



# Honoring Progress

An Update on the NGA Center Honor States

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This bimonthly newsletter provides information about the progress of the Honor States Grant Program, a \$23.6 million, governor-led effort to improve college- and work-ready graduation rates. Launched at the 2005 National Education Summit, this initiative includes 26 states and is supported by a consortium of eight foundations.

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## IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue we explore how effective education governance can support innovative state policy development, successful policy implementation, and ultimately a redesigned high school experience for all students. We begin by defining some major trends in governance including state efforts to centralize accountability, integrate P-16 systems and state education agencies, and grant school leaders increased flexibility in return for greater accountability. We then highlight strategies pursued by three states that have each leveraged different governing structures to support policies that improve college and career readiness. We conclude by providing useful resources for policymakers interested in learning more about best practices that support accountable, responsive, and efficient school governance structures.

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## Facts at a Glance: Trends in K-12 Education Governance

- Four major actors establish state-level K-12 education policy: governors, state legislatures, chief state school officers, and state boards of education. However, states vary in the extent to which these actors are empowered to set policy. Moreover, in fourteen states, the chief state school officer is elected by the voters; while state board members face the voters in only twelve states. The remaining states rely upon the gubernatorial appointment method for selecting chiefs and state board members (NASBE State Educational Governance Models, 2007).
- Even within a state, local school boards—sometimes called local education agencies (LEAs)—retain the lion's share of responsibility for implementing the policies enacted by the state's four main government actors.
- In the wake of No Child Left Behind's heightened accountability requirements, states have increasingly sought to centralize education governance by gradually vesting more authority in governors and legislatures. For example, some states have begun articulating statewide graduation requirements while others, such as Delaware, have developed a statewide curriculum. One major structural change that has coincided with these statewide reforms has been the dramatic decline in the number of school districts nationally from 120,000 in the 1930s to around 15,000 today (Noel Epstein, *Who's In Charge Here? The Tangled Web of School Governance and Policy*, Brookings Institution Press, 2004).
- In 2002, an *Education Week* poll found that a majority of Americans believe that their school boards are the most important government institution influencing the quality of public schools—more important than governors, state assemblies, or the U.S. President. However, only a small percentage of the electorate—10 to 15 percent on average across the nation—votes in school board elections with candidates often in short supply (Deborah Land, "Local School Board Elections Under Review," 2002).
- Some states such as Michigan have sought to implement policies that would boost voter turnout in board elections by requiring that they take place in November concurrent with major state and federal elections. Some empirical evidence suggests that this would lead to significantly higher levels of voter participation (Michigan State Legislature).

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## Governance as an Ally: Massachusetts, Maine, and Florida Launch Effective High School Redesign Policies in Different Governing Contexts

In the United States, a tangled web of federal, state, and local political authorities collectively set the policies that govern our public schools. Because the American system of governing public education relies on complex intergovernmental decision-making, state policymakers implementing a high school redesign agenda must consider how governance structures can support or inhibit reform efforts.

As American society becomes increasingly mobile and the global economy raises the skill set necessary for college and career success, states have responded by asserting more control over local school districts, particularly in regard to standards and assessments. For example, twelve states now align their high school standards with their state's post-secondary expectations, and 27 additional states are engaged in ongoing efforts to align graduation requirements with college expectations<sup>1</sup>. However, for those states that exhibit strong elements of local control—the governance structure whereby a state's constitution, courts, and traditions empower localities to control major education policy decisions—implementing high school redesign consistently can prove difficult.



Spurred in part by the new federal accountability requirements of NCLB, some states have revisited the issue of local control. By establishing college-ready state assessments and recommending more rigorous core curricula, many local control states have sought to make high school redesign more consistent across the entire state.



In other states, policymakers have sought to implant more authority for education policy decision-making within the governor's office. This effort represents an ambitious attempt to centralize accountability with those political authorities most directly responsible to the public. Although low turnout plagues state and local school board and state superintendent elections, mayoral and gubernatorial elections garner significant media coverage resulting in higher levels of voter turnout. As a result, mayors and governors remain more accountable to the electorate for student achievement; they answer directly to the voters on the state's ability to turn around low-performing schools.

