Education Commission of the States

12 for 2012

Issues to Move Education Forward in 2012

January 2012

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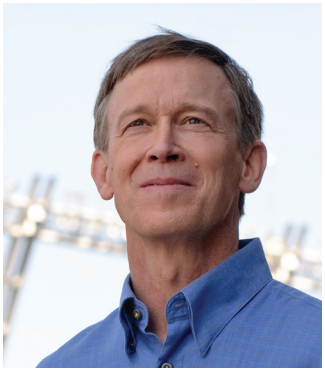
The mission of the Education Commission of the States is to help states develop effective policy and practice for public education by providing data, research, analysis and leadership; and by facilitating collaboration, the exchange of ideas among the states and long-range strategic thinking.

Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan organization that brings together key leaders — governors, legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials, business leaders and others — to work side by side to improve education.

ECS was established in 1965, by state leaders for state leaders. For more than 40 years, ECS has been helping policymakers improve public education by facilitating the exchange of information and ideas across states. A nonprofit interstate compact with 350 commissioners from its member states, ECS is the leading nonpartisan source of information, ideas and leadership on education policy. It tracks trends, translates research, provides advice and creates opportunities for state leaders to learn from one another.



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About this report

12 for 2012 is an ECS "read of the field," built on our scrutiny of new reports and research, and our analysis of emerging drivers of change. The 12 policy areas do not represent an exhaustive list of the critical issues for the coming year, nor is this report intended to dictate your education policy priorities for 2012. Rather, *12 for 2012* is intended to stimulate thinking around how best to craft the "2.0" of powerful policy across the states.

The 12 policy areas highlighted in this report share certain common themes:

- P-20 in nature: Holding implications for the way we do business across the education spectrum, from the early years through postsecondary
- High-leverage
- Related to one another: Our success in addressing issues in one area (i.e., Common Core State Standards implementation) hold implications for our success in other areas (i.e., teacher evaluation).

For each of the 12 issues identified, four common threads are addressed:

- Potential power: Are there wide-reaching implications for getting state-level results?
- Biggest challenges
- Positive signs
- Further reading.

Policy areas identified in 12 for 2012:

- Are grounded by an evidence base or state experience
- Hold implications not for individual education "silos," but for the educational system as a whole, P-20
- Impact schools nationally — not subject to regional or political preferences
- Hold wide-reaching state-level implications
- Have potential for an enduring impact on student outcomes and state policymaking — no trend-chasing here
- Hold broad funding implications.

We hope you find this publication useful. Please feel free to share your feedback with Jennifer Dounay Zinth, *12 for 2012* editor and co-author, at jdounay@ecs.org.

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Authors:

1. Pre-K: Expanding the focus to P-3 (***Karen Schimke and Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
2. K-12 finance: Creating and maintaining efficiency and financial accountability without lowering expectations (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth and Mike Griffith***)
3. Blended learning: Getting moving. Getting it right. (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
4. Common Core State Standards: From talking to doing (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
5. Developing civic engagement in PK-12: State action in the absence of federal funding (***Paul Baumann***)
6. Teaching quality: Fasten your seatbelts! (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
7. Rural: Enhancing the potential of education in rural America (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
8. Data: Access to what teachers and leaders need to improve student outcomes (and the skills to use it) (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
9. Individualized instruction: Faster. Cheaper. Smarter (***Jennifer Dounay Zinth***)
10. Performance funding: Building a model without a blueprint? (***Matthew Smith***)
11. Remedial education: We know more now than we ever have (***Matthew Smith***)
12. Credentials of value: Some are better than others (***Matthew Smith***)

Pre-K: Expanding the focus to P-3

Potential power

- Smoother transition from "P" to the early grades
- Greater likelihood that students will be proficient readers by the end of grade 3

Biggest challenges

- ***Changing mindsets***
  The most dramatic brain development occurs before children enter formal schooling at age 5 or 6. It took decades for kindergarten to be accepted as the start of formal education. Now another paradigm shift must occur for us to get used to saying that pre-kindergarten is the first year (or the first two years) of school. It is still a perception among some policy leaders and parents that pre-K programs are "taking people's children away," and some have strongly held beliefs that pre-K is the responsibility of the family. Yet early education is critical if children are to succeed in school.
- ***Funding***
  Over the last years, states have struggled in a very difficult fiscal environment. Often the response is to reduce spending in the earliest years because it is seen as less essential than K-12.
- ***Assuring quality***
  Simply having a pre-K classroom available will not guarantee the gains necessary to ensure school readiness and success in subsequent grades. This remains true for P-3, particularly if children are to be proficient readers by end of grade 3.
- ***Instructional leadership***
  Optimal learning will occur when principals and early childhood directors are cognizant of the P-3 continuum, and ensure it is high quality and well aligned.
- ***Ensure proficiency without negative approaches***
  State initiatives to retain students not reading at grade level by the end of grade 3 may inadvertently punish students who have not received the same quality instruction and curriculum as more-advantaged peers. Research indicates that students who are overage for their grade (including those retained) are more likely to drop out of high school than their peers.

Positive signs

- States have begun developing literacy plans that incorporate the "P" grades. In addition, in 2011 six states — **Georgia**, **Louisiana**, **Montana**, **Nevada**, **Pennsylvania** and **Texas** — were awarded federal grants to support birth – grade 12 literacy efforts. Fifteen percent of grant funds must target children ages birth to 5, while 40% of funds must be directed at students in grades K-5.[1]
- **New Jersey** has launched a principal leadership initiative emphasizing early learning content. Lessons learned from New Jersey's experience can inform efforts nationally.[2]
- **Florida** has taken on a comprehensive approach. The Just Read, Florida! initiative, created through executive order in 2002 and sustained through legislation, calls for an array of actions from diverse stakeholders including parents, teachers, principals and reading coaches.[3] Statute creates a Just Read, Florida! Office in the department of education to coordinate and oversee program activities.[4] Legislation also establishes the Florida Center for Reading Research which, along with an outreach center each in central and south Florida, are tasked with numerous activities to support policy and practitioner efforts.[5]

ECS is also seeing leadership from national organizations and research institutions:

- The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, supported by dozens of funders nationally, aims to:
  - Close the reading achievement gap between low-income students and their peers

- Raise reading proficiency expectations for all students
- Ensure equal opportunity for all children to meet higher standards.[6]

- Leading research institutions are seeking to improve P-3, and can help link states with evidence-based best practice. Harvard, for example, is offering technical assistance and other supports to groups nationally on key elements of a P-3 system. The Frank Porter Graham Center (FPG Child Development Institute) at the University of North Carolina has a FirstSchool initiative. "It is a systems-based change process: the FirstSchool team works with schools, districts, communities, states, and institutions of higher education to move toward a seamless approach for children ages 3 to 8. The project is working with four schools in NC and four schools in Michigan to implement the FirstSchool process, and is conducting continued national outreach, dissemination, and professional development."[7]

Endnotes

1 U.S. Department of Education, *$180 Million Awarded to Six States for Comprehensive Literacy Program Aimed at Children, Birth – Grade 12* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, September 7, 2011), http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/180-million-awarded-six-states-comprehensive-literacy-program-aimed-children-bir, (accessed November 30, 2011).

