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## Issues Update – December 2011/ January 2012

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### I. Common Core Standards/Next Gen Science Standards/STEM

- [National Core Standards for Kindergartners](#)– (1/10/12) – Newstimes.com - National core standards for kindergartners New national "common core" standards adopted by 45 states, including Connecticut, and the District of Columbia for 2014 expect kindergarten children to master skills rather than just be introduced to them.
- [How Much will RTT3 Benefit STEM Education](#)– (1/10/12) – Education Week - All seven states that qualified for the third round of the federal Race to the Top competition [have won a share](#) in the \$200 million remaining, and all of them will be expected to address STEM fields. The question on the table is just how far these changes are going to go where STEM is concerned. Remember, states primarily will use this money to implement part of their original Race to the Top plans—which means making progress in one of the core areas of the economic-stimulus legislation, such as raising standards, improving evaluation systems, or turning around low-performing schools. They don't actually have to spend it explicitly on STEM programming.
- [Kansas to lead effort to improve science education](#) – (12/22/11) – El Dorado Times - Kansas has been selected as one of a group of states that will lead an important effort to improve science education for all students. In all, 20 states will lead the development of Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that will clearly define and integrate the content and practices students will need to learn from kindergarten through high school graduation. The NGSS process is being coordinated by the National Research Council, which is the staffing arm of the National Academy of Sciences, and the standards development process is being managed by Achieve, an education reform non-profit organization.
- [Preparing Teachers for the Next Generation Science Standards](#)- (12/13/11)- Chemical and Engineering News- Calls to improve K–12 science education are becoming increasingly vocal as the need for a highly trained scientific workforce and a scientifically literate citizenry has become imperative in the U.S. To address this need, the National Research Council (NRC) created the Committee on Conceptual Framework for [New Science Education Standards](#), which released its final report in July 2011 ([C&EN, July 25,](#)

[page 11](#)). Copies of the report, entitled "[A Framework for K–12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas](#)," can be obtained on the [National Academies Press](#) website. The American Chemical Society, through its Committee on Education and individual members, provided input as the NRC framework was being developed.

- [34 STEM Education Programs Awarded](#)- (12/9/11) US News-Thirty-four innovative STEM programs nationwide will get some help from big corporate backers as part of the [Ashoka Changemakers Partnering for Excellence](#) competition. Organizations and companies such as Google, Exxon, and the Carnegie Corporation pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to help scale up programs that focus on STEM, such as "Citizen Schools," which puts STEM professionals into high-needs classrooms to give students role models.

## II. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA/ NCLB)

- [House ESEA Draft Would Rein in Federal Accountability Rules](#)– (1/9/12) – Education Week - House Republicans released two draft bills that would significantly scale back the federal role in K-12 schools and go further than any other proposal yet to dismantle the accountability tenets at the heart of the decade-old No Child Left Behind Act. The measures, put forth by U.S. Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee today, take some of the same steps as a bipartisan Senate rewrite of NCLB—and the Obama administration's [own vision](#) for rewriting the law. Like those proposals, the Republican bills would entirely scrap the law's signature yardstick, adequate yearly progress, or AYP, while largely keeping NCLB'S current testing schedule in place. ("[Obama Outlines NCLB Flexibility](#)," September 28, 2011.)
- [NCLB turns 10](#)– (1/6/12) – Education Week - Ten years after President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law on Jan. 8, 2002, NCLB is now overdue for reauthorization in Congress. Bipartisan in its origins but controversial in its execution, NCLB, which is the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, expanded the federal role in education and targeted improving the achievement of disadvantaged students. To reflect on the law's anniversary, the *Education Week* Commentary editors asked a range of K-12 education leaders, politicians, teachers, and child advocates for their thoughts. This package also includes links to *Education Week's* coverage over the decade, readers' comments, and a glossary of selected NCLB terms.
- [Half of US Schools Fail Federal Standards](#)– (12/15/11) – USA Today - Nearly half of America's public schools didn't meet federal achievement standards this year, marking the largest failure rate since the much-criticized No Child Left Behind Law took effect a decade ago, according to a national report released Thursday. The Center on Education Policy report shows more than 43,000 schools — or 48% — did not make "adequate yearly progress" this year. The failure rates range from a low of 11% in Wisconsin to a high of 89% in Florida.

