

Nebraska

State Highlights 2010

Fresh Course, Swift Current

Momentum and Challenges

In the New Surge

Toward Common Standards

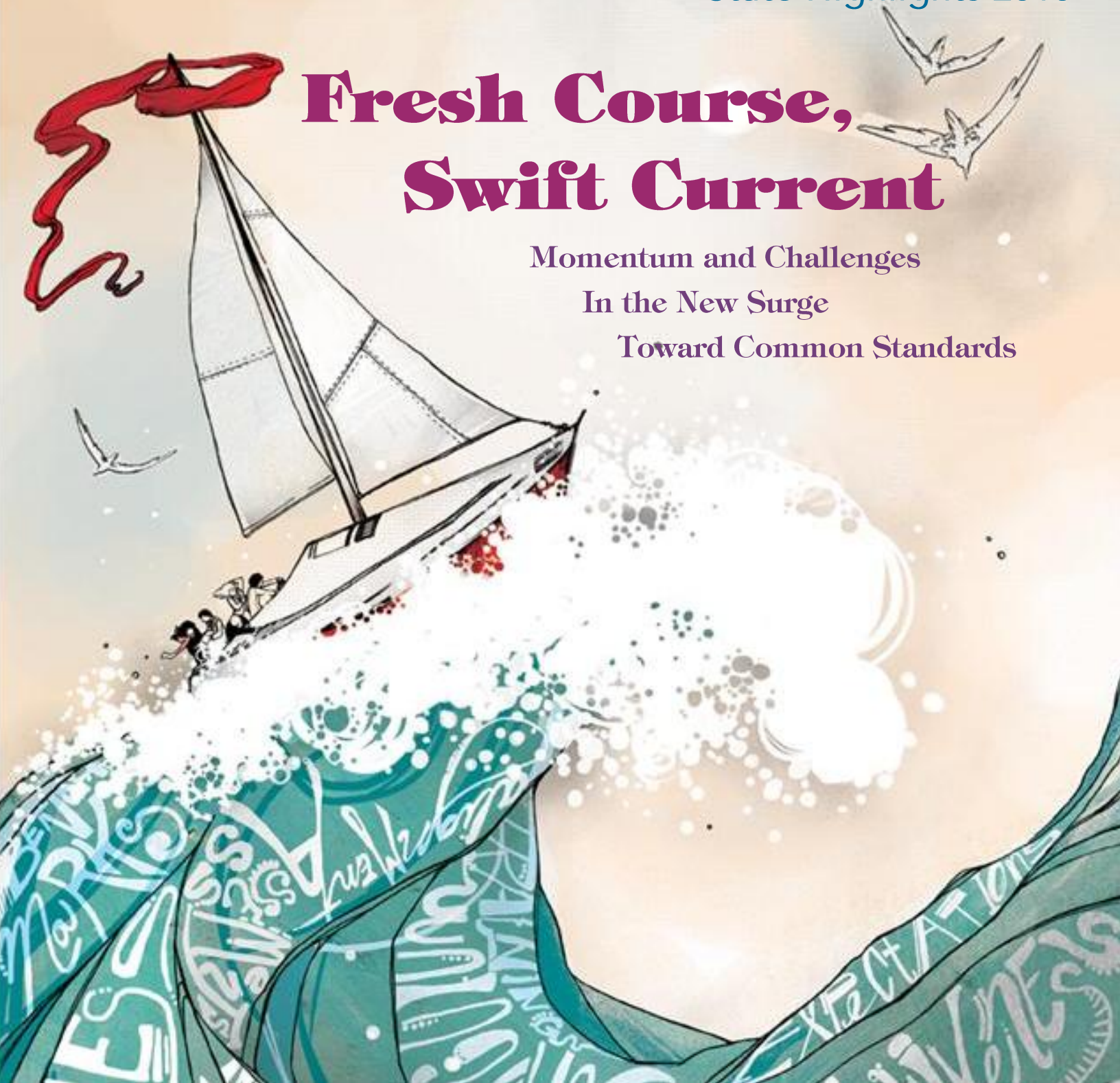


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A Special Supplement to *Education Week's*
QUALITY COUNTS
2010



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Nebraska—State Highlights 2010

A special supplement to *Education Week's Quality Counts 2010*

Fresh Course, Swift Current: Momentum and Challenges in the New Surge Toward Common Standards

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About this Report

The 14th annual edition of *Education Week's Quality Counts* continues the report's tradition of tracking key education indicators and grading the states on their policy efforts and outcomes. This year's special theme—the latest iteration of the national debate over common academic standards—is complemented by updated 50-state information on policies and conditions in four of the areas monitored by the report on an ongoing basis: the Chance-for-Success Index; the teaching profession; standards, assessments, and accountability; and school finance. The report also presents a new analysis of outcomes and opportunities in mathematics. Most of the indicators that appear in *Quality Counts* are based on original analyses and state-survey data from the EPE Research Center. The report also supplements those data with information published by other organizations.

In past years, the print edition of *Quality Counts* has provided an annual update on state policy initiatives in several key areas and has also used original data analyses to track state educational progress and performance in three other areas. Last year, *Quality Counts* moved to a modular research design in which the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center surveys the states about policy issues on an every-other-year rotation. This approach was designed to lessen the burden on state respondents without compromising our timely reporting on key educational policy developments.

In order to provide a comprehensive perspective on state policy and performance, the 2010 State Highlights Reports integrate findings across multiple years of indicators reported in the 2008, 2009, and 2010 editions of *Quality Counts*. This approach allows us to capture state standings across all six topics that constitute the analytic framework of *Quality Counts*. The overall state letter grades awarded in the State Highlights Reports are based on the following categories: Chance for Success; transitions and alignment; school finance; K-12 achievement; standards, assessments, and accountability; and the teaching profession.

Overall findings from *Quality Counts* show that some states perform consistently well or poorly across the full range of graded categories. However, a closer examination of the rankings reveals that most states post a strong showing in at least one area. This suggests that while broad evaluations of state performance can be useful, a more thorough reading of the results presented in this State Highlights Report will provide a more nuanced perspective on the educational condition of the nation and of individual states.

Editorial Projects in Education Research Center
January 2010

About Editorial Projects in Education

Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, *Digital Directions*, the *Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook*, and the Top School Jobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The **EPE Research Center** conducts annual 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, contributes original data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week*, and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources.

QUALITY COUNTS 2010 GRADING SUMMARY

OVERALL GRADE

A state's overall grade is the average of the scores for the six graded categories.

Nebraska: **D+**

Rank: 49

Nation: C

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www.edweek.org/go/qc10/calculator

	Nebraska		How did the average state score?
	grade	(rank)	
Chance for success (2010)	B-	(16)	C+
Standards, assessments, and accountability (2010)	D-	(51)	B
The teaching profession (2010)	C-	(32)	C
School finance (2010)	C	(21)	C
Transitions and alignment (2009)	F	(51)	C
K-12 achievement (2008)	D+	(31)	D+

Quality Counts Grading Breakdown

This table reports the detailed scoring behind the grades for the six major topics examined in *Quality Counts*. Scores for those major categories are the average of the respective subcategory scores.