2 Cynthia Rice and Vincent Costanza, *Building Early Learning Leaders: New Jersey's PreK-3rd Leadership Training* (Newark: Advocates for Children of New Jersey, March 2011), http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/NJ%20PreK-3rd%20Leadership%20Training.pdf, (accessed November 30, 2011).

3 Florida Department of Education, *Just Read, Florida!* (n.d.), http://www.justreadflorida.com/, (accessed November 30, 2011).

4 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 1001.215

5 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 1004.645

6 Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading: 3rd Grade Reading Success Matters* (n.d.), http://www.gradelevelreading.net/, (accessed November 28, 2011).

7 FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina, *FPG Project Summary: FirstSchool Implementation,* http://www.fpg.unc.edu/projects/project_detail.cfm?projectid=557, (accessed November 30, 2011).

Further Reading

Mariana Haynes and Jessie Levin, *Promoting Quality in PreK–Grade 3 Classrooms: Findings and Results from NASBE's Early Childhood Education Network* (Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education, March 2009), http://nasbe.org/index.php?option=com_zoo&task=item&item_id=196&Itemid=1033.
Discusses major themes from efforts in Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Oregon and Virginia to align early learning programs with early elementary grades.

Mimi Howard, *Transition and Alignment: Two Keys to Assuring Student Success* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2010), http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/84/07/8407.pdf.
Defines transition and alignment, explains their importance and identifies diverse state efforts to improve transition and alignment.

Kristie Kauerz, *Making the Case for P-3* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, July 2007), http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/75/22/7522.pdf.
Presents a concise and highly operational definition of P-3, outlines key guiding principles and provides a compelling case for "Why P-3 now?"

Geoff Marietta, *Lessons in Early Learning: Building an Integrated Pre-K-12 System in Montgomery County Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: PreK Now, August 2010), http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/MCPS_report.pdf?n=8784.
What can happen when a school district integrates high-quality early learning across the system as part of a comprehensive pre-K-12 reform plan? Almost 90% of kindergarteners enter 1st grade with essential early literacy skills, nearly 88% of 3rd graders read proficiently, achievement gaps between different racial/ethnic groups across all grade levels decline by double digits, about 90% of 12th graders graduate from high school and about 77% of graduating seniors enroll in college. This report identifies five lessons states and districts can apply from Montgomery County's success.

NAESP [National Association of Elementary School Principals] Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, *Building & Supporting an Aligned System: A Vision for Transforming Education Across the Pre-K-Grade Three Years* (Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2011), http://www.naesp.org/transforming-early-childhood-education-pre-k-grade-3.
Recommends 10 action steps — that address funding, federal and state policy integration, workforce development, and standards and assessments for young children — to guide alignment of early childhood and elementary education.

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K-12 finance: Creating and maintaining efficiency and financial accountability without lowering expectations

Potential power

- Maximizing scarce resources; using existing resources more efficiently
- Making budget adjustments without adversely impacting student achievement
- Scaling up proven success: Implementing across a state or district successful practices that may have existed only at the building or district level
- Aligning practice with research-based, data-driven approaches

Biggest challenges

- ***Reaching agreement***
  Stakeholders may be wedded to a particular demonstrated approach to efficiency that may be incompatible with another stakeholder's preferred approach.
- ***Working across key stakeholders to define what is essential for a high-quality education***
  Some may believe that the arts, for example, are "nice but not necessary," while others may feel the arts are the linchpin of a solid education.

Positive signs

- **Texas** state policy directs the commissioner of education, in consultation with the comptroller, to implement separate district and open-enrollment charter school financial accountability systems. The systems must include uniform indicators to measure district and charter school financial management performance, and are supposed to differentiate districts and charter schools based on financial performance. The financial accountability rating systems must also create greater transparency and enable the commissioner and district and charter school leaders to provide meaningful financial oversight and improvement.[1]
- Texas additionally requires the comptroller to identify districts and campuses whose resource allocation practices contribute to high student achievement and cost-effective operations. Doing so includes integrating accountability and financial data, ranking the results to identify district and campus relative performance, and identifying potential areas for district and campus improvement. In reviewing district and campus resource allocation, the comptroller must ensure resources are being used for instruction.[2]
- Texas also directs the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a process to evaluate each district's future financial solvency. Legislation sets forth the specific elements the review must take into account for the preceding, current, and future two school years in determining a district's financial solvency, and directs the TEA to develop an electronic-based program for districts to use in submitting information. Required elements include an alert to notify the agency if (1) a student-to-staff ratio is significantly outside the norm; (2) the district general fund balance shows a rapid depletion; or (3) a significant discrepancy exists between actual budget figures and projected revenues and expenditures.[3]
- **Virginia** legislation calls for the department of planning and budget, upon request from a school division, to initiate a review of the division's noninstructional expenditures. This review identifies opportunities to improve operational efficiencies and reduce costs in such areas as overhead, human resources, procurement, facilities use and management, financial management, transportation, technology planning, and energy management. School divisions must pay 25% of the cost of the review in the fiscal year following the completion of the final report.[4] Once a review is completed, a report clearly stating the district's potential savings is posted to the Virginia Department of Education Web site.[5]

Endnotes

1 TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 39.082

2 TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 39.0821

3 TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 39.0822

4 VA. CODE ANN. § 2.2-1502.1

5 *School Division Efficiency Reviews* (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.), http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/efficiency_reviews/index.shtml, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Further Reading

Education Commission of the States, *Recent State Policies/Activities: Finance—Resource Efficiency* (n.d.), http://www.ecs.org/ecs/ecscat.nsf/WebTopicView?OpenView&count=-1&RestrictToCategory=Finance--Resource+Efficiency, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Summaries and links to executive orders, newly enrolled, enacted and vetoed state legislation, and recently approved state board rules from across the states. Updated weekly.

James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy and National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, *Making Education Dollars Work* (2011), http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1105GESBRIEFS.PDF;jsessionid=F2333E2D39E597C3BA740CD9BFE80182, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Session I, "Advancing Education Reform with Limited Resources," provides promising practices on increasing states' "bang for their buck" in education investments.

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, *Meeting the Challenge: Fiscal Implications of Dropout Prevention in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, March 2011), http://renniecenter.issuelab.org/research/listing/meeting_the_challenge_fiscal_implications_of_dropout_prevention_in_massachusetts, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Explores the approaches, costs and potential financial benefits of implementing dropout reduction strategies. Highlights a diverse group of five Massachusetts districts that have substantially reduced their dropout rates over the past three years and identifies the districtwide policies and school-based strategies that have contributed to reducing dropout rates.

Texas Legislative Budget Board, *Methods for Reducing Costs and Maximizing Revenue in Public School Districts* (January 2011), http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Perf_Rvw_PubEd/Other/Reducing_Costs_Max_Revenue_Public_%20School_Dist.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Provides approaches identified in school performance reviews that districts can use to lower costs and maximize revenues. Methods are grouped into the broad categories of Educational/Organizational, Financial, Operational and Cross-Functional.

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Blended learning: Getting moving. Getting it right.

Potential power

- Greater personalization of instruction — self-paced progression and immediate interventions targeted at student need
- Powerful real-world learning opportunities
- Development of 21st century skills (including critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration with peers)
- Expansion of learning outside the school day and school year
- Fiscal efficiencies

What is blended learning?

