



# Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

VOL. 7, NO. 3  
AUGUST  
2012

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## WELCOME!

Welcome, and farewell. In July 2006, we introduced our new center and stated: "...our purpose is to build state-level capacity by delivering technical assistance and support to the state education agencies (SEAs)." It is hard to believe we wrote that first issue six years ago. Many things have changed since then: state superintendents and their staff, federal leadership, educational priorities, and reform initiatives. What has not changed is the need for all of us in the field of education to work together to improve our students' learning opportunities and their success in college and their careers. The other thing that has not changed is that we are to build the capacity of states to help their districts and schools. In this the final issue of *Your Access to the Region*, we decided to have the Great Lakes West staff and our state liaisons reflect about the work we have done in Illinois and Wisconsin. We videotaped staff talking about what capacity building is, how it has changed over time, and some examples of our work. We also interviewed each of our state liaisons about how Great Lakes West has worked with them to develop their states' capacity. While none of us are at risk of having Hollywood knock at our doors, we are passionate about this work and hope you see our commitment to you and our determination to providing quality services for the last six years.

This center will close its doors before Christmas (we have a few projects that we will finish from October through December), but there will be a new center called the Midwest Regional Center that will be funded starting October 1, 2012. The new center will include four states: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The award will not be made to an organization until sometime in September, but the purpose of the new center will be to work with state education agencies and build the capacity of the states to support their educators and students.

We want to thank all of you who have worked with us. Your dedication and commitment to our kids is apparent to everyone at Great Lakes West. Our states are doing amazing work, and we are proud to have had the opportunity to work alongside you.

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

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends and readers,

This is the 26th and final issue of the Great Lakes West e-newsletter *Your Access to the Region*. As editor for all but the first issue, it is a momentous and slightly bittersweet occasion for me. The newsletter has gone through many changes and growing pains in that time. So, for this final issue, it only seemed fitting to pause from our usual routine of updates on our work and reflect on some of those changes. With this issue we have sought to do two things, the first was to reflect on what capacity building has meant to us for these almost seven years; that task fell to the Great Lakes West staff and our state liaisons. The second was to thank you all for following our work and checking in with us every quarter; that task now falls to me.

Thank you. There are no better words to capture the heartfelt gratitude and sincerity we feel here at Great Lakes West towards our newsletter readers. As we began to reflect on how our sense of capacity building has developed over the life of the contract, it became clear how much the newsletter—as our vehicle for communicating about capacity building—has also grown. Our desire to serve the state education agencies in our region and be responsive to you fueled that growth. Your feedback through our annual survey has been invaluable to helping us better understand our audience and how to effectively interact with you. Your insights have helped us focus the message of capacity building; this has gone beyond the newsletter to helping improve our services and how we communicate directly with our state clients. As much as the constant cycle of updating progress on our work has sometimes been tiring and difficult, it has also helped us keep focused on where we have been and where we are going. I hope that you have enjoyed coming along with us and that we have been successful in our goal to serve you and be responsive to your needs.

I would also like to thank everyone who helps make sure each issue is the best it can be. The Great Lakes West staff has been essential to pulling this off every issue. Thank you for always tolerating my reminders and nudges, and setting aside time in your demanding schedules to write, review, or do whatever else is being asked of you. Each issue is a team effort, and no issue could have been completed without the Great Lakes West team and their work. However, once Great Lakes West staff develops the content, the work is not done. Thank you to all of the editors, designers, and Web developers who have worked on the newsletter throughout the years. I truly believe our editors are Great Lakes West's unsung heroes; everything we do they make better, and their dedication is evident in each issue we have produced.

Thank you all for helping make each issue a reality. It has been a wonderful and productive seven years at Great Lakes West. We can't wait to see you when we begin the next contract.

Marie Husby-Slater

Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

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## 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 the state managers are included.



### ILLINOIS

**State Manager:** Nick Pinchok | **E-Mail:** [npinchok@air.org](mailto:npinchok@air.org)

#### Cross-Divisional Family Engagement

##### Purpose

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) continues to align its work across the agency. Family engagement was chosen as one area of focus because it touches on so many different elements of practice and policy. The divisions of English Language Learning, Early Childhood, Career & Technical Education, Special Education and Support Services, and Innovation & Improvement are exploring current programs, partnerships, and policies across the divisions. ISBE staff identified opportunities of how activities in one area could be shared across multiple divisions with an eye on eliminating duplication and leveraging precious resources to a broader audience. The agency will have stronger alignment of initiatives across the agency through improved professional learning activities that strengthen connections across divisions, and seek to use a significant funding opportunity to identify and replicate best practices and successful models statewide and across divisions.

##### Great Lakes West Priorities

Great Lakes West is working with ISBE to help build capacity across the state to strengthen and support a statewide system of family engagement planning and practice. Great Lakes West has helped ISBE develop a plan for more engaging cross-divisional family engagement work, participating on the cross-divisional team and providing a research synthesis.

##### Next Steps

One initial outcome is to develop a cross-divisional family engagement newsletter. ISBE staff published the first quarterly newsletter this summer. Additionally, ISBE has chosen to invest some significant one-time funding into the development of a family engagement framework that can be used for family engagement programs. The framework will ideally be a collaborative model focusing on common strengths, needs, research, and best practice, and take a whole-system approach to improving policy, resource allocation, and best practice, which will impact a broader base of stakeholders. The cross-divisional team plans on completing the framework in early 2013.

