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CONTACT: Chloe Louvouezo, (202) 955-9450, ext. 320, clouvouezo@communicationworks.com
Kari Hudnell, (202) 955-9450, ext. 314, khudnell@communicationworks.com

Report Card Grades States on Education Performance, Policy; Nation Scores High on Standards Policies, But Struggles to Provide Opportunities to Succeed

***Special Theme Explores New Push for Common Standards and Assessments;
States Cite Hurdles in Setting Common Expectations***

Grades and Highlights Reports Issued for All 50 States and D.C.

WASHINGTON—Jan. 14, 2010—The nation and many states face a continuing struggle to deliver a high-quality education to all students, according to *Education Week's* annual education report card. The nation received a C when graded across the six distinct areas of policy and performance tracked by *Quality Counts*, the most comprehensive ongoing assessment of the state of American education. Maryland topped the nation with a B-plus overall, followed closely by Massachusetts and New York, both of which earned a B. The majority of states received grades of C or lower.

States posted their highest scores for policies related to standards, assessments, and accountability. The nation as a whole earned a B in this area, with 20 states receiving grades of A or A-minus. The top-ranking states—Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and West Virginia—had near-perfect showings on the policies examined, many of which have been tracked since the report's inaugural edition in 1997.

"Over the years, states have made tremendous progress in adopting policies that establish standards for academic content, align assessments to those standards, and hold schools accountable for results," said Christopher B. Swanson, vice president of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. "In fact, many policies that were considered highly innovative when we first launched *Quality Counts* 13 years ago are now commonplace."

The report also finds that the nation has made little progress in improving the opportunities for students to succeed throughout their lives. The nation received a C-plus on the report's annual Chance-for-Success Index, the same grade as last year. Only one state—Massachusetts—earned an A, while Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New Jersey posted grades of A-minus. Three states received a D-plus. The EPE Research Center's Chance-for-Success Index provides a detailed look at the role that education plays as a person moves from childhood, through formal K-12 education, and into college and the workforce.

Quality Counts 2010, supported by the Pew Center on the States, also updates national and state grades in two other categories that are monitored on an ongoing basis: school finance and policies that aim to strengthen the teaching profession. The national grade in school finance dropped to a C from a C-plus last year, while the results for the teaching profession held steady with the nation earning a C.

SPECIAL FOCUS ON COMMON STANDARDS

Quality Counts 2010: Fresh Course, Swift Current—Momentum and Challenges in the New Surge Toward Common Standards also investigates the latest iteration of the national debate over common academic standards. An on-again, off-again fixture of the education policy landscape since at least the 1980s, interest in common academic standards and assessments has again swept the nation during the past year, fueled in large part by the Common Core State Standards Initiative led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. The report reviews the origins of the standards

movement and presents new reporting and analysis that highlight the challenges that current initiatives pose for administrators, educators, and state and local officials.

An original 50-state survey conducted by the EPE Research Center finds evidence of solid foundations that may facilitate a more unified approach toward defining common academic standards. When crafting and revising their academic standards, a large majority of states already look beyond their own borders for guidance. The work of national subject-matter organizations has influenced English/language arts or mathematics standards in more than 40 states, while just over half of those have examined the frameworks of other states to inform their own standards.

However, far fewer states (16) have engaged in the type of international comparisons or benchmarking that has received considerable attention in recent policy discussions. In addition, a number of states have reported challenges—ranging from the political to the practical—that they believe may complicate efforts to adopt common-core standards. The leading concerns, each raised by at least 15 states, include: securing a high level of input and support from stakeholders; possible disruptions to the state’s own policy efforts; and misalignments between state expectations and the common standards.

“A convergence of political and economic factors has generated a great deal of momentum behind the push for common standards right now,” Swanson added. “But the success of this movement will ultimately hinge on follow-through on key issues like aligning curriculum with the common standards, supporting high-quality instruction, and measuring student performance against the new expectations.”

REPORT EXAMINES PROGRESS, OPPORTUNITIES IN MATHEMATICS

To complement *Quality Counts 2010*’s exploration of reinvigorated national interest in common standards and assessments, the EPE Research Center created a new Math Progress Index, which comprises a dozen indicators that examine: levels of mathematics performance, trajectories of change over time, poverty-based disparities, and student access to opportunities that promote greater learning and successful school careers.