- "A course that combines face-to-face instruction and online instruction.
- A school that combines some fully face-to-face courses and some fully online courses.
- A school that offers mostly or entirely blended courses.
- A student's coursework, if the student is self-blending by taking à la carte courses from a virtual school while also attending a traditional brick-and-mortar school."

Source: Evergreen Education Group, *Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice* (2010).

Biggest challenges

Simply layering technology onto traditional instructional practices will not harness blended learning's power. Consequently, one of the greatest challenges may be helping teachers rethink their craft in order to facilitate rather than direct learning. Other big challenges:

- ***Bandwidth and hardware capacity, especially in rural and urban areas***
  Rural areas may lack the bandwidth to provide online content to enough students; older buildings in urban areas may not have sufficient connectivity to the Internet.[1]
- ***Funding systems that cannot link funding to the course level and that do not provide the level of flexibility necessary to promote frequent use of quality online resources***
- ***Accountability***
  Need for digital formative and summative assessments that provide some measure of course quality (largely) and teacher effectiveness (in part) through "student learning data." Need for mechanisms that "hold schools and providers accountable to achievement and growth."[2] This is a significant departure from the current picture of local and state-level accountability.
- ***Teacher preparation and professional development***
  The Digital Learning Council (DLC) points to the need for states to offer "alternative certification routes, including online instruction and performance-based certification … reciprocity for online instructors certified by another state … [and] the opportunity for multi-location instruction." Teacher preservice programs should be encouraged to provide "targeted digital instruction training," and existing teachers should have "professional development or training to better utilize technology before teaching an online or blended learning course."[3]

Positive signs

Florida now requires that all K-12 students have access to "high-quality digital content, instructional materials, and online and blended learning courses."[4] Each district must provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in part- and full-time online instruction through any of several options:

- School district-operated part-time or full-time virtual instruction programs for K-12 students
- Florida Virtual School instructional services
- Blended learning instruction provided by charter schools
- Full-time virtual charter school instruction
- Courses delivered in the traditional school setting by personnel providing direct instruction through a virtual environment or though a blended virtual and physical environment
- Virtual courses offered in the course code directory to students within the school district or to students in other school districts throughout the state.[5]

Endnotes

1 Evergreen Education Group, *Keeping Pace with Online Learning: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice (2010)* (Evergreen Education Group, 2010), http://www.kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/KeepingPaceK12_2010.pdf, (accessed December 5, 2011).

2 Foundation for Excellence in Education, *Digital Learning Now!* (December 1, 2010), http://www.excelined.org/Docs/Digital%20Learning%20Now%20Report%20FINAL.pdf, (accessed November 10, 2011).

3 ibid.

4 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 1002.321(2)(e)

5 FLA. STAT. ANN. § 1002.321(4)

Further Reading

Digital Learning Now!, 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning (Foundation for Excellence in Education, December 1, 2010), http://www.excelined.org/Docs/Digital%20Learning%20Now%20Report%20FINAL.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

The "10 Elements" hold significant implications for effective state-level implementation of blended learning.

Digital Learning Now!, Roadmap for Reform (Digital Learning Now!, 2011) http://digitallearningnow.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Roadmap-for-Reform-.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Builds upon the 2010 10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning to provide greater guidance on state actions to support K-12 online learning, including blended learning.

Evergreen Education Group, *Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning 2011* (Evergreen Education Group, 2011), http://kpk12.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/KeepingPace2011.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

The latest in an annual series examining online learning nationally, this report identifies trends and ongoing challenges in state and local implementation of blended learning.

Michael B. Horn and Heather Staker, *The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning: Profiles of emerging models* (Innosight Institute, January 2011), http://www.innosightinstitute.org/innosight/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/The-Rise-of-K-12-Blended-Learning.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

The 5 Ws of blended learning, in just 18 short pages.

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Common Core State Standards: From talking to doing

Potential power

Bringing ever-greater numbers of students to:

- Demonstrate higher-order thinking skills through rigorous expectations we share as a nation
- A common expectation of "proficiency". Student "proficiency" truly will mean proficiency when a student crosses state lines
- Meet high expectations held by top-performing nations in reading and math
- College and career readiness.

Biggest challenges

- ***Helping teachers and principals transition to the new standards, and integrating the standards into teacher preparation programs***
  Research indicates that content, scope and sequencing in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) differ from that in most states' former standards. States that have crosswalked the standards are often finding that topics covered in the CCSS may not be covered (or covered in less depth), or may be reflected in a higher or lower grade level than in former standards.
- ***Adoption of new textbooks and other curricular materials***
  The Center on Education Policy (CEP) reported in September 2011 that nearly two-thirds (64%) of districts in the CCSS-adopting states agreed that CCSS implementation will demand "new or substantially revised curriculum materials" in math; 56% felt similarly about curriculum materials in English language arts.[1]
- ***Ensuring that teachers are teaching the standards***
  Some argue that teachers are not teaching the existing state standards. Why would those same teachers start teaching the CCSS?
- ***Assessment: Who pays after development?***
  Annually refreshing new items that are valid and reliable, and that incorporate higher-order thinking skills will not come cheap. A few states could choose to break away from the consortium assessments if they think that they can develop their own at a lower cost.
- ***Recalibrating state accountability systems***
  With standards and assessments reflecting more rigorous content, states will need to reconsider their accountability metrics, and that in turn will require recalibrating timelines for consequences. States will also need to maintain ongoing communication with the general public on the meaning of these revised expectations for schools.
- ***Opportunity to learn***
  English language learners, students with disabilities and low-income students need access to the general curriculum (i.e., CCSS). If state accountability systems do not continue to ensure that the performance of student subgroups remains measured and transparent — even with potential changes to NCLB — these students could be left behind.
- ***College admissions requirements***
  Standards and assessments that are truly college-ready should be reflected in some manner in postsecondary admissions requirements. This will require changes in many states.
- ***Funding***
  It goes without saying that implementing new curricula, assessments and training is costly.

Positive signs

- The CCSS provide an opportunity to develop and leverage high-quality teacher training and professional development programs. With a common set of standards, each state need not create its own preparation and professional development programs from scratch.
- States are moving ahead on implementation. Below are just a few highlights:
  - **Delaware's** crosswalk of the Delaware State Standards and the CCSS lays the foundation for extensive professional development and supports, including Model Instructional Units and lessons that contain numerous components such as assessment prompts, teaching strategies and assignments to help align instruction with the CCSS.[2]
  - **North Carolina's** strategy includes a full-court press to prepare educators on the CCSS. This plan of action includes "Tools and training, blending online and face-to-face learning experiences to help educators increase effectiveness and transition to new standards and assessments. Included are the creation of instructional toolkits, … formative assessment training modules, new standards roll-out, using data to make decisions ..." Summer 2011 institutes across the state addressed content, process and resources. In addition, regional education service agencies host forums every other month, while wikis, chats, blogs and forums provide further support. Supplemental training is also planned for all academic staff at the department of public instruction, principals, central office staff, superintendents and university faculty.[3]

Endnotes

1 Nancy Kober and Diane Stark Rentner, *Common Core State Standards: Progress and Challenges in School Districts' Implementation* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Education Policy, September 2011), http://www.cep-dc.org/cfcontent_file.cfm?Attachment=KoberRentner%5FCommonCoreDistrict%5FReport%5F091411%2Epdf, (accessed December 6, 2011).