	Nebraska	U.S. Average		Nebraska	U.S. Average
Chance for success (2010)			The teaching profession (2010)		
<i>Early foundations</i>	89.8	81.1	<i>Accountability for quality</i>	73.5	75.5
<i>School years</i>	77.6	74.8	<i>Incentives & allocation</i>	69.2	70.8
<i>Adult outcomes</i>	80.8	80.1	<i>Building & supporting capacity</i>	66.7	73.5
Standards, assessments, and accountability (2010)			School finance (2010)		
<i>Standards</i>	60.7	84.1	<i>Equity</i>	90.6	85.3
<i>Assessments</i>	65.0	84.2	<i>Spending</i>	61.4	65.8
<i>School accountability</i>	60.0	84.3			
Transitions and alignment (2009)			K-12 achievement (2008)		
<i>Early-childhood education</i>	70.0	81.8	<i>Status</i>	64.2	62.4
<i>College readiness</i>	50.0	59.8	<i>Change</i>	67.5	71.5
<i>Economy and workforce</i>	50.0	86.3	<i>Equity</i>	69.9	77.9

Grading Curve A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (0-59)

COMMON STANDARDS

Context for Common Standards

The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association are coordinating a state-led effort to develop common standards in English/language arts and mathematics. The architects of the Common Core State Standards Initiative aim to base those standards on evidence about best practices and international benchmarking. The draft college-readiness standards released by the initiative in the fall of 2009 cite standards from national organizations, states, and high-performing nations as references. The information below provides context for these efforts by indicating the sources informing current state content standards as well as the state agency or institution most likely to formally approve any common standards.

State-Standards Context

The national summary column indicates the total number of states.

From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska	Nation
Sources Informing State Academic Standards		
Standards from national organizations used as model		
English/language arts (2009-10)	No	37 states
Mathematics (2009-10)	No	42
Science (2009-10)	No	39
Social studies/history (2009-10)	No	30
Standards from other states used as model		
English/language arts (2009-10)	No	22
Mathematics (2009-10)	No	22
Science (2009-10)	No	20
Social studies/history (2009-10)	No	15
Standards from other nations used as model		
English/language arts (2009-10)	No	4
Mathematics (2009-10)	No	16
Science (2009-10)	No	10
Social studies/history (2009-10)	No	1
This State Serves as a Model for Others		Number of states cited by other states
Number of states using this state's English/language arts standards as model (2009-10)		20
Number of states using this state's mathematics standards as model (2009-10)		26
Number of states using this state's science standards as model (2009-10)		21
Number of states using this state's social studies/history standards as model (2009-10)		19
Common Core State Standards Initiative Status		
State signed memorandum supporting Common Core State Standards Initiative (2009-10)	Yes	48 states and the District of Columbia
Likely authority for formally approving common standards (2009-10)	state board	34 state board only
Likely authority for formally approving common assessments (2009-10)	state board	29 state board only

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)

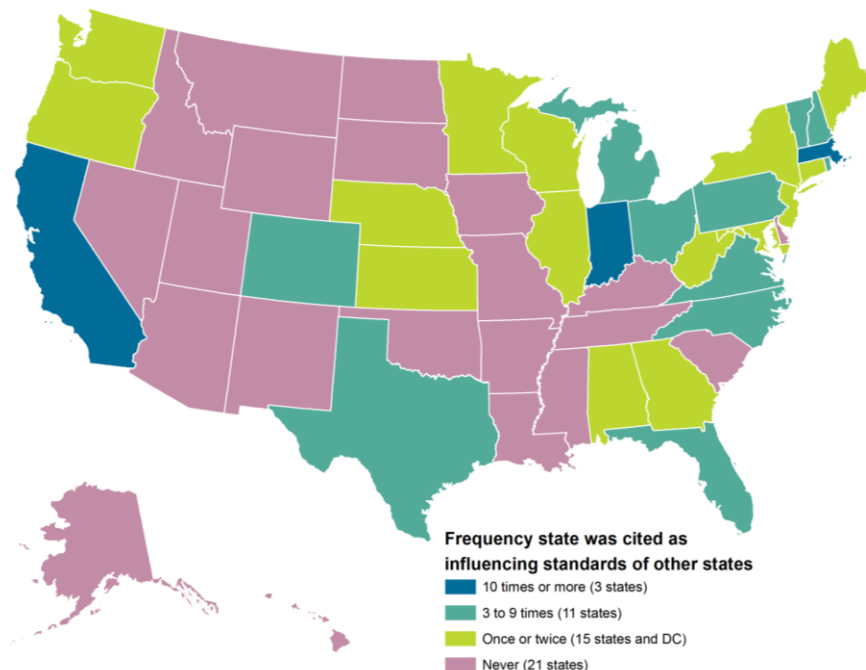
NOTE: Word-cloud image created using Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>).

BUILDING ON 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.

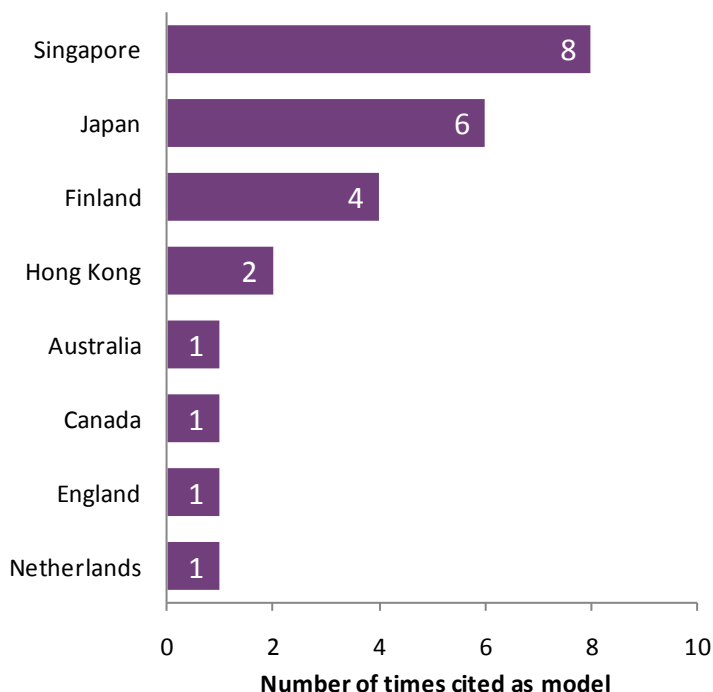
The standards of California, Indiana, and Massachusetts were most frequently mentioned as models, with each cited at least 10 times by other states.



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.



MATH PROGRESS INDEX

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.