Accounting for trends in the rise of executive leadership on education issues, some policymakers have sought to centralize governance within a state's political executive by increasing gubernatorial appointment powers and creating cabinet level positions in education. For example, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has called for creating the position of state education secretary to better carry on the state's reform agenda by centralizing the current triad of fragmented education agencies. Currently, education governance in Massachusetts is split among three separate entities: the Department of Early Education and Care; the Department of Education, which handles students through grade 12; and the Board of Higher Education, which oversees the state's college campuses.

Finally, as NCLB enters its sixth year of implementation, states are witnessing an increase in the number of schools targeted for restructuring. As local districts look to federal and state policymakers for guidance on restructuring, a state's capacity to respond to local districts' restructuring needs will hinge on the efficiency of governance within and around the state's education agency. Without greater clarity defining roles and responsibility at the state level, it may be difficult to adequately assist districts in reconstituting and ultimately turning around low-performing schools.

<sup>1</sup> Closing the Expectations Gap, Achieve Inc., 2007.

No state or policymaker as of yet has all the answers to educational governance, perhaps because of the dearth of research on the subject. The few studies that do exist remain inconclusive regarding the impact of particular governance structures on student performance.

The good news is that several states are ahead of the curve and are engaged in finding solutions and mounting serious reform efforts. States can drive reform through supporting flexible governing arrangements or finding policy strategies to deal with more constrictive arrangements when necessary. Florida, Maine, and Massachusetts have each identified a unique approach to ensuring their governance systems advance rather than deter growth in student achievement.

## Florida

In the Sunshine State, long-term efforts to streamline governance culminated in a forward-thinking constitutional amendment reorganizing Florida's education system into one "seamless" P-20 model. First, Florida voters gave the governor authority to appoint the Commissioner and members of the state's Board of Education.

Florida's reform model was motivated by a desire to create a comprehensive P-20 system in which responsibility for the entire educational system goes to the state's most visible political authority. The state believes this structure will result in improved alignment of early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary policies.

Along with these changes in form came changes in function—specifically around student data. The state has integrated its extensive K-12 and postsecondary education student-unit record systems, making it one of the few fully operable P-20 data systems in the country according to the Data Quality Campaign (DQC). By tracking a variety of information—including student demographic data, attendance, grades, test scores, and parent information—and then sharing that data throughout the pipeline, policymakers can more effectively deal with emerging issues important to high school reform such as student transitions (e.g., middle school to high school).

With a unified student-unit record system and centralized authority, the board of education was able to identify school districts where a disproportionately low number of students were enrolling in the state's four-year colleges. The board then analyzed high school course-taking patterns and teacher qualifications to launch a statewide initiative to improve students' access to rigorous high school classes taught by effective educators.

Florida's story demonstrates how an aligned and centralized system of educational governance allows governors and other state leaders to harness the data to inform the development of state policy. More practically, the availability of such data gives policymakers the opportunity to respond to key challenges that exist in schools and districts across a state.



## Maine

Governor John Baldacci has made efficient governance a priority in his education reform agenda. The governor has spearheaded a reduction in the administrative overhead of the state's K-12 education system by advancing an agenda that consolidates Maine's comparatively large number of school districts.

To streamline governance in his sparsely populated state, Governor Baldacci has moved to reduce the number of school superintendents by lowering the overall number of school units (or district LEAs) to fewer than 80. Before the governor's effort, 152 superintendents oversaw nearly 300 separate local education agencies (LEAs) each with their own school board—a high number when one considers that a state as large and dense as Florida has just 67 school districts (refer to the map in “A Bird's Eye View” to see LEA sizes in all 50 states). Currently, Maine estimates that shifting these administrative resources to the classroom, along with additional economies of scale, could result in cost savings of \$250 million over the first three years.

