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## **Report Awards Grades for Education Performance, Policy; Nation Earns a C, Maryland Ranks First for Fourth Straight Year**

***Special Theme Explores American Education from a Global Perspective***

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

WASHINGTON—Jan. 12, 2012—As an election year begins, the nation also approaches the third anniversary of the federal stimulus program and the aggressive wave of education reforms it spawned. Such topics as American schooling's international standing, the lessons to be learned from high-performing countries around the globe, and the implications for economic competitiveness in an interconnected world all remain high on the policy agenda, from the White House and Congress down to local school boards and chambers of commerce.

Against this backdrop, the nation and many states face continuing challenges in delivering a high-quality education to all students, according to *Quality Counts*, the annual report card published by *Education Week*. The nation receives a C when graded across the six distinct areas of policy and performance tracked by the report, the most comprehensive ongoing assessment of the state of American education. For the fourth year in a row, Maryland earns honors as the top-ranked state, posting the nation's highest overall grade, a B-plus. Perennial strong finishers Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia follow close behind, each receiving a B. Nearly half the states, however, receive grades of C or lower.

"Dating back at least to the Sputnik era and the Space Race, we've been warned that America's schools do not measure up favorably on an international yardstick," said Christopher B. Swanson, Vice President of Editorial Projects in Education, the nonprofit organization that publishes *Education Week*. "Despite some bright spots over the years, Americans remain rightly concerned that the nation's pace of improvement is simply too slow, at a time when our global peers and competitors may be rocketing ahead."

A well-educated workforce and citizenry is widely viewed as the basis for economic stability and competitiveness, both internationally and domestically. Yet, new findings from the report's annual Chance-for-Success Index—which captures the role of education in a person's life, from cradle to career—show the country struggling to provide opportunities to succeed and many states lagging far behind the national leaders. The U.S. as a whole receives a C-plus on the index. For the fifth year running, Massachusetts earns the only A and remains at the top of the national rankings, followed closely by New Hampshire and New Jersey, each posting grades of A-minus. Mississippi, New Mexico, and Nevada receive the lowest scores, with grades of D-plus or lower. Scores on the Chance-for-Success Index have dropped from pre-recession levels, due in part to declines in conditions that support early schooling success, including family income and parental employment.

Focusing more specifically on academic performance, the report's K-12 Achievement Index evaluates the overall strength of a state's public schools against 18 individual indicators that capture: current achievement, improvements over time, and poverty-based disparities or gaps. Massachusetts emerges as the top-achieving state this year, with New Jersey and Maryland finishing second and third, respectively. These states—each earning a B in this year's report—have been the nation's top three

scorers since the index was first graded in 2008. A wide gulf separates the leaders from the rest of the pack, with the average state earning a C-minus on K-12 Achievement, a slight improvement over last year. Three states—Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia—and the District of Columbia receive grades of F on the index.

States post their highest scores for policies related to standards, assessments, and school accountability, one of *Quality Counts'* longest-standing categories. The nation earns a B in this year's report, with 12 states—led by Indiana—receiving an A and nine with an A-minus. Since results were last reported in 2010, scores have improved in 20 states, with the largest gains found in Illinois and Kentucky. Progress in these areas reflects the cumulative legacies of standards-based reform and accountability initiatives dating back to the 1990s, the decade-old No Child Left Behind Act, and, more recently, an array of stimulus-era programs and the common-standards movement.

*Quality Counts 2012* features new results for its Teaching Profession category, which spans 44 individual state indicators. The U.S. earns a C in this area, although scores for the nation as a whole and the majority of states have dropped in the past two years. Arkansas and South Carolina each earn a B-plus, the highest grade awarded this year; four states and the District of Columbia earn a D-minus. Findings from a survey conducted by the EPE Research Center show that some declines can be attributed to the economic impacts of the recession and states' inability to maintain funding for certain teacher-related policies and programs. More positive results emerge for the center's Pay-Parity Index, which shows that the national pay-gap between teachers and other comparable workers has narrowed in the past several years. Public-school teachers earn about 94 cents for every dollar earned in similar occupations nationwide.