Results reveal that even the national leaders—Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire—fall shy of 80 points on the index’s 100-point scale. The highest- and lowest-performing states (Massachusetts and Louisiana, respectively) are separated by a 27-point gap, which would translate to a difference of roughly two to three full letter grades on a metric more akin to *Quality Counts*’ grading scale.

Some hopeful signs also emerge from a closer examination of the Math Progress Index. For example, since 2003, nearly every state has seen improvements in math achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress at both the 4th and 8th grade levels. Although economically disadvantaged students almost always have less access to experienced math teachers, states where poor students have more-equal access to such teachers post significantly smaller math-achievement gaps.

SPECIAL WEB-ONLY FEATURES AVAILABLE AT EDWEEK.ORG

- The full *Quality Counts 2010* report and interactive state report cards: www.edweek.org/go/qc10.
- State Highlights Reports for the 50 states and the District of Columbia featuring detailed, state-specific data and our comprehensive grading of the states across six categories of educational performance and policy: www.edweek.org/go/qc10/shr.
- A live Webinar featuring findings from the report on Jan. 19 at 2 p.m. EST and a live online chat with leading policy experts at 3 p.m. EST on Jan. 26.

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The EPE Research Center is the research division of the Bethesda, Md.-based nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education. It conducts policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the Quality Counts, Technology Counts, and Diplomas Count annual reports. The center also produces independent research reports and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources. The EPE Research Center is on the Web at www.edweek.org/rc.

The Pew Charitable Trusts applies the power of knowledge to solve today’s most challenging problems. The Pew Center on the States identifies and advances effective policy approaches to critical issues facing the states. Online at www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

The Foundations and Future of Common Standards

New Findings from *Quality Counts 2010: Fresh Course, Swift Current*

NOTE: Embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. EST on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2010

*About *Quality Counts 2010: Fresh Course, Swift Current**

Fresh Course, Swift Current—Momentum and Challenges in the New Surge Toward Common Standards will be released Jan. 14, 2010. The report provides a timely, in-depth investigation of the latest iteration of the national debate over common academic standards. An on-again, off-again fixture of the education-policy landscape since at least the 1980s, interest in developing common academic standards and assessments has again swept the nation during the past year. Through a unique combination of original journalism and research, the report reviews the origins of the standards movement and highlights the challenges that current initiatives pose for administrators, educators, and state and local officials.

To help guide your reporting, we have highlighted some of the key findings below. For the purposes of the national totals reported below, the District of Columbia is counted as a state. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

Key Findings

Over the years, **states have established firm foundations** that may allow them to move toward common academic standards.

- As of the 2008 edition of *Quality Counts*, all states had adopted academic-content standards in the core areas of English/language arts, mathematics, and science.
- By the 2009-10 school year, about half the states had developed grade- or course-specific standards across all grade spans in English/language arts (27 states) and mathematics (26). Slightly fewer have such detailed standards in social studies/history and science (23 and 22 respectively).
- States have also provided educators with supplementary resources or guides that elaborate on the official academic-standards documents. Forty-two states have such resources for all core-subject areas, while 39 states have tailored supplementary materials for particular student populations (e.g., English-language learners, special education).

More recently, states have engaged in a variety of **efforts to better connect academic-content standards** to day-to-day instruction in the classroom.

- For the 2009-10 school year, 49 states made assessment frameworks in English/language arts available to educators, while 45 states released sample test items.

- Thirty-eight states provided curriculum guides in English, with 31 states also offering sample lesson plans in that subject.
- Findings were nearly identical for mathematics.

States already look beyond their own borders when developing and revising their academic standards, with many seeking guidance from the same sources.

- In 45 states, academic standards for mathematics were influenced by some outside source, with 39 states reporting such influence in English/language arts.
- National organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Council of Teachers of English were the most common external sources of guidance, cited by 42 states for mathematics and 37 for English/language arts.
- Roughly half the states examined the frameworks of other states when developing their own standards, with even fewer states engaging in some form of international comparison or benchmarking.
- In all, 30 states were referenced at least once by their peers as an influence on their English or math standards. California, Indiana, and Massachusetts led the nation, with each mentioned at least 10 times.

Although 48 states and the District of Columbia have signed on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, states anticipate a variety of both **political and practical challenges** associated with adopting the initiative's recommendations for common standards.