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## Rising Star Capacity Builders Professional Development

### Purpose

Over the past nine months, ISBE has provided several opportunities to build the capacity of new Rising Star users. Implementation of Rising Star, a Web-based continuous improvement tool organized around eight essential elements of effective practices, will support ISBE in developing a comprehensive continuum of research-based support services and resources designed to improve student outcomes for all Illinois districts and schools. ISBE's statewide system of support (SSOS) team designed a series of workshops to prepare and support new district/school coaches with Rising Star. This work has continued since the original workshop, presented via a webinar, was provided multiple times in late November and early December 2011. Recent workshops took place in May and June 2012 to build the capacity of district-appointed improvement coaches in the use of high-impact coaching competencies that support the work of Continuous Improvement Teams, and focus on monitoring and sustainability.

### Great Lakes West Priorities

Great Lakes West is working with ISBE's SSOS to help build capacity that improves data-based decision making, fosters innovation and excellence in all schools, and strengthens Illinois' education system. As a member of the design team, Great Lakes West provides resources, support, and guidance on how best to build capacity within the agency and across the system from a research- and-evidence-based perspective, and works closely with team members to improve their facilitation and collaboration skills.

### Next Steps

ISBE is developing a Center for School Improvement to coordinate the comprehensive continuum of research-based support services and resources designed to improve student outcomes for all Illinois districts and schools. In support of the center's mission, ISBE's SSOS team will move forward with the following activities:

- The design team will train coaches to be trainers so that modules can be delivered regionally.
- The design team is designing training around Coaching for Capacity Building and Effective Communication

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## Content Area Specialists Summer Regional Conferences

### Purpose

ISBE's content area specialists (CAS) in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, data & assessment, and learning support develop and provide resources and tools for education stakeholders in understanding and implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The CAS held statewide Summer Regional Common Core Conferences in three different locations (south, central, and north) to provide the latest and best CCSS-aligned strategies for ELA and mathematics instruction in classrooms around the state. They also showcased the resources and tools the CAS team has developed and collected from other states and organizations for teachers, curriculum directors, SSOS coaches, and content specialists.

### Great Lakes West Priorities

Great Lakes West is working with ISBE's CAS to help build capacity for an SSOS that improves data-based decision making, fosters innovation and excellence in all schools, and strengthens Illinois' education system. To optimize productivity with ISBE staff, Great Lakes West continues to provide thought partnering and resource support. Additionally, Great Lakes West is working on team-building and facilitation processes to assist CAS with these important skills and their interaction in the field with new and greater numbers of stakeholders.

### Next Steps

The CAS will continue to develop CCSS strategies by grade level and incorporate formative assessment development activities. CAS and Great Lakes West staff will edit the most recent (May 2012) webinars based on feedback from participants. Great Lakes West will also continue collaborative and supportive discussions with the data & assessment CAS members to pursue a Web- and learning progressions-based assessment system for Illinois educators.

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## Response to Intervention

### Purpose

The Wisconsin RTI (Response to Intervention) Center and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) staff are working to identify RTI interventions that will meet Wisconsin's Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) criteria. DPI would like to codevelop a list of research-based intensive interventions that meet the SLD criteria to help Wisconsin districts, schools, and teachers select specific intensive interventions to support students before they are identified for special education.

### Great Lakes West Priorities

Great Lakes West is working with DPI to meet the needs of SLDs by promoting data-based decision making within a multilevel system of support to develop successful, safe, and healthy schools. Great Lakes West is working in conjunction with the National Center on Response to Intervention to identify RTI interventions that meet the SLD criteria in Wisconsin.

### Next Steps

Great Lakes West met with DPI and the Wisconsin RTI Center in both June and August 2012 to identify intensive interventions that meet Wisconsin's SLD criteria. DPI will select various staff of school-based teams for participation in an initial Feedback Forum that will include testing and feedback of the tool before piloting it during the 2012–2013 school year. The Feedback Forum took place on Thursday, August 23, 2012, in the Wisconsin Dells.

## Educator Effectiveness

### Purpose

The preliminary report, *Wisconsin Framework for Educator Effectiveness*, was released on November 7, 2011. The framework established a solid foundation for the development of a state model that specifically guides training, piloting, and implementation of Wisconsin's educator effectiveness system. Since the release of the report, DPI has continued developing that foundation by:

- Establishing an internal workgroup to move forward with developing a state model for educator effectiveness.
- Forming a statewide coordinating council to provide feedback to the workgroups developing the model and make final recommendations for the state model.

**Great Lakes West Priorities**

The educator effectiveness work connects directly to Wisconsin’s next-generation accountability efforts. The state model will improve the recruiting and retention of successful teachers and leaders in Wisconsin. Great Lakes West supported the convening of the workgroups throughout the spring.

**Next Steps**

This fall, Great Lakes West will plan with DPI in identifying the best ways to support the pilot districts during the 2012–2013 school year as well as other supports (i.e., meeting facilitation, research, or specific technical assistance DPI will need to build the capacity of its internal teams to support the pilot districts and schools).

**Next-Generation Learning**

**Purpose**

DPI and Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #1 (serving southeastern Wisconsin) are documenting the impact of district efforts to pilot Wisconsin’s next-generation learning system. This effort is part of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and CESA #1 work to organize and define Wisconsin’s next generation of “personalized” learning. As a result of these efforts, DPI will be able to share the stories of districts engaged in the work and will have defined critical elements of personalized learning within the context of next-generation learning in Wisconsin.

**Great Lakes West Priorities**

The next-generation learning project promotes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) initiatives as part of a complete education that will help districts and schools meet the needs of English learners and other diverse learners, and support the DPI goal of having every graduate being college or career ready. Great Lakes West has facilitated collaboration between DPI and CESA #1 throughout the project.