The report also includes an annually updated analysis of school expenditure patterns and the distribution of those funds within states. The national grade in school finance holds steady at a C for 2012, with seven states earning the top grade of B-plus. Since the onset of the recession in 2007, scores have dropped for the two aspects of school finance tracked by *Quality Counts*—spending and equity.

## SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

*Quality Counts 2012: The Global Challenge—Education in a Competitive World* takes a critical look at the nation's place among the world's public education systems, with an eye toward providing policymakers with perspective on the extent to which high-profile international assessments can provide valid comparisons and lessons. It examines effective reform strategies here and abroad that have gained traction and may be replicable. And, the report highlights the political and social challenges policymakers will face in improving American education to meet the demands of a 21st century work force.

The report also features commentaries penned by educational leaders from around the globe—Byongman Ahn of South Korea, England's Sir Michael Barber, Pasi Salhberg sharing Finland's lessons, and Margaret Spellings from the United States.

## ONLINE EXCLUSIVES AVAILABLE AT EDWEEK.ORG

- The full *Quality Counts 2012* report and interactive state report cards: [www.edweek.org/go/qc12](http://www.edweek.org/go/qc12).
- 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/qc12shr](http://www.edweek.org/go/qc12shr).
- The public release event for *Quality Counts 2012* will be streamed live in a simulcast from Washington, D.C. The Webcast will be available at 10 a.m. EST on Jan. 12, 2012, at [www.edweek.org/go/qc12Livestream](http://www.edweek.org/go/qc12Livestream).

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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 annual Quality Counts, Technology Counts, and Diplomas Count reports. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts and EdWeek Maps online data resources. The EPE Research Center is on the Web at [www.edweek.org/rc](http://www.edweek.org/rc).*

### EDUCATION IN A COMPETITIVE WORLD

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#### New Findings from *Quality Counts 2012: The Global Challenge*

*NOTE: Embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. EST on Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012*

#### About *Quality Counts 2012*

*The Global Challenge—Education in a Competitive World* will be released Jan. 12, 2012. The report takes a critical look at America's place among the world's public schooling systems and puts to the test popular assumptions about the country's competitive status in education. This 16th annual edition of *Quality Counts* also features results of an original survey by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, which asked state officials about the ways they make use of international insights to guide their own policies and programs.

To help guide your reporting, we have highlighted some of the key findings below. For the purposes of the national totals reported here, the District of Columbia is counted as a state.

#### Key Findings

**Most states look beyond the U.S. borders** to inform their own educational reforms, policies, and programs.

- Education officials in 29 states reported that their agency uses international education comparisons to inform their reform strategies or identify “best practices.”
- States using international comparisons often cited a need to align student preparation with the demands of a global economy and learn from the experiences of high-achieving nations.
- In describing the ways they used such insight from abroad, states most frequently noted the role of international indicators in comparing student achievement (18 states) and developing academic-content standards (12 states).
- Other uses of international comparisons included: improving assessment and accountability systems (9 states), finding ways to support teachers (8), and setting performance standards for state assessments (5).

**Math and Science** in the U.S. are the subject areas most strongly influenced by international standards and examples.

- When developing or revising their own academic standards, states are most likely to seek international guidance in mathematics and science, two subjects often linked to economic competitiveness and technological innovation.
- In math, 23 states looked to other nations to inform their standards; 13 states did so for science.
- Fewer states used international standards as models for English/language arts and social studies—10 states and 2 states respectively.

- For math and science, Singapore was most frequently cited as an exemplar, mentioned by 18 states. Other international systems used as models included: Japan (by 11 states), Finland (10), Canada (8), England (7), Hong Kong (6), and New Zealand (5).

