



# Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center

VOL. 6, NO. 4  
OCTOBER  
2011

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## WELCOME!

Fall is officially here, and many schools already have had their first parent-teacher conferences. Along with the question, How is my child doing? often there is an unspoken question, How is my child's school doing? Many schools are doing a great job of engaging students and meeting their individual learning needs. For schools that are not doing well, school choice and the charter schools movement are offered as an alternative. In this quarter's *Your Access to the Region*, we look inside the charter schools effort and see where the challenges are. The National Charter School Resource Center delves into current charter school issues in Illinois and Wisconsin, and the direction in which these issues are going, and looks at how each state has developed charter school laws during the past 20 years.

In addition, you will notice that we have started making some changes to this e-newsletter. Based on the survey conducted last spring and feedback from our advisory board during the summer, we will no longer run the *Highlights of the Quarter* section. In the next several upcoming issues, look for more changes as we work to ensure that our content is clear and targeted to be the most useful to our readers. As always, we want to hear your ideas about topics of interest to cover and ways we can improve this e-newsletter. Please e-mail us with your suggestions.

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

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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

#### Parent Involvement

The Illinois State Board of Education's Division of Innovation and Improvement will be hosting a second round of Parent Involvement Regional Summits this fall. The summits, created for Title I school teams, have been developed to assist these teams in producing plans and implementing high-yield strategies that will sustain family engagement partnerships and improve skills that join families and schools on a common path to student achievement.

The fall summits will revisit the work started in the spring summits. Using data specific to each school, the fall session will lead school teams through an evaluative action planning process and the development of a ready-to-implement plan that will satisfy family engagement requirements for school improvement planning. Teams will be grouped by schools that serve elementary school, middle school, and high school levels. Lunch and learn breakout sessions run by returning practitioners from the spring summits will provide additional support.

There are four fall summits in October and November. The Illinois State Board of Education's Parent Involvement Regional Summits are the collaborative work of the Academic Development Institute, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, and the Illinois Parent Information Resource Center. More information on the summits can be found at <http://www.illinoisparents.org/isbesummitinfo.htm>.

#### School Improvement Grants (SIG)

The Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE's) Division of Innovation and Improvement hosted a SIG 1003(g) fall grantee meeting on Thursday, October 6, 2011, in Bloomington. Great Lakes West assisted ISBE with the development of the day's activities and provided resources for facilitation support.

SIG 1003(g) Round 1 and Round 2 recipients were encouraged to bring district and school leaders and team members who are working through implementing each grantee's plans. The meeting provided current information on memorandums of understanding (MOUs), monitoring, and data use and engaged participants in activities to stimulate thinking and new strategies for a variety of issues critical to transformational school success (e.g., "Cultivating Relationships, Family, and Community Support," "Working With School Boards," "Leveraging Resources," and "Building Teacher Capacity"). ISBE plans to provide additional opportunities for Round 1 and Round 2 recipients to share what is working and learn from prior year grantees to accelerate learning.

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## Illinois Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

The Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center is continuing to support the rollout of the New Illinois State Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core online tool through a series of information webinars for regional offices of education and districts. These 60-minute webinars will provide an overview of the online tool and its capabilities as well as a question and answer session. Every district in the state now has a user name and password to begin to use the tool to think through their transition from current practice and curricula to implementation of the new, more rigorous standards. The Web-based planning tool was designed to guide districts in preparation for the transition to new standards. There are three sections with guiding questions and planning steps to (1) identify your strengths, your concerns, and what you can build upon during the transition; (2) look into the future and determine what successful implementation would look, sound, and feel like to your main stakeholders; and (3) specify the objectives, goals, and action steps local teams will establish in the areas of curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment to bring your plan to life.

Great Lakes West, in collaboration with the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, will be hosting additional multistate regional meetings to continue to foster collaboration among our five state education agencies (SEAs) and explore ideas for optimizing everyone's time and resources for this important reform. SEA staff members will be planning each of the meetings, and survey results from attendees of the January 2011 workshop are being used to prioritize common needs, areas of focus, and work groups. To date, the following areas have been targeted:

### **Policy**

- Messaging college and career readiness to the field
- Continuously connecting to individual state policy contexts

### **Instruction**

- Helping educators understand the shifts in instruction

### **Professional Development**

- Professional development planning

### **Assessment**

- Assessment literacy
- Data literacy

### **Curriculum**

- Collecting demonstrations of what this looks like in the classroom
- Integrating the CCSS into career and technical education work

In addition, Great Lakes West plans to bring in support and expertise from REL Midwest, national content centers, and other thought leaders in the Common Core State Standards area as well as host vetted resources and a space where SEAs and local education agencies can go to help them communicate and plan for implementation.