The governor plans to reallocate these savings back into the classroom to:

- Ensure that every school has a full time principal;
- Raise teacher salaries over two years;
- Increase professional development for all educators;
- Provide college scholarships for 15,000 students over four years;
- Purchase 172,000 additional laptops for students in grades 7 through 12; and,
- Offer tax relief to local communities.

Maine high school students may stand to gain additional benefits from the governor's consolidation plan including greater diversity and flexibility in the learning opportunities available to them. As districts consolidate and the number of high school options within Maine's districts increases, the state's consolidation policy may bring about an additional benefit—a policy environment more conducive to specialized high schools oriented around themes such as Science, Technology, Mathematics, and Engineering (STEM). Rather than having just one high school option available, students may soon have multiple high schools in their district from which to choose.



Although changes to longstanding governance structures present challenges for governors and other state level policymakers, Maine has demonstrated that a well-configured and streamlined governance arrangement can improve the opportunities currently available to high school students across the state.

## Massachusetts

In the Bay State, high school redesign has taken a bold step forward within an environment of strong local control. State policymakers have compensated for the discrepancies that can arise when policy implementation works its way down to the district level by drawing on two primary strategies.

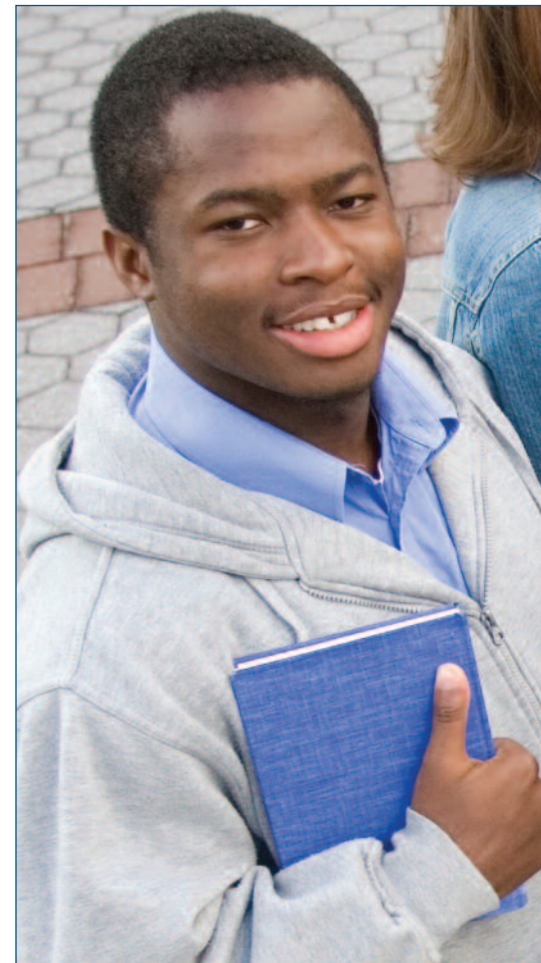
The first strategy to navigate policy reform in the context of local control began in 1993 with the Massachusetts Education Reform Action (MERA). Under MERA, the state adopted the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment (MCAS)—an exam administered annually that measures the performance of individual students and schools in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, and History and Social Science. MCAS serves as the focal point for the state’s accountability system. High school students beginning with the class of 2003 have been required to pass the MCAS Grade 10 exams in English Language Arts and Mathematics to receive their high school diploma and will be required to pass the Science and Technology/Engineering and History and Social Science assessments effective with the graduating Class of 2010 and 2012, respectively.

Recently, Massachusetts strengthened the MCAS by increasing cut scores on the exam so that students in every district could benchmark their progress on a rigorous college- and career-ready assessment. In addition to establishing a rigorous accountability system in MCAS, the Reform Act addressed how schools and districts operate. The School Committees’ power over personnel issues was reduced, with superintendents and principals given more authority over hiring and supporting teachers.

