



# Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

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## WELCOME!

It is late March, and we had a “dusting” of snow and ice in the Chicago area this morning. I cannot speak for everyone, but I think most of us are ready for spring and warmer weather. However, I have an additional reason for eagerly anticipating spring. In May, at the request of the U.S. Department of Education, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, in partnership with the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center and the National High School Center (NHSC), will host the Midwest High School School Improvement Grant (SIG) Conference. The conference intends to help state education staff, along with SIG district and school awardees, learn about reform efforts taking place at the high school level from other district and school staff as well as educational leaders.

To set the stage for the conference, the feature article in this issue is *School Improvement Grants for High Schools: Trends in Wisconsin and Illinois*. This topic is especially pertinent for both Illinois and Wisconsin because, as the article states, “One hundred percent of Illinois’ grantees serve high school grades. Similarly, 100 percent of Wisconsin’s tier I and II grantees serve high school grades.” Great Lakes West has worked with both states on high school reform. We believe the conference and the work being done to improve the systems of support in both states will add value to the states’ work in reforming their SIG high schools.

In March, the comprehensive center (CC) directors from the 16 regional centers and the 5 national centers met with the technical assistance centers funded by the Office of Special Education Programs to learn about knowledge translation. The national emphasis in education on evidence-based practices makes information about knowledge translation or translating research into practice highly relevant and important. Recently, my daughter, a fourth-grade teacher, tried to decipher some research, hoping it would help her better meet the needs of one of her students. Pulling out the pertinent, critical ideas was challenging and time consuming. Translation is definitely needed to make it easier to apply research to practice. I would be interested in hearing from you, our readers, about your successes in translating knowledge.

Linda Miller, Director  
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center  
and Great Lakes West staff members

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# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

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## Illinois High School ELL Meeting

At the request of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Great Lakes West helped to plan, convene, and facilitate a statewide stakeholder meeting for ISBE's Division of English Language Learning (DELL) on February 28, 2011, in Naperville, Illinois. The purpose of the meeting was to assist ISBE DELL determine district guidance needs related to bilingual education requirements under Illinois Administrative Code 228. The team worked together to identify flexibility for implementation within the Illinois school code and find potential solutions to challenges related to the delivery of instructional services for high school English language learners (ELLs).

Key stakeholders, representing high school districts and regional offices of education (ROEs) from across Illinois, came together to discuss the challenges that districts face in the delivery of instructional services for high school ELLs. The stakeholders discussed three sections of the Illinois Administrative Code: Section 228.25, Program Options, Placement, and Assessment; Section 228.30, Establishment of Programs; and Section 228.35, Personnel Qualifications and Professional Development. Participants had the opportunity to share ideas and recommendations with ISBE. Some areas discussed included scheduling issues, meeting the needs of students with different language abilities, and staffing highly qualified staff in content and language areas. Great Lakes West facilitated small-group discussions about each section of the administrative code. During the last meeting session, all meeting participants gathered for a large-group discussion to identify the next steps for ISBE as they draft high school guidance for secondary ELLs. The meeting closed with an address from Christopher Koch, Ph.D., Illinois Superintendent of Education, who attended the day-long event.

More details on Great Lakes West's ongoing efforts to support Illinois ELLs are in the *Focus on States*.

## Common Core Regional Efforts

Great Lakes East, Great Lakes West, and REL Midwest cohosted the regional meeting *Building a Collaborative Work Plan for Implementation of the Common Core State Standards* on January 24–25, 2011. The meeting brought together state education agency (SEA) staff from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The purpose of the regional meeting was to assist SEAs with creating plans for developing resources, strategies, and tools for implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). During the meeting, participants engaged in conversations about needs, issues, and successes they have had in the early stages of implementation. Participants spent time in cross-state and state-specific groups, sharing and learning new information. At the end of the event, the states identified key areas for continued collaboration and support.

Great Lakes West and Great Lakes East have continued to provide regional support to each state through cross-state workgroups in the areas of leadership, communications, alignment, and teaching and learning. These workgroups are meeting regularly, and each has regional discussions on issues related to their topic areas, looking for ways to collaborate on implementation and for Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West to provide regional support. The regional workgroups compliment and supplement the state-specific work that Great Lakes West continues to provide to Illinois and Wisconsin. Updates on these areas of work are in the *Focus on States*.

## The Comprehensive Center Directors Learn About Knowledge Translation

The CC directors, along with the directors of the equity assistance centers and the technical assistance centers funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, have met annually for

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the past five years to discuss and plan how to combine and leverage resources to better serve the states. This year, the directors met to learn about knowledge translation from Melanie Barwick and Donna Lockett, Canadian experts who help others move research into practice.

The trainers shared the following example of how long it takes for research findings to become common practice. In 1497, Vasco da Gama sailed with a crew of 160, and 100 of them died of scurvy. At the time, citrus was suspected to be a cure (this could probably be considered professional wisdom but not strong evidence). In 1601, Captain James Lancaster sailed with four ships, and a crew on one of the vessels was given three teaspoons of lemon juice daily. That ship had 0 percent mortality compared to 40 percent on the other three ships (the evidence is slowly getting stronger). In 1747, British Navy physician James Lind conducted random trials of six treatments for scorbatic sailors; again citrus proved effective. In 1865, the British Board of Trade adopted the “innovation” and made the use of citrus to prevent disease policy. It took 368 years for using citrus as a treatment for scurvy to become general practice. Today, at least in the medical field, the time has shortened to about 17 years. Barwick and Lockett stated that no one is sure what that time is for education, but certainly the push from the field, the states, and the federal government is to quickly move strong research into practice.