## WISCONSIN

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

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### Educator Effectiveness

The Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center continued to facilitate the educator effectiveness work throughout the summer as the design team and work group began development of the Wisconsin educator effectiveness framework. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Great Lakes West, and REL Midwest worked together to outline the written framework document, which also involved reviewing frameworks for other states. Through this work, Great Lakes West was able to support DPI in a targeted way to streamline information and allow DPI the time to give structure and voice to the educator effectiveness framework document.

Meetings resumed in August. The teams were faced with issues that continue to present challenges for decision makers on a national level, such as the weight of student outcomes relative to other measured components of performance and measuring effects on outcomes for teachers of nontested subjects. Great Lakes West has had a strong and deliberate focus on coordinated communication, planning, and networking to bridge the varying viewpoints and opinions of members of the groups. As a result, DPI has been able to reach consensus on key decision points on which the framework will be developed. The framework is expected to be completed by the end of October 2011.

### Response to Intervention (RTI)

RTI continues to be a priority at DPI. The Wisconsin RTI Center planned a Wisconsin state RTI meeting to bring together state leadership from schools and districts in Wisconsin. The meeting was held on September 16 in the Wisconsin Dells and provided participants with the opportunity to discuss the state vision, upcoming trainings, and activities in which the Wisconsin RTI Center would provide implementation support during this year. Great Lakes West and the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) attended this meeting as a support to DPI and as thought partners.

Great Lakes West also hosted a DPI and Wisconsin RTI Center planning meeting at the RTI Innovations Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, in conjunction with NCRTI to discuss how Great Lakes West and NCRTI could support Wisconsin's vision. DPI is working not only to strengthen the supports the department provides to the Wisconsin RTI Center but also to make intentional connections between the tenets of RTI and the Common Core State Standards to help facilitate schools' and districts' deeper understanding of how these two high priority initiatives connect at the instructional level.

### Read to Lead

Great Lakes West and REL Midwest continued to support the Read to Lead task force by facilitating each meeting. At the meeting on August 25, the Read to Lead group was asked to make recommendations to inform the work of other statewide initiatives, including the Accountability

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design team and the Educator Effectiveness design team, in order to make intentional connections across these priority areas at the state level. At this meeting, the task force also heard from Elaine Allensworth, Ph.D., of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Dr. Allensworth presented research on district policies aimed at improving literacy achievement. The final meeting of the task force took place in Wausau on September 27, which concluded the six-month-long task force.

## Common Core

Within DPI, the Common Core decision making has been divided into four internal leadership teams—English language arts, mathematics, disciplinary literacy, and science—which have worked individually and collaboratively to develop user-friendly guidance for districts, schools, and cooperative educational service agencies. The guiding principles for teaching and learning have now been posted on DPI’s website. Additional guidance for English language arts, mathematics, and disciplinary literacy will be completed soon. DPI has started similar work for science guidance documents based on K–12 science standards being developed at the national level.

The next phase of work will be to design and develop professional development modules aligned with the rollout and implementation of DPI’s learning standards. Great Lakes West, in support of DPI, will be intentional about connecting the Common Core and RTI initiatives. Great Lakes West has partnered with DPI leadership teams to plan, design, and cofacilitate statewide implementation activities for the professional development modules. Work on the modules will continue through the 2011–12 school year.

## Accountability Task Force

In collaboration with Governor Scott Walker, Representative Steve Kestell, and Senator Luther Olsen, DPI is participating in an Accountability task force to establish a next generation accountability system for Wisconsin. The purpose of the design team is to design a fair and accurate accountability system that measures the performance of all students—including those in traditional public schools, charter schools, and private school choice programs—to ensure that every Wisconsin child has the opportunity to graduate ready to succeed in college or a career.

