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## New England Secondary School Consortium Receives National Recognition for State Educational Innovation

### Frank Newman Award Honors Pioneering Five-State Partnership

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**Denver, CO** – On July 7, 2011, the [Education Commission of the States](http://www.ecs.org) will honor the [New England Secondary School Consortium](http://www.newenglandssc.org) as the recipient of the prestigious 2011 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation during its 2011 National Forum on Education Policy in Denver. The award recognizes the Consortium's bold example of state leadership, collaboration, expertise exchange, and resource sharing across states, as well as its commitment to promoting 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, supporting high school innovation, reducing persistent achievement gaps, and graduating every student prepared for success in the colleges, careers, and communities of our global society.

"The Consortium's forward-thinking efforts to ensure their students can make seamless transitions into the workforce or higher education, while maximizing limited resources, are commendable," said **Roger Sampson, president of the Education Commission of the States**.

The New England Secondary School Consortium is a state-led regional partnership encompassing Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Formed in 2007, the Consortium was created by a group of state education leaders who recognized that a multistate collaboration could strengthen, expand, and sustain the critical high school improvement work already taking place in their state.

"The Consortium has been extraordinarily important for Vermont and our partners by supporting our work to improve and change what a high school education will look like in the future," said **Armando Vilaseca, Vermont Commissioner of Education**. "The idea that our work is being mirrored by our fellow New England states provides the focus and energy we need to make high school restructuring a priority—and a reality. Having five states collaborating on student outcomes, college-ready criteria, and policy across all five states guarantees support from the higher education, business, and government sectors. The Consortium is a model for how all other states can collaborate on this important work."

The Consortium is designed to help its member states to achieve their own education goals more effectively, while leveraging state, federal, and foundation resources to increase advance secondary reforms with the potential to improve educational quality and life outcomes for roughly 375,000 secondary students. Utilizing a "schoolhouse to statehouse" approach, the Consortium works not only with state leaders, but also with districts, schools, and educators.

"This award recognizes not only the substance of our education reforms, but also the innovative way in which those reforms are being achieved," said **George A. Coleman, Connecticut's Acting Commissioner of Education**. "The New England Secondary School Consortium was created to help each member state develop and implement high school reform with a eye toward uniform standards and consistent goals for all students in the New England region. Connecticut's participation in this partnership has been a great experience and has helped our state advance its own efforts to improve student achievement in our high schools."

With coordination the [Great Schools Partnership](#), and financial support from the [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#) (which provides funding that includes partnership support from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#)), the [Rhode Island Foundation](#), and the five participating state departments of education, the Consortium has established a broad-based leadership council composed of state education leaders and policy makers, undertaken an ambitious regional policy agenda, developed common metrics for student attainment, and launched a variety of initiatives, including an educator-driven multistate support network, an annual conference for secondary educators, and a briefing series for state and school leaders.

“The five Consortium states are doing something that is rarely done—reach across state, institutional, and political lines to address some of the biggest challenges facing today’s schools and communities,” said **David Ruff, executive director of the Great Schools Partnership**. “We could not be more impressed with the bold, forward-thinking leadership we have observed over the past three years, and we expect even more big things to unfold in the years to come.”

While each state has retained its autonomy and individuality, all five states are committed to pursuing common goals, sharing successes and setbacks, and working together regardless of leadership turnover, budget constraints, or shifting political priorities. By 2016, the five states intend to increase on-time high school graduation rates to 90% or higher and raise college-enrollment rates to at least 80%, among other objectives.

“We’re proud of the work of the Consortium,” said **Nicholas Donohue, President and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation**, the Consortium’s lead funder. “To prepare all New England’s learners with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in life, there needs to be regional dialogue. The states have shown through their work with the Consortium that successful collaboration toward large-scale change is not only necessary but completely possible.”

**The ECS Frank Newman Award for State Innovation** was established in 1998 and recognizes states and U.S. territories for enacting innovative education reforms or implementing innovative programs that go beyond incremental changes to improve student outcomes on a large scale; that are replicable and hold valuable lessons for other states; that are bold, courageous, and include new approaches designed for large-scale impact; and that have bipartisan, broad-based support to ensure sustainability. In 2005, ECS named its State Innovation Award in honor of the late Frank Newman, ECS president for fourteen years.

“New Hampshire is pleased to be part of the New England Secondary School Consortium and deeply honored to be selected for this award,” said **Virginia M. Barry, New Hampshire Commissioner of Education**. “The Consortium goals are consistent with our own high school redesign efforts and the Department’s commitment to ensure every student will graduate with the knowledge and the skills needed to be successful in the colleges and careers of the 21st century. As a regional partnership, we can promote the kind of systemic reforms that might otherwise be more difficult to achieve if our states acted independently.”

“As a member of the Consortium, we believe that states can move forward with transforming education by providing feedback to one another and by sharing best practices,” said **Deborah A. Gist, Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education**. “The ongoing work of the Consortium will certainly help all of the New England states as we work to accelerate our secondary schools toward greatness. I am particularly pleased that the Consortium has received the Frank Newman Award, as Dr. Newman served for nine years as the distinguished president of the University of Rhode Island.”

The **Education Commission of the States** is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials, and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

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