In the years since MERA became law, state policymakers have further mitigated the complication of local control by instituting stronger course requirements, increasing the rigor of the state’s MCAS assessment, and adopting a recommended high school curriculum.

MassCore—the proposed recommended high school course of study aimed at increasing the number of graduates who are well prepared for college and the workplace—outlines the subject area credits, courses, and other learning opportunities that students should complete in preparation for college and career. To encourage participation across all districts, the state is considering enticing LEAs to participate by coupling MassCore with incentives for students and schools. In addition, the state will publish the recommended curriculum to generate public support within local communities for adopting the rigorous high school courses all students need to be college- and career-ready.

While local control can prove challenging for high school redesign at the state level, Massachusetts policymakers have shown that by embracing rigorous college-ready assessments and engaging the public on the importance of college-ready policies, high school redesign can succeed in an environment of local control.

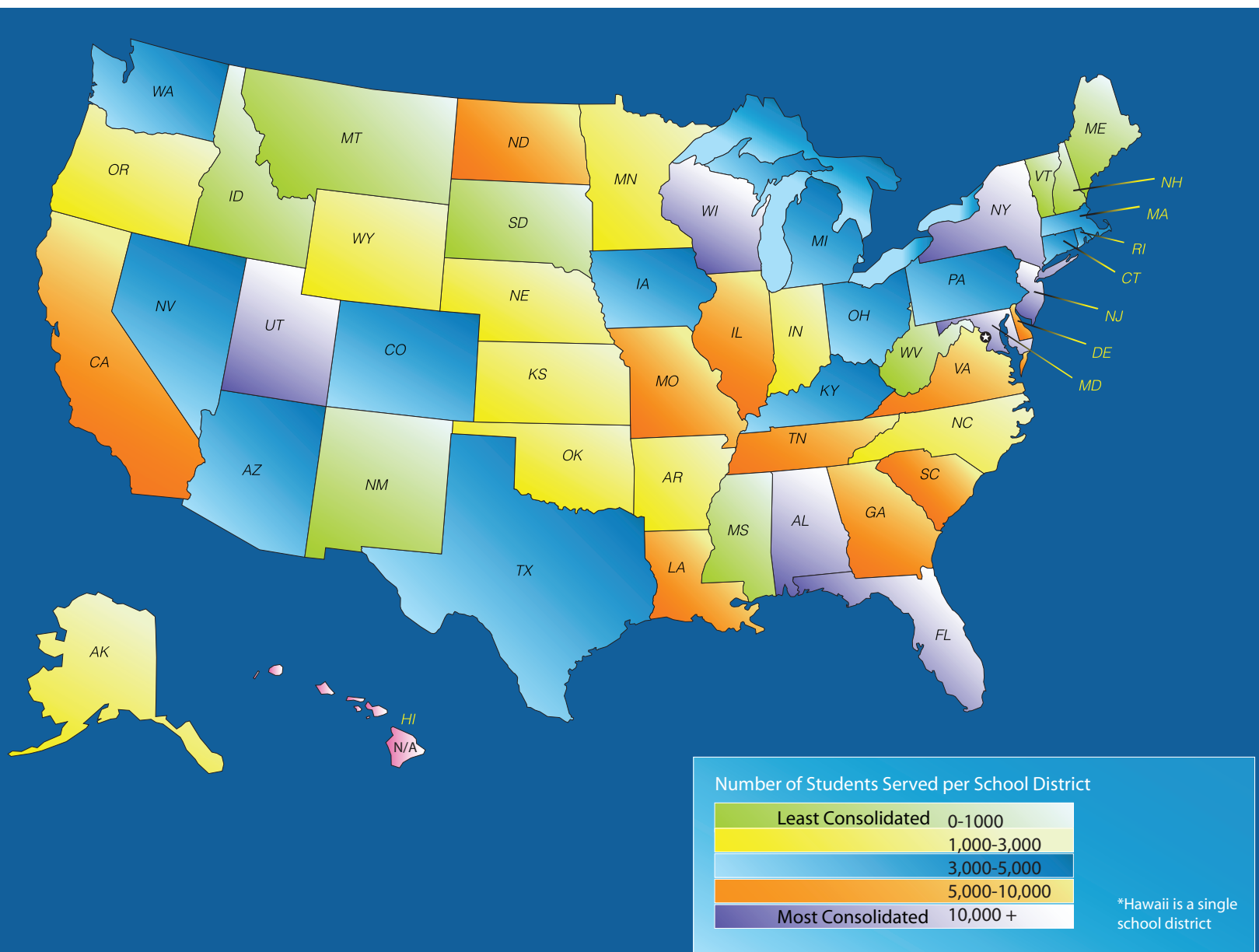


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## A Bird's-Eye View: Number of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) by State

States vary dramatically in the number of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) they rely on to implement education policies and serve a comparable number of students. Although policymakers may view the volume of districts within a state as a mere structural artifact, the number, design, and the internal capacity of school districts can have a direct bearing on the quality of state policy implementation at the local level. The map below provides the volume range that states fall into by comparing the number of school districts that operate within a state and the overall number of K-12 students enrolled statewide.



Source: Education Commission of the States, ECS, 2007

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## Governing School Reform: Paul Reville and the Rennie Center Tackle Education Governance in Massachusetts

Paul Reville is the president of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy—an independent, policy and research organization dedicated to the improvement of P-12 public education, especially in Massachusetts. In his spare time, Paul serves at the Chair of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, which he was appointed to by Governor Deval Patrick. Because the Rennie Center has spent considerable time studying educational governance systems—culminating in last April's policy brief and symposium on the topic—*Honoring Progress* sat down with Mr. Reville to draw upon his expertise in developing a thoughtfully constructed governance model that can support improved student performance.