2 Linda B. Rogers, *Delaware's Implementation of Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics* (PowerPoint: Delaware Department of Education, 2011), http://www.ecs.org/html/meetingsEvents/NF2011/resources//Linda-Rogers-NF2011.pdf, (accessed November 14, 2011).

3 Rebecca Garland, *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in North Carolina* (PowerPoint: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2011), http://www.ecs.org/html/meetingsEvents/NF2011/resources/CommonCoreStateStandards.pdf, (accessed November 14, 2011).

Further Reading

David T. Conley, Kathryn V. Drummond, Alicia de Gonzalez, Mary Seburn, Odile Stout, Jennifer Rooseboom, *Lining Up: The Relationship between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Comparison Standards* (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2011), https://www.epiconline.org/files/pdf/LiningUp-FullReport.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Analyzes the degree of alignment between the Common Core State Standards and five sets of existing standards, to see if the Common Core standards cover similar content, how broadly they cover the comparison standards and how the cognitive challenge level of aligned content matches up.

Phil Daro, Frederic A. Mosher, and Tom Corcoran, *Learning Trajectories in Mathematics: A Foundation for Standards, Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction* (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, January 2011), http://www.cpre.org/ccii/images/stories/ccii_pdfs/learning%20trajectories%20in%20math_ccii%20report.pdf, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Provides a useful introduction to current work and thinking about learning trajectories in mathematics education and why they matter.

Education Commission of the States, *Recent State Policies/Activities: Standards–Common Core State Standards* (n.d.), http://www.ecs.org/ecs/ecscat.nsf/WebTopicView?OpenView&count=-1&RestrictToCategory=Standards--Common+Core+State+Standards, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Summaries and links to recently enrolled, enacted and vetoed state legislation, and recently approved state board rules from across the states. Updated weekly.

Nancy Kober and Diane Stark Rentner, *Common Core State Standards: Progress and Challenges in School Districts' Implementation* (Washington. D.C.: Center on Education Policy, September 2011), http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=374, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Describes school districts' perceptions about the impact of the Common Core State Standards, their progress in implementing these standards and the challenges they face in doing so. "Only half or fewer of the districts in CCSS-adopting states had received any of the various supports listed in the survey from their state education agency to assist with district implementation of the standards for 2011-12."

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy and Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), *The Road Ahead for State Assessments* (Cambridge, MA: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, May 2011), http://renniecenter.issuelab.org/research/listing/road_ahead_for_state_assessments, (accessed January 20, 2012).

Offers a blueprint for strengthening assessment policy, pointing out how new technologies are opening up new possibilities for fairer, more accurate evaluations of what students know and are able to do. Provides a clear set of assessment-policy recommendations.

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Developing civic engagement in PK-12: State action in the absence of federal funding

Potential power

- Effective tool for public schools to use to build and sustain a strong democratic society
- Higher levels of civic engagement and civic participation for students[1]
- May diminish the achievement gap for low-income students
- Elevates levels of students' school engagement and attachment
- Increases students' career and educational aspirations
- Useful intervention to help combat the dropout crisis[2]

Biggest challenges

- ***Declining levels of civic engagement***
  Levels of students' — and generally all Americans' — civic knowledge and civic engagement have been continuously declining since the 1960s.[3]
- ***Modest levels of investment***
  Between 1993 and 2010, Learn and Serve America, a division of the Corporation for National and Community Service, received steady but modest funding.[4] Grants from Learn and Serve, and not state funds, supported state-level Learn and Serve offices within many states' departments of education.
- ***Elimination of federal funding***
  The primary funding stream for most state-level Learn and Serve offices has been eliminated and will not be restored in the foreseeable future. H.R. 1473, passed in April 2011, contained almost $40 billion in spending cuts, including all funding for Learn and Serve America, and proposals for the 2012 federal budget do not restore this funding.

Positive signs

- Service-learning advocates in several states are actively developing and implementing agendas for PreK-12 service-learning that do not rely on federal dollars or authorization of new state funding. Rather, these advocates are looking for solutions that are of little or no cost to the state or can fit into existing funding structures. For example, in **Colorado,** stakeholders from the department of education and other private and public organizations have formed the Colorado Service-Learning Council in an effort to maintain and advance service-learning throughout the state.
- Between 2001 and 2011, the number of state-level policies that institutionalize service-learning in PreK-12 has increased dramatically. Nearly every state has either adopted legislation or board policy that encourages schools to utilize service-learning. Such policies are designed to be of little or no cost to the state. A few examples follow:

  Michigan: State Board of Education policy recognizes service-learning as an effective learning strategy for increasing student achievement, civic engagement and workforce readiness.[5]

  Florida: Florida statute directs the Florida Department of Education to "develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for inclusion in middle and high school course code directories, which will allow additional opportunities for students to engage in service-learning. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula, standards, and course, district or state assessments. Service-learning activities foster academic achievement, character development, civic engagement and career exploration, and enable students to apply curriculum content, skills and behaviors taught in the classroom."[6]

  Minnesota: Minnesota statute allows districts to "award up to one credit, or the equivalent, toward graduation for a pupil who completes the youth service requirements of the district."[7]

- The Harkins-Enzi proposal for ESEA reauthorization, as passed out of committee in the U.S. Senate, would establish a competitive grant program for civic learning, particularly for underserved populations. While Harkins-Enzi may see little or no further movement forward, the inclusion of this grant program suggests that some federal policymakers are willing to restore some federal investment in civic engagement in PreK-12 schools, and to do so within the U.S. Department of Education.

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T. Lennon, *Service-Learning and Hispanic Students: What Works in the Field.* (Education Commission of the States, National Center for Learning and Citizenship, 2009), http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/81/01/8101.pdf.
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State Policies for Service-Learning Database (Education Commission of the States, National Center for Learning and Citizenship, 2011), http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueID=109.
Allows users to generate individual state profiles of service-learning policies and view 50-state reports on policies for service-learning.

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Teaching Quality: Fasten your seatbelts!

Potential power

- The quality of the teacher in the classroom is what matters most.
- Identification of the most effective teachers is the first step to maximizing their value to kids.
- Taking on tough decisions about the least effective teachers is simply necessary.
- Identification of effective and ineffective teachers is a critical step in improving the preparation of teachers.

Biggest challenges

- ***Building necessary will, capacity and accountability for evaluators***
  Teacher evaluations must be valid, reliable, and above all, do-able. If principals are unable to conduct valid and reliable evaluations or are unwilling to take on the tough decisions necessary, we are wasting our time.
- ***Differentiated assistance***
  Teacher professional development — both before and after an unfavorable evaluation — needs to be high-quality and ongoing. Teachers will not improve with "drive-by" professional development.
- ***Getting to the optimal measures, processes and procedures***
  Getting the evaluation process right will prove challenging. Evaluation that is based on student performance and that has high stakes will be particularly contentious.