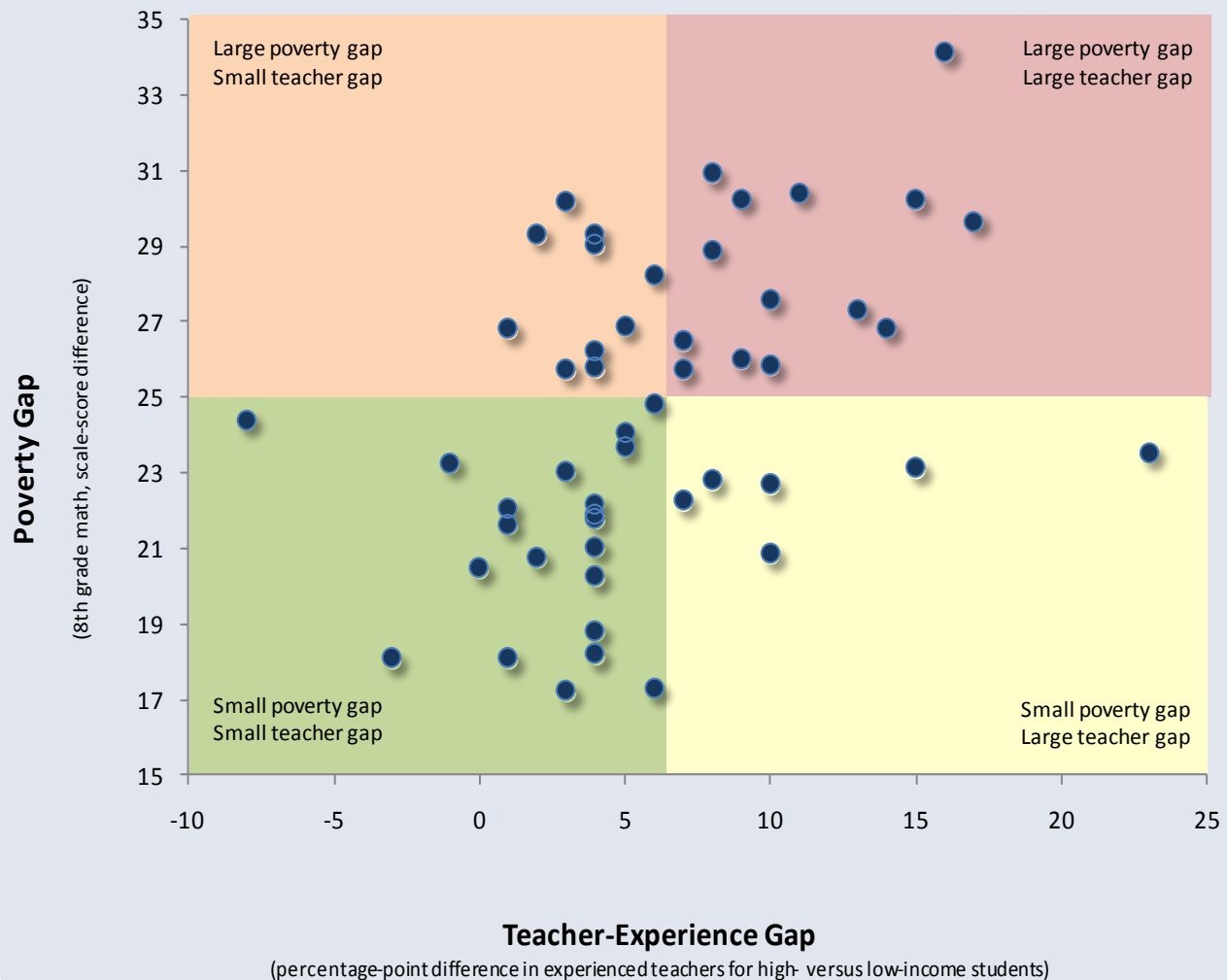
State Mathematics Indicators

Poverty status is measured by students' eligibility for the National School Lunch Program. Poverty gap is the difference between noneligible and eligible students.

From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska		National
	State Average	State Rank	Average
Performance			
4th grade – Percent proficient or above on NAEP (2009)	37.9%	30	38.4%
8th grade – Percent proficient or above on NAEP (2009)	34.6%	27	32.6%
Poverty gap – 8th grade NAEP scale score (2009)	27.3	38	26.9
High AP test scores – Scores on math tests of 3 or higher per 100 students (2008)	1.2	46	3.2
Improvement			
4th grade – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2009)	+2.5	44	+5.1
8th grade – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2009)	+2.1	48	+5.6
Poverty-gap change – 8th grade NAEP (2003-2009), negative value = closing gap	+2.3	42	-1.5
Change in AP scores – Increase in high scores on math tests per 100 students (2000-2008)	154%	3	62%
Opportunity			
Algebra by 8th grade – Percent of 8th graders in schools where algebra by 8th grade is the norm (2009)	13%	17	18%
Teacher expertise – Percent of 8th graders whose math teachers have a major or minor in math (2009)	67%	6	57%
Teacher experience – Percent of 8th graders whose teachers have taught math for 10 or more years (2009)	56%	7	45%
Teacher-talent poverty gap – Percentage-point gap in experienced math teachers for 8th graders (2009), lower value = smaller gap	13%	45	9%
SCORE	62.7	37	64.7

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.



CHANCE FOR SUCCESS

The Chance-for-Success Index

To better understand the part that education plays over a lifetime, the EPE Research Center has developed the Chance-for-Success Index. Based on an original state-by-state analysis, this index combines information from 13 indicators that span an individual's life from cradle to career. The Chance-for-Success framework allows states to identify strong and weak links in their residents' educational life course—their typical trajectory from childhood through adulthood. More importantly, the index also provides information that could be used to target the efforts of public education systems in ways that better serve students of all ages.