- According to an original EPE Research Center survey, 18 states raised concerns about the high level of stakeholder input and support required to move a common-standards agenda forward in their states.
- Also frequently noted as potential challenges were: disruptions to ongoing state efforts (17 states); misalignment between state expectations and common standards (16); insufficient quality, content, or rigor of common standards (14); and complex testing and accountability implementation (14).
- Very few states, by contrast, reported expecting difficulties related to the initiative's aggressive timeline or possible conflicts with local control over schools.

Additional Resources

The 2010 release of *Quality Counts* will also include:

- The EPE Research Center's new **Math Progress Index**, which provides an in-depth state-by-state analysis of math performance, improvement, and opportunities.
- The **Chance-for-Success Index**, which grades the nation and states on 13 indicators capturing the critical role that education plays as a person moves from childhood, through the K-12 system, and into college and the workforce.
- The **annual update of national and state grades** in key areas of performance and policy, including: the Chance-for-Success Index; the teaching profession; standards, assessments, and accountability; and school finance.
- **State Highlights Reports**, individualized online reports featuring state-specific findings from *Quality Counts*, including our comprehensive state report cards.

All of these resources will be available on the *Education Week* Web site: www.edweek.org/go/qc10.

GRADING SUMMARY

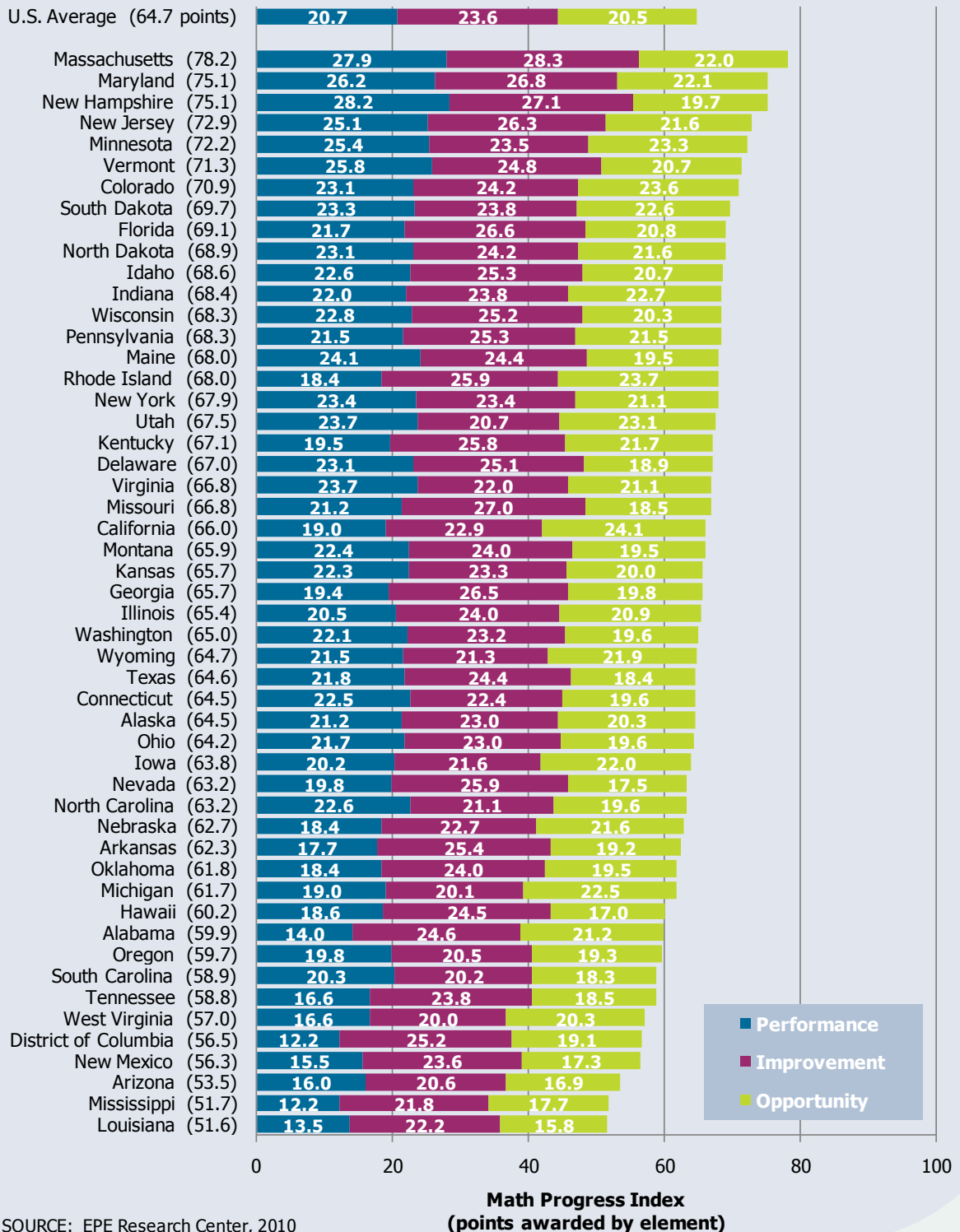
	OVERALL STATE GRADE			Quality Counts 2010		Quality Counts 2008		Quality Counts 2010		Quality Counts 2009		Quality Counts 2010		Quality Counts 2010	
				Chance for Success		K-12 Achievement		Standards, Assessments, & Accountability		Transitions & Alignment		Teaching Profession		School Finance	
	grade	score	rank	grade	rank	grade	rank	grade	rank	grade	rank	grade	rank	grade	rank
Alabama	C	75.3	31	C-	42	F	48	A-	12	C+	15	C+	18	C-	28
Alaska	C-	71.3	42	C	37	D+	30	C	40	C-	29	F	50	B-	11
Arizona	C-	70.8	46	C-	45	D	44	A-	18	C-	29	D	46	D+	43
Arkansas	B-	79.9	10	C-	46	D	34	A	7	B	6	B+	2	C	24
California	C+	76.8	19	C	41	D	38	A-	17	B-	10	C	20	C	23
Colorado	C	72.5	39	B-	14	C-	19	C+	32	D	44	D+	37	C-	37
Connecticut	C	76.4	25	A-	4	D	35	C+	39	C-	29	D+	40	B+	5
Delaware	C+	76.5	22	C+	24	C-	16	A-	20	D	44	C	22	C+	16
District of Columbia	D+	68.3	51	C+	31	F	50	C+	37	D+	38	D-	49	—	—
Florida	B-	80.3	8	C	35	C	7	A	5	C+	15	B	4	C-	31
Georgia	B-	79.5	13	C	38	D+	28	A-	14	B	6	B-	8	C+	19
Hawaii	C	76.1	26	C+	27	D	37	B+	23	C-	29	C+	17	—	—
Idaho	C-	70.9	44	C	32	C-	17	A-	16	D-	48	D	48	D	49
Illinois	C-	71.8	41	B-	17	D+	27	C	46	D+	38	D+	35	C-	36
Indiana	C+	77.0	17	C+	29	C-	25	A	2	C+	15	D	45	C	26
Iowa	C+	76.8	20	B	12	C-	20	C	45	C+	15	B-	12	C	27
Kansas	C	73.4	36	B-	15	C	12	B-	29	D-	48	D	42	C+	20
Kentucky	C	73.3	37	C	40	D+	33	C	41	C	22	C+	15	C-	33
Louisiana	C	75.8	27	C-	48	D-	47	A	3	C	22	B	3	D+	40
Maine	C+	76.5	21	C+	26	C	10	C-	49	B-	10	C-	31	B	8
Maryland	B+	87.5	1	B+	6	B	2	B+	22	A	1	B	5	B	7
Massachusetts	B	82.5	3	A	1	B	1	B	25	C	22	C	23	B-	10