Positive signs

- In 2011, 18 state legislatures modified some element of their tenure (a.k.a. continuing contract) laws — and many of these amendments made major changes. A growing number of states are beginning to embed teacher performance in decisions to grant tenure or explicitly state the maximum length of contract terms.
- In 2011, 19 states modified provisions for teacher evaluations. A number of states have set up advisory groups or task forces to recommend specific models or elements of the evaluation process.
- Since 2009, policies in 10 states (**Arizona**, **Florida**, **Idaho**, **Illinois**, **Indiana**, **Michigan**, **Nevada**, **New Hampshire**, **Ohio** and **Utah**) have done away with "last in, first out" reduction-in-force policies — nine of these policy changes were enacted in 2011. In addition, **Arkansas** legislation requires districts to have a written policy on reduction in force based upon objective criteria for a layoff and recall of employees. Likewise, states are increasingly empowering building leaders with the final say in which teachers they accept as staff.
- The use of unique teacher identifiers within state student information systems is beginning to allow state policymakers in an increasing number of states to identify which state institutions are doing the best (or worst) job of preparing teachers.

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Provides a 50-state overview of teacher effectiveness policies, and looks more in-depth at the characteristics of the 17 states' and the District of Columbia's Public Schools policies, which are giving student achievement a significant, objective, meaningful and measurable role in how teacher performances is assessed.

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Rural: Enhancing the potential of education in rural America

Potential power

- Impact nearly one in five of America's public K-12 students[1]
- Revitalize communities that may be experiencing economic decline
- Increase postsecondary completion rates in rural areas, which have lower attainment rates that in turn may negatively impact economic growth

Biggest challenges

- ***Stretching human capital***
  Typically, rural districts lack the resources to apply for local, state, federal and philanthropic grants. With federal grants in particular becoming increasingly competitive rather than formula-based, states need to find ways to help rural districts apply for grants.
- ***Reduced high school career and technical course offerings in some fields***
- ***Insufficient or less than optimal academic course offerings, especially at the high school level***
  This may impact students' ability to succeed in entry-level postsecondary courses, or even impact student eligibility for admission to four-year institutions, which may require multiple years of foreign language, advanced math or lab science.
- ***What some have referred to as a "hidden" dropout problem***
- ***Unique funding challenges***
  Due to lower per-pupil ratios and more significant transportation costs, cost of services per pupil can run higher in rural districts than in their urban or suburban counterparts. Also, Title I mechanisms fail to adequately reflect the level of need in rural areas.
- ***An increasing English language learner (ELL) population***
  From 1998-99 to 2008-09, the ELL population grew by more than 200% in Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, and by 100-200% in many Midwestern states, as well as in Oregon, Mississippi, New Hampshire and Vermont.[2]
- ***Serving an increasingly poor student population***
  Recent federal data indicate that 25% of rural children, and 30% of rural children under age 6, live in poverty. Child poverty rates — both for all children and for children under age 6 — are even higher in the rural South. More than one in three — nearly 36% — of rural children under age 6 in the South live in poverty.[3]
- ***Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and leaders***
- ***Maximizing high-quality professional development by allowing access to it anywhere, anytime***
  This challenge might also reflect a lack of interest in online professional development, at least among principals. In a 2007 study, rural high school principals in seven states expressed the lowest preference for "online/self-paced" professional development; "conference/seminar" was the delivery method most preferred by principals in the survey.[4]
- ***Broadband capacity***
  The need for broadband often exceeds capacity, is growing and is tied to economic development.

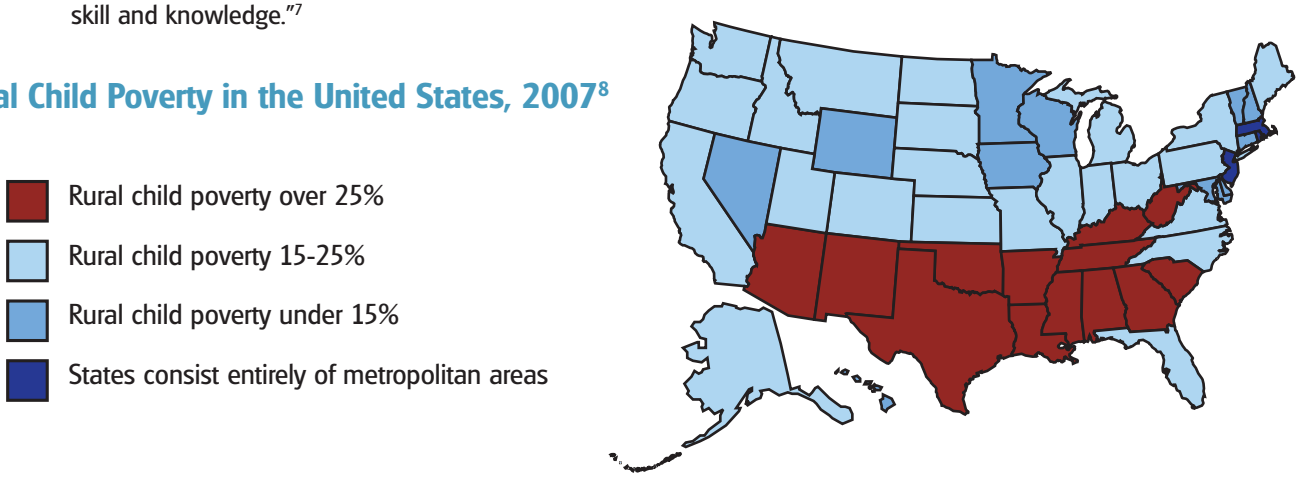
Positive signs

- **Virginia's** Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act permits private entities, with public entity authorization, to develop or operate a "qualifying project." A "qualifying project" includes any technology, equipment or infrastructure designed to deploy wireless broadband services to schools.[5]
- In **Arkansas'** Delta region, the University Center at Mid-South Community College offers certificate through graduate-level programs via partnerships with four-year institutions in Arkansas and Tennessee. Four-year degree programs are made available "through a combination of live classroom teaching, compressed video, interactive World Wide Web connectivity, and on-demand multimedia technology." Programs are offered not only through a variety of means but via "weekend, on-line, on-demand, and

hybrid delivery of instruction."[6] This approach not only provides access to certificate and degree programs otherwise unavailable in the rural Delta area, but produces cost savings across participating institutions in terms of infrastructure and economies of scale (reduced to eliminated need for duplicating facilities across multiple locations for what may be small numbers of learners in each locale).

- The organization Public Impact has identified ideas that policymakers might use to deploy the most effective teachers in creative ways. Pursuing some or all of these inventive ideas could help leverage the impact of highly effective teachers to broaden their reach beyond the small percentage of students in their traditional classrooms. These approaches include:
  - ***"In-Person Reach Extension"*** – Top teachers are physically present with students in the classroom, but allocate non-instructional tasks to other adults, lead multiple classrooms, or accept small numbers of children from other classrooms in shifts
  - ***"Remote Reach Extension"*** – Providing direct student/teacher interaction via technology
  - ***"Boundless Reach Extension"*** – Offering great teaching (though not direct teacher/student interaction) via video recordings of the best teachers and "Smart software" that confirms and instantly responds to every student's "level of skill and knowledge."[7]

Rural Child Poverty in the United States, 2007[8]



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Data: Access to what teachers and leaders need to improve student outcomes (and the skills to use it)

Potential power

- Improve instruction, particularly for traditionally disadvantaged students, by helping teachers immediately identify and address areas of student need
- Save time and money by delivering education more efficiently
- Reduce student retention and dropout rates through early identification and intervention