**Next Steps**

Great Lakes West will work in conjunction with Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest (REL Midwest), DPI, and CESA #1 to create an online survey of the districts participating in the project, to be administered in early September. The survey will comprise four separate surveys for administrators, parents, teachers, and students. REL Midwest will do an initial analysis to begin to summarize the data this fall. The survey will launch efforts to capture the stories of districts in innovative ways as they move forward and identify ways to help others begin this work.

## Common Core State Standards

### Purpose

DPI has created leadership teams in the content areas of mathematics, English language arts, disciplinary literacy, and science to focus on these areas within the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in order to develop professional development modules for district and school staff. The teams include DPI staff and stakeholders from the field, including teachers, administrators, and association members.

### Great Lakes West Priorities

The Common Core work connects directly to the federal priority area of college- and career-ready students and aligns with DPI priority initiatives such as RTI and the new Wisconsin accountability system. Great Lakes West is working with DPI staff to help them create the meeting agenda and develop the professional development modules.

### Next Steps

In addition to supporting the four leadership teams, Great Lakes West hosted a bridge event on mathematics intervention strategies in collaboration with the National Center on RTI and REL Midwest to bring Wisconsin and Illinois together. The event was attended by more than 200 educators in Lake Geneva on August 10.

## Statewide Systems of Support and School Improvement Grants

### Purpose

Great Lakes West has worked with DPI this past year to support Title I schools in Wisconsin using the Indistar® online tool to inform, coach, sustain, track, and report improvement activities at the school and district levels.

### Great Lakes West Priorities

Great Lakes West's primary role in this work is to support DPI in understanding how to use the Indistar tool to best support the improvement efforts of Title I schools. This work builds DPI's capacity to foster innovation and excellence by turning around persistently low-achieving schools. Using the Indistar tool will also strengthen Wisconsin's education system by creating consistency across School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools.

### Next Steps

Over the summer, Great Lakes West worked in collaboration with the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) and DPI to design a professional development plan for the rollout of Indistar to Wisconsin focus and priority schools in fall 2012. Great Lakes West and CII worked closely together to identify the baseline and coded indicators and then developed, guided, and coached DPI on the design and planning for its trainings this summer.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### State Capacity and the Comprehensive Center

Building capacity of the state education agencies has been the central charge of Great Lakes West technical assistance. As part of this issue's reflection on capacity building, Great Lakes West spoke with the Illinois and Wisconsin state liaisons about capacity and how the comprehensive center has contributed to developing their agencies' capacity. Although the goal of capacity building is the same for each state, the states themselves and their priorities are unique.

*Great Lakes West: How has your concept of capacity building changed over the last 5–7 years?*

*Sheila Briggs, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI):* I have been with DPI for a little more than a year. Thinking about that time, capacity building is all about providing support in a way that then allows somebody to do something similar without support after the fact. Great Lakes West has expertise in areas around project planning and meeting planning, organizing, and facilitating. When we get support with that, my idea of capacity building is that I then see those people in the agency carry that information into other things they do without Great Lakes West. For example, I have seen people work with Great Lakes West on developing plans for how they are going to implement the Common Core, and I can see the impression that Great Lakes West has made with plans that they have made in other contexts.

*Great Lakes West: How has Great Lakes West's work influenced your understanding of your organization's capacity?*

*Susie Morrison, Illinois State Board of Education:* Great Lakes West has helped us to fill some voids in our own capacity and has helped us work more strategically across the organization to increase our limited capacity.

*Sheila Briggs:* I am working to understand our capacity in multiple areas as I learn more about the organization. What has happened is, in the areas where I see the need for capacity building, we are able to have Great Lakes West as a resource to come in and help with that.

An example of that is when we started strategic planning last August. We did some initial great work, but had trouble getting some traction and moving forward. I was able to make the suggestion to bring in a facilitator. Once Great Lakes West came in to do that, things moved forward more quickly. Having someone who was a little removed helped us and we were able to focus on what we needed to do. Great Lakes West brought in a facilitator who was able to bring in great ideas around processes and procedures, and how to do the background work. That role has been really helpful. That is a great example of an area where we were lacking in the ability to have a single person dedicated to that role, and the experience we have had is going to carry over into the other work we do.

*Great Lakes West: In what ways has working with the comprehensive center helped to develop your organization's capacity?*

*Susie Morrison:* Great Lakes West has helped us be more strategic through their efforts to bring staff from across the agency and different centers and divisions together. The work on any number of initiatives where they have been the conveners has helped foster communication and coordination across the agency, to help us see how we can leverage the limited capacity that we do have.

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*Sheila Briggs:* In addition to project and meeting planning and facilitation, a big area of support that stands out is being able to help connect us to the research. There is a specific skill set in being able to do research scans and pull relevant research in a timely matter. It is not that we don't have people in the agency who can do that, but it is not something that we always have the time to do in an efficient manner. Being able to have Great Lakes West help find relevant research around a topic has been extremely beneficial to us. When you talk about capacity building, when we are able to read additional pertinent research in an area we are working in, it is certainly building our capacity to lead in that area.

*Great Lakes West: What is an example of a way you work differently within your organization or with your constituents as a result of Great Lakes West technical assistance?*

*Susie Morrison:* Within those initiatives, we have been able to send a more consistent message to the field. There is a greater likelihood that people across the agency are more likely to speak with one voice and answer questions in the same way. This increases our credibility as an agency when they are getting the same response from different places in the agency. For me personally, one of the ways Great Lakes West has helped increase capacity is by allowing opportunities to meet with other states and share resources across states. We are all limited in what we can do alone.

