



Educators and policymakers realize that all of America's students need a high-quality education to prepare them for college and careers. 2012 promises to be another busy year in transformational strategies in education. In order to ensure a world-class education, leaders will likely address these top five issues facing states and territories ("the states") this year.

» **Reforming America's Public School Systems: What does the law allow?**

Because Congress has failed to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, states now can apply for No Child Left Behind waivers if they implement transformational initiatives to ensure students are college- and career-ready. States must address four major areas, including rigorous academic standards with aligned assessments; a robust accountability system; a plan to design an educator evaluation system based on multiple measures, including student growth; and elimination of unnecessary district reporting requirements such as school/district improvement requirements and Title 1 school-wide program restrictions.

» **Transforming Education through Increased Rigor and Accountability**

Forty-six states and the District of Columbia are implementing the Common Core State Standards and moving toward assessments that accurately measure student progress. Two consortia are developing instruments to assess all students and provide data to inform classroom instruction, direct professional development and to ensure teachers know where their students stand on their path toward college- and career-readiness. States also are looking to create deeper evaluation structures for accountability. Policymakers may consider a set of core principles, including annual accountability determinations, decisions based on student growth and outcomes, disaggregation of data to determine achievement gaps, transparent reporting, diagnostic reviews of schools that will lead to quality supports and interventions targeted to the lowest-performing schools and districts.

» **Increasing Teacher Effectiveness Through Salary and Tenure Reform**

To improve teacher quality, policymakers may consider interventions such as performance pay, which compensates teachers based in part on student test results and evaluations from administrators and peers. Another reform gaining traction involves changing teacher tenure laws to ensure tenure only after proving teacher effectiveness or making it easier to terminate ineffective teachers. Tenure reform can include increasing the number of years it takes to be eligible, empowering local districts to remove tenured teachers for an increased number of offenses, or ending the practice of laying off teachers based primarily on seniority.

» **Using School Choice to Enhance Outcomes for Students**

Concern over the quality of public education may lead some policymakers to consider school choice options, providing parents with alternatives to traditional public school education. Policies can include vouchers or scholarships that use state revenue for children to enroll in private schools. State tax deductions for tuition paid for private schools and tax credits for contributions to nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations also give parents options. Other forms of school choice include nontraditional charters, early college high schools, or magnet schools focusing on specific learning areas such as arts, foreign language, or math and science. Policymakers also may consider whether regulations governing home schooling should be relaxed or strengthened in their states.

» **Overhauling Higher Education to Ensure a Competitive Edge**

In order for the United States workforce to grow, millions of new jobs must be developed. Under the current trends, however, many potential workers will not have the skills necessary to be a productive employee. The higher education pipeline must be strengthened to ensure more students succeed. Strategies such as investing in community colleges, increasing financial aid awareness, decreasing the number of students who require remedial courses, focusing on first-generation and minority students, and creating competency-based degrees will all be discussed this year.

For more information on these topics and for additional resources on education policy, see » www.csg.org/top5in2012

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PAM GOINS



THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Pam Goins has been with CSG since 2005. In her current role, she oversees the education policy division, supervises the Policy Academy for Newly Elected Legislators series on topics impacting state policymakers and serves as staff liaison to CSG's Education Policy Task Force. She has led implementation of the Common Core State Standards Policy Initiative educating state and local policymakers on the national effort for states to adopt common English/language arts and mathematics academic standards. She also led a six-state effort to reduce childhood obesity through policymaking as part of a project with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Prior to joining CSG, Goins served as a program consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education for 11 years, serving in a regulatory and policy compliance capacity. She also was associate director for KYCID, a statewide center working with 176 local school districts in Kentucky on positive behavior supports for students. Goins holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Eastern Kentucky University and a master's degree in education from the University of Kentucky.

GET INVOLVED »

CSG provides state leaders a variety of regional and national opportunities to actively engage on issues of importance to their jurisdictions and constituents. CSG's regional and national committees and task forces are designed to encourage multi-state problem solving, the sharing of best practices, and networking among state officials and between the public and private sectors.

CSG's Education Policy Task Force is co-chaired this year by Rep. Roger Eddy from Illinois and Rep. Sara Lampe from Missouri. Over the past two years, the task force has focused on several key issues, including creating a college-going culture, using public-private partnerships to enhance educational outcomes, the nexus of education and workforce development, and seeding the knowledge economy.

The task force will hold its next meetings as part of the **NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE** in La Quinta, Calif., May 17-20, and the **CSG 2012 NATIONAL CONFERENCE** in Austin, Texas, Nov. 30-Dec. 3.

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