State Success Indicators

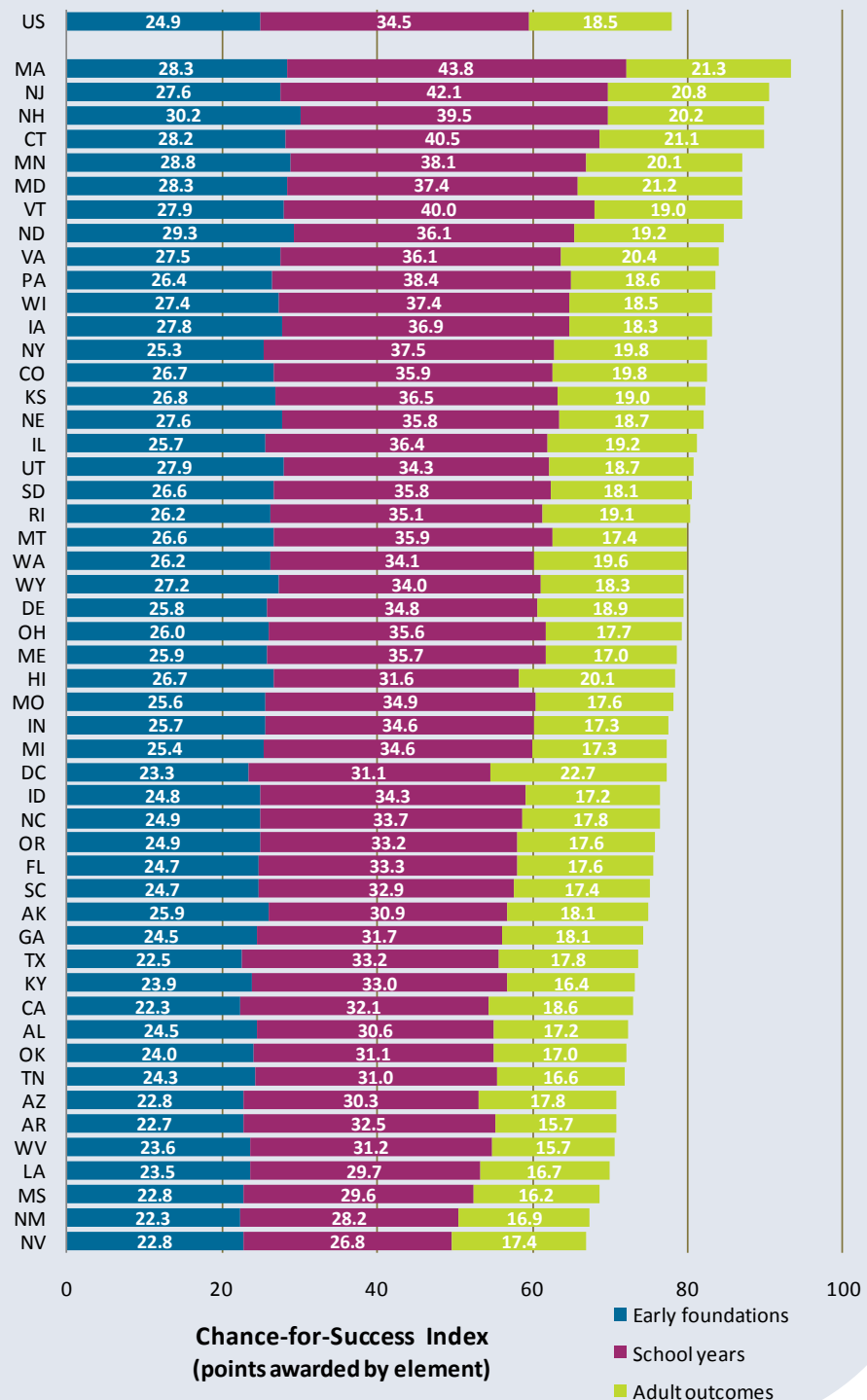
From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska		National
	State Average	Rank	Average
Early Foundations			
Family income Children from families with incomes at least 200% of poverty level (2008)	65.5%	17	60.4%
Parent education Children with at least one parent with a postsecondary degree (2008)	51.2	13	44.4
Parental employment Children with at least one parent working full time and year-round (2008)	86.4	1	76.9
Linguistic integration Children whose parents are fluent English-speakers (2008)	89.9	32	83.9
School Years			
Preschool enrollment Three- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool (2008)	36.1	47	46.8
Kindergarten enrollment Eligible children enrolled in kindergarten programs (2008)	73.2	46	76.9
Elementary reading Fourth grade public school students proficient on NAEP (2007)	34.6	22	31.7
Middle school mathematics Eighth grade public school students proficient on NAEP (2009)	34.6	27	32.6
High school graduation Public high school students who graduate with a diploma (class of 2006)	78.7	7	69.2
Postsecondary participation Young adults enrolled in postsecondary or with a degree (2008)	63.9	4	53.0
Adult Outcomes			
Adult educational attainment Adults with a two- or four-year postsecondary degree (2008)	40.7	18	37.9
Annual income Adults with incomes at or above national median (2008)	45.5	37	50.6
Steady employment Adults in labor force working full time and year-round (2008)	76.8	3	73.0
GRADE	B-	16	C+

Providing Opportunities for Success

The **Chance-for-Success Index** captures the importance of education in a person's lifetime from cradle to career. Its 13 individual indicators span a variety of factors, including preparation in early childhood, the performance of the public schools, and educational and economic outcomes in adulthood.

The states are graded using a "best in class" rubric, where a score of 100 points on the index would mean that a state ranked first in the nation on each and every indicator.

State scores range from 93.3 (Massachusetts, earning the only A) to 67.0 (Nevada, with a D-plus). A closer examination of results shows that while early foundations and adult outcomes do contribute to the index, indicators related to formal education (the schooling years) are the driving force behind the state rankings.



STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Policy Indicators

The national summary column indicates the number of states that have enacted a particular policy or, as applicable, the number of states with the specified policy enacted at all grade spans.

From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska	Nation
Academic Standards		
English/language arts standards are course- or grade-specific (2009-10)	ES MS	27 states
Mathematics standards are course- or grade-specific (2009-10)	No	26
Science standards are course- or grade-specific (2009-10)	No	22
Social studies/history standards are course- or grade-specific (2009-10)	No	23
Supplementary resources – Materials elaborate on standards in all core subjects (2009-10)	Yes	42
Supplementary resources – Materials provided for particular student populations (2009-10)	No	39
Assessments		
Test items used to measure student performance		
Multiple-choice items (2009-10)	ES MS HS	51
Short-answer items (2009-10)	No	29
Extended-response items – English/language arts (2009-10)	ES MS HS	45
Extended-response items – Other subjects (2009-10)	No	24
Portfolios of student work (2009-10)	No	0
Alignment of assessments to academic standards		
English/language arts (2009-10)	ES MS HS	51
Mathematics (2009-10)	No	50
Science (2009-10)	No	50
Social studies/history (2009-10)	No	11
Assessment systems		
Vertically equated scores on assessments in grades 3–8 in English (2009-10)	No	22
Vertically equated scores on assessments in grades 3–8 in math (2009-10)	No	23
Benchmark assessments or item banks provided to educators (2009-10)	No	27
School Accountability (policies must apply to Title I and non-Title I schools)		
State ratings – State assigns ratings to all schools on criteria other than AYP (2009-10)	No	24
Statewide student ID – State has a statewide student-identification system (2009)	Yes	50
Rewards – State provides rewards to high-performing or improving schools (2009-10)	No	31
Assistance – State provides assistance to low-performing schools (2009-10)	No	38
Sanctions – State sanctions low-performing schools (2009-10)	No	32
GRADE D- (rank=51)		B

Key: ES = elementary school, MS = middle school, HS = high school

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Efforts to Improve Teaching

The national summary column indicates the number of states that have enacted a particular policy.