Michigan	C+	77.6	15	C+	30	D	43	A-	13	B	6	C-	33	C+	17
Minnesota	C	75.4	29	B+	5	C	8	C	47	C	22	D+	39	C	22
Mississippi	C-	70.0	47	D+	49	F	51	B+	24	C	22	D	43	D	45
Missouri	C-	72.4	40	C+	28	D	39	B-	31	D+	38	C	26	C-	32
Montana	C-	70.9	45	B-	21	C-	15	D+	50	D	44	C-	29	C-	35
Nebraska	D+	68.9	49	B-	16	D+	31	D-	51	F	51	C-	32	C	21
Nevada	D+	68.7	50	D+	51	D-	45	C+	36	D+	38	C-	27	D	48
New Hampshire	C	75.6	28	A-	3	C	9	C	43	C-	29	D	44	C+	13
New Jersey	B-	80.4	7	A-	2	B-	3	C	43	C+	15	C-	30	B+	2
New Mexico	C	76.4	24	D+	50	D-	46	A-	18	A	2	C	21	C-	30
New York	B	84.0	2	B	13	C-	18	A	11	B+	4	B-	11	B+	4
North Carolina	C	75.1	32	C	33	D+	32	B+	21	D+	38	B	6	D+	44
North Dakota	C	74.6	35	B	8	C	11	B	26	D+	38	C-	33	D+	38
Ohio	B-	81.2	5	C+	25	C-	14	A	3	B-	10	C+	14	C+	18
Oklahoma	C	76.4	23	C-	43	D	36	A	9	C+	15	B-	9	D+	41
Oregon	C-	71.0	43	C	34	D	40	C+	35	C+	15	F	51	C-	29
Pennsylvania	B-	80.5	6	B	10	C+	5	B-	30	B-	10	B-	10	C+	15
Rhode Island	C	75.0	33	B-	20	D	42	C+	33	C-	29	D+	38	B+	3
South Carolina	B-	79.8	11	C	36	D	41	A	7	C	22	A	1	C	25
South Dakota	C-	69.5	48	B-	19	C-	23	C	48	D-	48	D	46	D+	39
Tennessee	C+	76.9	18	C-	44	D+	29	A-	15	B+	4	C+	19	D	46
Texas	C+	78.1	14	C	39	C	13	A	6	B	6	C	24	D+	42
Utah	C	72.7	38	B-	18	C-	26	C+	34	C-	29	D+	36	D	47
Vermont	B-	79.5	12	B+	7	C+	4	B	27	C-	29	C-	28	B	6
Virginia	B-	82.3	4	B	9	C	6	A	9	B-	10	B-	13	C+	14
Washington	C	75.4	30	B-	22	C-	22	B-	28	C	22	C	25	C-	34
West Virginia	B-	80.2	9	C-	47	F	49	A	1	A	2	B-	7	C+	12
Wisconsin	C+	77.2	16	B	11	C-	21	C	42	C-	29	C+	16	B	9
Wyoming	C	74.7	34	C+	23	C-	24	C+	38	D	44	D+	41	A-	1
U.S.	C	75.9		C+		D+		B		C		C		C	