Knowledge translation involves taking the best available research and applying it in the real world, in education as well as other fields, such as health, agriculture, and business. Knowledge translation strategies and processes work to ensure that we get the right information to the right people in the right format at the right time to influence decision making (Barwick, Butterill, Lockett, Buckley, & Goering, 2005).

This definition resonated with the technical assistance center directors. We have all at one time or another experienced the implementation gap—when what is known is not adopted because the known was not done with fidelity, was not sustained, and was not taken to scale. To help the directors think about how to work more effectively, the training looked at how people value the source of information. Strong influencers include personal experience (most powerful), colleagues or a professional network, and data that have implications for the user. Research reports and professional development events have a weaker influence on individuals (Barwick et al.). These findings make sense and most directors knew them, but it was a good reminder of considerations for carrying out technical assistance work. The trainers summarized one teacher’s ideas very plainly: “Show me, break it down, and stick around.”

The training concluded with emphasizing the importance of using plain language and the good writing practices learned in fifth grade that most people have somehow unlearned.

## Reference

Barwick, M., Butterill, D., Lockett, D. M., Buckley, L., & Goering, P. (2005). *Scientist Knowledge Translation Training Manual*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

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Dear readers,

If you are interesting in learning more about knowledge translation, please contact me. The trainers gave the directors permission to share all their information as long as their work is cited.

Linda Miller  
[LMiller@air.org](mailto:LMiller@air.org)

## FOCUS ON STATES

In this section, our state managers provide updates about current plans undertaken by each state to focus efforts on implementing federal priorities. E-mail addresses of state managers are included.

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### ILLINOIS

**State Manager:** Nick Pinchok | **E-Mail:** npinchok@air.org

#### Common Core Online Planning Tool

ISBE has adopted the *New Illinois State Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core* as the new mathematics and English/language arts (ELA) standards for K–12. The goal of the new standards is to better prepare Illinois students for success in college and the workforce in a competitive global economy. As part of these efforts, ISBE recently asked Great Lakes West to lead the development of an online planning tool for districts to think through implementation of the standards. The structure of the online tool is based on the Common Core Blueprint planning tool that Great Lakes West created for its first regional CCSS meeting in May 2010.

Districts and schools will approach the planning and implementation of the new standards in various ways and will consider local circumstances. The web-based planning tool is designed to guide district and/or school teams through the process of identifying specific steps as they work toward implementing the new standards. The online planning tool was developed as a common and consistent resource for ongoing planning and implementing and is also responsive to individual district needs.

There are three main sections in the planning tool: Current State, Desired State, and Planning for Implementation. The Current State section focuses on helping districts analyze their existing situation in the areas of curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment. Districts then identify their strengths and analyze the implications of their current situation. The Desired State section helps districts develop a vision for implementation by focusing on building incremental goals. Examples of some of the questions districts respond to are as follows: “What are some ‘quick wins’ you can identify for parents?” or “What are the two-year goals you have for your students?” The Planning for Implementation section focuses on developing specific goals and action steps in the areas of curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment. Each section addresses several vital issues that districts should think through as they assess where they are and where they want to be. Users will identify who will lead determined actions, the resources needed, and the indicators of success for tangible goals that also include progress metrics.

District leadership will be able to provide access to users in their districts and are encouraged to engage a variety of stakeholders in the process of building plans. Data from the plans will be aggregated up to the state level; then ISBE can analyze the plans and determine if additional resources are needed to assist districts with their strategic planning. Additionally, Great Lakes West is supporting training for ROEs on the online tool so that ROE staff can work with districts in their regions to assist them with using and interpreting the tool and their plans.

## English Language Learners

On February 28, 2011, ISBE DELL and Great Lakes West collaborated on a high school ELL meeting. This was the first in a series of three stakeholder meetings that DELL and Great Lakes West are holding to engage key stakeholders in the field in substantive conversations. The results of these meetings will inform guidance to the field, including defining uniform criteria for part-time status programs and preschool guidance. Over 30 Illinois participants, representing districts, ROEs, associations, and the Illinois Bilingual Advisory Council attended to help ISBE explore common ELL high school challenges. Participants were asked to explore specific elements of the state bilingual code, including the establishment of ELL programs, staff certification and qualification requirements, and student thresholds. Great Lakes West facilitated conversations and group activities, during which stakeholders collectively identified challenges within the current state code and opportunities where successful programs were being implemented. Additionally, participants brainstormed on flexibility within the code, potential solutions for implementing requirements, and where the school code could be modified.

State Superintendent Chris Koch attended the day's event. He was there to listen to stakeholders' concerns and recommendations and discussed how stakeholder input would be used to inform ISBE's decision-making process. Superintendent Koch led a roundtable discussion at the end of the meeting, during which he answered questions and shared current information regarding many initiatives and thanked the participants for their thoughtful analysis of these common issues. He shared that the feedback would be summarized and shared with stakeholders in attendance as well as at the March 18 Bilingual Advisory Council meeting. Sharing the meeting results at the Bilingual Advisory Council Meeting was intended to use the results of the discussion to determine if any policy changes need to be made.

