



Hot Topics in Education in 2012

What challenges are ahead for education leaders?

What challenges are ahead for school district leaders? Will those challenges be any different in 2012 than they were in 2011? You can best serve your customers if you understand the world in which they work—what they are looking forward to and what they are bracing for.

Here are some of the hot topics on tap for 2012. The more you know about them, the better able you will be to help current customers and potential customers navigate the coming 12 months.

Core Common State Standards

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is an effort to establish a shared set of education standards for K-12 English language arts and mathematics. States are not required to adopt the standards, which are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce. In fact, several states have declined to adopt them, citing the quality of their own state standards, including Texas, Virginia, Nebraska, Minnesota, Alaska, and Puerto Rico.

Costs for implementing the Common Core State Standards include funding for professional development, instructional materials, and assessments.

For more information, visit www.corestandards.org

Emphasis on STEM Education

Many consider the emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education to be an avenue to preparing students for all the challenges and opportunities in today's rapidly changing world and putting America back on top in terms of innovation and advancement. This idea is being played out in school districts all over the country, where education leaders

are promoting incorporation of those areas across the curriculum.

The current administration echoes that viewpoint. In fact, The Department of Education's *Investing in Innovation* (i3) competition provides funding to school districts and non-profit organizations to develop new approaches to longstanding challenges in education. STEM education is a priority of the competition and an element in Race to the Top funding.

Learn more at the STEM Education Coalition Website: www.stemedcoalition.org

Virtual Schools

Reduced state funding has promoted the growth of virtual schools. A 2010 Brookings Institute survey of 20 virtual charters in 14 states indicates the cost of online learning is "roughly half that of traditional public schools."

School districts partner with virtual schools to expand the curriculum and offer courses outside the typical school day. Districts can offer Advanced Placement, Reading Recovery, and a wide range of electives that might not otherwise be possible. If a virtual school is chartered through a public supporting school district, there typically is no cost for the student to enroll in classes through the virtual school.

For more information, visit the International Association for K-12 Online Learning at www.inacol.org

Stay Connected

Keep your finger on the pulse of school business management. Read *School Business Affairs* and *Accents Online*, attend the Annual Meeting and Expo in Phoenix in October, and ask your customers and potential customers what you can do to meet their needs in 2012.