Biggest challenges

- ***Giving teachers and principals what they need, how they need it and when they need it***
  Making the data that teachers and leaders need most available in usable, accessible formats
- ***Building local capacity***
  Training teachers and leaders to accurately interpret and use data to adjust instruction
- ***Ensuring systems support action***
  In its *10 State Actions to Ensure Effective Data Use*, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) notes that only three states' data systems "[i]mplement policies and promote practices, including professional development and credentialing, to ensure educators know how to access, analyze and use data appropriately. To ensure that data is used to inform teaching in the classroom and to promote continuous improvement at the school and district levels, educators must be trained on how to access, analyze and interpret the data. States can develop the capacity of educators to use data by implementing appropriate policies for both pre-service and in-service staff."[1] The DQC also notes, "Every state now has the capacity to empower all stakeholders — from parents to policymakers — with data to inform decisions to improve student achievement. However, no state has implemented all of DQC's *10 State Actions to Support Effective Data Use*."[2]

Positive signs

- The DQC indicates that **Oregon** and **New Hampshire** have taken meaningful steps to provide teacher training on using data. Oregon's Direct Access to Achievement (DATA) Project offers two forms of training: one targeted at "instructional professional development;" the other "on technical training for data stewards."[3] New Hampshire's Initiative for School Empowerment and Excellence (i4see) provides "information … to schools to empower teachers, administrators, policy makers, and parents" to raise student achievement.[4]
- **California** permits K-12 teachers participating in its Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program, as an option for fulfilling up to 40 of the 80 hours of follow-up training required, to participate in instruction in such areas as data analysis, alignment of assessment and instruction, implication of data analysis and its effect on increasing pupil achievement, impact on pupil success through diagnostic teaching, and statewide and local data management systems. The state policy also permits the superintendent of public instruction to appoint an advisory committee to ensure the quality and effectiveness of any such training. The majority of the committee must be comprised of professionals with expertise in data analysis, the implications regarding management of universal access, providing instruction to pupils while teaching the academic content standards and English language development standards, and experience in using data analysis to increase pupil academic achievement. The program is set to sunset on July 1, 2012.[5]
- The PARCC and SMARTER Balanced assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are expected to include formative assessment components.[6]
- **Nebraska's** new Teacher & Principal Performance Framework, adopted November 2011, includes data analysis in numerous examples of model teacher and leader professional practice. For example, under teacher "Instructional Strategies," one example

indicator is that the teacher "Modifies, adapts, and differentiates instruction and accommodations based on data analysis, observation, and student needs." One example indicator for principal "Continuous School Improvement" is that the principal "Makes informed decisions based on student achievement data, research, and best practices to improve teaching and learning;" an example indicator under instructional leadership is that the principal "Uses student performance data from multiple assessments to evaluate the curriculum and instructional program."[7]

- **Louisiana**, **South Carolina** and **Alabama** have all launched early warning indicator systems. These systems provide teachers and other school staff with ongoing access to student-level data on indicators research identifies as flags that students may be at risk of dropping out of school.[8]

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Identifies essential elements of and uses for state-level data systems that include teacher data, and notes key implementation issues.

Data Quality Campaign, *States Could Empower Stakeholders to Make Education Decisions with Data … but They Haven't Yet* (2011), http://dataqualitycampaign.org/files/DFA2011%20Mini%20report%20findings%20Dec1.pdf, (accessed January 23, 2012).
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Reports the findings of a benchmarking study of district best practices in data-driven decisionmaking. Holds implications for state-level policy.

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Individualized instruction. Faster. Cheaper. Smarter.

Potential power

- Serve students with diverse needs:
  - Students below grade level (or at risk of being behind as identified by formative assessments)
  - Students generally performing at grade level but who need deeper learning in one or more key topics or skills
  - Students needing accelerated instruction, including:
    - Gifted students
    - Students who have acquired most or all of the essential knowledge and skills outside the context of seat time and who need a mechanism for demonstrating their knowledge and skills before credit may be awarded
    - Students who have failed a course the first time but who are missing just a few key concepts
- Increase student engagement and success by targeting individual students' needs and interests.

Biggest challenges

- ***Few state-level models***

  While local approaches are growing more common, with the exception of statewide online learning programs, state-level efforts for other jurisdictions to use as models are not widespread.

- ***Lack of a research base***

  Anecdotally, proficiency-based credit, credit recovery and other options appear to be effective means of helping students achieve academic milestones more efficiently, but a solid research base on which approaches are most effective with which students has yet to be created.

- ***Funding***

  Although replicating online or computer module instruction across classrooms statewide (or nationally) may be cost effective and allow schools and districts to use their most effective teachers to reach a broader number of students (see Emily Ayscue Hassel and Bryan Hassel's groundbreaking work on "extension" approaches to expand the reach of the most effective instructors), real or perceived barriers on the cost of implementing such approaches may hamper adoption and implementation.

- ***Broadband or infrastructure issues for online, blended learning and computer-based approaches, particularly for small or underresourced schools.***

- ***Ensuring consistency in student expectations, especially for proficiency-based credit and credit recovery.***

  Students earning credit via these options should not be held to more rigorous or less rigorous expectations than their peers completing courses through other means.

What is individualized instruction?

Individualized instruction is instruction delivered tailored to student need. Approaches include:

- Online and blended learning
- Computer-based modules
- Proficiency-based credit
- Credit recovery
- Standards-based instruction (pacing student progression through a course of study based on attainment of standards in lieu of seat time).

Instruction can be delivered in diverse classroom sizes:

- One-on-one
- Small group
- Full classroom

Locations:

- Traditional brick-and-mortal school
- Home
- Blend of traditional and home

Contexts:

- Full-time instruction
- Supplemental instruction
- During regular school day/year
- As part of extended day/year
- Through out-of-school learning experiences

Positive signs

- **New Hampshire** requires every district board to permit high school credit to be earned by demonstrating mastery of required competencies for the course, as approved by school staff. Effective with the 2008-2009 school year, all local school boards were to require high schools to offer competency assessments for all courses offered.[1]
- New Hampshire districts may offer "Extended Learning Opportunities" (ELO), allowing students the opportunity to earn credit for approved nontraditional activities such as private instruction, team sports, apprenticeships, community service, internships, independent study and performing groups. Each participating district's ELO efforts must be governed by local policies that require each extended learning proposal to meet rigorous standards. ELOs must be available to all students in a participating district, and give students a voice in selecting, organizing and carrying out extended learning activities.[2] A 2011 evaluation of the 2009-11 ELO initiative found that most participating students believed they learned more from their ELO experience than they would have in a traditional class in the same subject area. Students also by and large believed that their ELO experience had either "greatly" or "moderately" enhanced their "understanding of the skills needed for the future", their "level of confidence", their "readiness for work", and "clarity about their interests and goals". Participating faculty agreed that ELOs positively impacted students' academic interest, while "over 90% of teachers and community partners believed students became deeply knowledgeable about a specific topic area and learned new skills through their ELO, and that students were able to explain what they learned through the experience."[3]

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Identifies means by which states and districts can expand the "reach" of the top quartile of effective teachers. "By eliminating rote and non-instructional duties from teachers' schedules, many methods would increase touch and reach simultaneously — especially benefiting students who, because of age or learning needs, learn best with high levels of teacher interaction."

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Evaluates the success of a state-level online credit recovery initiative. Results hold implications for other state efforts.