### **HP: What would a truly integrated P-20 system look like and what policy levers would such a system rely upon to realize true integration?**

**PR:** For starters, such a system would feature integrated mechanisms of governance and finance. The system would be characterized by robust communications, joint planning and budgeting, integration and articulation at all levels, complementary accountability systems, shared leadership, common goals, and a holistic approach to each child. However, such changes are difficult to make in the context of most states' political contexts. A reasonable alternative is to create a variety of mechanisms that link the leaders of various layers of the system in regular dialogue and joint goal setting and planning.

### **HP: Nearly all states develop education policy through four state-level institutional actors: governors, state legislatures, chief state school officers, and state boards of education. What can be done to ensure greater interoperability and conditions that foster cooperative governance?**

**PR:** The main breakdowns in the system occur as a result of faulty communication, turf protection, or significant differences in the policy convictions of various players. Creating mechanisms that regularize communication and collaboration is an important prerequisite. Leadership is the unknown variable in many states. If the Governor has a sharp focus on education, calls for the various players to regularly be accountable for making collaborative progress, and has some flexibility and willingness to negotiate on the education agenda then prospects for success are brighter than average.

### **HP: What role can governors specifically play to encourage stable, accountable, responsive and efficient educational governance in their states?**

**PR:** Governors need to give education sufficient attention if they want to drive significant improvement. If a governor demands regular meetings and reports from the key education players in his/her administration then the likelihood of progress, responsiveness, and efficiency increases. The power of structure and governance mechanisms tends to be overestimated. The key to integrated, effective inter-agency collaboration is executive leadership. An executive branch can have a potent effect on integrating systems and services if there is commitment and regular action at the highest levels.



State leaders must also invest in the capacity of state education agencies to do the work of building local school district capacity. If this is not done, the states should cease operating accountability systems which “call out” low performance because it is inappropriate to point the finger of blame without being first in line to provide quality assistance to improve performance.