The primary goal of the group is to take advantage of the recent Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) waivers that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has made available at the state level, but, more important, the goal is to build an improved accountability system that focuses on college and career readiness. The first task force meeting was held on August 30 in Madison and was facilitated by Great Lakes West. The design team, which includes 30 members, will work throughout the next four months with DPI and the legislative team to explore guiding principles of a Wisconsin accountability system. The guiding principles are to define each of the following: purpose and guiding principles of our work; performance objectives; measures and metrics; annual determinations; transparent reporting; diagnostic review; and support, rewards, and interventions.

The outcome of the task force will be mutually agreed upon principles and a statewide framework to build the statewide accountability system that will have rigor, be comprehensive, and will connect to other initiatives throughout the state.

## Statewide System of Support

Wisconsin DPI sent two teams to the 2011 SIG Regional Conferences. One team attended the Midwest SIG Regional Conference in Chicago on May 18–19, which focused on high school improvement priorities. The other team attended the Central SIG Regional Conference in Denver on May 24–25, which focused on the role of school and district leadership in turning around low-performing schools, highlighting rural school turnaround, and serving Native American and Alaskan Native students. At these conferences, the DPI teams had the opportunity to preview a demonstration of the SIG Online Monitoring Tool for the Transformation Intervention Model, developed by the Center on Innovation & Improvement.

In mid-July, DPI launched the SIG Online Monitoring Tool with Menominee Indian High School. Several other schools are eligible to apply for or have applications pending with DPI to use the monitoring tool.

DPI has trained the Title I School Support team assigned to the SIG 1003(g), which currently consists of three staff members. The DPI School Support team will be providing face-to-face demonstrations as well as webinars to train and support school teams. The goal for the DPI staff is to monitor implementation of SIG requirements and student achievement results.

In addition, a first draft of a statewide system of support operations manual has been submitted to the Center on Innovation & Improvement. Wisconsin's accountability system resulted from the work of evaluation of their current system of support.

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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Charter Schools Gain Broad Support Nationally; Laws Evolve in Illinois and Wisconsin

By John Bray, National Charter School Resource Center

The roughly 5,275 charter schools across the country comprise only about five percent of all public schools. But charter schools have taken an especially big role in the education reform debate, led by top performers that have demonstrated high achievement among high-need students. The basic bargain with charter schools is that they are publicly funded, and, in exchange for freedom from many regulations, they must meet the terms of performance contracts or face closure.

In September 2011, Maine became the 41st state with a law allowing charter schools. A recent nationwide PDK/Gallup poll found that 70 percent of those surveyed viewed charter schools positively. That broad support appears to be reflected in the U.S. House of Representatives, which on September 13, 2011, voted 365–54 in favor of the Empowering Parents through Quality Charter Schools Act. The bill, developed by the Education and the Workforce Committee, would provide \$300 million annually to support growth of high-quality charter schools through support for facilities, sharing of best practices, outreach to special populations of students, and improved transparency and performance management through stronger systems of approving and monitoring schools. The bill faces review by the U.S. Senate. At the same time, charter schools, a diverse field with wide-ranging performance and operating modes, have come under closer scrutiny regarding financial management, the role of for-profit companies in managing schools, and the extent to which students with the most significant disabilities and discipline challenges are being served.

The National School Boards Association issued a statement calling the U.S. House bill flawed because it expands support for charter start-ups in tight economic times and backs alternatives to school district authorizers whose sponsorships of charter schools “frequently result in alienation and negative competition.” Efforts have been under way in some places to foster collaboration among district and charter schools, including projects supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The issue of who gets to authorize, monitor, and close charter schools has been a key issue in Wisconsin, where a bill to expand the field of authorizers is pending in the state legislature, and also in Illinois, which recently appointed a nine-member independent statewide commission focused on appeals of charter applications turned down by school districts. Other important issues have included funding levels, support for facilities, and the role of teachers unions.

Click [here](#) to read the full article.

### Wisconsin’s Number of Charter Schools Among Nation’s Leaders; Autonomy Lags

In 1993, Wisconsin was among the first states to pass a charter school law, and the current inventory of 236 charter schools is among the largest of any state. There is no cap on the number charter schools, and routes to authorization for charter school applicants could increase with passage of state Senate Bill 22, which would establish a statewide authorizer and allow so-called cooperative educational service agencies to authorize charter schools. Authorizing options other than school districts have been growing since 1997 and now include the city of Milwaukee, the

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University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, which is approved for a single charter. The bill also includes provisions covering funding, teacher certification requirements, and enrollment in online or virtual charter schools. A 2010 [report](#) by the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau said spending in 2007–08 totaled \$17.8 million for 15 virtual charter schools serving 2,951 students, with a 5,250-student enrollment cap.