Note: The District of Columbia and Hawaii are single-district jurisdictions. As a result, it is not possible to calculate measures of financial equity, which capture the distribution of funding across districts within a state. The District of Columbia and Hawaii do not receive grades for school finance.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010. This table integrates findings across three years of indicators reported in the 2008, 2009, and 2010 editions of *Quality Counts*.

THE MATH PROGRESS INDEX

To complement *Quality Counts 2010*'s exploration of common standards and assessments on the national stage, the EPE Research Center conducted an original analysis intended to examine state performance in one core academic area—mathematics. Built around the dimensions of performance, improvement, and opportunity, the Math Progress Index investigates academic performance in mathematics nationwide, trajectories of change over time, and student access to educational supports that promote greater learning and successful school careers. The index comprises a dozen indicators drawn largely from the National Assessment of Educational Progress as well as data on Advanced Placement testing in mathematics from the College Board, and places an emphasis on equitable outcomes and opportunities as they relate to the experiences of economically disadvantaged students. The highest possible score on the index is 100 points.

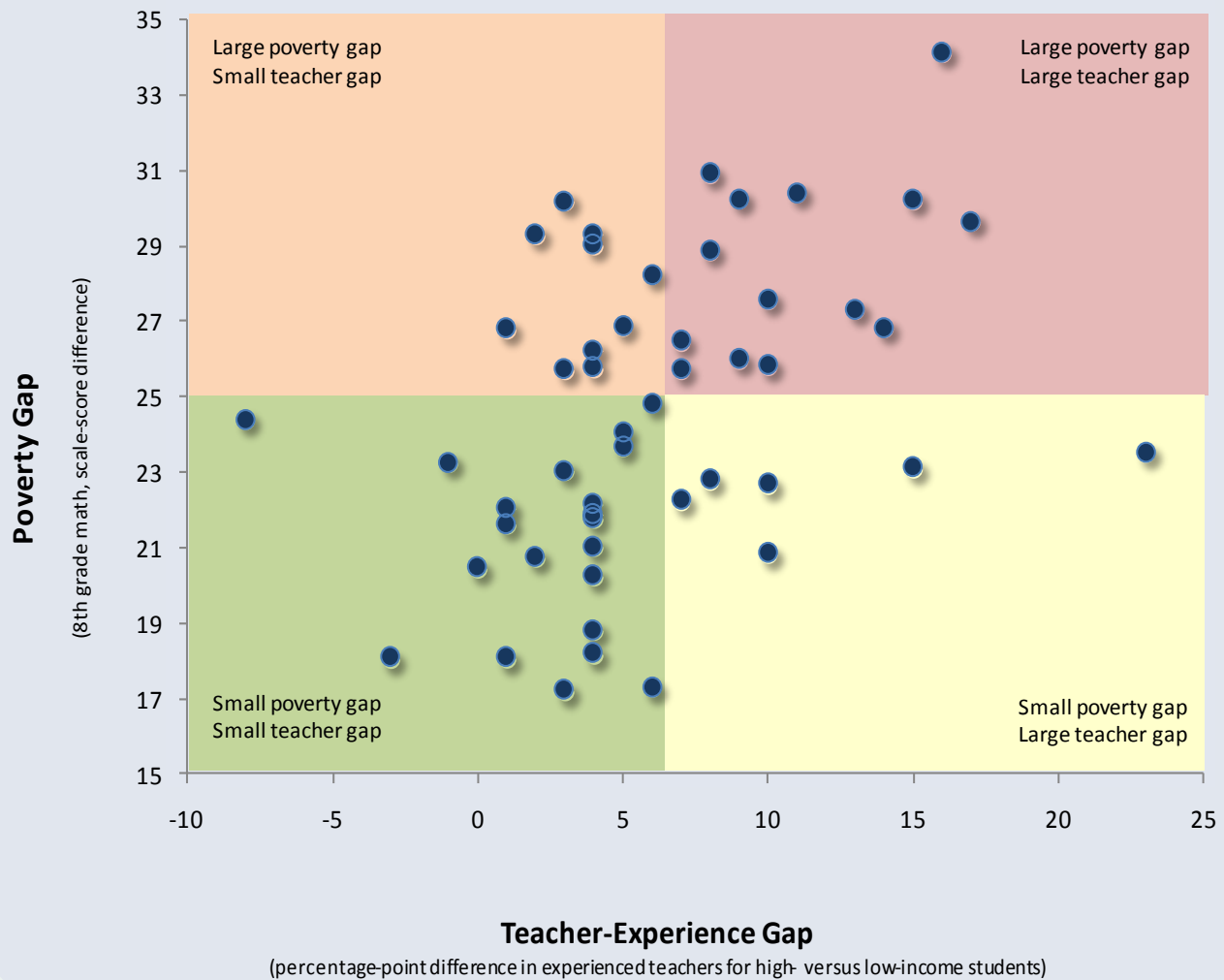


SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

Math Progress Index

Aligning Teacher Experience and Student Need

In all but a small handful of states, low-income students are less likely to be taught by experienced math teachers than are their more affluent peers. Significant poverty-based gaps in math achievement can also be found in every state, although the size of these disparities varies considerably. However, an original analysis by the EPE Research Center finds consistently smaller performance gaps in states that more effectively target teacher talent to student need. In other words, achievement levels are more equal when low- and higher-income students have more equitable opportunities to learn from experienced teachers.



COMMON STANDARDS

States Cite Hurdles in Path to Common Standards

Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia have agreed to take part in the Common Core State Standards Initiative. This process, led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, seeks to develop a set of high-quality, common academic standards in math and English/language arts, which then would be adopted by participating states.

The Editorial Projects in Education Research Center asked states to describe the challenges they expected to face in adopting Common Core content standards and implementing the common assessments that many see as a necessary complement to the standards initiative. The word-cloud graphic below illustrates the words and phrases most commonly used by the states to describe those challenges. Expressions mentioned more often appear in larger text size.

Navigating Politics and Process

States often cited concerns related to the process of developing the common academic standards themselves, as well as the larger political and fiscal landscape surrounding these efforts.

- High stakeholder input/support required (18 states)
- Inadequate information to make plans (13)
- High financial costs (11)
- Common Core process too top-down (5)
- Timeline overly aggressive (3)
- Conflict with local control (2)



Pointing to Practical Concerns

States also cited a host of practical concerns about the quality and content of the standards or assessments, as well as the feasibility of implementing them in practice.