From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska	Nation
Accountability for Quality		
Requirements for initial licensure (2009-10)		
(* indicates requirements that do not also apply to alternative-route candidates)		
Substantial coursework in subject area(s) taught	Yes*	27 states
Test of basic skills	Yes	40
Test of subject-specific knowledge	No	43
Test of subject-specific pedagogy	No	5
Student-teaching during teacher training	Yes*	39
Other clinical experiences during teacher training	Yes*	15
Discouraging out-of-field teaching (2009-10)		
Direct parental notification of out-of-field teachers	No	6
Ban or cap on the number of out-of-field teachers	Yes	4
Evaluating teacher performance (2009-10)		
Formal evaluations of all teachers' performance required	Yes	44
Student achievement is tied to teacher evaluations	No	13
Annual basis for teacher evaluations	No	15
All evaluators of teachers receive formal training	No	27
Teacher education programs (2009-10)		
Rankings/results published for teacher-preparation institutions	No	33
Programs accountable for graduates' classroom performance	No	17
Data systems to monitor quality (2009)		
Unique identification number assigned to each teacher by state	Yes	51
Link teacher and student records by course/subject and state assessment results	No	20
Incentives and Allocation		
Reduction of entry and transfer barriers (2009-10)		
Alternative-route program for teacher preparation	Yes	49
Teacher-license reciprocity or portability arrangement with other state(s)	Yes	41
Teacher-pension portability across state lines	No	21
Salaries and incentives		
Teacher-pay parity – Teacher salaries at least equal to comparable occupations (2008)	No	9
Districts report school-level salaries for teachers (2009-10)	Yes	12
Pay-for-performance program or pilot rewards teachers for raising student achievement (2009-10)	No	10
Differentiated roles for teachers formally recognized by state (2009-10)	No	22
Incentives for teachers taking on differentiated roles (2009-10)	No	16
Incentives for teachers to earn national-board certification (2009-10)	No	31

Nebraska – State Highlights 2010

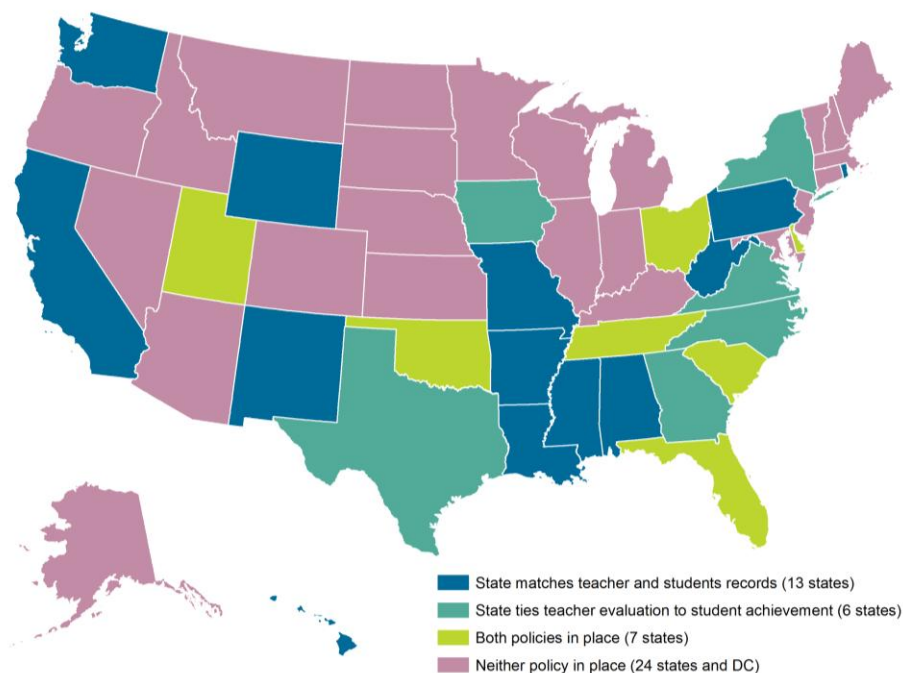
Incentives and Allocation (cont.)	Nebraska	Nation
Managing and allocating teaching talent (2009-010)		
Incentives to teachers working in targeted schools	Yes	25 states
Incentives to teachers working in hard-to-staff teaching-assignment areas	Yes	17
Incentives to board-certified teachers working in targeted schools	No	12
Incentives to principals working in targeted schools	No	11
Building and Supporting Capacity		
Supports for beginning teachers (2009-10)		
Induction program for all new teachers funded by state	No	18
Mentoring program for all new teachers funded by state	No	23
Mentoring-program standards for selecting, training, and/or matching mentors	No	19
Reduced workload for all first-year teachers	No	3
Professional development (2009-10)		
Formal professional-development standards	No	40
Professional development financed by state for all districts	Yes	24
Districts/schools required to set aside time for professional development	Yes	16
Professional development aligned with local priorities	No	31
School leadership (2009-10)		
Standards for licensure of school administrators	Yes	51
Supervised internship for aspiring principals	Yes	32
Induction or mentoring program for aspiring principals	No	19
School working conditions		
Program to reduce or limit class size implemented by state (2009-10)	No	24
Student-to-teacher ratio median in elementary schools is 15:1 or less (2008)	Yes	30
State tracks condition of school facilities (2009-10)	No	25
State posts school-level teacher-survey data on climate, working conditions (2009-10)	No	4
GRADE	C- (rank=32)	C

EVALUATION AND ALLOCATION

LINKING TEACHER EVALUATION TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Among the most active areas of state reform are initiatives to strengthen state data systems and to base teachers' evaluations, at least in part, on their students' academic performance.

For the 2009-10 school year, information systems in 20 states are able to link teacher records to student data that include course or subject and state-assessment results. Thirteen states also tie teacher evaluation in some way to student performance. However, only seven states—Delaware, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah—have implemented these policies in tandem.

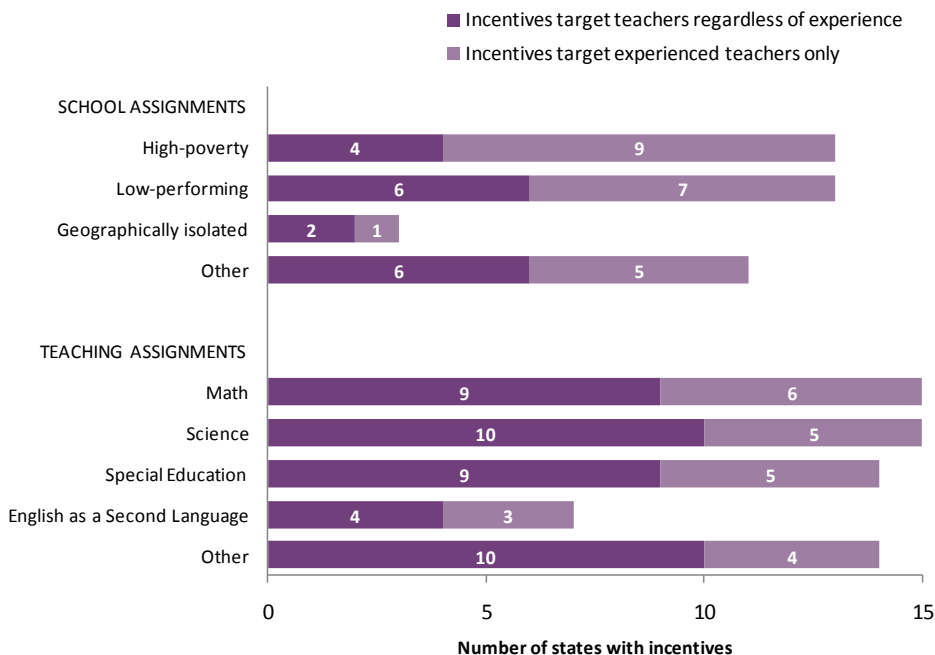


SOURCES: Data Quality Campaign, 2009;
EPE Research Center, 2010

ATTRACTING TEACHERS TO HARD-TO-STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

