



Volume 7, Issue # 11

Issues Update – November 2011

I. Common Core Standards/Next Gen Science Standards

- [Common core Standards Pose Dilemmas for Early Childhood](#) – (11/29/11) – Washington Post - After a decade of concerns and criticisms about the lack of rigorous national standards in the [No Child Left Behind](#) Act, we now have a set of ambitious standards for use nationwide — the [Common Core State Standards](#). Since their formulation two years ago, these [standards](#) have been adopted by 45 states, were made a precondition for funding in the Race to the Top competition, and have begun to influence the development of new curricula and assessments. But early childhood education — concerned with children from birth to the end of third grade — seems nearly an afterthought in [the standards](#). Not only do they end (or begin) at kindergarten, ignoring more than half of the early childhood age range, they simply don't fit what we know about young children's learning and development.
- [States Transform Science Class](#) – (11/11) – eSchool News - The National Academy of Sciences has kicked off a multi-state campaign to improve science instruction- a move that will lead to a greater emphasis on analytical and consequential thinking. As part of the effort, 20 states will help write new standards that determine what is taught in schools from kindergarten through high school.
- [Assessment Consortium Releases Final Content Frameworks](#)- (11/10/11)- Education Week- The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or [PARCC](#), has released its final content frameworks for the common standards. And the newsiest thing about the document is this: The consortium is going to create content frameworks for grades K-2. In a [document](#) describing the key strands of feedback on the content frameworks, PARCC said that one of the biggest demands was for K-2 frameworks that dovetail with the guidance the frameworks already offer for grades 3 and above. The consortium is already working on formative-assessment tools for K-2, but said it will also now develop content frameworks, to be issued in 2012.

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

- [State requests NCLB waiver](#)– (11/29/11) – Pekin Times - As expected, Illinois is seeking a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, officials from the Illinois State Board of Education said. “Increasing student achievement is Illinois’ number one educational priority, and, as such, our state intends to pursue a waiver from NCLB, allowing us to create our own accountability system,” Gery Chico, chairman of the State Board of Education, said in a news release issued last week.
- [NCLB Waivers: 11 States Request Relief from Federal Education Law](#)– (11/08/11) – Huffington Post – The U.S. Department of Education announced Tuesday that 11 states have formally submitted requests for waivers from key provisions of No Child Left Behind. Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee have submitted to the Education Department curriculums and plans catered to their localities in exchange for flexibility from federal education mandates.
- [ESEA Bill Gets Day in the Sun at Senate Hearing](#)– (11/08/11) – Education Week- The much-anticipated hearing on a Senate [bill](#) to make over the No Child Left Behind Act had one of the bill's chief sponsors casting it as an important but imperfect compromise, while Republicans saying the bill wouldn't do enough to rein in the federal role in education. U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, said that a comprehensive, bipartisan bill that passed out of his committee last month is a step in the right direction, even if it doesn't please everyone.

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

- [Race to the Top Round 3 Requires STEM Emphasis](#)– (11/21/11) – Trianglecolaition.org - the U.S. Department of Education invited nine states to apply for the third round of Race to the Top by submitting state-wide education reform plans that emphasize STEM education. The states eligible to apply for a portion of the \$200 million are the nine unfunded Round 2 finalists: Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.
- [Race to the Top Consolation Prize: \\$200 million for STEM](#)- (11/17/11)- Education Week-The U.S. Department of Education has now [spelled out](#) what the nine runner-up finalists from [last year's Race to the Top competition](#) must do to get a piece of the \$200 million consolation prize. This new money, which makes for a third round of the Obama administration's signature education-reform initiative, must be spent on a piece of a state's second-round Race to the Top proposal that seeks to advance the state's comprehensive reform agenda, according to the department. Importantly, though, a state must make the case that whatever it chooses will also improve STEM education. STEM, or science, technology, engineering, and math, has become an important priority for the Obama administration, and most recently, was a [big beneficiary](#) of the latest round of Investing in

Innovation grants. For this latest round of Race to the Top, grant money doesn't necessarily have to be spent on STEM programs, it's just that a state must identify an area to focus on that will also benefit STEM (such as raising standards in all subjects).

- [Grantees Picked in Round Two of Investing in Innovation Contest-](#) (11/10/11)- Education Week- The U.S. Department of Education has identified the [23 finalists](#) expected to get Investing in Innovation, or i3, grants in the second round of the high-profile competition, including the Success For All Foundation—the only repeat winner—as well as the College Board, a California charter schools network, and five school districts. The largest single grant is expected to go to [Old Dominion University Research Foundation](#), based in Norfolk, Va., which requested nearly \$25 million for a "scale-up" grant aimed at providing high-need middle schoolers with increased access to challenging math courses. In all, 587 applicants were vying for a slice of nearly \$150 million in this second round of the i3 program. Last year, the Education Department [awarded](#) 49 grants totaling roughly \$650 million.

IV. Other State

- [Teachers union presents plan measuring school quality-](#) (11/27/11) – Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel- After declining to join a task force to discuss how to better measure school quality in Wisconsin, the state's largest teachers union is presenting its own set of proposals on the matter. Wisconsin Education Association Council President Mary Bell [snubbed Gov. Scott Walker's school accountability task force](#) earlier this year in the wake of Republican-approved cuts to school funding and collective bargaining limitations.
- [Study Highlights 'Power of More Time' for Science Learning-](#) (11/17/11)- Education Week- A new report makes the case for restructuring the school calendar to allow more learning time for science, and through a set of case studies seeks to explain promising approaches to make the most of that extra time. "Together, these schools offer a glimpse of what is possible when schools and districts make science a priority and when they furnish students and teachers with the time they need to build dynamic science programs," says the [report](#) from the National Center on Time & Learning, a research and advocacy group. (Released on 11/17, the report was supported by funding from the Noyce Foundation, which recently provided a grant to *Education Week* to produce a [special report](#) on science learning outside the classroom.) The case studies highlight five regular public schools that serve large populations of disadvantaged students, including [Matthew J. Kuss Middle School](#) in Fall River, Mass.
- [Colorado approves with 4-tier teacher ratings-](#) (11/9/11)- Colorado Post- Colorado education officials gave final approval Wednesday to a statewide teacher rating system that could make it easier to fire teachers who don't meet testing standards. The Board of Education unanimously approved the rating system after months of work on elaborate standards to judge teachers and principals. The standards create a four-tier grading system—"highly effective," "effective," "partially effective" and "ineffective." Educators rated "ineffective" for two consecutive years would lose tenure. New teachers would need three consecutive years of "effective" ratings to make tenure. The standards won't be in place for

many just yet. They will be tested at pilot schools starting next year, and state lawmakers also have to sign off next year.

Sources

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