**HP: How can state policymakers leverage school finance systems to promote greater alignment between K-12 and postsecondary systems?**

**PR:** The accountability system in K-12 can be tied to performance in getting students prepared to be successful in college. Accountability can be tied to finance. Individual student accounts could be set up to follow a student all the way through pre-school, K-12, higher education, training, and employment. The same governance body might be responsible for overseeing P-20 finance. Budgets could be integrated. Facilities could be co-located and combined. State-local proportions for educational expenses could be adjusted.

**HP: Many state leaders operate within an environment of local control. What strategies can state policymakers employ to develop and implement a high school redesign agenda within a local control context?**

**PR:** The key is incentives. State policymakers can provide incentives for high schools to improve. The state’s accountability system provides a key lever as does the school finance system. These instruments can be used to provide both positive and negative incentives. However, there must be a clear theory of action supporting initiatives for high school redesign. There also need to be policies that differentiate between different kinds of communities and schools. Urban high schools face different challenges and exist in a very different political environment from suburban schools. Policies and incentives must differentiate. Urban high school reform should be an urgent and top priority in most of our states right now.

**HP: Elected local school boards remain our most common governance structure. How can state policymakers increase the accountability, flexibility, knowledge, and overall effectiveness of these local boards? What strategies must be considered to help them govern low-performing schools?**

**PR:** Accountability systems could be structured with real consequences at the school board level. For example, if a school system does not perform, the school board might steadily lose its prerogatives and cede increasing authority to the state. Boards need more training which could be made mandatory for new members. The state-local balance of power should be re-examined to reflect the share of funding, degree of responsibility, and overriding interests. The state has an overriding interest in all students, irrespective of geography, being educated at high levels. However, local authorities are the first responders to this challenge. If they fail, the state has to be ready to step in to build local capacity rather than operate local schools. The state should insist on the achievement of the goals and the locals should be responsible for the means of achieving those goals. If the locals fail, then state responsibility increases proportionately.

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## Federal Update: America COMPETES Act Signed Into Law

### *Federal Update: Advancing P-16 Systems; High School Reform and AC/SMART Grants*

#### **Advancing P-16 Systems**

Earlier this year, the nation's governors proposed a federal legislative package, "Innovation America: A Partnership" to support the development of a skilled and competitive workforce in the global economy. In this package, NGA proposed that Congress fund grant programs to support the voluntary creation or enhancement of state P-16 longitudinal data systems and P-16 councils. To date, 31 states have implemented a formal P-16 council to better integrate their governance structures and data systems throughout the education pipeline, and NGA believes Congress should recognize, support, and encourage this state best practice.

Congressional action on longitudinal data systems has been mixed. NGA advocated for increased funding and is pleased that the proposed FY08 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill doubles the current funding for statewide data system grants. Alternatively, the draft *No Child Left Behind* reauthorization bill, released in August by Representatives George Miller and Howard "Buck" McKeon, included a new mandate on longitudinal data systems. In its current form, this provision would require states to create federally prescribed longitudinal data systems to monitor student academic progress across grades. Governors are also concerned that an insufficient amount of funding and time will be available to develop and institute these costly systems. NGA weighed in on this and other concerns in the NCLB draft and will offer recommendations for the final bill to protect and encourage states' innovation for aligning education systems.

For more information on P-16 Alignment, visit the NGA Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee issue page at <http://www.nga.org/federalrelations/p16>.

NEW! UPDATED! Visit the NGA Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee's newly revised website at: <http://www.nga.org/federalrelations/ECW>. For more information on federal education issues, contact Joan Wodiska with NGA at [jwodiska@nga.org](mailto:jwodiska@nga.org)

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## Resource Box

Best practice research can help guide policymakers on the latest trends in state educational governance by identifying the governance structures most supportive of increased student achievement. This section highlights resources for state policymakers to learn more about the strategies that policymakers are using to advance school reform within different governing contexts.

## *The Progress of P-16 Collaboration in the States*

This policy brief written by Carl Krueger, a policy analyst for the Education Commission of the States, offers a primer to state policymakers on recent P-16 Council developments in an array of states with active councils. The author begins by providing the foundational concepts behind a P-16 system and how a formal council complements that system. It follows with an extensive analysis on the contextual challenges that confronted different states that attempted to implement a fully integrated council with representation from all of the major state governing authorities.

