



Volume 7, Issue # 9

## Issues Update – September 2011

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

- [Common-Standards Implementation Slow Going, Study Finds](#) – (9/13/11) – Education Week - Barely half the districts in states that have adopted the common standards are taking essential steps to implement them, and most cite inadequate state guidance as a major problem, a Center on Education Policy [study](#) finds. Districts are also deeply divided about how rigorous the new standards are and how much they demand new curricula and instructional strategies.
- [Assessment Consortium Releases Math Content Specifications](#) – (8/31/11) – Education Week - The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium has released its [content specifications in math](#). With that move, the group has now issued drafts of what it believes are the types of evidence of learning that students will have to demonstrate to show they've mastered the common standards in math and English/language arts.
- [Wyoming Lawmakers Considering Reversing Common Core Adoption](#) – (9/16/11) - Casper Star Tribune - Wyoming lawmakers are considering reversing an earlier decision by the state school board to sign on to the Common Core State Standards, saying there might be too many strings attached. The school board agreed to implement the standards in 2010, and the state was to formally adopt them in November. Lawmakers say the issue needs to be further reviewed before a decision is made to introduce legislation that would strike down the common core. Most states have adopted the standards, and some Wyoming districts have begun transitioning their curriculum.
- [Twenty States Named to Help Craft New Science Standards](#) – (9/20/11) – Education Week & Associated Press - A cadre of 20 states will lead the development of a new set of common standards in science, according to [an announcement](#) from Achieve. Participating states span the country, from California and Arizona to Michigan and Maryland. They will help craft what have been dubbed the Next Generation Science Standards based on a framework [developed](#) by a panel of the National Research Council earlier this summer. The new standards are expected to be completed before the end of 2012.
- [Kansas Likely to be Named Lead State for Science Standards](#) – (9/14/11) –The Topeka Capital Journal - Members of the state board of education were told in early September that Kansas is likely going to be named a lead state for developing a set of national common core standards for science. Matt Krehbiel, educational science consultant for the Kansas State Department of Education, said being one of six lead states would allow Kansas to have additional feedback opportunities on the drafts of the science standards that are expected to be in a final draft form by the end of 2012.
- [Maine Among States to Lead Science-Standards Effort](#) – (9/15/11) – Education Week - Word is starting to get out about states expected to play a lead role in developing a set of new, common science standards. So far, we've seen stories indicating that Maine is among them. A final list of states will be out next week, said Dana Tofig, a spokesman for Achieve, a Washington-based nonprofit that is working with states and outside experts to develop the standards. He did confirm, however, that Maine is among them.

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

- [Obama Administration Sets Rules for NCLB Waivers](#) – (9/23/11) – Education Week Politics Blog - The Obama administration announced it will waive the cornerstone requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, including the 2014 deadline that all students be proficient in math and language arts, and will give states the freedom to set their own student-achievement goals, and design their own interventions for failing schools. In exchange for this flexibility, the administration will require states to adopt [college- and career-ready standards](#), focus on 15 percent of their most-troubled schools, and create guidelines for [teacher evaluations](#) based in part on student performance.
- [Obama prepares to revamp 'No Child Left Behind'](#) – (9/21/11) – Washington Post - President Obama is poised to broaden federal influence in local schools by scrapping key elements of [No Child Left Behind](#), the Bush administration's signature education law, and substituting his [own brand](#) of school reform. The move will bypass Congress, drawing fire from Republicans on Capitol Hill and some in the educational establishment but winning applause from [governors across the country](#) struggling to meet the demands of the nine-year-old law. For many students, the most tangible impact could be what won't happen. They won't see half their teachers fired, their principal removed or school shut down because some students failed to test at grade level — all potential consequences under the law.
- [With Bipartisan Support, Law on Expansion of Charter Schools Passes the House](#) – (9/13/11) – New York Times - In a rare display of bipartisanship, the U.S. House approved a bill supporting the expansion of charter schools, the first part of a legislative package to carry out a piecemeal rewrite of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The bill, [HR 2218](#), tweaks an existing federal grant program that provides start-up money for new charters and adds some quality control provisions.
- [GOP Senators Introduce Own ESEA Renewal Bills](#) –(9/14/11) – Education Week – A group of Republican senators unveiled a package of four bills aimed at revamping portions of the No Child Left Behind Act in mid September. Sen. Lamar Alexander, a former education secretary, is also expected to introduce a bill that would aim to clarify Education Secretary Arne Duncan's authority to issue waivers on NCLB later in the session. The four bills released target changes to the Title I program and the law's "highly qualified teacher" requirements, among other provisions.
- [States Can't Prove Taxpayer-funded Tutoring Helps](#) – (9/12/11) - The Tennessean - Officials in Tennessee, Minnesota and California -- states that use federal money to fund private tutoring for students in schools that fail to meet federal No Child Left Behind targets -- are requesting permission to try other methods for improving student achievement. "There is little statistical evidence that the tutoring has made a significant difference, and there is evidence that longer school days and years can make a difference," Tennessee education department spokeswoman Kelli Gauthier said. A federal decision on flexibility for NCLB requirements is expected this month.

