To get there, states that adopted the Common Core standards in math and English language arts must find a way to implement them. Mitch Chester from Massachusetts told conference-goers that Bay State leaders convened representatives from the business community, teachers from higher education institutions and K-12 schools, and curriculum experts to work together in evaluating the value added of the common core. There, the common standards were embedded into the state’s curriculum frameworks with customization and the state has been actively involved in the PARCC Consortia.

Terry Holliday said a 2009 state law required Kentucky to align higher education and K-12 expectations. Every university and two-year institution president signed a commonwealth commitment dedicating resources and staff to assist K-12 local superintendents and teachers in preparing students to be college- and career-ready.

Similarly, all the colleges and universities in Delaware signed a memorandum of understanding to share data in an effort to track college entrance and retention, said Lillian Lowery. Georgia defined college-and career-ready through...
Dr. Andreas Schleicher delivered the keynote address to commence the 2012 NASBE Annual Conference. Dr. Schleicher oversees Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). PISA provides an international gauge of student achievement in each participating country and offers a wealth of student and teacher indicators to help inform the decisions of policymakers. Dr. Schleicher noted that the PISA is a unique assessment of student achievement in that it requires students to “apply knowledge in an unfamiliar situation in creative ways.”

While the U.S. has historically outperformed most countries through the 20th century, this has been changing rapidly over the last decade as many countries have made significant gains in achievement as a result of a shift in focus and priorities within their education systems. Schleicher noted some of the key factors that led to significant gains in achievement for these countries included a commitment to the notion that competency can be learned and all students are capable of success; clearly defining who is responsible for student success and to whom, such as teachers, schools, parents and students; and an investment in the continued development of the teaching profession. Other features of high-performing education systems, Schleicher said, include strong overall accountability combined with significant local autonomy for schools, as well as strong lateral accountability, where teachers consistently work with their peers and the members of these teams are accountable to each other.

As the U.S. strives to once again be the educational leader in attainment and success in the world, Schleicher commended each state’s efforts to embrace the Common Core State Standards as a first step to ensuring that expectations for all students remain consistent and meaningful.

Dr. Schleicher’s multimedia presentation will be available on the NASBE website early next week at http://goo.gl/pQpCE. A video of the session (without the slides) will also be available at http://goo.gl/44xZe.

Meanwhile, Massachusetts is using PARCC’s benchmarks to measure whether students are on track for common assessments and directed a communications campaign toward higher education and K-12 schools about the upcoming exams. In Kentucky, assessments for grades 3-8 begin this year with cut scores based on a trajectory of college and career readiness. Delaware has changed the proficiency levels for standard setting and has infused mathematics and reading/writing into all subject areas.

But what lies ahead in the near term? The chiefs said the state boards from all four states will be focused on submitting waiver applications from provisions of NCLB to the U.S. Department of Education. Delaware will also build out the growth year for non-tested grades and devise a policy for the transitional years. Similarly, Georgia will determine cut scores and, once approved, institute a growth model and revised accountability system.
Panel Presents International Best Practices in Education

NASBE members got a whirlwind tour of education reform in three top-performing nations from a panel of experts well-versed in their countries’ reform efforts. The afternoon session, moderated by Rehema Ellis of NBC News, gave attendees a greater understanding of reforms in South Korea, Canada, and Finland.

Kiyong Byun, associate professor, College of Education, and vice director of the Higher Education Policy Research Institute at Korea University, said he was surprised NASBE wanted someone from South Korea to explain its reforms, as his country patterned much of what it has done on U.S. methods.

He said what propelled South Korea’s economic growth over the last 30 years was its investment in education. In addition, Dr. Byun explained, “Traditionally, in Korean society, children financially support their parents after retirement. For Korean parents, spending for their children’s education means a fruitful investment for the future.”

Carol Campbell, associate professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, expanded on Canada’s Ministry of Education, specifically noting how Ontario’s improvement started at the top of its governing hierarchy.

To raise the province’s performance, the ministry set a series of goals that included high levels of student achievement, reducing gaps in student achievement, and increasing public confidence in education.

Finland, represented by Jenni Jarventaus from the press and public affairs department of the Finnish embassy in the U.S., has high student achievement in part because the system does not use standardized exams, Jarventaus said. In addition, teachers are recognized as professionals, and their ranks are filled by the nation’s top students.

SILENT AUCTION!!

Friday 5:30 – 7:00

All proceeds benefit the NASBE Foundation’s Campaign for Excellence
Host State Night at Fernbank Museum of Natural History