Some states are using incentives as a way to attract teachers to hard-to-staff campuses and subject-assignment areas. Slightly more than half the states offering incentives to teachers who agree to work in hard-to-staff schools target those programs to experienced, well-qualified teachers.

In contrast, only a third of the states offering incentives to teachers in hard-to-staff assignment areas raise the bar by targeting the most experienced and well-qualified teachers.



SCHOOL FINANCE

Equity and Spending Indicators

From <i>Quality Counts 2010</i>	Nebraska		National
	State Average	Rank	Average
Equity (2007)			
Wealth-Neutrality Score – Relationship between district funding and local property wealth	-0.178	2	0.091
McLoone Index – Actual spending as percent of amount needed to bring all students to median level	95.0%	3	90.8%
Coefficient of Variation – Amount of disparity in spending across districts within a state	0.186	36	0.162
Restricted Range – Difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles	\$3,784	32	\$3,924
Spending (2007)			
Adjusted per-pupil expenditures (PPE) – Analysis accounts for regional cost differences	\$11,903	11	\$10,557
Students funded at or above national average – Percent of students in districts with PPE at or above U.S. average	21.9%	27	40.5%
Spending Index – Per-pupil spending levels weighted by the degree to which districts meet or approach the national average for expenditures	86.6	35	89.6
Spending on education – State expenditures on K-12 schooling as a percent of state taxable resources	3.5%	32	3.8%
GRADE			
C			
21			
C			

Definitions of School Finance Indicators

Wealth-Neutrality Score: The wealth-neutrality score shows the degree to which state and local revenue are related to the property wealth of districts. A negative score means that, on average, poorer districts actually have more funding per weighted pupil than wealthy districts do. A positive score means the opposite: Wealthy districts have more funding per weighted pupil than poor districts do.

McLoone Index: The McLoone Index is based on the assumption that if all students in the state were lined up according to the amount their districts spent on them, perfect equity would be achieved if every district spent at least as much as that spent on the pupil in the middle of the distribution, or the median. The McLoone Index is the ratio of the total amount spent on pupils below the median to the amount that would be needed to raise all students to the median per-pupil expenditure in the state.

Coefficient of Variation: The coefficient of variation is a measure of the disparity in funding across school districts in a state. The value is calculated by dividing the standard deviation of adjusted spending per pupil by the state's average spending per pupil. The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion (i.e., how spread out spending levels are across a state's districts). If all districts in a state spent exactly the same amount per pupil, its coefficient of variation would be zero. As the coefficient gets higher, the variation in the amounts spent across districts also gets higher. As the coefficient gets lower, it indicates greater equity.

Restricted Range: This indicator captures the differences in funding levels found between the highest- and lowest-spending districts in a state. The index value is calculated as the difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles. Districts enrolling fewer than 200 students are excluded from the analysis.

Spending Index: The Spending Index takes into account both the proportion of students enrolled in districts with spending at the national average, and the degree to which spending is below that benchmark in districts where per-pupil expenditures fall below the national average. Each district in which the per-pupil-spending figure (adjusted for student needs and cost differences) reaches or exceeds the national average receives a score of 1 times the number of students in the district. A district whose adjusted spending per pupil is below the national average receives a score equal to its per-pupil spending divided by the national average and then multiplied by the number of pupils in the district. The spending index is the sum of district scores divided by the total number of students in the state. If all districts spend above the U.S. average, the state attains a perfect index score of 100 points.

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 and are not included in the rankings reported in this table.

TRANSITIONS AND ALIGNMENT

Education Alignment Policies

The national summary column indicates the number of states that have enacted a particular policy.

From <i>Quality Counts 2009</i>	Nebraska	Nation
Early-Childhood Education		
Early learning – State early-learning standards aligned with K-12 standards (2008-09)	Yes	50 states
School-readiness definition – State formally defines school readiness (2008-09)	No	19
School-readiness assessment – Readiness of entering students assessed (2008-09)	No	19
School-readiness intervention – Programs for students not deemed ready (2008-09)	No	23
Kindergarten standards – Learning expectations aligned with elementary (2008-09)	Yes	51
Postsecondary Education		
College readiness – State defines college readiness (2008-09)	No	20
College preparation – College prep required to earn a high school diploma (2008-09)	No	3
Course alignment – Credits for high school diploma aligned with postsecondary system (2008-09)	No	7
Assessment alignment – High school assessment aligned with postsecondary system (2008-09)	No	11
Postsecondary decisions – High school assessment used for postsecondary decisions (2008-09)	No	9
Economy and Workforce		
Work readiness – State K-12 system defines work readiness (2008-09)	No	28
Career-tech diploma – State offers high school diploma with career specialization (2008-09)	No	37
Industry certification – K-12 has path for industry-recognized certificate or license (2008-09)	No	38
Portable credits – K-12 pathway to earn career-tech. credits for postsecondary (2008-09)	No	45

GRADE

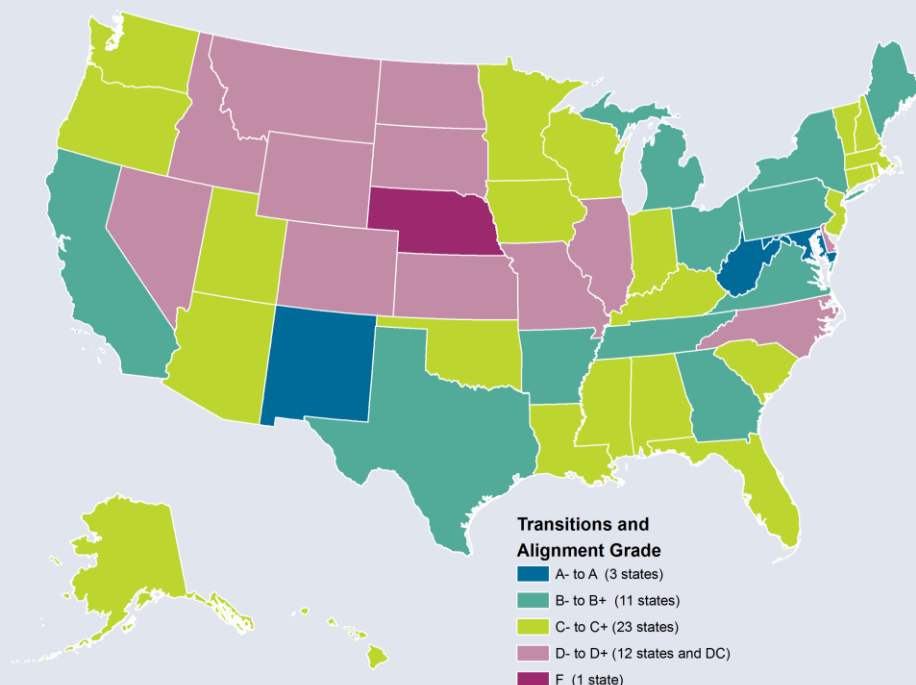
F (rank=51)