Great Lakes West will provide further support to ISBE related to uniform part-time status criteria and preschools at the second and third meetings. ISBE has identified these as areas to potentially provide guidance to all stakeholders that will improve educational outcomes and optimize resources in the delivery of ELL instruction statewide. A part-time status meeting will be held in April, and a preschool meeting will be held in May to provide similar opportunities to explore the issues. Once the challenges and solutions have been identified and collected, ISBE plans to provide guidance documents reflective of the feedback and ideas generated from the field. ISBE will work with Great Lakes West and other partners to update the DELL website to provide guidance, research, support, professional development, and other resources in a helpful and interactive way. DELL is also interested in embarking on research and study initiatives to enhance the quality and quantity of data locally and nationally on what works with ELL students and fill in some of the gaps currently existing in the evidence base for serving ELL populations.



## WISCONSIN

State Manager: Anna Koelln | E-Mail: akoelln@air.org

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### Response to Intervention

Planning has begun for Wisconsin's new role as an intensive state from the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI). Wisconsin officially became an NCRTI intensive state in December 2010. As a result of the new assistance, NCRTI and Great Lakes West are collaborating to provide continuity of response to intervention (RTI) services to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). An initial planning meeting was held on March 16, 2011, between Great Lakes West, NCRTI, DPI, and the Wisconsin RTI Center to discuss specific supports for Wisconsin in implementing RTI. One of the keys to Wisconsin's selection as an intensive state was DPI's release of *Wisconsin Response to Intervention: A Guiding Document* in November 2010. The guiding document is being used as a roadmap for coordinated RTI implementation activities.

### Educator Effectiveness

Great Lakes West is supporting DPI in creating a new statewide educator effectiveness system that will include improved teacher and principal evaluations. In December 2010, DPI created an educator effectiveness stakeholders group to discuss the new systems approach to educator effectiveness. The purpose of this group is to (1) design an educator effectiveness system for the state of Wisconsin, (2) create a regulatory framework for implementing the system, and (3) make recommendations to local education agencies (LEAs) on methods to support improvement and recognize performance. To conduct this work, the larger stakeholders group consists of a workgroup and a design team. The workgroup includes key stakeholders from the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, the Wisconsin Education Association Council, and representatives from colleges and universities. The workgroup will provide data, research, and contextual information to support the design team. The design team includes leadership from each participating organization and is charged with planning the next steps for the work. The design team will make final decisions based on data and research collected by the workgroup. Great Lakes West is providing facilitation support to the workgroup and design team monthly meetings. Great Lakes West is also collaborating with the National Comprehensive Center on Teacher Quality to provide the most recent and relevant research for the educator effectiveness stakeholders group.

### Wisconsin Common Core State Standards

Since Wisconsin's adoption of the CCSS in ELA and mathematics, Great Lakes West has continued to work with DPI on planning and implementation activities. A regional meeting was held January 24-25 in the Chicago area for SEA staff to meet with their peers from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Great Lakes East, Great Lakes West, and REL Midwest sponsored this meeting.

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Since the regional meeting, Great Lakes West has taken a two-pronged approach to supporting DPI in a regional manner and a state-specific approach. Great Lakes West is assisting DPI staff to build and sustain continuous systemic support for standards implementation by providing resources, models, meeting facilitation, processes, and thought partnering throughout the CCSS implementation process. Great Lakes West is also coordinating and facilitating workgroups among all five states so that a comprehensive, collaborative approach can be developed for states to share their ideas and resources at the regional level. Wisconsin DPI is participating in four workgroups that are supported by Great Lakes West and Great Lakes East: leadership, communications, alignment, and teaching and learning.

### **Wisconsin Pacesetter Initiative**

Work is underway for the second cohort of the Academy of Pacesetting States. The Academy of Pacesetting States is an initiative sponsored by the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) that began in 2009. As part of this initiative, the Wisconsin team of nine Title I staff will participate in a series of meetings and distance-learning opportunities throughout the year. Wisconsin began with an orientation for distance learning on December 10, 2010, and the other team activities are as follows:

- Participation in distance-learning sessions for cohort I
- Participation in distance-learning sessions for cohort II
- Attendance at monthly meetings with the Great Lakes West liaison
- Development of a statewide system of support operations manual
- Attendance at Great Lakes West and CII monthly meetings

Great Lakes West is providing direct support to DPI staff before, during, and after the distance-learning sessions so that new learning and dialogues from each session can be applied to current work and initiatives in Wisconsin.

### **Early Childhood**

DPI has recently requested support from Great Lakes West to provide research and facilitation to a small stakeholders group consisting of DPI staff and other Wisconsin education organizations in early childhood. Great Lakes West is researching early childhood development licensure systems in other states to help DPI gain an understanding of these licensure systems. DPI has also requested that Great Lakes West facilitate two meetings in April and May. The first meeting will focus on understanding the issues related to K–12 licensing and childcare licensing and presenting the results of the research conducted. The second meeting will focus on ways Wisconsin could modify early childhood licensing in light of the information shared at the first meeting.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### School Improvement Grants for High Schools: Trends in Wisconsin and Illinois

By Megan Lebow, Research Associate, National High School Center

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#### SIG Overview

SIGs target schools that are persistently low achieving. SIGs have provided \$3.4 billion funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act through increased appropriations for individual schools. To receive SIG funding, states are required to identify a pool of SIG-eligible schools consisting of Title I schools that are in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring and schools that do not receive Title I funds but are similarly low achieving. States must then divide the pool into three tiers. Tier I and II schools are persistently low achieving and either fall in the bottom 5 percent based on academic performance or have graduation rates below 60 percent. Tier III schools are the remainder of Title I schools in the SIG-eligible pool. When allocating funds, states must prioritize tier I and II schools but may also fund tier III schools in high-need districts.