Endnotes

1 N.H. CODE ADMIN. R. ANN. ED. 306.27(d) AND (i).

2 N.H. CODE ADMIN. R. ANN. ED. 306.27(b)(4); New Hampshire Department of Education, Extended Learning Opportunities. (n.d.), http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/elo/index.htm (accessed January 19, 2012).

3 Ivana Zuliani and Steven Ellis, *New Hampshire Extended Learning Opportunities: Final Report of Evaluation Findings* (Hadley, MA: University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, May 2011), http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/elo/documents/evaluation.pdf, (accessed January 19, 2012).

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Performance funding: Building a model without a blueprint?

Potential power

As states struggle to address their budgets, policymakers have explored rewarding postsecondary institutions based on how efficient they are and how effectively they increase access and success. Performance-based funding is a popular idea because models could:

- Align state goals and strategies with funding
- Address attainment gaps by rewarding institutions that enroll, retain and graduate underserved populations
- Use funding as a lever to spur innovation
- Provide a more systemic view of how well the postsecondary system is meeting state goals and strategies.

Biggest challenges

When performance funding becomes a reality and not just an idea, the challenges of shifting the funding paradigm become more apparent. The foremost challenge is how to develop the contours of the new funding formula. However, the lack of fully implemented, performance funding systems can make states feel like they are creating a model without a blueprint. Still, specific metrics and mechanisms of performance funding models are available that are evidence-based. Practical challenges include:

- ***Balancing consistency and differentiation***
  Any approach should consider institutional mission; however, consistency is also important, because there has to be a way of measuring system productivity.
- ***Meaningfulness of the formula***
  One challenge is how to make metrics attainable while also challenging institutions to be more ambitious. Generally, the greater the number of metrics, the greater the likelihood that funding levels will not substantially change, even if the formula does. This is why it is so important to get the metrics right in the first place, in terms of their number and specificity.
- ***Getting buy-in***
  Three things will doom new funding models: alleged inequities in funding between like institutions; apprehension/anxiety about how funding levels will change; and, whether adherence to metrics compromises quality of learning. Going over these concerns at first seems obvious but is not always done. State and system policymakers can improve buy-in by developing the outlines of a performance funding formula and soliciting feedback from institutional leaders. Also, the discussion of unintended consequences can improve the quality of the model's implementation.
- ***Considering tipping points***
  Policymakers should consider outcomes-based funding levels, both in regards to its percentage of the base allocation and in terms of how the system would fund attainment of each metric. If an institution perceives that the cost of attaining a goal is not met by the incentive benefit, then the institution will not innovate to pursue that goal. Conversely, providing an incentive far greater than the tipping point might induce institutions to fundamentally change their behavior, often in negative ways.
- ***Lack of fully implemented systems***
  Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, states do not have a great deal of evidence to draw from about the success of performance funding version 2.0. While no one best model exists, best practices on how to implement performance funding and the components that should be part of the formula are widely disseminated. More than anything, giving institutions a transitional period to implement performance funding is a way to improve overall sustainability of such a project.

Positive signs

In 2011 alone, 12 state legislatures enacted legislation that considers or develops performance funding or outcomes-based metrics. A reading of the enactments shows that states have, on balance:

- Learned from the pitfalls (e.g., poor communication, uneven implementation, lack of mission differentiation) associated with performance funding efforts of the 1980s and 1990s
- Studied the incentive funding issue and given systems and institutions two to three years to collect data and implement the funding model
- Used momentum points to reward institutions both for student progress and degree completion
- Minimized the winners and losers mentality by benchmarking institutions against their own past performance.

Further Reading

Russ Deaton, *Outcomes-Based Formula Explanation* (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, January 2011), http://www.tn.gov/thec/complete_college_tn/ccta_files/outcomes_based_ff/Outcomes_Based_Formula_Explanation.pdf.

The brief examines the outcomes-based metrics in the Tennessee performance funding formula. The model differentiates between two- and four-year institutions, and will be phased in over a three-year period, so that the coordinating board can review the model to make necessary adjustments.

Thomas Harnisch, *Performance-based Funding: A Re-Emerging Strategy in Public Higher Education Financing* (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, June 2011), http://www.congressweb.com/aascu/docfiles/Performance_Funding_AASCU_June2011.pdf.

The policy paper gives a good overview of the performance funding landscape, covering funding incentives, formula development and the impact of both on college access and success.

HCM Strategists, *Performance Funding in Indiana: Working Draft.*" (August 2011), http://www.hcmstrategists.com/content/Indiana_PFReport2_8.2.11.pdf.

This working paper, produced on behalf of the Indiana Commission of Higher Education, reports on the status of performance funding in Indiana, and also looks at other examples of model implementation in five other states (e.g., Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington).

Travis Reindl, & Ryan Reyna, *From Information to Action: Revamping Higher Education Accountability Systems* (National Governors' Association's Center for Best Practices, July 2011), http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-edu-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/from-information-to-action-revam.html.

This piece from the National Governors' Association recommends that states include "efficiency and effectiveness metrics in their accountability systems to help answer four key policy questions." Those questions involve meeting long-term economic goals, increasing postsecondary productivity, measuring states' and students' return on their higher education investments, and reconciling efficiency and quality learning.

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Remedial education: We know more now than we ever have

Potential power

For years, higher education leaders viewed remedial education as a means to compensate for what students did not learn in high school, instead of addressing what they needed to know to receive a college credential. Traditional course-based approaches, while effective for some students, do not always support unique student needs and learning styles. The data bear this out. About 40% of students enter college with remedial needs. Less than 25% of community college students referred to remedial education graduate with a credential within eight years. These data suggest that the system is broken, with too-long remedial sequences, a weak, imprecise assessment system, and little to no focus on degree completion as the ultimate indicator of student success.

In terms of research, we know more about remedial education than we ever have. Education leaders understand the challenges and have developed alternative ways of delivering remedial education that have increased student success. If policymakers work to implement and support some of these innovations, then they could enhance their states' chances of improving degree completion rates.

Scaling institutional innovations statewide could:

- Provide institutions with the technical expertise to reform remedial education programming
- Make remedial education a focal point of state education policy by including it in performance funding, accountability and continuous improvement systems
- Encourage policymakers to adopt common state standards to measure remedial student success.

Biggest challenges

Empirical evidence has shown that most students can complete remedial education in a single semester, so the current system sets up barriers and bottlenecks. Systemic reform is critical to sustain effective new approaches to remedial delivery. Three specific challenges involving system-wide reform are:

- ***Implementation and scaling***
  States and postsecondary systems should consider how to support new innovations, while giving institutions a degree of flexibility to implement them. Also, policymakers should assess the effectiveness of specific instructional models and disseminate best practices to support implementation.
- ***Funding***
  State should consider how to adapt funding, so that it is more amenable to competency-based, outcome-oriented instruction. Still, the primary challenges are how to reward institutional performance and how to hold institutions accountable to accelerating student success.
- ***Perceived misalignment between new instructional models and current funding approaches***
  With modular and accelerated approaches diverging from the traditional course model, it might take a little persuasion by policymakers to adopt new innovations within current funding and accountability structures. However, if alternative approaches increase degree attainment rates for students with remedial needs, then necessary changes should be made to accommodate innovative models.

