Education in Oklahoma
The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly
Below is a survey of the state of education in Oklahoma:

The Good

**Standards** – In 2010, Oklahoma’s English language arts (ELA) and math standards received a B+ from the national Thomas B. Fordham Institute. On June 25, 2010, the Oklahoma State Board of Education adopted the rigorous Common Core State Standards in ELA and math for grades K–12. These new standards received a B+ and an A- for ELA and math, respectively, from the Fordham Institute. Mastery of these standards will help ensure that Oklahoma students are prepared for success in college and the workforce.

**Data System** – Oklahoma’s state longitudinal data system contains nine of the ten core elements that the Data Quality Campaign deems essential. However, the state must work to publicly report student-level course completion (transcript) data. Oklahoma must also work to maximize use of data capacity in driving effective decision making to improve system and student performance.

The Bad

**Teacher Policies** – In its 2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook, the National Council on Teacher Quality gave the state of Oklahoma an overall D+ for state policies focused on teachers.

Specifically, the state received grades on its ability to perform in the following areas:

- Delivering well-prepared teachers: C-
- Expanding the pool of teachers: C-
- Identifying effective teachers: D+
- Retaining effective teachers: C-
- Exiting ineffective teachers: D+

However, Oklahoma has since enacted legislation establishing a teacher evaluation system that bases 35% of a teacher’s score on student academic growth using multiple years of standardized test data and an additional 15% on other academic measurements.

**Return on Investment** – Student achievement in Oklahoma is middling relative to state spending on education according to the 2007 national Leaders and Laggards report. Oklahoma received a C and ranked 27th among all states for its return on investment, which was measured by its students’ performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—an independent measuring stick also known as the Nation’s Report Card—relative to its per-pupil spending ($5,864, after controlling for student poverty, the percentage of students with special needs, and cost of living).

**Charter School Laws** – According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools’ 2011 ranking of state charter school laws, Oklahoma’s public charter school law is ranked 22nd in the nation. Oklahoma’s law only allows charter schools to be established in districts with more than 5,000 students in Oklahoma and Tulsa counties and in districts that have schools on the state’s school improvement list—amounting to 21 of the state’s 537 districts. While Oklahoma is a leader in providing operational autonomy to its charter schools, it must expand charter schools statewide, and ensure equitable funding and access to facilities. For the 2010-11 school year, Oklahoma has 6,600 students attending public charter schools, which provide needed educational options for families.
Graduation Rate – Oklahoma reports a 77% graduation rate, but the national Diplomas Count report calculates a rate of 72%. Below is the percentage of students graduating in 2007 in Oklahoma as compared to the United States.

Student Achievement – Like many other states, Oklahoma paints a misleading picture of how well its students are performing. While the state reports proficiency rates of 59% or higher for 4th and 8th graders in math, NAEP reveals a 33% or lower proficiency rate for both grades.
Achievement Gap – Not only is the state performing insufficiently overall, but some groups of students are faring even worse. There is close to a 20-point gap in scores between Oklahoma’s black and white students on 4th and 8th grade reading and math tests.\(^1\) This is morally unacceptable and a significant threat to continued prosperity and economic competitiveness in Oklahoma and the nation.

Dropouts’ Effect on the Economy – The Alliance for Excellent Education estimates that the lost lifetime earnings in Oklahoma for the 2010 class of dropouts alone would total over $3.7 billion. If Oklahoma graduated all students ready for college, the state would save as much as $39.5 million a year in community college remediation costs and lost earnings. In addition, if the state increased its male high school graduation rate just 5%, Oklahoma’s economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about $96.4 million each year.\(^2\) Significantly reducing dropouts each year would multiply these positive outcomes.

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Endnotes

4 Data Quality Campaign, 2010-11 Survey Results, 2011. (http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/states)

For more information on the National Chamber Foundation visit \url{www.uschamber.com/ncf}.
Learn more about the Chamber’s education agenda at \url{www.uschamber.com/icw}. 