Though SIGs are designed to fund struggling schools at all grade levels, numerous states have made high schools a priority. A total of 589 schools serving high school grades—about half the total number of school grantees—have received funds so far. This emphasis on high school is even stronger in the Great Lakes West region. One hundred percent of Illinois' grantees serve high school grades. Similarly, 100 percent of Wisconsin's tier I and II grantees serve high school grades. Wisconsin has also elected to serve 35 tier III schools, 10 of which are high schools. This article provides a snapshot of the current SIG efforts related to high schools in the Great Lakes West region.

[Read more.](#)

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# PROFILE

## SIG Regional Conference

The Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West, will host a series of regional capacity-building conferences in support of SEAs, LEAs, and schools implementing SIGs.

Four conferences are planned to facilitate this learning. The eastern and western regional conferences will include school turnaround presentations applicable to all SIG grantees, as well as special sessions on rural and high school turnaround. The central and Midwest regional conferences will focus on specific segments of SIG grantees: high schools (Midwest) and rural/Native American schools (central).

Great Lakes West, Great Lakes East, and NHSC have partnered to host the Midwest regional conference on high school turnaround: *Leading Successful High School Turnarounds: Learning From Research and Practice*. The conference presentations and discussions will be structured around the following high school improvement priorities:

- Meeting the individual needs of all high school students
- Ensuring college and career readiness
- Preventing dropouts and increasing graduation rates
- Organizing for high school change (time, structures, staff, and operations)

Date/Location	Region	Conference Theme
April 5–6, 2011: Los Angeles	Western (CA, UT, CO, NV, OR, WA, HI, AZ, and NM)  California CC, West/Southwest CC, Northwest CC, and Pacific CC	The role of state, district, and school leadership in turning around low-performing schools
April 13–14, 2011: Washington, D.C.	Eastern (DC, DE, MS, PA, NJ, VA, WV, SC, TN, GA, LA, AL, MS, FL, PR, USVI, ME, NH, MA, RI, NY, KY, NC, VT, and CT)  New England CC, New York CC, Mid-Atlantic CC, Appalachia CC, Florida and Islands CC, and Southeast CC	The role of state, district, and school leadership in turning around low-performing schools
May 18–19, 2011: Chicago	Midwest (MI, IL, IN, IA, WI, OH, MN, and interested others)  Great Lakes West, Great Lakes East, and NHSC	High school turnaround
May 24–25, 2001: Denver, Colorado	Central (NE, ND, SD, KS, MO, AR, OK, AK, TX, MT, ID, WY, BIE, and interested others)  North Central CC, Mid-Continent CC, Texas CC, Alaska CC, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)	Rural school turnaround and serving Native American students

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## IN THE NEWS

The following articles were selected to provide easy access to news and resources addressing the key topics related to federal priorities within Great Lakes West states and across the country during the past quarter.



### ILLINOIS

**Education Plan Could Come This Week**—*McDonough Voice*, April 12, 2011

<http://www.mcdonoughvoice.com/education/x1485958725/Education-plan-could-come-this-week>

“Education reform in Illinois has gained serious momentum recently, but a day of meetings between all the major players on Thursday failed to produce a plan everyone could agree on.”

**Federal Officials Say Illinois Schools to Receive \$22M in Funding for Low-Achieving Schools**—

*The Republic*, March 18, 2011

<http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/26e63f51c7c14bda92c4b0b91f98fe3a/IL-Illinois-Schools-Grant/>

“Federal officials say Illinois will get more than \$22 million for low achieving schools through a school improvement program.”

**More Illinois School Districts Balancing Budget in Tough Economic Times**—*Illinois State Board of Education*, March 16, 2011

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2011/mar16.htm>

“The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released its annual financial profile of the state’s public schools using revised Fiscal Year 2010 data that takes into account that the state is behind in payments to school districts. The 2011 financial profile scores show that the number of districts in Financial Recognition increased from last year’s 550 to this year’s 571, or nearly 66 percent of all districts are doing a sound job of managing their finances during this current fiscal crisis.”

**Quinn’s School Merger Idea Could Boost Teacher Pay**—*The State Journal-Register*, March 11, 2011

<http://www.sj-r.com/education/x13268916/Quinns-school-merger-idea-could-boost-teacher-pay>

“Gov. Pat Quinn’s proposal to merge Illinois school districts would trigger a sudden increase in teacher salaries that could reduce or even erase any administrative savings, according to labor and education experts.”

**Governor Quinn Receives First P-20 Council Report**—*Office of the Governor*, February 13, 2011

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2011/feb13.pdf>

“Governor Pat Quinn today received the first set of recommendations from the Illinois P-20 Council. The council’s report was released to the Governor and the General Assembly, and it provides a number of suggestions aimed at improving student success in Illinois.”

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**Voucher Testing Data Takes a New Twist**—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 31, 2011

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/118886284.html>

“A day after the release of state test scores showed voucher-school students in Milwaukee achieving lower levels of reading and math proficiency than students in Milwaukee Public Schools, new data from researchers studying the voucher program’s results over multiple years shows those students are doing about the same as MPS students, not worse.”

**Achievement Gaps Close for All Groups of Students**—*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*, March 29, 2011

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_28.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_28.pdf)

“Six years of data from the Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) show improved mathematics and reading performance and achievement gap reductions across all racial and ethnic groups.”