*Sheila Briggs:* The big one that stands out to me is working with constituents. We feel really strongly that as a state agency we have an important obligation to involve our stakeholders in the work we do, decisions we are making, and support we are providing. That is always a challenge. When you are working statewide, just logistically, to be able to bring people together and have efficient gatherings to collect that input is really important, but really complex. We see Great Lakes West as our angel in being able to do that effectively. They help us bring stakeholders together, develop efficient and effective processes and meetings, and find ways to gather feedback from our stakeholders. I put that on the top of our list when it comes to us being able to work differently. The bottom line is I am not sure how we would do that, and it is such a mission critical part of our work. Engaging with our stakeholders is so critical to us, and resource-wise and capacity-wise I am not sure we would be able to do that without the center.

*Great Lakes West: If someone asked you to describe Great Lakes West, what would you say?*

*Susie Morrison:* I would say they are one of the greatest assets we have right now as a state agency. They respond quickly to our requests, help us think differently about how to solve problems and address issues, and are more nimble because they aren't part of the agency.

*Sheila Briggs:* I see Great Lakes West as a resource for the state agency to be able to carry out our mission. When I say "resources," I use that as a very broad term, such as the human resources of being able to have staff that can help with things, like research scans. Great Lakes West likes the term "thought partner" when thinking about a project or thinking about how to move a project forward. I am a huge believer in process; you can have the greatest idea or the smartest group of people together, but if you don't have a process to work through what needs to be done it is going to be a waste of everyone's time. I have seen Great Lakes West be very supportive in thinking through process and getting us where we need to go with the groups of people we bring together, both internally and externally. I see that as really valuable. Great Lakes West provides overall support to the state agency in many ways—support that helps us do what we need to do as a state agency. I think our capacity would be diminished without that support.

# NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

## Capacity Building, Comprehensive Centers, and the Future

By Paul Kimmelman, Ed.D.,

Senior Advisor, Education, Human Development, & the Workforce, American Institutes for Research

### Introduction to Capacity Building

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act passed by Congress in 2001 was “game changer” legislation for state education agencies (SEAs). A decade later, states have discovered that federal legislation with rigorous accountability requirements can impose daunting challenges for their education agencies that lack the staff and technical expertise to effectively move the complex legislation to classroom practice. That observation is not intended to be a condemnation of the work of SEAs. Rather, it is recognition that what was being asked of them was an entirely new scope of work for the states. As a result of the shift in federal priorities, states had to support their districts and schools with using scientific research findings to inform program decisions, building comprehensive data systems that comply with federal accountability requirements, developing new teacher and principal evaluations focused on effectiveness, and providing oversight of schools that fail to meet required achievement standards. Instead of providing primarily oversight to ensure schools were meeting state rules and regulations, as had been their basic responsibility, SEAs were now challenged to organize complex new systems to implement the new requirements within their agencies.

Along with NCLB, Congress passed legislation that authorized the Education Technical Assistance Act, creating national and regional comprehensive assistance centers that were expected to help the states build their capacity to implement NCLB and its numerous requirements. The network of centers included five national centers: Assessment and Accountability, Innovation and Improvement, Instruction, High School, and Teacher Quality. In addition, 16 regional comprehensive centers were created, with at least one center in each of the 10 geographic regions served by a regional educational laboratory to ensure all the states received support for their work. The premise was for the content centers to help the regional centers and states gain the necessary specialized knowledge about the education reform initiatives necessary to implement the law and meet its requirements, and the regional centers would help the states implement the law. For purposes of this article, I am focusing on the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center that serves Illinois and Wisconsin.

Much has changed since 2002 about the comprehensive center network and capacity building. Great Lakes West would not have been able to do a lot of the work described here 5–6 years ago. The comprehensive centers’ scope of work prior to 2002 did not require the ongoing, intense partnerships between states and the comprehensive center staff that the NCLB accountability provisions did. Instead, under the newly authorized Education Technical Assistance Act, SEA staff had the opportunity to work much more closely with comprehensive center staff to comply with new, rigorous, complex initiatives that had some egregious sanctions if states and districts did not successfully meet the minimum standards contained in the law.

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The first challenge for Great Lakes West was to gain the trust and build new working relationships with SEA staff. While that might sound like a simple activity, it takes time to build good working relationships, and the new comprehensive center relationship was a more intense federal–state relationship. States were reluctant to immediately share data or even accept the fact that NCLB would survive. Thus, it took several years for the partnerships to develop in ways that would not only produce good working relationships but positive results as well. It should also be noted that both Illinois and Wisconsin had changes in top leadership including the state superintendents. Changes in leadership required developing working relationships with new personnel, which took additional time.

Second, because NCLB was a new law with specific accountability requirements, both state and comprehensive center staff had to find the best resources to build data systems, evaluate educators, help schools review curriculum and programs to ensure higher graduation rates, prepare students who are career and college ready, and think about innovative ways to incorporate technology as an integral part of the work. Over the last five years, it is apparent that Great Lakes West has developed the type of relationships with the Illinois and Wisconsin departments of education that have enabled them to undertake substantive work with effective results. With that, Great Lakes West has moved with the SEAs and helped build their capacity in new and different ways as the work progressed and became more in depth and complicated.

Working collaboratively with SEA staffs in Illinois and Wisconsin, Great Lakes West has assisted with capacity-building activities that have led to successful outcomes on a number of projects. A few high-impact, capacity-building projects for each state are featured in this commentary. Those successes are good examples of how the federal government can, with limited funding, provide technical support to states to meet the challenges of building their capacity to implement the complex federal education policy reform initiatives. The entire network of comprehensive centers is a logical federal approach to helping states successfully gain the capacity to do the “heavy lifting” in the new policy-driven, standards-based, accountability era.