Positive signs

Regardless of the status of statewide efforts to scale innovations in remedial education, institutions are not delaying the implementation of these models, because they see that the status quo is not working for students. Funding and governance should not impede student success or evidence-based practice in the classroom. The Tennessee Board of Regents and the Virginia Community College System have developed modular models for developmental mathematics. Most of the funding and accountability issues are ameliorated by the systems' relative autonomy to certify alternative approaches and fund accordingly. Still, states with decentralized postsecondary systems like Texas are also considering how to leverage and scale instructional innovations.

Further Reading

Thomas Bailey et. al, *Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges* (Community College Research Center, November 2009), http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=659.

Bailey's research finds that students placed into two or more levels of developmental education are at a serious disadvantage when it comes to completing college. The longitudinal data reveal that "more students fail to complete remedial education because they never enroll in their first or a subsequent course than because they drop out of or fail to pass a course in which they are enrolled."

Nikki Edgecombe, *Accelerating the Academic Achievement of Students Referred to Developmental Education*" (Community College Research Center May 2011), http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=920.

The short summary focuses on the obstacles to implementing accelerated instructional models. The author challenges policymakers and practitioners to use the promising evidence on acceleration to reform the delivery of remedial education.

Jobs for the Future, *The Rallying Call: Bringing Game-Changing Results to Developmental Education*, (August 2010), http://www.deionline.org/resources/download.aspx?id=cc8ae47d-1963-45aa-92b5-14a8fac16662.

This paper shows how state legislatures and governing/coordinating boards can play a leadership role in increasing the success of remedial education students. The two main ways to improve outcomes are to identify and scale innovation and support it through funding incentives and a culture of continuous improvement.

Elizabeth Rutschow, & Emily Schneider, *Unlocking the Gate: What We Know about Developmental Education* (MDRC, June 2011), http://www.mdrc.org/publications/601/execsum.pdf.

This research paper covers four different interventions that have promise in improving students' remedial success and college-level persistence. The interventions involve early identification of remedial deficits, remedial program acceleration, contextualizing basic skills with occupational or major-specific content, and auxiliary supports, such as tutoring, advisement and mentorship.

Bruce Vandal, *Getting Past Go: Rebuilding the Remedial Education Bridge to College Success* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, May 2010), http://www.gettingpastgo.org/docs/GPGpaper.pdf.

This framework document discusses the levers that policymakers and higher education leaders have at their disposal to enhance remedial student outcomes. The levers are: assessment and placement; instructional delivery; accountability and continuous improvement; and data collection and reporting.

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Credentials of value: Some are better than others

Potential power

The college completion narrative is simple and persuasive: by substantially increasing degree attainment rates, state economies grow, tax revenues increase, citizens earn more and industries prosper. However, this narrative does not consider the specific variables that propel economic prosperity in a state. Each state has different labor needs, so policymakers should consider which credentials have value and invest heavily in related programs of study. While more degrees and certificates will propel economic growth and sustainability, credentials that are better-aligned to workforce demand expedite this process.

Increasing the alignment between postsecondary capacity and workforce demand has several benefits:

- ***Informed policymaking***
  Using labor data to reveal which careers are in high demand and produce an above-average wage, postsecondary capacity can be adjusted to produce credentials that align with these careers.
- ***Increased responsiveness***
  Challenging postsecondary systems and institutions to use the same labor data to make resource allocation decisions. In particular, data can be used to sound alarms when states overproduce credentials in a specific field.
- ***Recognizing not all credentials in the same field are created equal***
  Making sure that postsecondary systems do not respond to the need for more healthcare workers, for instance, by increasing production of all healthcare credentials without regard to actual demand. For instance, institutions can produce three- to six-month health certificates more easily than nursing degrees. However, wage data indicate that the relative wage premium for the nursing degree could be as much as 100% of a short-term certificate.[1]
- ***Improved transparency***
  Articulating the value of a credential gives students more clarity on what to expect in terms of labor market outcomes. The discussion of short-term, intermediate and long-term economic dividends to a college credential can enhance student decisionmaking.

Biggest challenges

Completion of an associate degree has a significant impact on earning for students in some, but not all, programs at community colleges. On balance, workers with college credentials should see a modest wage premium compared to workers without them. However, when examining averages, the full extent of income variance is masked. Degrees in health science, engineering, mathematics and finance produce wage premiums far above that of generic credentials at the same attainment level. In some cases, college graduates in STEM fields can earn 50-80% more than their counterparts who hold less-demanded credentials. The three primary challenges of aligning postsecondary capacity with workforce demand are:

- The relative value of credentials varies based on state or regional demand, and can change substantially from year to year
- Postsecondary institutions cannot always react immediately to changes in workforce demand
- It is hard to manage workforce demand when people, businesses and other economies react to local economic growth.

Positive signs

Several states have used federal funds to create longitudinal data systems to connect education and workforce data. Also, policymakers have recognized the utility of producing more credentials in science, technology and health care. However, the next step is to point out the potential of granularity, because not all credentials or programs of study actually produce a wage premium. In 2012, states will have to move beyond the relative value of certain credential types and explore the specific fields of study that produce in-demand skills.

Further Reading

Anthony Carnevale et. al, *Career Clusters: Forecasting Demand for High School through College Jobs*, Center on Education and the Workforce, November 2011), http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/clusters-execsum.pdf.

Carnevale reports on the job prospects of three categories of job seekers: those with a high school diploma or less; those with some college but no degree, with certificates or an associate degree; and, those with a bachelor's degree or better. Evidence shows that a postsecondary credential increases the likelihood that a person will achieve a livable wage.

Anthony Carnevale, Stephen Rose and Ban Cheah, *The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, and Lifetime Earnings*, Center on Education and the Workforce, August 2011), http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegepayoff-summary.pdf.

The brief focuses on the impact of a college credential on future earnings. The executive summary discusses four fundamental rules. The first is that degree level matters. However, the second rule finds that occupational choice can sometimes mean more than degree level, especially in high-demand fields. Still, within individual occupations, degree level matters. The final rule establishes that gender and race/ethnicity are "wild cards" that can have a significant effect on earnings.

David Altstadt, *Aligning Community Colleges to Their Local Labor Markets*, Jobs for the Future, September 2011, http://www.jff.org/publications/workforce/aligning-community-colleges-their-local-/1303.

Altstadt's report finds that community colleges have taken steps to meet the needs of local businesses, but that their efforts have been diminished by the lack of updated data about economic and workforce demand. The paper finds that analysis of online job advertisements can complement traditional data stores to determine demand.

Marcie Foster, Julie Strawn and Amy Duke-Benfield, *Beyond Basic Skills: State Strategies to Connect Low-Skilled Students to an Employer-Valued Postsecondary Education*, Center for Law and Social Policy, March 2011, http://www.clasp.org/postsecondary/publication?id=0929&list=publications.

The brief describes the types of state-level innovations and the common themes embedded in them. The authors intended for the report to describe strategies that policymakers could use to strengthen collaboration and curricular alignment between Adult Basic Education and postsecondary education. This pathway could be an effective means of advancing low-skill adults through postsecondary programs that improve job prospects.

Endnotes

1 Patrick Kelly, *Realizing Kentucky's Educational Attainment Goal: A Look in the Rear View Mirror and Down the Road Ahead* (NCHEMS, September 2011), http://cpe.ky.gov/nr/rdonlyres/81ab2e18-9122-4baa-86c1-b6804d2cce9a/0/nchemsrealizingkyscollegeattainmentgoal.pdf (October 26, 2011).

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