## *How Governance of K-12 Education Influences Policy Outputs and Student Outcomes in the U.S.*

Even though the governance of K-12 education has become an increasingly relevant topic in U.S. policy circles, few individuals understand the diverse arrangements states have devised to govern America's schools. In this paper, Paul Manna—a professor of Public Policy and Government at the College of William and Mary—describes that variability in governance and then uses it to explain how student academic success and state policy production is related to a state's education governing structures. The author concludes that states perform better on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) when governors are empowered to appoint leaders of state education agencies, but that performance wanes if governors can appoint the state chief school officer and members of state education boards.

## *Governing Change: Considerations for Education Policymakers*

In this new policy brief, the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy examines models of education governance in several states, drawing out lessons to help inform policy discussions around P-20 governance. The brief lays out the rationale for better integrating divisions of educational governance including the ability to harness a seamless governing process that starts in preschool and terminates at the postsecondary level creating a more efficient system under a unified structure. While there is growing interest in creating an integrated governance structure, there is also concern. However appealing the benefits seem, the challenges, substantive and political, of dismantling the current bureaucracy and assembling a new system, are significant. The report concludes with case studies examining the states that have engaged in the process of designing education governance systems that stretch from preschool through graduate school.

## *School Restructuring Under No Child Left Behind: What Works When*

This guide, from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (in partnership with Learning Point Associates), provides users with a step-by-step approach to restructuring under No Child Left Behind beginning with an orientation to organizing a district team and the necessary methods for policymakers to assess a district's capacity to govern restructuring. In addition, this resource provides templates, checklists, and other practical tools to apply in a restructuring assessment. It is the fourth in a series of papers designed to help district leaders understand their options when a school is identified for restructuring under NCLB.

## *School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century*

Although local school boards have been a fixture in American public education since the founding of the public school system, few statistical studies examine how these public bodies function. This report provides detailed information on the nature of school boards through comprehensive surveys of board members in nearly 2,000 school districts. Among other things, the report finds that large-district boards differ dramatically from their smaller counterparts. In districts larger than 25,000 students, boards are highly political bodies, where expensive campaigns bring the attention of active interest groups. Conversely, boards in smaller districts prove relatively apolitical electing members in relatively inexpensive election campaigns that often go uncontested and operate without partisan distinction.

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## **Foundation Corner: The Wallace Foundation's School Leadership Issue Groups (LIGs)**

Over the past several years, the Wallace Foundation has funded roundtables called Leadership Issue Groups on topics related to school leadership and the principalship. Among the LIGs sponsored the past two years, the Governance Issue Group focuses on state and district policies that relate to regulations, funding allocation, school boards, unions, local officials and others whose decision-making authority impacts the ability of education leaders to improve student achievement. The Wallace Governance Issue Group further examines the key policies that are necessary to prepare, support, and best place school leaders in low-performing schools. Members consider which governing entities both formal (legislatures, state or local boards, authorized leaders, etc.) and informal (unions, business or community leaders, etc.) most influence those policies and how can they be engaged to bring about the identified policies. Recently, the Governance Group has drafted a set of recommendations—called the LIG GPS—that provides a road map to state and local policymakers delineating the policy levers that can influence the preparation, placement, and support of school leaders in low achieving schools. The Group plans to turn its written GPS draft into a fully-functioning electronic document that state and local policymakers can access and use interactively in the near future.

## **The Broad Foundation's Institute for School Boards**

The Broad Institute for School Boards is a national school board training program for newly elected and appointed urban school board members, sponsored by The Broad Foundation and run by the Center for Reform of School Systems. The program is modeled after Harvard University's induction programs for new mayors, new members of Congress and college presidents. At the Institute, new school board members receive training in effective educational governance during an intensive six-day training program. Each day of training requires that participants analyze and evaluate one or more case studies covering issues of policy governance, urban politics and urban school reform strategies. Since its inception, the Institute has trained over 151 new board members from 34 cities across the counties who are responsible for implementing education policy for nearly 3 million schoolchildren.