C

A National Perspective

The EPE Research Center has examined state efforts to connect the K-12 education system with early learning, higher education, and the world of work. Fourteen key transition and alignment policies were included in *Quality Counts 2009*.

The states with the most comprehensive alignment initiatives—Maryland, New Mexico, and West Virginia—have enacted at least 12 of the 14 focal policies. At the other end of the spectrum, Idaho, Kansas, and South Dakota have enacted just three such policies, and Nebraska only two.



ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PERFORMANCE

The K-12 Achievement Index

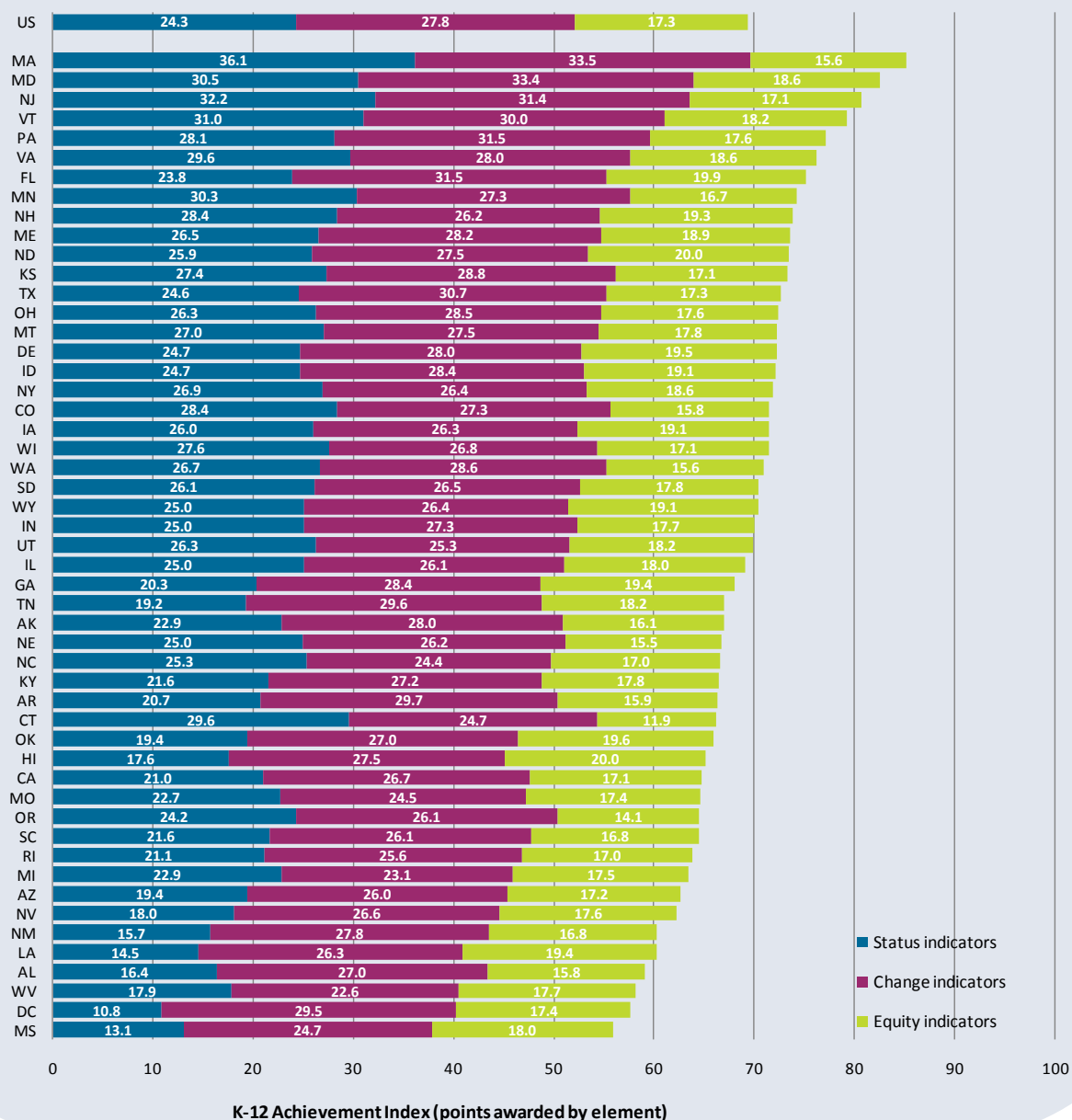
The K-12 Achievement Index examines 18 distinct state achievement measures related to reading and math performance, high school graduation rates, and the results of Advanced Placement exams. The index assigns equal weight to current levels of performance and changes over time. It also places an emphasis on equity by examining both poverty-based achievement gaps and progress in closing those gaps.

State Achievement Indicators

From <i>Quality Counts 2008</i>	Nebraska		National Average
	State Average	State Rank	
Achievement Levels			
4th grade math – Percent proficient on NAEP (2007)	37.9%	31	38.6%
8th grade math – Percent proficient on NAEP (2007)	34.6%	23	31.0%
4th grade reading – Percent proficient on NAEP (2007)	34.6%	22	31.7%
8th grade reading – Percent proficient on NAEP (2007)	35.0%	14	29.2%
Achievement Gains			
4th grade math – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2007)	+1.8	48	+5.1
8th grade math – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2007)	+1.5	42	+4.1
4th grade reading – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2007)	+2.3	32	+3.2
8th grade reading – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2007)	+0.7	16	-0.3
Poverty Gap (National School Lunch Program, noneligible vs. eligible)			
Reading gap – 4th grade NAEP scale score (2007)	24.4	25	26.8
Math gap – 8th grade NAEP scale score (2007)	27.6	43	26.0
Reading-gap change – 4th grade NAEP (2003-2007), negative value = closing gap	+2.5	41	-1.1
Math-gap change – 8th grade NAEP (2003-2007), negative value = closing gap	+2.6	46	-2.4
Achieving Excellence			
Math excellence – Percent advanced on 8th grade NAEP (2007)	7.6%	16	6.6%
Change in math excellence – Percent advanced on NAEP (2003-2007)	+2.5%	11	+1.6%
High School Graduation			
Graduation rate – Public schools (class of 2004)	79.8%	6	69.9%
Change in graduation rate – Public schools (2000-2004)	+1.4%	33	+3.1%
Advanced Placement			
High AP test scores – Scores of 3 or higher per 100 students (2006)	5.9	48	16.9
Change in AP Scores – Change in high scores per 100 students (2000-2006)	+3.2	38	+6.0
GRADE	D+	31	D+