**Legislation May Chart New Course for Charter Schools**—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 19, 2011

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/118309929.html>

“Charter schools are in for major boosts, both in Milwaukee and statewide, if Republican proposals in the Legislature become law. In fact, a big step in that direction may come Wednesday when the state Senate Education Committee takes up three education bills.”

**WEAC President: Commitment to Education “Stronger Than Ever”**—*Wisconsin Education Association Council*, March 14, 2011

[http://www.weac.org/news\\_and\\_publications/11-03-14/WEAC\\_President\\_Commitment\\_to\\_education\\_stronger\\_than\\_ever.aspx](http://www.weac.org/news_and_publications/11-03-14/WEAC_President_Commitment_to_education_stronger_than_ever.aspx)

“On Saturday, March 12, in front of what was pegged as the largest Capitol rally yet in support of workers, WEAC President Mary Bell said educators remain united in support of public education and to restoring the rights of Wisconsin’s workers.”

**MPS on Way to Meeting Goals**—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 13, 2011

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/117914704.html>

“A new report doles out strong praise for the progress Milwaukee Public Schools is making on a court-mandated improvement plan—a 180-degree turn from the gloomy tone of last year’s report on the same subject.”

**Students Increase Participation in AP STEM Exams**—*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*, February 16, 2011

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_16.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_16.pdf)

“More Wisconsin students are taking Advanced Placement (AP) mathematics and science exams than they did five years ago; an indicator that calls for more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education are resonating with educators, students, and their parents.”



## ELSEWHERE IN THE NATION

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Following are news articles related to the topics of charter schools, college and career ready students, district and school improvement, early childhood education, educational systems, effective teachers and leaders, secondary schools, special populations, and the whole child.

### College and Career Ready Students

#### **Three New Briefs From Jobs for the Future Explore Community College Innovations—**

*PR Newswire*, April 10, 2011

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/three-new-briefs-from-jobs-for-the-future-explore-community-college-innovations-119563299.html>

“Jobs for the Future (JFF) today released three new publications examining innovative ways community colleges are serving their students, communities, and emerging workforce needs.”

#### **Gates Foundation Ups Stake in Common Core Standards—***THE Journal*, April 5, 2011

<http://thejournal.com/articles/2011/04/05/gates-foundation-ups-stake-in-common-core-standards.aspx>

“The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is upping its financial support for Common Core State Standards. The foundation awarded \$3 million to ASCD to support that group’s efforts to help education leaders and educators themselves understand the standards and implement them.”

### Education Systems

#### **Obama Urges Education Law Overhaul—***New York Times*, March 14, 2011

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/15/us/politics/15obama.html>

“President Obama called on Monday for an overhaul of education legislation enacted in the Bush administration, telling an audience of teachers and students that Congress should change the No Child Left Behind Act before the start of the next school year.”

#### **Most Public Schools May Miss Targets, Education Secretary Says—***New York Times*, March 9, 2011

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/education/10education.html?\\_r=1&ref=education](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/education/10education.html?_r=1&ref=education)

“More than 80,000 of the nation’s 100,000 public schools could be labeled as failing under No Child Left Behind, the main federal law on public education, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told Congress on Wednesday.”

### Great Teachers and Leaders

#### **Next US Education Reform: Higher Teacher Quality—***Christian Science Monitor*, March 17, 2011

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2011/0317/Next-US-education-reform-Higher-teacher-quality>

“Compared with more than 70 economies worldwide, America’s high school students continue to rank only average in reading and science, and below average in math. But this sorry record for a wealthy nation can be broken if the US focuses on recruiting and keeping first-rate teachers.”

**U.S. Is Urged to Raise Teachers' Status**—*New York Times*, March 15, 2011

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/education/16teachers.html?\\_r=1&ref=education](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/education/16teachers.html?_r=1&ref=education)

“To improve its public schools, the United States should raise the status of the teaching profession by recruiting more qualified candidates, training them better and paying them more, according to a new report on comparative educational systems.”

**Full Report:** <http://www.mcgraw-hillresearchfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/pisa-intl-competitiveness.pdf>

**How Teacher Development Could Revolutionize Our Schools**—*Washington Post*, February 28, 2011

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/27/AR2011022702876.html>

“Over the past four decades, the per-student cost of running our K-12 schools has more than doubled, while our student achievement has remained virtually flat. Meanwhile, other countries have raced ahead.”

## Meeting the Needs of English Learners and Other Diverse Learners

**Draft Rules Point Way to Consistency in ELL Policies**—*EdWeek*, April 4, 2011

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/06/27ells\\_ep.h30.html?tkn=NVPFOh0ffJy7J%2BgzK0EWFHTbLHfJ35fJxhZC&cmp=clp-edweek](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/04/06/27ells_ep.h30.html?tkn=NVPFOh0ffJy7J%2BgzK0EWFHTbLHfJ35fJxhZC&cmp=clp-edweek)

“U.S. Department of Education officials are poised to release a final notice of the requirements for the \$10.3 million grant competition that will ultimately lead to the creation of a new generation of English-language-proficiency tests developed under the Common Core State Standards Initiative.”

**Presidential “Latinos and Education” Town Hall—A Key to Winning the Future**—*White House*, March 28, 2011

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/03/28/presidential-latinos-and-education-town-hall-key-winning-future>

“President Obama participated in an historical town hall event focused on education and the Latino community this morning at Bell Multicultural High School, a dual-language school situated in the heart of the Hispanic community in Columbia Heights in the nation’s capitol.”