## Great Lakes Capacity Building in Illinois and Wisconsin

### Illinois

In Illinois, Great Lakes West has assisted with implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through several tasks supporting a comprehensive approach to CCSS technical assistance. At the time of adoption, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) leadership placed high priority on the rollout and implementation of the CCSS and, like many other states, was dealing with staff and budget reductions and challenges related to CCSS work. As a result, ISBE relied upon strategic partners to help implement CCSS as a statewide reform. Great Lakes West provided several types of technical assistance in different areas to support ISBE in taking an effective and holistic approach to implementation of the CCSS. Great Lakes West has provided technical assistance to ISBE in the areas of:

- District planning
- State networking, information gathering, and planning
- State implementation planning

One of the key CCSS activities was the development of an online planning tool to help districts plan for the transition to the CCSS. The tool guided practitioners through questions to determine their readiness for using the CCSS in their classrooms, and develop objectives and action steps to sustain their work. Development of the online tool was a collaborative process that included ISBE, Great Lakes West, Illinois State University, and Regional Offices of Education staff. The strategic partners offered technical assistance to help districts build their awareness and knowledge of the CCSS and utilize the online tool.

Great Lakes West has helped Illinois and other Midwestern states build their capacity to implement the CCSS through the Midwest Common Core Consortia. The consortia began in January 2011 and included the development of an Innovation Configuration Map (IC) for Common Core implementation. The IC Map became the basis for the online tool and spurred recent efforts to help ISBE think strategically about Common Core implementation and support.

In 2012, the Midwest Common Core Consortia evolved into a series of five regional meetings focusing on specific topics to help the states implement the CCSS. This series engages state planning teams in reviewing their CCSS work and includes presentations from national experts to help them. Great Lakes West has facilitated state teams in planning the meetings and enabled states to share their work at the CCSS series. Through these meetings, ISBE has been able to work with the experts and collaboratively engage with other states to make substantial progress toward implementing the standards.

As mentioned above, one significant outcome from the collaborative state work was the creation of an SEA-level set of IC Maps to guide CCSS implementation. To help ISBE think strategically, Great Lakes West used IC Maps to analyze Illinois' priorities and status towards implementing the CCSS. Great Lakes West's review was able to help ISBE focus on areas that were determined to be important and needed additional effort.

Each of these efforts alone would have developed ISBE's capacity to support statewide implementation of the CCSS, but would not have worked towards a systemic view of the initiative. By focusing on each component, Great Lakes West has been able to work as part of the larger system, therefore helping ISBE pursue comprehensive efforts towards statewide implementation.

**Wisconsin**

Building capacity means that you move with your client in terms of meeting their needs, starting where they are and moving forward with them. This concept has been realized during Great Lakes West's five years of technical assistance in working with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to develop, design, and refine its educator effectiveness system.

Great Lakes West first started supporting Wisconsin with effectiveness when DPI initiated a state-supported induction and mentoring program in 2006. Great Lakes West and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest helped Wisconsin develop a better understanding of how current programs were addressing needs related to this new program by developing and administering a survey for three consecutive years to gauge preparation in the field. At the beginning of the project, DPI needed a better understanding of what was happening in the state to engage in long-term support for a new initiative. However, the project quickly morphed. Research and the results of the first survey were used to inform a seminar on teacher induction. This seminar also grew over its three years to feature

Wisconsin researchers and research, and promote promising practices. In 2010, the focus of Wisconsin's needs evolved further to the facilitation of the Forum on Advancing Educator Effectiveness (FAE2). This forum continued the previous years' work through efforts to design a framework that clearly outlined the shared definitions of teacher and administrator effectiveness, measurable indicators, and research-based resources for use in local systems of educator effectiveness assessment.

However, it quickly became clear that there was a need to involve a larger group of Wisconsin stakeholders and focus clearly on a system of evaluating educator effectiveness. In 2011 and 2012, Great Lakes West has continued to support DPI as the educator effectiveness work has become more systematic and larger in scope.

Phase I of the current educator effectiveness project included representatives from the governor's office, district administrators, teachers, and state associations participating in a task force to design a framework for educator evaluation. Great Lakes West facilitated this task force, similar to its facilitation of the previous FAE2 group's work. The impact of the educator effectiveness work and Great Lakes West support were captured well by Mike Thompson, deputy superintendent of Wisconsin:

Great Lakes West has been instrumental in assisting Wisconsin in two very large statewide accountability reform projects, including developing an educator effectiveness evaluation framework and a school accountability system that formed the basis for our No Child Left Behind waiver with the United States Department of Education. Both of these were statewide efforts with a tremendous amount of stakeholder involvement. Great Lakes staff were partners with DPI in the process, and provided excellent facilitation and technical input from the beginning of the process to the end. The success of both of these reform initiatives was largely dependent on their involvement. They continue to be valued partners as we continue to move forward with implementation.

Phase II of the educator effectiveness task force focused on designing the components of the educator effectiveness system. Great Lakes West and National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) staff supported workgroups developing student learning objectives (SLOs), teacher and principal practice, and assessment components. By supporting this work, Great Lakes West, in partnership with the TQ Center and REL Midwest, has been able to help DPI better understand the technical components of framing and designing an educator effectiveness system. Over the course of nearly six years, Great Lakes West has been able to walk with DPI as it moves from the beginning of a new initiative to strengthening and improving an important piece of the statewide education system.

