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Education Policy Groups Partner to Launch Multi-State College & Career-Ready Policy Institute

Eight Leading States Selected to Develop Cutting Edge College- and Career-Ready Assessment and Accountability Policies

WASHINGTON, D.C. – September 10, 2008 – Today Achieve, the Data Quality Campaign, the EducationCounsel, Jobs for the Future and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices announced an unprecedented partnership to provide guidance, advice and support to states through the “College & Career-Ready Policy Institute” (“Institute”). The Institute is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Institute is designed to help states put K-12 assessment and accountability systems in place that will ensure that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. In addition, the Institute will also assist states in developing strategies for building the capacity of districts and schools so that all students successfully reach higher standards. The support to states by the partners will include multi-state gatherings where state teams will participate in cross-state leadership sessions, the first of which begins today in Washington D.C., as well as in-state, customized technical assistance.

The eight Institute states, all participants in Achieve’s American Diploma Project Network, are **Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio and Tennessee**. The Institute states were chosen through a competitive selection process based on the states’ strong leadership and commitment to a college- and career readiness agenda as demonstrated by their success in raising academic standards and graduation requirements for all students. These states are now well positioned to tackle the difficult, but essential, task of ensuring that their assessment and accountability systems are likewise anchored in college- and career readiness and that state education policies cohesively support this critical goal.

The members of the team from Arkansas attending the meeting in Washington are: Dr. Ken James, Commissioner of Education; Dr. Jim Purcell, Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education; Luke Gordy, Executive Director of the Arkansas for Education Reform Foundation; Julie Johnson Thompson, Director of Communications for the Arkansas Department of Education; and Heather Gage, Special Advisor to the Commissioner of Education.

Specifically, the Institute will assist states in:

- Developing goals for improving high school graduation, college- and career readiness and postsecondary attainment rates;
- Putting in place a comprehensive state assessment system that is aligned with college- and career-ready standards and that measures student progress over time;

- Establishing a coherent system of accountability that makes college- and career readiness a central priority and that “incentivizes” proper actions, promotes accurate judgments, and drives effective supports and interventions;
- Designing a statewide system of supports and interventions to assist low performing districts and schools and ensure continuous improvement for all schools and districts around the state; and
- Providing educational options and supports to boost the achievement of low-income students and other groups at high-risk of not achieving college-ready standards and college success.

In addition to assisting the eight states in developing and implementing a comprehensive college- and career-ready policy, it is hoped that the lessons learned from these Institute states can assist other states also committed to the college- and career-ready agenda, therefore boosting the academic prospects for even more U.S. students.

More Information on the College & Career-Ready Institute Partners:

Achieve

Created by the nation’s governors and business leaders, Achieve, is a bipartisan, non-profit organization that helps states raise academic standards, improve assessments and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary success. At the 2005 National Education Summit, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network, a coalition that has grown to 33 states, educating nearly 80% of public school students in the United States. The ADP Network is committed to aligning high school expectations with the demands of college, career and life. For more information about Achieve, go to: www.achieve.org.

Data Quality Campaign

The Data Quality Campaign is a national, collaborative effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the collection, availability and use of high-quality education data and to implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. The campaign aims to provide tools and resources that will assist state development of quality longitudinal data systems, while also providing a national forum for reducing duplication of effort and promoting greater coordination and consensus among the organizations focusing on improving data quality, access and use. The DQC has 14 Managing Partners and numerous Endorsing Partners. For the list of partners and more information, Please visit www.DataQualityCampaign.org.

EducationCounsel

EducationCounsel is an innovative law, policy, strategy, and advocacy organization committed to strengthening education systems, closing achievement gaps, and expanding access to educational opportunities. The firm collaborates with education leaders from across the country, including state and local leaders, higher education officials, associations, and pioneering private and public entities to improve educational outcomes for all students. EducationCounsel's multidisciplinary team seeks creative, research-based solutions to the complex challenges facing the education community. The firm's collaborative approach helps clients effectively address every educational stage, from birth and pre-school through elementary, secondary and higher education.

Jobs for the Future

Jobs for the Future creates strategies for educational and economic opportunity. We develop promising education and labor-market models, expand successful models in communities across the country, and shape the policy environment that enables American families and companies to compete in a global economy. To learn more, visit www.jff.org.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit www.nga.org.