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## P-20 Councils: Vesting Governance in Leaders Across the Educational Systems

As part of the NGA Honor States' commitment to *Getting it Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda*, each Phase I Honor States agreed to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to aligning its governance structure with P-16 education and to directly include gubernatorial leadership implementing that commitment. Currently 8 of the 10 Phase I Honor States have a P-16 Council serving as a structural lead on their high school redesign agenda.

In committing to this non-negotiable, two states—Rhode Island and Virginia—have made gubernatorial involvement a staple of their P-16 governance structure.

**Virginia's** P-16 Council was created through the executive order of then-Governor Mark Warner in 2005 and successfully continued with the support of Governor Tim Kaine. The Council has offered recommendations to the governor and legislature for better coordinating the state's overall education reform efforts from preschool to graduate school. For example, the Council has recommended that Virginia adopt a common standard for college readiness, align assessments with postsecondary expectations, improve the state's preparation of middle school students, and increase the number of students completing rigorous coursework in high school. In addition, the Council recommended to Governor Kaine that Virginia create a robust P-16 data system for advancing its high school redesign agenda.

Under Governor Donald Carcieri's leadership, **Rhode Island's** PK-16 Council has established itself as a focal point for high school redesign. The council guides policy in four major areas: validating state academic standards, improving Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education, expanding dual enrollment programs, and developing a longitudinal data system linked to unemployment data. By chairing the Council, Governor Carcieri not only remains informed on all of the central issues pertinent to high school redesign, but visibly strengthens public awareness around the state's redesign agenda.

P-16 councils are an emerging strategy for state policymakers seeking to mitigate the challenges posed by the fragmented system of education governance embedded in so many state structures. A strong, gubernatorial-led council can serve to centralize accountability in the hands of political authorities equipped to make reform changes in both tangible and symbolic ways that traditional non-streamlined structures cannot.

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## What's Next: How State Governance Structures Can Support High School Redesign

While policymakers have focused heavily on the curricular elements of high school redesign, all too often they neglect the role that governance systems play in supporting reform. Despite a few recent studies examining the role of education governance at the state level, there has not been a sustained effort to understand how a state's governance model—and the way it vests power in and holds political authorities accountable for education results—can maximize student achievement.

To free states to innovate and implement effective policies that raise achievement for all students, policymakers must establish agile and accountable governance structures that can best respond to student needs. States may want to consider enacting policies that:

**1) Encourage local education agencies to hold elections for school board members in November.** Research has shown that when local board elections are held concurrently with state and national elections, the public votes in much higher numbers and the electorate becomes engaged in local school issues.

**2) Create a single governance system for kindergarten (or early childhood) through postsecondary education.** Governors recognize that education is a single system in which higher education institutions train the teachers and leaders for schools that educate the future student bodies of these colleges and universities. A single education governance system with authority over the entire system can improve the coherence of policy development and implementation across and within all levels.

**3) Create a permanent statewide education commission.** Political or cultural circumstances in a state may prevent consolidating education governance. However, governors can create a permanent commission that brings together educators, policymakers, and business leaders to develop common goals, performance benchmarks, and education policies for the state's entire education system.

**4) Strengthen statewide governance or coordination of higher education.** In addition to creating a statewide education roundtable representing the different levels of education, governors can strengthen the state's capacity to coordinate the policies of individual colleges and universities with state-level governing or coordinating boards that have budgeting, policymaking, and data collection authority.

These recommendations were adapted from the existing NGA Center publication, *Improving the High School-to-College Transition Through Leadership and Governance*.

The NGA Center for Best Practices is the nation's only consulting firm dedicated to governors and their key policy staff. The Center's mission is to develop and disseminate innovative solutions to public policy challenges.

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