

Governors' Top Education Issues: State-of-the-States 2014

By Jennifer Thomsen
March 2014

Education issues were again at the forefront when the leaders of 42 states and the District of Columbia outlined their priorities in their 2014 state-of-the-state addresses. Governors outlined their plans for increasing the quality and availability of education – from preschool through postsecondary – to spur economic growth and enhance the quality of life of each state's citizens.

This brief highlights the most frequently cited education priorities of the nation's governors:

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ECS' online database of the 2014 state-of-the-state addresses is searchable [by state](#) and [by issue](#). The database includes most years from 2005 to 2014.

- [Career and technical education](#) – At least 13 governors and the D.C. mayor outlined proposals improving or expanding CTE options for students.
- [Dual enrollment](#) – Governors in at least 10 states discussed college- and career-ready high school graduates, many outlining plans to increase funding for, or access to, dual enrollment programs.
- [Early learning](#) – At least 14 governors and the mayor of D.C. highlighted preschool proposals in their 2014 addresses, focused primarily on expanding access through increased funding, universal pre-K and public-private partnerships.
- [Economic and workforce development](#) – At least 13 governors described plans to create or strengthen partnerships between their education systems and business communities, with a focus on ensuring graduates are prepared to meet state workforce needs.
- [Higher education](#) – Governors in at least 17 states outlined proposals related to higher education, most focused on tuition, financial aid and affordability. Five governors called for a freeze on tuition rates.
- [K-12 finance](#) – At least a dozen governors and the D.C. mayor have made the restoration of K-12 funding a priority, following cuts made in the economic recession.
- [Teacher compensation](#) – Governors in at least 10 states included teacher compensation policy in their addresses, with calls for pay increases or compensation policy changes.

Note that governors in eight states – Arkansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas and Virginia – either are not scheduled to give or have yet to give annual state-of-the-state addresses this year.

Career and technical education

Recognizing that career and technical education can play a key role in workforce and economic development and increase student engagement and graduation rates, at least 13 governors and the mayor of D.C. outlined proposals improving or expanding CTE options for students.

Highlights: Career and technical education	
Delaware Gov. Jack Markell	Called for the rollout of a new two-year comprehensive program in manufacturing technologies for high school juniors and seniors focusing on mechanical, electrical and computer engineering that will lead to nationally recognized manufacturing certificates.
Indiana Gov. Mike Pence	Called for making career and vocational education an option for every high school student by expanding curricula in high schools and developing new partnerships with local businesses to support career and technical education on a regional basis.
South Dakota Gov. Denis Daugaard	Proposed investing \$5 million to support a series of Governor Grants for career and technical education to help schools join together to strengthen their current offerings.
Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam	Called for implementation of a scholarship for adults to attend Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology free of charge.
West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin	Called for allocation of funding to place math and English teachers in career centers for career and technical education students and proposed providing an additional \$500,000 to continue expansion of Advanced Career Programs to help students pursuing technical careers.
Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker	Proposed a Blueprint for Prosperity to help provide more opportunities and to increase the Wisconsin Fast Forward program by \$35 million, with a focus on three new areas: (1) investing in technical colleges to eliminate the waiting list in high-demand fields such as manufacturing, agriculture and information technology; (2) helping high school students get training in high demand jobs through dual enrollment programs between high schools and technical colleges; (3) supporting programs to help people with disabilities enter the workforce, as outlined in the Year of A Better Bottom Line initiative.

Dual enrollment

In an ongoing effort to ensure that students graduate from high school well prepared for college or the workforce, governors in at least 10 states laid out proposals related to high schools, many of which focused on increasing funding for and access to dual enrollment programs.

Highlights: Dual enrollment	
Delaware Gov. Jack Markell	Proposed a scholarship program that would allow all low-income students with college potential to take credit-bearing postsecondary courses during their senior year of high school.

Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy	Proposed partnering with the IBM Corporation and other local companies to develop a Connecticut version of P-TECH, IBM's acclaimed, innovative high school and college partnership, which will allow students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree.
Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant	Called for additional funding to expand dual credit/dual enrollment programs for at-risk high school students and for students who wish to obtain work certificates.
Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam	Called for expansion of the Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support Program (SAILS), which gives students extra support in math during their senior year in high school so they can avoid remediation when they enter college.

Early learning

Understanding a large body of research shows high-quality pre-kindergarten can yield big returns for children and their communities, governors in at least 14 states and the mayor of D.C. highlighted early learning proposals in their 2014 addresses. The proposals focused primarily on expanding access to more young children in their states through increased funding, universal pre-K and public-private partnerships.

Highlights: Early learning	
Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy	Committed Connecticut to achieving universal pre-kindergarten, starting with an additional 1,020 early childhood opportunities next year, and expanding to 4,000 new opportunities by 2019.
Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie	Proposed strengthening private and nonprofit sector partnerships in early education by the passage of constitutional amendment to provide for these partnerships.
Indiana Gov. Mike Pence	Called for establishment of a voluntary pre-K program to help low-income kids in the form of a voucher to be used where parents decide, including church-based, private or public programs.
Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon	Proposed tripling the amount of funding for preschool.