## A Complete Education

**A Head Start Center of Excellence**—*U.S. Department of Education*, March 8, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/oese-news/head-start-center-excellence>

“It’s on behalf of our youngest learners that the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services are partnering and coordinating our work. It’s also why investments in early learning, such as the Early Learning Challenge Fund, proposed in the President’s FY2012 Budget, are so important.”

**U.S. Economic Future Needs STEM Education**—*The Hill*, March 31, 2011

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/campaign/153037-us-economic-future-needs-stem-education>

“The United States has begun to lose its status as a scientific and technological leader, and the only way we can hope to compete in the 21st century global economy is if we invest in research and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.”

**Urban Districts Trail Nation on Science NAEP**—*EdWeek*, February 24, 2011

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/02/24/22naep.h30.html?tk>

“Most of the 17 urban districts that took part in a prominent science exam fell below the national average, with the exception of the school systems in Austin, Texas; Charlotte, N.C.; and Jefferson County, Ky.; where 4th graders scored about the same as their peers across the country.”

**Full Report:** <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011452>

## Successful, Safe, and Healthy Schools

**States Making Swift Progress on Student-Data Systems, Report Finds**—*EdWeek*, February 21, 2011

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/02/16/21dqc.h30.html>

“After a big influx of money from the federal economic-stimulus law, states have made “unprecedented progress” in building the technology needed to collect statewide data on students’ academic progress from year to year, according to the latest report on a project that promotes the use of such data. Yet it still will take a political push to ensure all states have fully operational student-data systems by September.”

**Full Report:** [http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/stateanalysis/executive\\_summary/](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/stateanalysis/executive_summary/)

## Fostering Innovation and Excellence

**Return of the One-Room Schoolhouse**—*American Spectator*, March 31, 2011

<http://spectator.org/archives/2011/03/29/return-of-the-one-room-schoolh>

“Detroit . . . is conceding to the reality that the school district model—with its expensive central bureaucracy, woeful inefficiency, and lengthy record of academic failure—no longer works either for children or taxpayers.”

**How to Fix America’s Worst Schools**—*Christian Science Monitor*, March 26, 2011

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2011/0326/How-to-fix-America-s-worst-schools>

“Across the country, a new movement is taking root, backed by the Obama administration, that is trying bold and controversial new methods—a kind of shock therapy—to fix the nation’s worst schools. These are the bottom 5 percent, the roughly 5,000 public schools that chronically underperform and that, in many cases, society has given up on.”

**SIG Regional Conferences—Save the Date!**—*U.S. Department of Education*, February 15, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/oese-news/sig-regional-conferences-%E2%80%93save-date>

“OESE is partnering with its Comprehensive Centers to connect educators, administrators, and practitioners together to learn from one another and begin creating peer networks and communities of practice.”

## RESOURCES

This section emphasizes current topics at regional comprehensive centers, national content centers, and other technical assistance providers.

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***Beyond Basic Skills: State Strategies to Connect Low-Skilled Students to an Employer-Valued Postsecondary Education***—Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success, March 2011

<http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Beyond-Basic-Skills-March-2011.pdf>

“Critical federal programs, such as funding for student aid and job training, can help lower-skilled adults and youth access postsecondary education, but important policy choices that support their success and completion can be made at the state and local levels.”

***Achieving More, Spending Less: In Schools, Districts, and States***—Center on Innovation and Improvement, March 2011

[http://www.centerii.org/productivity/Docs/Achieving\\_More\\_Spending\\_Less2.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/productivity/Docs/Achieving_More_Spending_Less2.pdf)

“Forty-six states and many municipalities face financial deficits that total more than \$130 billion. The deficits are likely to continue threatening and diminishing school spending. Since August 2010, an estimated 400,000 state and locally financed workers, including teachers and firefighters, have been laid off (Financial Times, January 13, 2011, p. 7). Policymakers and educators face the productivity or efficiency challenge of maintaining or preferably increasing learning with the same or lower spending levels.”

***Webinar Series: Using Doing What Works (DWW) Resources to Support SIG Grantees in Adolescent Literacy***—Center on Instruction, March 2011

<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/webinar-series-using-doing-what-works-dww-resources-to-support-sig-grantees-in-adolescent-literacy-school-leadership>

This webinar series includes five webinars, with supporting documents on Doing What Works resources that can support SIG grantees with adolescent literacy. The five modules include school leadership, research overview, explicit vocabulary instruction in middle school, text discussion, and intensive interventions for struggling readers.

***Measuring Teachers' Contributions to Student Learning Growth for Nontested Grades and Subjects***—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, March 2011

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/MeasuringTeachersContributions.pdf>

“This Research & Policy Brief provides information about options for states to explore as well as factors to consider when identifying and implementing measures. The brief also focuses specifically on federal priorities to help ensure that evaluation systems meet the high expectations set for teacher evaluation. Finally, the brief emphasizes the importance of fairly measuring all teachers, including them in the evaluation process, and ensuring validity in measurement.”

**The Impact of Collaborative Strategic Reading on the Reading Comprehension of Grade 5 Students in Linguistically Diverse Schools**—REL Southwest, March 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=78>

“Recent findings from an expert panel of reading researchers noted that approximately 8 million adolescents struggle with literacy in middle and high school (Biancarosa and Snow 2006); the “most common problem is that they are not able to comprehend what they read” (p. 3). Before the 1980s, teachers rarely taught reading comprehension (Carlisle and Rice 2002; Durkin 1978).”

