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ABSTRACT

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) Task Force on Education for Economic Growth was established in 1982 and is made up of governors, business and industry leaders, labor representatives, members of the technical community, and educators. The task force has surveyed 40 states and found programs and activities enhancing economic growth. Many states have established task forces to study the issues as well as community involvement programs to encourage citizen and business involvement in education programs. Enhancement programs also exist, and their purposes fall into three categories: to improve student skills, to improve teacher quality and quantity, and to improve curriculum. The ECS task force has identified four goals: (1) create an understanding of the need for a well-educated work force; (2) evaluate current education programs' legislative actions to improve education; and (4) promote partnerships to improve education for economic growth. A list of ECS task force members and their positions is included. (MD)

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13. Education For Economic Growth

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13. Education For Economic Growth

The Issue

American education leaders are only beginning to understand the complex relationships between education of the work force and economic productivity. That they are connected, no one doubts. For example, Edward Dennis of the Brookings Institution reports that the increased education level of American workers between 1948 and 1973 contributed 20% of the national per capita income for those years, and a recent study by the New York Stock Exchange relates Japan's recent jump in productivity to its increased primary and secondary school improvement.

If the United States is to reap the economic harvest it desires, it must invest heavily in education and, government, business, labor, military and education leaders will have to join together in a concerted effort.

This Issuegram is devoted to the initial activities of the ECS Task Force on Education for Economic Growth.

ECS Establishes Economic Growth Task Force

In December 1982 ECS Chairman James B. Hunt Jr., governor of North Carolina, established the ECS Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. It is made up of governors, business and industry leaders, labor representatives, members of the technical community, and educators. The task force hopes to encourage each of the represented groups to do whatever they can to improve high school graduates' ability to contribute to economic growth.

The task force has surveyed 40 states in order to discover what programs and activities are already underway. They intend to use the information to help leaders at all levels evaluate their current efforts and plan their activities for the coming year.

What the survey shows

The states were asked about their approaches to the following:

- o Improving student competence in math, science, computers and other academic areas;
- o Using computers to improve education;
- o Providing incentives for attracting, retaining and upgrading education personnel, especially science and math teachers;
- o Involving citizens and business and industry leaders in education.

Although each of the states reported unique approaches to the areas in question, three general activities are already taking place across the country.

Task Forces. Many states have established task forces to study the issues, define the problems and recommend new policies and programs. Task force agendas include consideration of:

- o curriculum improvement issues,
- o graduation requirement revisions,
- o expansion of computer use,
- o expansion of community involvement in education,

- o improvement of state economies through education improvements,
- o teacher training/retraining issues,
- o teacher certification and retention issues.

Community Involvement Programs. Many states report actively encouraging citizen, and business and industry involvement in designing education programs. Community involvement programs reported by the states center around these:

- o advisory councils for vocational education,
- o matching fund programs in which private sectors donate funds for faculty or equipment,
- o increasing cooperative programs between schools and industry -- including cooperative research, partnership programs, team teaching or citizen volunteer programs,
- o customizing training to suit the needs of various industries,
- o parent workshops.

Enhancement Programs. These programs fall into three general categories: student skills, teacher quality and quantity, and curriculum.

The states are attempting to improve students' skills by the following:

- o increasing high school graduation requirements to include more mathematics, science, English and foreign languages,
- o increasing postsecondary entrance requirements,
- o lengthening the school year,
- o minimum competency testing,
- o creating special schools or programs for gifted students,
- o using child development programs for pre-school children, either in the home or the day-care centers.

Efforts to improve the quality and quantity of teachers center on the following:

- o revising teacher certification requirements;
- o providing tuition and scholarship programs for teachers, particularly in science and math;
- o making student loans available to prospective teachers;
- o providing 12-month contracts to teachers in critically needed subjects: the summer months would be devoted for such things as retraining and course preparation;
- o providing private-industry internships for teachers,
- o allowing private-industry professionals to teach science or mathematics classes several hours per week,
- o increasing teacher salaries
- o recruiting good high school students into teaching,
- o assessing the present and future teacher supply and demand.

Programs to improve the quality of curricula center around the following:

- o developing new or revised curricula,
- o shifting curricula toward concepts, applications, problem solving and critical thinking,
- o providing state technical assistance to local districts as needed,
- o introducing college level courses in high school,
- o introducing computer-assisted instruction to increase student learning and achievement.

Task Force Identifies Goals

- o Create a national understanding of the need for a well-educated work force and of the changing work skills necessary for economic growth;
- o Report on how well current education programs are preparing youth for future jobs;
- o Identify alternative policies, programs and legislative actions available to state and local leaders to improve education;
- o Promote partnerships among parents, community, business, industry, labor, education and government leaders to improve education in ways that will lead to economic growth.

Task Force Members

Pierre S. du Pont IV, governor of Delaware
D. Robert Graham, governor of Florida
James B. Hunt, governor of North Carolina
Thomas Kean, governor of New Jersey
Richard Lamm, governor of Colorado
Scott M. Matheson, governor of Utah
George Nigh, governor of Oklahoma
Robert D. Orr, governor of Indiana
Robert D. Ray, governor of Iowa
Charles S. Robb, governor of Virginia
Richard L. Thornburgh, governor of Pennsylvania
Anne Lindeman, state senator, Arizona
Wilhelmina Delco, state representative, Texas
Oliver Ocasek, state senator, Ohio
Thornton Bradshaw, chairman, RCA Corporation
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Colorado
William C. Friday, president, University of North
Carolina
Floretta McKenzie, superintendent, District of
Columbia public schools
Marvin O. Koenig, principal, Southwest High School,
St. Louis, Missouri
Bruce Brombacker, mathematics teacher, Upper Arlington, Ohio
1982 "Teacher of the Year"
Judy Moyers, education specialist, New York, New York

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