINA Gov. Henry McMaster</p>	<p>Proposed the creation of the South Carolina Workforce Partnership to connect businesses with high schools and technical colleges to collaborate on internships and dual credit and certificate programs for students interested in skilled trades, especially in rural areas.</p>
<p>SOUTH DAKOTA Gov. Dennis Daugaard</p>	<p>Piloting Career Launch, a program to provide high school students with work-based educational experiences, in four school districts.</p>



Read more about comprehensive approaches to high school CTE policies [here](#).

Teacher Quality

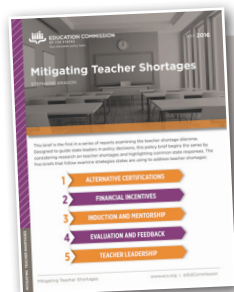
Teacher recruitment and retention strategies continue to be in the front of governors' minds, as many face shortages in their states. This year, at least 16 governors prioritized teacher quality in their addresses, and nine governors thanked an educator by name. While many governors praised the growing economies and rising wages in their states, the same optimism was not always reflected in comments about teacher salaries. Governors recognized the need for up-to-date professional development and competitive compensation for teachers, and efforts to improve teacher pay were high among their priorities in State of the State addresses this year.

Learning takes place in the classroom, and that's why our first job is to support teachers and give them the training and the freedom to teach as they know best.

CALIFORNIA
Gov. Jerry Brown

Highlights

ARIZONA Gov. Doug Ducey	Increased teacher pay by 9 percent since 2015 and proposed more spending on teacher pay in the future.
COLORADO Gov. John Hickenlooper	Added \$10 million to the 2019 budget to address teacher shortages.
DELAWARE Gov. John Carney	Proposed expanding the number of math coaches in middle schools, and hiring 200 new teachers to match enrollment growth.
IDAHO Gov. Butch Otter	Called for \$42 million in fiscal year 2019 to continue implementing a career-ladder system for teachers.
MISSISSIPPI Gov. Phil Bryant	Directed more than \$100 million to teacher pay raises.
NEW MEXICO Gov. Susana Martinez	Proposed a 2 percent raise for all teachers and a \$5,000 bonus for teachers with an exemplary rating.
SOUTH CAROLINA Gov. Henry McMaster	Highlighted Clemson University's Call Me MISTER program, which works to increase the pool of available teachers and principals from diverse backgrounds, and proposed increasing funding for the program.



Want to learn more about teacher shortages and strategies to mitigate them? Using financial incentives is one of five strategies examined in this [series of briefs](#) on the topic.

Early Learning

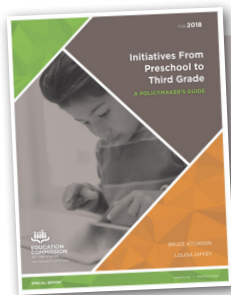
Recognizing that third-grade reading proficiency is a key indicator of later academic success, governors continue to prioritize early childhood education by dedicating additional funding to pre-K and early interventions, in particular. At least 11 governors mentioned early learning initiatives in their State of the State addresses this year. Specific areas of focus included increasing funding and the number of seats for their states' youngest learners, highlighting high-quality programs and elevating the importance of literacy in the early years.

“If we fail to reach Georgia’s youngest minds ... if we fail to get them reading on grade level by the end of third grade, they are much more likely to fall behind, both in the classroom and the life that awaits them beyond.”

GEORGIA
Gov. Nathan Deal

Highlights

<p>ALABAMA Gov. Kay Ivey</p>	<p>Noted that the state’s First-Class Pre-K program has been recognized as the highest-quality pre-K program in the nation for 11 consecutive years. Proposed increasing funding for the program by an additional \$23 million, as well as increasing funding for the state’s Pre-Through-3 initiative.</p>
<p>IDAHO Gov. Butch Otter</p>	<p>Asked for \$6.5 million in fiscal year 2019 to expand early literacy intervention efforts.</p>
<p>MISSISSIPPI Gov. Phil Bryant</p>	<p>Noted the important work of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council, a group comprising experts in education, health care, child welfare, mental health and early childhood learning.</p>
<p>NEW MEXICO Gov. Susana Martinez</p>	<p>Asked for an additional \$8 million to expand pre-K programs throughout the state that will allow an additional 2,000 kids to enroll.</p>
<p>NEW YORK Gov. Andrew Cuomo</p>	<p>Called for an expansion of the state’s pre-K programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.</p>



Want to take a deeper dive into the P-3 landscape? [This primer](#) covers a range of vital P-3 issues, providing context, current state examples and additional resources.

AUTHORS

Erin Whinnery is a policy researcher at Education Commission of the States. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Boston College and a master's degree in higher education administration from the University of Denver. Outside the office, Erin is an amateur crafter and a tolerable cook. Contact Erin at ewhinnery@ecs.org or **303.299.3654**.

Sarah Pompelia is a policy researcher at Education Commission of the States. She completed her bachelor's degree at Northwestern University and earned master's degrees in public policy and social work at the University of Denver. In her free time, Sarah enjoys cooking, building furniture and spending as much time as possible in the mountains. Contact Sarah at spompelia@ecs.org or **303.299.3612**.

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Education Commission of the States | 700 Broadway Suite 810 Denver, CO 80203