**Effects of the economic downturn linger** in American education, a year and a half after the official end of the recession.

- The educational impacts of the recession can be seen in a variety of areas, among them: states' decisions to scale-back school programs due to tight budgets and troubling trends in factors linked to academic preparation and success, including increased child poverty and parental unemployment.
- States are financing fewer programs for educators in 2012 than they did in 2010. Reductions in efforts to develop and allocate teaching talent were made in 23 states. Officials often cited budget cuts prompted by the recession as a reason for eliminating programs.
- Fewer states reported using non-multiple-choice questions on their assessments in 2012 than in recent years. For example, the number of states including essay questions or other extended-response items in English assessments dropped from 45 in 2010 to 38 in 2012.

**Since the recession, teacher pay has risen**, relative to the earnings of workers from comparable occupations. However, uncertainty about the post-stimulus outlook remains.

- The EPE Research Center's Pay-Parity Index measures the earning power of public school teachers compared with the wages of counselors, nurses, physical therapists, and other comparable occupations in the same state.
- *Quality Counts* finds that teachers earned 94 cents for every dollar earned by a comparable worker in 2010, the most recent year for which data are available. The median salary for public school teachers was \$49,974 compared with \$52,972 for comparable workers
- Median teacher salaries were at least on par with comparable workers in 13 states, four more than in 2010.
- Since the recession, median teacher salaries have risen modestly, while earnings for workers in similar occupations have declined.

## Additional Resources

The 2012 release of *Quality Counts* will also include:

- 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 **K-12 Achievement Index**, which evaluates state educational performance on 18 individual indicators that measure: current achievement, improvements over time, and poverty-based disparities or gaps.
- The **State of the States report card**, an annual update of national and state grades in key areas of performance and policy, including: the Chance-for-Success Index; the K-12 Achievement 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/qc12](http://www.edweek.org/go/qc12).