Economic and workforce development

As states continue their recovery from the recent recession, economic and workforce development is on many leaders' minds. At least 13 governors described plans to create or strengthen partnerships between their education systems and business communities, with a focus on ensuring that graduates are prepared to fill the workforce needs of businesses in the state.

Highlights: Economic and workforce development	
Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley	Called for legislation creating a Statewide Workforce Council of business and industry leaders who will advise educators and colleges on the workforce needs in each region.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal	Proposed the Governor's High Demand Career Initiative through which the heads of economic development, the Georgia university system, technical colleges and schools, and private sector industries will discuss future workforce needs and give institutions guidance on preparing tomorrow's workforce.
Idaho Gov. C.L. Otter	Called for improvements to the Workforce Development Training Fund program to allow more targeted use of grants for training employees not just for individual businesses, but for the market-driven growth of industry sectors that add value to the state's economy.
New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan	Proposed a new effort to partner manufacturing companies directly with classes at local schools to build relationships that will lead to a stronger workforce pipeline.

Higher education

As tuition expenses continue to increase, access to postsecondary education moves further out of reach for many students. Understanding that higher education is critical in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, governors in at least 17 states outlined proposals related to postsecondary education, a majority of them focused on tuition, financial aid and affordability issues. At least five governors called for a freeze on tuition rates.

Highlights: Higher education	
Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper	Proposed adoption of a need-based financial allocation process that would support Coloradans with the highest need and incentivize retention and timely completion.
Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy	Proposed a "Go Back to Get Ahead" program for students who began a degree program but have been out of school for more than 18 months, offering one free course for each course taken at a public college, up to three free courses in total, if the student matriculates.
Florida Gov. Rick Scott	Recommended performance funding for postsecondary institutions, with \$80 million in the proposed budget for those colleges and universities that graduate students best positioned to get a job.
New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo	Proposed providing full tuition scholarships to any SUNY or CUNY college or university to the top 10 percent of high school graduates if they pursue a STEM career and then work in New York for five years.
Ohio Gov. John Kasich	Introduced student performance-based funding for colleges and universities, proposing that, rather than basing funding on enrollment, funding will be provided only if students complete courses or degrees.
Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett	Called for launch of the Ready to Succeed Scholarship program to provide an additional \$25 million for middle income students who want to earn a two- or four-year degree, with grants going to academically achieving students who otherwise may not be able to attain enough financial aid.
Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam	Called for the investment of \$13 million to fund the Complete College Act, which incentivizes colleges and universities based on the number of graduates instead of enrollment.

K-12 finance

Many school districts across the country experienced big decreases in funding in the years after the 2008 economic crisis. Looking to restore some of that funding, governors in at least 12 states and the mayor of D.C. have made K-12 funding a priority.

Highlights: K-12 funding	
District of Columbia Mayor Vincent Gray	Proposed an additional investment of \$116 million in public education, which would include for the first time dedicated funds for the District's neediest students in the form of an "at-risk" weight aimed at narrowing the resource gap for students who have been historically underfunded, including middle and high school students, English-language learners, adult learners and students in alternative schools.
Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant	Called for a high-growth funding formula for districts that continue to take on more students.
Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon	Proposed increasing K-12 funding by \$278 million to put the state on a path to fully funding the foundation formula.
South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley	Called for school districts to receive a 20 percent increase per student for every child that falls into the poverty index, totaling \$100 million in additional state dollars.
Washington Gov. Jay Inslee	Proposed a \$200 million investment in local school districts, and called for funding a cost-of-living adjustment for educators.

Teacher compensation

A high-quality education system depends on having highly effective teachers in every classroom. Seeking to attract and retain great teachers, governors in at least 10 states included teacher compensation in their address, with calls for pay increases or compensation policy changes.

Highlights: Teacher compensation	
Delaware Gov. Jack Markell	Called for an improved approach to educator compensation that will attract and retain great teachers and allow teachers to receive additional compensation for pursuing leadership opportunities while remaining in the classroom.
New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez	Proposed supporting teachers with advancement opportunities such as being able to become a principal in two years instead of six and called for raising minimum starting teachers' salaries by 10 percent.
New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo	Called for the creation of a Teacher Excellence Fund to help school districts reward the most effective teachers by making highly effective teachers in participating school districts eligible for annual supplemental compensation.
West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin	Proposed an across the board salary increase of 2 percent for all teachers and education service personnel.

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For more information

The Education Commission of the States has reviewed governors' state-of-the-state addresses for education priorities since 2005. Visit our [online database](#) to learn about education priorities in previous years. The database is searchable by year, by state and by issue.

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