



NEWS RELEASE

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CEP Reports on How States Are Using Federal Stimulus Aid To Support Elementary and Secondary Education

Survey Results Reveal State Responses to Federal Education Priorities

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Dec. 3, 2009—Most states plan to support new federal priorities for education in the economic stimulus package, including adopting common core standards and applying for Race to the Top funding, though many express misgivings about state capacity and how best to meet some of the expectations for improving schools, according to a survey of states released today by the Center on Education Policy (CEP).

The report, *An Early Look at the Economic Stimulus Package and the Public Schools: Perspectives from State Leaders*, examines implementation of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provisions for elementary and secondary education. The report draws from a survey of state education agencies and governors' offices in 44 participating states and the District of Columbia. Subsequent reports in 2010 and 2011 will again survey state officials and will also have data from surveys of school districts.

While ARRA funding helped stave off education budget cuts, the relief may be a short-term fix given the grim fiscal outlooks faced by many states. Governors' advisors in 14 of the 24 states that responded to survey questions about state budgets expect their state's K-12 education funding to decrease in fiscal year 2010 – up from 9 of 24 responding states that reported decreases in fiscal 2009.

Interest in the administration's Race to the Top program is high, with 41 states reporting they plan to apply for a share of the \$4.3 billion in funds. States also report they will take an active role in overseeing use of ARRA funds.

States seem more certain about being able to fulfill the ARRA program assurances to create longitudinal data systems and adopt rigorous new academic standards than they are about how to meet the assurances to improve the effectiveness and distribution of teachers and turn around low-performing schools.

"States may find it easier to fulfill assurances relating to data, assessments, and standards because these goals can be accomplished by state actions and because they include more straightforward reforms that were already underway before ARRA was enacted," said Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO. "On the other hand, improving teacher effectiveness and turning around low-

performing schools are more explicitly local responsibilities, and their implementation will depend a great deal on local decisions.”

Nonetheless, more than one third of states plan to have reforms to turn around low-performing schools in place by 2010, according to the states surveyed for the study.

The report finds that 33 states are considering adopting the common standards for core subjects, which will fulfill the ARRA assurance for developing and implementing rigorous standards for college and career readiness. Twenty-one states identified the adoption of internationally benchmarked standards as the most critical reform for meeting the assurance for rigorous standards. Most states plan to create longitudinal data systems that will include a host of detailed, accessible test data and other information useful to tracking student achievement. The data reforms that states deemed to be most critical were linking K-12 and higher education data systems (17 states) and creating a teacher identifier system that matches teachers to students (14 states).

States reported that professional development is the most frequently mentioned overall reform strategy for improving teaching and one of the most popular for implementing new standards and turning around low-performing schools. According to the report, “The popularity of this strategy ... suggests that states may be choosing more traditional strategies over strategies that could turn out to be more expensive, controversial, or sweeping.”

States also reported that improving teacher professional development, recruitment and placement, and redesigning school schedules and calendars would be among their most popular strategies to reform low-performing schools using ARRA school improvement funds.

All 45 reporting states noted a problem with multiple or inconsistent reporting requirements imposed by ARRA or other federal, state, and non-governmental entities that monitor implementation. This was a major problem for 29 states and a minor problem for 16 states. A lack of administrative funds and the lack of state capacity were also cited by states as significant challenges.

“ARRA has already had a significant impact on both funding and education reform in public schools,” said Jennings. “States are also changing how public schools operate as a result of ARRA and are planning many further reforms.”

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Based in Washington, D.C. and founded in January 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national, independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent any special interests. Instead the Center helps citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.