Nation Receives Passing Grade on Achievement, But Just Barely

The EPE Research Center's K-12 Achievement Index awards states points based on three distinct aspects of student achievement: current levels of performance, improvements over time, and achievement equity between poor and nonpoor students. The nation as a whole earns 69 points, on a 100-point scale, for a grade of D-plus. The leading state, Massachusetts, earns 85 points and a B. These results suggest that no state excels across all three dimensions of achievement captured by the index. Massachusetts, for example, ranks first in the nation for current achievement levels and improvements, but 47th on equity. Despite below-average current achievement, Florida finishes seventh nationally, a result that can be attributed to very strong improvements in recent years and relatively small poverty gaps.



NOTES AND SOURCES

Quality Counts 2010

This year's 14th edition of *Quality Counts* focuses on the latest iteration of the national debate over common academic standards. *Quality Counts 2010* also provides a 50-state update on policies and conditions in four distinct areas: chance for success, teaching, school finance, and standards, assessments, and accountability.

The State Highlights Reports present state-specific summaries of key findings across six areas of policy and performance. That information is drawn from the 2008, 2009, and 2010 editions of *Quality Counts*. Reports for the 50 states and the District of Columbia are available on the Web at www.edweek.org/go/qc10/shr.

Indicator Sources

Quality Counts regularly tracks and grades state progress in six categories comprising more than 150 different state-by-state indicators. The 2010 installment of the report also includes a special focus on common academic standards. Many of these 50-state indicators are based on original analyses and state-survey data from the EPE Research Center. The report also draws on published information from other organizations.

The methodology section of *Quality Counts* provides detailed descriptions of our indicators and procedures for grading the states. That information can be accessed online at www.edweek.org/go/qc10 (2010) and www.edweek.org/go/qc09 (2009).

Between June and October of 2009, the EPE Research Center conducted an original survey of state education agencies and the District of Columbia public schools. This survey provided information for most of our state policy measures. Indicators derived from other sources are noted below.

Common Standards (2010)

State signed memorandum supporting Common Core State Standards Initiative: Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors Association, 2009

All Other Indicators: EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2009.

Math Progress Index (2010)

Mathematics Achievement: 2009 NAEP State assessment. U.S. Department of Education, 2003 and 2009.

Math Advanced Placement: EPE Research Center analysis of data from the College Board's AP Summary Reports, 2000 and 2008, and the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data, 1999-2000 and 2006-07.

Chance for Success (2010)

Elementary Reading and Middle School Mathematics: 2007 (reading) and 2009 (mathematics) NAEP State assessment. U.S. Department of Education, 2007 and 2009.

High School Graduation: Cumulative Promotion Index, calculated using the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data, 2005-06. EPE Research Center, 2009.

Other Indicators: EPE Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2008.

Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2010)

Assessment item types and alignment to state standards: EPE Research Center review of testing calendars and other materials from state education agency Web sites, as verified by states, 2009.

State has a statewide student-identification system: Data Quality Campaign, 2009.

Other Indicators: EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2009.

The Teaching Profession (2010)

Data Systems to Monitor Quality: Data Quality Campaign, 2009.

Teacher-Pay Parity: EPE Research Center analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2007 and 2008.

School Leadership: As reported by states. EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2009.

Student-to-Teacher Ratio: EPE Research Center analysis of U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data, 2007-08.

Other Indicators: EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2009.

School Finance (2010)

Original EPE Research Center Analysis of Equity and Spending: Data for these analyses were obtained from a variety of sources, including: U.S. Census Bureau's Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data for 2007; U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data 2005-06, 2006-07 (district-level data); NCES' Comparable Wage Index 2005; U.S. Census Bureau's Small-Area Income and Poverty Estimates 2007; U.S. Department of Education's School District Demographics data, based on the 2000 U.S. Census; NCES, Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2006-07 (Fiscal Year 2007), February 2009; and 2007 gross-state-product data from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Transitions and Alignment (2009)

All Indicators: EPE Research Center annual state policy survey, 2008.

K-12 Achievement (2008)

Reading and Mathematics Achievement: 2007 NAEP State assessment. U.S. Department of Education, 2007.

High School Graduation: Cumulative Promotion Index, calculated using the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data, 2003-04. EPE Research Center, 2007.

Advanced Placement: EPE Research Center analysis of data from the College Board's AP Summary Reports and the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data, 2006.

QUALITY COUNTS 2010

Fresh Course, Swift Current

Momentum and Challenges
In the New Surge
Toward Common Standards

The 14th edition of *Quality Counts* explores the latest iteration of the debate over common academic standards. The report also provides a 50-state update on policies and conditions in four of the areas monitored by the report on an ongoing basis: the Chance-for-Success Index; teaching; standards, assessments, and accountability; and school finance.

Highlights from this year's report

A comprehensive look at the national debate over **common academic standards**, including both timely journalistic coverage and survey data from the EPE Research Center

EPE Research Center's **Chance-for-Success Index**, a cradle-to-career perspective on the importance of education throughout a person's lifetime

State-of-the-States—Our comprehensive annual review of state policy, this year highlighting teaching; standards, assessments, and accountability; and school finance

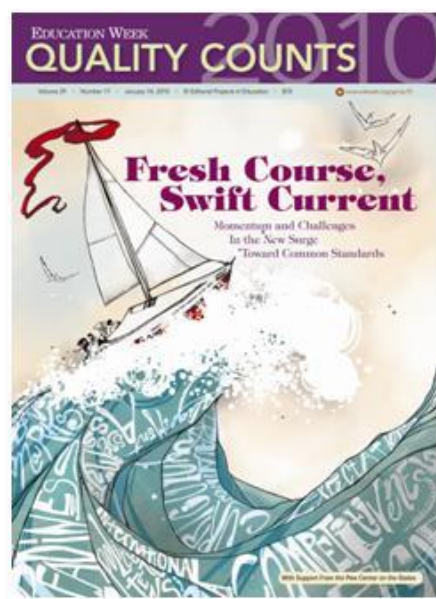
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State Highlights Reports—Download individualized reports featuring state-specific findings from *Quality Counts*

Live online chat and a Webinar—Join leading national authorities and experts from *Education Week* and the EPE Research Center

Education Counts—Access hundreds of education indicators from *Quality Counts* using our exclusive online database

Interactive tools—Readers can delve into state data and use an online calculator to recompute grades based on the indicators they feel are most important



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