



Support for School Improvement

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO State Support Team Network

January 2004

Welcome to the Support for School Improvement e-newsletter, a monthly publication focusing on school improvement efforts at the state and district level. Our goal is to provide a forum around school improvement efforts through national, state and district perspectives.

Support to Low Performing Schools: Learning from One Another

To provide support to local education agencies and schools in Georgia, the Georgia Department of Education has created a School Improvement Division in their Office of Teacher and Student Support. Check out Georgia's school improvement website at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/support/improvement> for additional information about its statewide system of support to local school systems. Find out more about the online survey, *What Works in Schools* from ASCD, being completed by Georgia Title 1 schools statewide. This survey addresses **eleven factors affecting student achievement** as identified by Robert Marzano in *What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action* (2003).

The Colorado Department of Education has a web page dedicated to Colorado resources for No Child Left Behind at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeunified/nclb.htm>. Check out the *Research You Can Use Newsletter*; this on-line publication provides synopses of information that highlight best practices and strategies for closing the achievement gap. Some of the topics addressed include extended learning, school culture, and scientifically based research. The issue on Using Data-Driven Practices to Improve Student Learning can be viewed at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeunified/download/RYCU0903.pdf>.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The Nation's Report Card shows the achievement gap is narrowing. Review the 2003 mathematics and reading assessment results at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

Although minority students in urban districts lag well behind whites on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), we have results that indicate African-Americans and Hispanic students are performing on par with their racial and ethnic counterparts in suburban and rural areas. The 2003 NAEP in mathematics and reading was administered to a representative sample of students in grades four and eight for each state, and on a trial basis to

students in nine large urban school districts. Fourth- and eighth-grade public school students in nine urban school districts participated in the 2003 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA): Atlantic City, Boston School District, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, City of Chicago School District 299, Cleveland Municipal School District, Houston Independent School District, Los Angeles Unified, New York City Public Schools, and San Diego City Unified. The District of Columbia is also included in the comparisons. Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2003 Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) for both reading and mathematics can be reviewed at the NCES web site. For a look at the TUDA reading results go to <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/results2003/districtresults.asp>.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg students scored above the national average in both subjects and for both grades. What factors may have contributed to this difference? Possible answers may be found in the report from the Council of Great City Schools, *Foundations for Success: Case Studies for How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. This document presents a case study of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district along with four other districts. It can be viewed at <http://www.cgcs.org/pdfs/Foundations.pdf>.

Examining Policies to Impact School Improvement

Through its work with superintendents and education experts, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has identified key issues for policymakers to address in improving education for urban students. The key recommendations address the areas of governance, teaching quality, finance, early childhood and English language learners (ELL). One recommendation suggested in the report is that policymakers consider making school board existence contingent on the academic performance of students and measuring teacher quality by yearly student achievement gains. Find the report at <http://www.ecs.org/e-Connection-ps>.

Publications and Sites of Interest

Helping Students Finish School: Why Students Drop Out and How to Help Them Graduate

As part of Washington state's efforts to reduce the number of students who drop out of school, the Washington Department of Education, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has released a new publication, *Helping Students Finish School: Why Students Drop Out and How to Help Them Graduate*. Included within the document you will find an analysis with research and professional literature available to help answer some of the troubling questions about why students choose to leave school before earning a diploma. This document is located at <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/default.aspx>.

Data-based Decision-Making, a free web resource tool

To assist state departments, school support teams, and technical assistance providers in working with schools identified as in need of improvement, CCSSO and AEL have collaborated to develop the Data-based Decision Making web tool. This tool provides guidance through the steps of data-based decision-making processes and access to useful examples, real school stories, and the best available tools and resources to help schools build effective data-based decision-making systems. This tool can be accessed at <http://www.ael.org/dbdm/>.

About Support for School Improvement e-Newsletter and SSTN

Support for School Improvement, the e-newsletter of the CCSSO State Support Team Network, is a free monthly newsletter focusing on school improvement efforts at the state and district level. The purpose of the State Support Team Network (SSTN) is to assist states in developing their systems of support for turning around low-performing schools. SSTN is part of the High Poverty Schools Initiative housed at CCSSO.

To submit a news item relevant to school improvement efforts at the state or district level, provide feedback or to subscribe/unsubscribe, send an e-mail to Susan Taylor at susant@ccsso.org.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a bipartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

Our mission statement: The Council of Chief State School Officers, through Leadership, Advocacy, and Service, assists chief state school officers and their organizations in achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

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