**Summary**

As demonstrated in the Illinois and Wisconsin examples of Great Lakes West capacity-building work, it should be apparent that the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center has met the intended outcomes of the federal legislation creating it. Great Lakes West helped both states better understand and implement the requirements of the complex challenges imposed by NCLB and the newer requirements from the U.S. Department of Education for waivers from some of NCLB's rules. By leveraging federal funding to maintain a system of support for states through regional and national centers, both Illinois and Wisconsin have been able to undertake reform initiatives with the knowledge and federal resource support they needed to successfully achieve their goals.

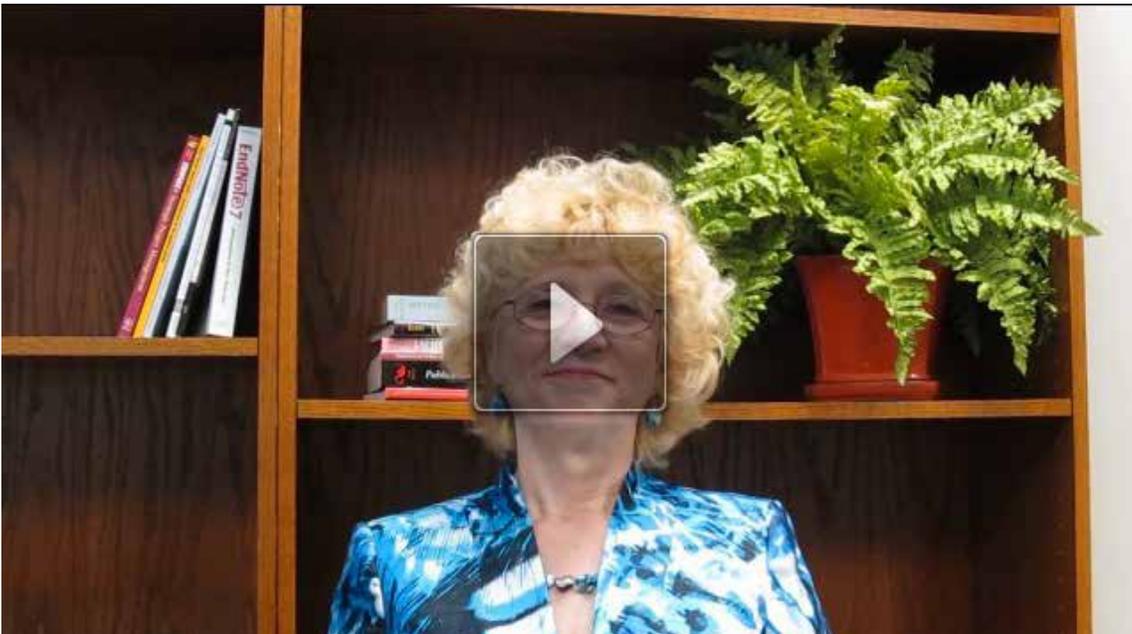
A recent commentary by Michael Usdan and Arthur Sheekey clearly articulates the future challenge for SEAs. They said, "...but of late, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is asking state and school district officials to do even more with even less. The Secretary is encouraging state and local education leaders to explore productive alternatives to old ways of doing things and urging them to bring about transformational productivity reforms that can also boost student outcomes." Secretary Duncan's charge to states is an important justification for federal support of comprehensive centers to help them implement the daunting school reforms required in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). States are being asked to accomplish a lot in today's education reform-oriented world.

Yet, the future of federal support for comprehensive centers is uncertain at this time. The competition for comprehensive centers began with the release of the request for proposals in June 2012. That is only the first step in the process. Next, will be a determination whether Congress will continue to fund them. It is not a secret that federal funding for every program is being carefully reviewed by Congress. And, in a presidential election year, there will be considerable discussion about the federal role in education. It is somewhat paradoxical; as the federal education requirements for states have become more complex, the question of whether to invest in programs such as comprehensive centers to help states implement those requirements is being debated. In the end, however, what is not being debated is that the most important outcome is a system that produces students who can achieve lifetime success in a highly competitive world.

## PROFILE

### Great Lakes West Reflections

As part of our reflection on capacity building, Great Lakes West staff were asked a series of questions about the story of capacity building for the comprehensive center. Their responses to these questions were videotaped and presented in a brief video below. [Click here to play video.](#)



## 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 the Great Lakes West states and across the country during the past quarter.



### ILLINOIS

#### **Quinn Signs Bilingual Education Law**—*NBC Chicago*, August 9, 2012

<http://www.nbcchicago.com/blogs/ward-room/Quinn-Signs-Bilingual-Education-Law-Others-165676986.html>

“House Bill 3819 calls for the Advisory Council on Bilingual Education to submit a report to the State Superintendent of Education, the General Assembly, and the governor’s office. Some of the issues to be covered in the report include how to better involve parents in their children’s education. ”

#### **Gov. Quinn Amps Up Pressure to Overhaul Pensions**—*State Journal-Register*, August 5, 2012

<http://www.sj-r.com/top-stories/x417564157/Gov-Quinn-amps-up-pressure-to-overhaul-pensions>

“Gov. Pat Quinn amped up the pressure on lawmakers to overhaul Illinois’ pension systems and warned on Sunday of massive future budget cuts for school districts as a consequence.”

#### **CPS Finds Few Wins After School Reform Legislation**—*Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 2012

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-state-education-reform-20120723,0,7750641.story>

“A year after legislators passed a controversial law intended to overhaul education in Illinois, it appears that Chicago still ain’t ready for reform. Senate Bill 7 was written specifically to take power away from the teachers union and set the stage for changes pushed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his appointed school board, most notably the longer school day and year.”