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

- [Chiefs for Change Worried About Race to Top Delays](#) – (8/30/11) – Education Week - The state education commissioners in the Chiefs for Change group are urging Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to stick to his guns as states implement their Race to the Top promises. The Education Department has allowed states to scale back their plans in some cases and delay projects. But even some of the Chiefs for Change states have submitted amendments to their plans.
- [Third Time Could Be the Charm for Race to the Top Finalist States](#) – (9/13/11) – ASCD Capitol Connection - The nine finalist states from the second round of Race to the Top have another shot at winning money to support their K-12 education reform efforts, albeit at much more modest funding levels. The U.S. Department of Education released its [proposed requirements](#) for the \$200 million Race to the Top round three competition, which will allow the nine states to apply for grants that support a portion of their previously established Race to the Top plans and include a meaningful focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.
- [587 Grant Applicants Vie for Smaller Round of i3 Cash](#) - (9/14/11) – Education Week - Nearly 600 school districts, nonprofits, and groups of schools applied for the second round of the

Investing in Innovation grant competition, designed by the U.S. Department of Education to find and scale-up the most promising education improvement ideas. Total funds for round two are estimated to be \$150 million. The awards, funded by a congressional budget deal, are expected to be announced in December.

#### IV. Other Federal

- [\*\*Obama Calls for \\$60 Billion to Save Teacher Jobs, Fix Schools\*\*](#) – (9/8/11) – Education Week - President Barack Obama called for \$30 billion in new money to stave off teacher layoffs — and \$30 billion more to revamp facilities at the nation's K-12 schools and community colleges — as he outlined his vision, [The American Jobs Act](#), for spurring the sputtering economy in a speech to Congress.
- [\*\*New STEM Schools Target Underrepresented Groups\*\*](#) – (9/14/11) – Education Week - A new wave of schools focused on science, technology, engineering and math -- or STEM -- education is targeting groups of students, such as females, minorities and those from low-income households, who typically are underrepresented in STEM professions. The schools take varying approaches to STEM learning, with some emphasizing project-based lessons while others stick to an enhanced traditional curriculum. Some experts say attracting students to STEM fields and casting a wider net for STEM talent is an economic imperative for the country.

#### V. Other State

- [\*\*Cuts to K-12 Aid Take Many States Below 2008 Levels\*\*](#) – (9/2/11) – Education Week - A new [report](#) concludes that funding for K-12 has, in many states, fallen below what was being spent before the recession took hold, four years ago. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities examined state spending in 24 states, representing about two-thirds of the nation's student population, looking at states where data was readily available.
- [\*\*Online Mandate\*\*](#) – (9/6/11) – Tampa Bay Online - Some cash-strapped Florida school districts are spending millions of dollars on technology to comply with a new state law that requires high-school students -- starting with this year's freshmen -- to take at least one online course before they graduate. However, the state has not provided funding for the mandate. The issue has garnered attention from the American Civil Liberties Union, which is concerned that not all students will have access to computers and the Internet to fulfill the new requirement.

#### Sources

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