- Disruption of ongoing state efforts (17 states)
- Misalignment between state and common standards (16)
- Insufficient quality, content, and rigor of common standards (14)
- Complex testing and accountability implementation (14)
- Need to coordinate with other states (7)
- Timing considerations (4)
- States bound by pre-existing testing contracts (3)

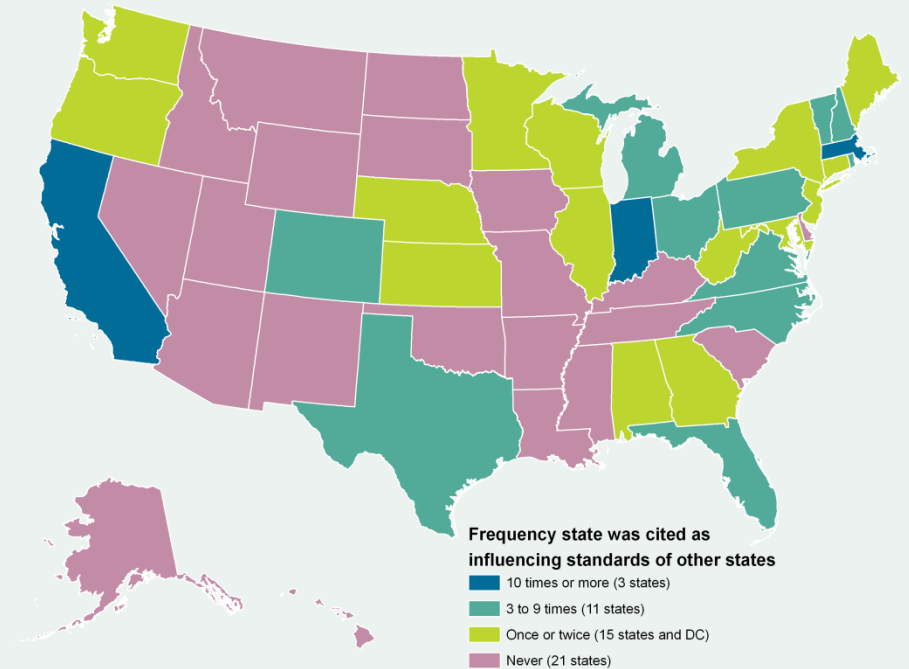
Common Standards

States Build Standards on Existing Models

States Look to Their Peers

Many states look to their neighbors to inform the writing and rewriting of their own academic-content standards. In fact, 30 states were cited as influencing the way in which their peers defined expectations for student learning and performance in either English/language arts or mathematics.

The standards of California, Indiana, and Massachusetts were most frequently mentioned as models, with each cited at least 10 times by other states.

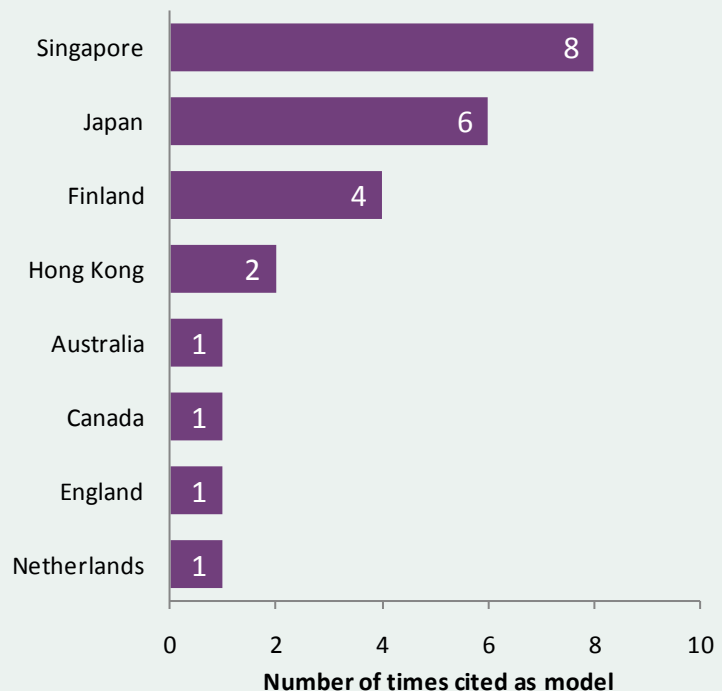


SOURCE: EPE Research Center 2010

States Look Internationally

In an increasingly globalized economy, education policymakers now frequently note that U.S. students must be able to compete with students from around the world. To better ensure that their students are learning at the same levels as peers overseas, states are beginning to compare their own academic-content standards against international models.

Standards from eight nations were cited as references for state standards in English/language arts and/or mathematics. States mentioned Singapore's mathematics standards eight times, making them the most commonly cited model.



SOURCE: EPE Research Center 2010

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