**Education as a Data-Driven Enterprise: A Primer for Leaders in Business, Philanthropy, and Education**—Alliance for Excellent Education, March 2011

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/EdAsDataDrivenEnterprise.pdf>

“With advances in research, technology, and assessments, and with a focused effort, the U.S. education system can lead the world in becoming a data-driven enterprise. This publication provides leaders from business, philanthropy, and education with background on data issues; describes challenges that must be overcome; and makes recommendations for moving forward.”

**The Relationship Between English Proficiency and Content Knowledge for English Language Learner Students in Grades 10 and 11 in Utah**—REL West, March 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=255>

“This study examines the relationship between performance on Utah’s English proficiency assessment and English language arts and mathematics content assessments by English language learner students and compares the performance of English language learner and non-English language learner students on the content assessments.”

**Building Teacher Evaluation Systems: Learning From Leading Efforts**—Aspen Institute, March 2011

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/building-teacher-evaluation-systems-learning-leading-efforts>

“Ambitious reforms across the country are reshaping teacher evaluation and performance management. Designing new systems for measuring teacher effectiveness and using that information to increase student achievement are at the heart of these efforts and at the center of important policy debates. Yet little information exists about how these systems work in practice and how to use evaluations in concert with other levers to improve teaching and learning.”

**State Strategies for Fixing Failing Schools and Districts**—National Governors Association, March 2011

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/1103FIXINGFAILINGSCHOOLS.PDF>

“At least 5,000 public schools have failed to meet their academic achievement targets for at least five consecutive years.<sup>1</sup> The underlying causes of such failure are usually a combination of weak leadership, inadequate skill levels among teachers, and insufficient high-quality teaching materials. Compared with a typical school, a failing school often has twice the number of high-poverty students and many more students who enter the school below grade level.”

**Teacher and Leader Effectiveness in High-Performing Education Systems**—Alliance for Excellent Education, March 2011

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/TeacherLeaderEffectivenessReport.pdf>

“The issue of teacher effectiveness has risen rapidly to the top of the education policy agenda, and the federal government and states are considering bold steps to improve teacher and leader effectiveness. One place to look for ideas is the experiences of high-performing education systems around the world. Finland, Ontario, and Singapore all have well-developed systems for recruiting, preparing, developing, and retaining teachers and school leaders, and all have attained high levels of student performance and attribute their success to their teacher-effectiveness policies. This report examines lessons from these high-performing systems that the United States can apply, and provides detailed descriptions of the policies from each system.”

**High Quality Professional Development for All Teachers**—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, February 2011

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>

“This Research & Policy Brief addresses the aspect of the teacher support system that is perhaps the most important and often the most weakly implemented: teacher learning and development.”

**Measuring Up to the Model: A Ranking of State Public Charter School Laws**—National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, January 2011

[http://www.publiccharters.org/files/pressreleases/2011\\_NAPCS\\_StateCharterLawRankingsReport.pdf](http://www.publiccharters.org/files/pressreleases/2011_NAPCS_StateCharterLawRankingsReport.pdf)

“This report is based on a comparison of each state’s charter laws and regulations against the Alliance’s model charter school law. The model describes 20 essential components of a strong charter school law.”

**Meeting the Challenge to Serve All Students: Charter Schools and Special Education**—National Charter School Resource Center, March 2011

<http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/webinar/meeting-challenge-serve-all-students-charter-schools-and-special-education>

“The National Charter School Resource Center hosted a webinar March 16, 2011, that explored promising practices to improve the quality of education for students with disabilities in charter schools. The presenters also highlighted National Charter School Resource Center resources that are designed to help charter school leaders implement high-quality programs for students with disabilities.”

**Conducting Return on Investment Analyses for Secondary and Postsecondary CTE:**

**A Framework**—National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, February 2011

[http://136.165.122.102/mambo/component/option,com\\_remository/func,fileinfo/id,249/](http://136.165.122.102/mambo/component/option,com_remository/func,fileinfo/id,249/)

This paper “extends [Kevin] Hollenbeck’s recent work estimating the rate of return for workforce development programs, including secondary and postsecondary CTE, in Washington state.”

**Dropout Prevention Programs in Nine Mid-Atlantic Region School Districts: Additions to a Dropout Prevention Database**—REL Mid-Atlantic, February 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=229>

“This report describes dropout prevention programs identified by respondents in nine school districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region, along with a searchable database of the programs. The programs expand a database developed in an earlier North-east and Islands Region study. Only 1 of the 58 identified programs has been reviewed for effectiveness by the What Works Clearinghouse.”

**Elementary/Secondary Information System**—National Center for Education Statistics, February 2011

<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

“The Elementary/Secondary Information System (ELSi) is an NCES web application that allows users to quickly view public and private school data and create custom tables and charts using data from the Common Core of Data (CCD) and Private School Survey (PSS).”

**The Nation’s Report Card: Science 2009**—National Center for Education Statistics, January 2011

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011451>

“This report presents results of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in science at grades 4, 8, and 12. National results for each of the three grades are based on representative samples of public and private school students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense schools.”

**Do Schools in Rural and Nonrural Districts Allocate Resources Differently? An Analysis of Spending and Staffing Patterns in the West Region States**—REL West, January 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=233>

“This study of differences in resource allocation between rural and nonrural districts finds that rural districts in the West Region spent more per student, hired more staff per 100 students, and had higher overhead ratios of district- to school-level resources than did city and suburban districts. Regional characteristics were more strongly related to resource allocation than were other cost factors studied.”