#### **New Illinois Law Cuts School Superintendents**—*State Journal-Register*, June 25, 2012

<http://www.sj-r.com/education/x1762343660/New-Illinois-law-cuts-school-superintendents>

“The number of regional school superintendents in Illinois will drop from 44 to 35 by 2015 under legislation signed Monday by Gov. Pat Quinn. Senate Bill 2706 raises the minimum population requirement for a regional office of education from 43,000 people to 61,000. Education service regions smaller than that will be eliminated.”

#### **Illinois Will Create New “Pathways to Prosperity” for High School Students**—Illinois State Board of Education, June 19, 2012

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2012/jun19a.htm>

“The Illinois State Board of Education announced today that Illinois is among six states to participate in the Pathways to Prosperity Network, a coalition that aims to increase the number of high school graduates who attain a postsecondary credential with value in the labor market while also leaving open the prospect of further education. The work will initially focus on Chicago and Aurora, but the long-term goal is to create a statewide system of career pathways.”

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**Wisconsin School Tests New Way to Grade Teachers**—WREX, August 13, 2012

<http://www.wrex.com/story/19264983/wisconsin-school-tests-new-way-to-grade-teachers>

“The new method evaluates public school teachers based on classroom observations and student outcomes, including test scores. The state Department of Public Instruction expects to have the system fully in place by the 2014–2015 school year.”

**Accountability System Preview**—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 17, 2012

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2012\\_82.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_82.pdf)

“Wisconsin’s new accountability system, which is based on the state’s recently approved No Child Left Behind (NCLB) flexibility waiver, will provide annual school report cards that use multiple measures to rate school effectiveness.”

**Less than Half of State’s Students Measure Proficient Under New National Standards**—*Wisconsin State Journal*, July 17, 2012

[http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/local\\_schools/less-than-half-of-state-students-measure-proficient-under/article\\_5c9a2860-cf9b-11e1-9250-0019bb2963f4.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/local_schools/less-than-half-of-state-students-measure-proficient-under/article_5c9a2860-cf9b-11e1-9250-0019bb2963f4.html)

“Nearly two-thirds of Wisconsin students who took the state reading test last fall scored below proficient, and less than half were proficient in math, according to recalibrated results released Tuesday by the Department of Public Instruction.”

**Do Wisconsin High Schools Pass the Career Test?**—*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, July 15, 2012

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/do-wisconsin-high-schools-pass-the-career-test-n662f6a-162541446.html>

“A wide-ranging group of lawmakers, business leaders, and educators begins work Monday to answer a central question: Does Wisconsin’s education system do enough to develop the career skills of high-schoolers?”

**Wisconsin Waiver Request Approved**—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, July 6, 2012

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2012\\_79.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_79.pdf)

“State Superintendent Tony Evers announced that Wisconsin’s request for waivers from certain provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Wisconsin submitted an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request in February and has been working with the federal education department and the peer review panel since mid-April to clarify details of the plan.”



## ELSEWHERE IN THE NATION

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**Next Generation Science Standards Aim to Improve Science Ed**—*Education News*, August 13, 2012

<http://www.educationnews.org/k-12-schools/next-generation-science-standards-aim-to-improve-science-ed/>

“Currently, 26 states are working together to develop a new set of science standards—called Next Generation Science Standards—that will be available to all 50 states starting in 2013.”

**U.S. Department of Education Kicks Off Connected Educator Month**—U.S. Department of Education, July 31, 2012

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-kicks-connected-educator-month>

“Because no educator should be an island, the U.S. Department of Education has declared August Connected Educator Month. Throughout August, more than 100 of the nation’s leading education organizations, communities, and companies will come together online to celebrate and explore the power of professional online communities and networks to meet the needs of education professionals—novices and leaders alike.”

**States With Education Waivers Offer Varied Goals**—*New York Times*, July 26, 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/27/education/varied-plans-for-states-with-waivers-no-child-law.html>

“In excusing more than half of the states from meeting crucial requirements of the No Child Left Behind education law, the Obama administration sought to require states to develop more realistic tools to improve and measure the progress of schools and teachers.”

**Statement From U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on “Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Report on Year 1 Implementation”**—U.S. Department of Education, July 16, 2012

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/statement-us-secretary-education-arne-duncan-teacher-evaluation-tennessee-report>

“It took extraordinary courage to comprehensively fix a longstanding system that was fundamentally broken. Thanks to Tennessee’s hard work, and the strong leadership of Governor Haslam and Commissioner Huffman, the state is making unprecedented progress in producing statewide reform and boosting student achievement in a relatively short period of time.”

**For full report:** [http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/yr\\_1\\_tchr\\_eval\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.tn.gov/education/doc/yr_1_tchr_eval_rpt.pdf)

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## RESOURCES

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

**State Policies on Principal Evaluation: Trends in a Changing Landscape**—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

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

"The recent wave of education reform initiatives has resulted in new principal evaluation legislation in the past few years. This policy brief describes the trends in recently passed principal evaluation legislation, with a focus on implementation timelines and pilot programs."

**Linking Teacher Evaluation to Professional Development: Focusing on Improving Teaching and Learning**—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

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

"This Research & Policy Brief was developed to support the efforts of states and districts to inform professional growth decisions and opportunities by strategic use of results from teacher evaluation processes."

**Aligning Teacher Evaluation With Professional Learning: What States and School Districts Need to Know Now**—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

[http://www.tqsource.org/publications/evaluation\\_learning\\_infographic.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/evaluation_learning_infographic.pdf)

"The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) has developed three new practical resources to help states and school districts build meaningful professional learning into the design and implementation of teacher evaluation systems."

**Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM): Catalyzing Change Amid the Confusion**—Center on Instruction

<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/science-technology-engineering-mathematics-stem-catalyzing-change-amid-the-confusion>

"This document offers an overview of the role of STEM in current educational improvement efforts. It offers a brief history of STEM initiatives and publications and attempts to capture important trends and dispel confusion over the goals and approaches of STEM initiatives. Several important considerations are also presented for state and district educators who are developing STEM programs to compare and contrast the available STEM approaches."

**Building the Foundation—A Suggested Progression of Sub-skills to Achieve the Reading**

**Standards: Foundational Skills in the Common Core State Standards**—Center on Instruction

<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/building-the-foundation—a-suggested-progression-of-sub-skills-to-achieve-the-reading-standards-foundational-skills-in-the-common-core-state-standards>

"This document is based on an analysis that determined the sub-skills students need to achieve in each of the Foundational Skills (K–5) in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). It contains five sections, each targeting one grade level in: Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency."

**What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools: A Focus on English Language Learners**—National High School Center and The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research

[http://www.betterhighschools.org/documents/UChicagoCCSR\\_NHSC\\_ELLEWS\\_reportMay12.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/documents/UChicagoCCSR_NHSC_ELLEWS_reportMay12.pdf)

“This report examines whether ninth-grade course performance indicators are as predictive of graduation for ELLs [English language learners] as for the general population.”

**Change Leadership: Innovation in State Education Agencies**—Academic Development Institute

<http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/ChangeLeadership.pdf>

“This paper presents a Change Leadership Framework and applies the framework to the role of leadership in a State Education Agency (SEA) in setting the conditions for change to accelerate student learning. These conditions include the way the SEA directs its own change and the way it inspires and leads constructive change in districts and schools.”

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

### September 2012

**Date:** September 12      **Topic:** Building the Bridge to College and Career Readiness (fifth in series)

**Location:** Lisle, IL      **Audience:** state education agency staff and state teams from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin

**Format:** Meeting      **Sponsor:** Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center and Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

**Date:** September 20      **Topic:** [Help Wanted: Addressing the Skills Gap](#)

**Location:** Washington, DC      **Audience:** business leaders, policymakers, and education organizations

**Format:** Conference      **Sponsor:** Institute for Competitive Workforce, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

**Date:** September 27      **Topic:** [EdTech 2013: Powering Up Success](#)

**Location:** Boston, MA      **Audience:** school district leaders

**Format:** Conference      **Sponsor:** Education Week

**Dates:** September 27–28      **Topic:** [RTI Innovations](#)

**Location:** Salt Lake City, UT      **Audience:** principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, Rtl coaches, school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, reading specialists, speech and language pathologists, educational consultants, central office administrators, state department personnel, professional development coordinators, higher education personnel

**Format:** Conference      **Sponsor:** Innovations Committee

### October 2012

**Date:** October 5      **Topic:** [EdTech 2013: Powering Up Success](#)

**Location:** Detroit, MI      **Audience:** school district leaders

**Format:** Conference      **Sponsor:** Education Week

**Dates:** October 18–21      **Topic:** [Advancing Native Education in the Age of Digital Learning](#)

**Location:** Oklahoma City, OK      **Audience:** tribal and native leaders, college students, K–12 youth, and researchers

**Format:** Conference      **Sponsor:** National Indian Education Association

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<b>Date:</b> October 24, 3–4:30 p.m. ET	<b>Topic:</b> Looking Inside Classrooms: Teacher Effectiveness
<b>Location:</b> Online	<b>Audience:</b> educators
<b>Format:</b> Webinar (series)	<b>Sponsor:</b> PreK– 3rd Grade National Work Group
<b>Dates:</b> October 29–30	<b>Topic:</b> Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) 2012 Statewide Charter School Conference
<b>Location:</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Audience:</b> INCS member schools, nonprofit organizations, start-up schools, vendors, and educational consultants
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> INCS

Upcoming

<b>Date:</b> November 5	<b>Topic:</b> Best Cooperative Practices: Charter & Traditional Public Schools Conference
<b>Location:</b> Broomfield, CO	<b>Audience:</b> education leaders and policymakers
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools and partners
<b>Dates:</b> November 8–9	<b>Topic:</b> The Education Trust 2012 National Conference
<b>Location:</b> Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b> educators, advocates, parents, and policymakers
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> The Education Trust
<b>Dates:</b> November 14–18	<b>Topic:</b> 40th Annual Conference of the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE)
<b>Location:</b> Nashville, TN	<b>Audience:</b> NABSE members, supporters, superintendents, principals, school board members, education human resource professionals, deans, professors, education department heads, administrative/educational support staff, teachers, parents, curriculum specialists, students, employers, job seekers, clergy, and any individual or organization concerned about the education of our nation’s children
<b>Format:</b> Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b> NABSE
<b>Date:</b> December 5, 3–4:30 p.m. ET	<b>Topic:</b> Using Data to Inform and Improve Instruction: Child Assessment
<b>Location:</b> Online	<b>Audience:</b> educators
<b>Format:</b> Webinar (series)	<b>Sponsor:</b> PreK–3rd Grade National Work Group
<b>Date:</b> January 16, 2013, 3–4:30 p.m. ET	<b>Topic:</b> Scale and Sustainability: Implications for State and District Policy
<b>Location:</b> Online	<b>Audience:</b> educators
<b>Format:</b> Webinar (series)	<b>Sponsor:</b> The PreK–3rd Grade National Work Group

This work was originally produced in whole or in part by the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B060001. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

Great Lakes West is one of the 16 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and its work is administered by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research.

## **Great Lakes West** Comprehensive Center

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