# GRADING SUMMARY

	Overall State Grade			Quality Counts 2012		Quality Counts 2012		Quality Counts 2012		Quality Counts 2011		Quality Counts 2012		Quality Counts 2012	
				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	76.1	32	C-	43	D	44	A-	13	B-	14	C	19	C-	32
Alaska	C-	70.8	46	C	32	D	43	C	43	D+	45	D-	51	B-	11
Arizona	C-	71.7	44	C-	48	D+	31	B+	25	C	28	D-	47	D+	41
Arkansas	B-	81.6	5	C-	44	D	34	A	6	A	1	B+	2	C	27
California	C	76.1	33	C	41	D	35	A	10	B-	14	C-	25	C-	31
Colorado	C	75.1	35	B	10	C	10	B-	32	C	28	D	42	C-	38
Connecticut	C+	78.6	15	B+	4	C-	16	C+	39	C	28	C	29	B+	4
Delaware	C+	76.8	25	B-	22	D+	29	B+	26	C-	36	C	22	C+	13
District of Columbia	C-	69.9	49	C+	28	F	51	B	30	C-	36	D-	48	NA	NA
Florida	C+	79.4	11	C	35	C-	12	A	5	B-	14	B	4	D+	39
Georgia	B-	79.7	7	C	37	C-	22	A-	18	B+	6	B-	10	C	24
Hawaii	C+	78.5	16	C+	25	D+	28	B+	22	C+	22	C+	17	NA	NA
Idaho	C-	70.0	47	C	34	C-	18	B+	27	D	48	D-	50	D	49
Illinois	C	76.3	29	B-	21	C-	21	A-	19	C	28	D+	34	C	28
Indiana	C+	77.5	22	C	33	D+	33	A	1	B+	6	D	46	C-	29
Iowa	C	76.1	31	B	12	D	40	C	47	B-	14	C+	13	C	23
Kansas	C	74.4	39	B-	13	D+	26	B-	34	D+	45	D+	37	C+	16
Kentucky	C+	78.6	14	C	36	C-	13	A-	20	B-	14	B-	5	C-	35
Louisiana	C+	77.2	23	C-	46	F	48	A	2	B-	14	B-	11	C	22
Maine	C	76.4	28	B-	23	C	11	C-	50	B	11	D+	35	B-	10
Maryland	B+	87.8	1	B+	5	B	3	B+	24	A	1	B	3	B+	7
Massachusetts	B	84.2	2	A	1	B	1	B+	23	C	28	C+	14	B	8
Michigan	C+	78.0	19	C+	31	D	41	A-	17	B	11	C	19	C	21
Minnesota	C	74.6	37	B+	8	C	9	C-	49	C-	36	D+	36	C+	19
Mississippi	C-	71.2	45	D+	49	F	50	A	10	C	28	D	41	D+	45
Missouri	C-	72.3	41	C+	29	D	37	C+	38	C-	36	D+	33	C-	34
Montana	C-	72.3	40	B-	20	C	6	C	41	D-	49	D+	32	C-	33
Nebraska	C-	69.6	50	B-	14	D	39	D+	51	F	51	C-	31	C+	18
Nevada	C-	70.0	48	D	51	D	36	C	45	C+	22	C-	28	D	47
New Hampshire	C	76.0	34	A-	3	C+	5	C	42	C-	36	D	44	C+	17
New Jersey	B-	80.5	6	A-	2	B	2	C	44	C+	22	D+	38	B+	6
New Mexico	C	76.3	30	D+	50	D-	47	A-	15	B+	6	C	23	C	25
New York	B	83.9	3	B-	17	C-	24	A-	15	B+	6	B-	7	B+	2
North Carolina	C+	78.3	17	C+	30	C-	20	A	10	B	11	C+	16	D	46
North Dakota	C	74.7	36	B+	6	C-	23	B	28	D+	45	D+	40	C-	37
Ohio	C+	79.5	10	C+	27	C-	15	A	4	C+	22	C	18	C	20
Oklahoma	C+	76.5	27	C-	42	D	38	A	8	B+	6	C-	24	D+	42
Oregon	C-	71.7	43	C	39	D	46	B-	35	C+	22	D	45	C-	30
Pennsylvania	C+	78.7	13	B	11	C	7	C+	40	B-	14	C	21	B-	12
Rhode Island	C+	77.7	20	B-	19	C-	19	B	29	C-	36	C-	27	B+	5
South Carolina	C+	77.2	24	C	38	D	45	A	6	C-	36	B+	1	C-	36
South Dakota	D+	68.1	51	B-	15	D+	30	C	48	D-	49	D-	49	D	48
Tennessee	C+	77.7	21	C-	45	D	42	A-	21	A	3	B-	9	D+	43
Texas	C+	79.2	12	C	40	C-	17	A-	13	A	3	C+	15	D+	40
Utah	C-	71.9	42	C+	24	D+	32	B-	33	C-	36	D	43	D+	44
Vermont	B-	79.6	8	B+	7	C+	4	B	30	C-	36	C	30	B+	3
Virginia	B	82.6	4	B	9	C	8	A	8	B-	14	B-	6	C+	15
Washington	C	74.5	38	C+	26	C-	25	C+	37	C	28	C-	26	C	26
West Virginia	B-	79.5	9	C-	47	F	49	A	3	A	3	B-	8	C+	14
Wisconsin	C+	78.1	18	B-	16	C-	14	C	46	C+	22	C+	12	B-	9
Wyoming	C+	76.8	26	B-	18	D+	27	C+	36	C	28	D+	39	B+	1
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>76.3</b>		<b>C+</b>		<b>C-</b>		<b>B</b>		<b>C+</b>		<b>C</b>		<b>C</b>	

Note: States are ranked based on unrounded scores. 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, 2012. This table integrates findings reported in the 2011 and 2012 editions of *Quality Counts*.