**Replication of a Career Academy Model: The Georgia Central Educational Center and Four Replication Sites**—REL Southeast, January 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=269>

“The study surveyed four career academies in Georgia that replicated the model of the Georgia Central Educational Center, which integrates technical instruction and academics at the high school level. The four replication sites adhered to the major tenets of the model. The model’s flexibility helped the new sites meet community needs.”

**Measuring Student Engagement in Upper Elementary Through High School: A Description of 21 Instruments**—REL Southeast, January 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=268>

“This report reviews the characteristics of 21 instruments that measure student engagement in upper elementary through high school. It summarizes what each instrument measures, describes its purposes and uses, and provides technical information on its psychometric properties.”

Updated! **Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants**—Center on Innovation and Improvement, January 2011

<http://www.centerii.org/handbook/>

The Center on Innovation and Improvement has added new guidance to the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants*.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

For additional listings, visit the Great Lakes West website to access the [Calendar of Events](#).

April 2011			
<b>Dates:</b>	April 18–21	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Assessment Summit: Ahead of the Curve</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Schaumburg, IL	<b>Audience:</b>	Educators and assessment directors
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Solution Tree
<b>Dates:</b>	April 25–28	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">CEC 2011 Convention &amp; Expo</a>
<b>Location:</b>	National Harbor, MD	<b>Audience:</b>	Special educators and early interventionists; general educators working closely with special educators; administrators and supervisors; teacher educators; researchers, related service professionals; psychologists and diagnosticians; curriculum specialists and facilitators; university students; parents; paraprofessionals; and others with a keen interest in special, early, and gifted education
<b>Format:</b>	Format: Convention	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Council for Exceptional Children
<b>Date:</b>	April 26	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">NRCCTE-OVAE Spring 2011 Colloquium</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b>	NRCCTE researchers and partners, NRCCTE advisory panel, national organizations, and the U.S. Department of Education
<b>Format:</b>	Colloquium	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE)
<b>Dates:</b>	April 27–29	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">4th Annual National Summit: Great Teachers for Our City Schools</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Denver, CO	<b>Audience:</b>	Urban educators, administrators, researchers, and policymakers
<b>Format:</b>	Summit	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Center for Urban Education
<b>Dates:</b>	April 27–29	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Annual Conference on Standards and Assessment</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Scottsdale, AZ	<b>Audience:</b>	Educators, administrators, and school and district teams
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Solution Tree
<b>Date:</b>	April 28, 11:30 a.m.– 2:30 p.m. CST	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Maximizing the Power of Education Data While Protecting the Privacy, Security, and Confidentiality of Student Information</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b>	Educators, policymakers, and education stakeholders
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting/Webcast	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Data Quality Campaign

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May 2011

<b>Date:</b> May 12	<b>Topic:</b> Transforming Urban Public Education: Exploring the Potential of City-Based Strategies
<b>Location:</b> New Orleans, LA	
<b>Format:</b> Dialogue	<b>Audience:</b> Leaders from high-quality charter schools, the state education agency, the school district, charter management organizations, authorizers, local or statewide charter support organizations, local foundations, the business community, and community-based or civic organizations
	<b>Sponsor:</b> National Charter School Resource Center
<b>Dates:</b> May 16–18	<b>Topic:</b> Eleventh National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute
<b>Location:</b> Chapel Hill, NC	<b>Audience:</b> State and local administrators, teachers, early interventionists, allied health professionals, inclusion specialists, technical assistance providers, and parents in leadership positions
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> FPG Child Development Institute, the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
<b>Dates:</b> May 18–19	<b>Topic:</b> Midwest High School SIG Conference, Leading Successful High School Turnarounds: Learning From Research and Practice
<b>Location:</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Audience:</b> State and local teams from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin (plus interested others)
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> National High School Center, Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
<b>Dates:</b> May 24–25	<b>Topic:</b> Rural School Turnaround and Serving American Indians and Alaska Natives
<b>Location:</b> Denver, CO	<b>Audience:</b> State and local teams from Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, and interested others
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> North Central Comprehensive Center, Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center, Texas Comprehensive Center, Alaska Comprehensive Center, and the Bureau of Indian Education

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June 2011

**Dates:** June 19–22  
**Location:** Orlando, FL  
**Format:** Conference

**Topic:** 2011 National Conference on Student Assessment  
**Audience:** Teachers, administrators, school board members, education associations, institutions of higher education, state education agencies, business, test developers

**Sponsor:** Council of Chief State School Officers

**Dates:** June 20–23  
**Location:** Atlanta, GA  
**Format:** Webinar

**Topic:** National Charter Schools Conference 2011  
**Audience:** School leaders; school administrators; teachers; chief business officers/chief financial officers/finance staff; school board members; facility managers; chief information officers; information technology staff; charter school authorizers; charter school legal experts; federal, state, and local policymakers and elected officials; charter management organization and education management organization staff; state charter association staff; business and community leaders; charter school advocates; education consultants; anyone interested in starting a charter school

**Sponsor:** National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

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## **Great Lakes West** Comprehensive Center

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1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200  
Naperville, Illinois 60563-1486  
630.649.6548

[www.learningpt.org/greatlakeswest/](http://www.learningpt.org/greatlakeswest/)