- [House Republicans likely to Write Own NCLB Bill-](#) (12/15/11) – Education Week – GOP lawmakers on the House education committee are likely to write a Republican-only version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. U.S. Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, said today that the committee has been working for months on a bipartisan rewrite of the law, but lawmakers haven't been able to reach agreement.
- [Military Children Stay a Step Ahead of Public School Children](#)– (12/11/11) – The New York Times - The results are now public from the 2011 federal testing program known as NAEP, the [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#). And once again, schools on the nation's military bases have outperformed public schools on both reading and math tests for fourth and eighth graders. They would find that the schools on base are not subject to former President George W. Bush's signature education program, [No Child Left Behind](#), or to President Obama's Race to the Top. They would find that standardized tests do not dominate and are not used to rate teachers, principals or schools.

### III. Educate to Innovate, Race to the Top and i3

- [Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept](#)– (1/10/12) – Education Week - In its first official assessment of \$4 billion in Race to the Top grants, the U.S. Department of Education today commended the 12 winners for working hard to implement the first year of their reform plans—but raised specific red flags about the pace of change in Hawaii, New York, and Florida.
- [Challenges Lie Ahead for Early-Learning Grant Winners](#) (1/13/12)- Education Week- The nine states splitting \$500 million in Race to the Top early-learning grants must now deliver on a slate of ambitious promises to improve the quality of early-childhood education for tens of thousands of low-income children who rely on a patchwork of publicly financed child-care and preschool programs.
- [Landrieu Education and Health Funding Priorities Clear Senate](#) (12/18/11)- [politicalnews.me](#)- The U.S. Senate approved year-end federal funding legislation, which contains education and health priorities advocated by United States Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La. This includes funding for charter schools, support for programs like Teach For America and increased funding for Louisiana from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This legislation has passed the House and now goes to the President to be signed into law. The legislation includes \$256 million for the Charter Schools Program and \$55 million to continue the high-quality Charter Management Organization (CMO) competition and \$11 million to strengthen charter school authorizing and oversight.
- [Can Washington fix what ails American higher ed?-](#) (12/7/11)- [CBSnews.com](#)- The administration does have one model of which it's proud. That's the \$4.3 billion "Race to the Top" fund for K-12 education reform, which used a relatively small slice of stimulus dollars as a prize to nudge dozens of states competing for it into reforms like expanding

charter schools and developing common standards. The structure also helped at least dilute, though not avoid, criticism that Washington was stepping on the states' toes.

#### IV. Other State

- [Race to the Bottom–UFT's Selfish move on schools](#) (1/3/12) – New York Post- Last week, after months of negotiations, the teachers union refused to agree to a meaningful system for evaluating teachers in 33 struggling city schools. As a result, the state suspended some \$60 million in federal grants meant for those schools. It was a truly unfortunate outcome — but even more worrisome is the fact that the union leadership threw away those desperately needed federal dollars because they wanted new job protections for the worst-performing teachers in those schools.
  
- [Superintendants Push Dramatic Change for Conn. Schools-](#) (1/4/12)- Education Week- The Connecticut classroom of the future may not be limited by a traditional school year, the four walls of a classroom, or even the standard progression of grades, based on a proposed [package](#) of unusually bold changes that are being advanced by the state's school superintendents. Instead, the current system would be replaced by a “learner-centered” education program that would begin at age 3; offer parents a menu of options, including charter schools and magnet schools; and provide assessments when an individual child is ready to be tested, rather than having all children tested in a class at the same time.
  
- [California Has Low Science Standards Study Says](#) (12/13/11)- MercuryNews.com- California claims it sets its academic bar high for public school students, but a newly released study shows that the state's eighth-grade science standards fall far below a national benchmark -- and are lower than those in nearly half the states. The survey examined states' standards for eighth-grade science and students' test results for 2009, and compared them to a national yardstick. Using as a reference point the National Assessment of Education Progress, the only K-12 academic test common across all states, California's definition of proficiency in science actually falls below the "basic" level. So do proficiency standards in 15 other states. The study found that only three states -- New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Massachusetts--maintain science standards above NAEP's definition of proficiency.

#### Sources

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