Click [here](#) to read more about Wisconsin

## **Illinois Gets New Statewide Charter School Commission; Districts Remain Applicants' Starting Place**

Illinois passed its charter school law in 1996. Growth in the number of schools has occurred mainly in Chicago, where there are 38 charter schools spread over 104 campuses that enroll about 40,000 students, or 10 percent of all students. Fourteen charter schools operate elsewhere in the state, the most recent addition opening for the 2011–12 school year. The state has a cap of 120 charter schools, with a provision for a limited number of additional schools that serve as reenrollment schools for dropouts.

### **Charter School Commission**

The new state Charter School Commission resulted from enactment of state Senate Bill 79. In Illinois, only school districts are allowed to authorize charter schools. A key role of the commission will be to hear appeals from charter school applicants who are turned down by districts, a job that had been left to the Illinois State Board of Education, which has authorized three charter schools, one of which has closed. The commission also will be able to authorize charter schools that would serve multiple school districts and take over authorization of charter schools if the charter school and its authorizer agree to it. No money was appropriated by the state to fund the commission, although it is allowed to accept grants and donations. The commission can charge a three percent administrative fee of any charter school it authorizes.

Click [here](#) to read more about Illinois.

# PROFILE

## National Charter School Resource Center

The National Charter School Resource Center (Resource Center) develops and provides easy access to top-notch resources to support the development and operation of high-quality public charter schools. The Resource Center produces a website, newsletters, webinars, conferences, discussion groups, and special projects designed to help the charter school community understand and address critical issues.

The Resource Center resources and activities focus primarily on charter authorizing, charter operations, facilities, human capital, military families, school turnaround, special education, and support for state agencies

The Resource Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and operated by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research.

You can find the Resource Center online at <http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/>.

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## REL MIDWEST UPDATE



### Reports Focus on Charter Schools and School Districts in Program Improvement Status

Among the REL Midwest reports on track for completion this year is *Examining Policy and Guidance in Midwestern States for Using Chartering to Address Chronically Low-Performing Schools*. Although one of the options for persistently low-achieving schools is to “restart” under new management by becoming a charter school, little is known about the readiness of states and districts to use chartering as a strategy to address chronic low performance. As one step toward gaining that knowledge, REL Midwest is systematically analyzing and describing state policy and guidance (e.g., state laws and regulatory code, state board policy) for using chartering to address chronically low-performing schools in the Midwest states.

Another report, *Characteristics of Midwestern School Districts in Program Improvement Status*, documents basic descriptive information about districts in the Midwest that are in program improvement and compares them with districts not identified for improvement. Making use of quantitative data from state and federal sources, this study will describe for each state (a) the characteristics, similarities, and differences among districts in improvement under federal and state classification systems, (b) the characteristics of students in these districts, (c) the number of schools in need of improvement and in corrective action, (d) differences in accountability status between districts and schools within districts, and (e) the staff and financial resources of districts in need of improvement.

### Upcoming Events Feature College Readiness and Formative Assessment

REL Midwest’s Connecting Research to Practice events provide opportunities for educators to engage with researchers and each other on improving practice and closing achievement gaps. There are no registration fees, and participants must make their own travel arrangements. Event announcements and registration details will be posted on the REL Midwest website (<http://www.learningpt.org/rel/events.php>) throughout the year. Plan now to attend. For additional information, please contact Lisa Shimmel by e-mail ([lshimmel@air.org](mailto:lshimmel@air.org)) or by telephone (312-283-2301).

#### **November 14, 2011—Iowa City, Iowa**

*Navigating the Path to College*. This half-day event in conjunction with the annual Midwestern Higher Education Compact Annual Policy Conference aims to engage Midwest region stakeholders in dialogue on college readiness research, with an emphasis on the nonacademic aspects of readiness. Nicole Farmer Hurd, Ph.D., will deliver a 60-minute presentation with a focus on recommendations from the IES Practice Guide *Helping Students Navigate the Path to College: What High Schools Can Do*.

#### **December 6, 2011—Chicago, Illinois**

*Supporting Research-Based Formative Assessment in Schools and Classrooms*. This event will provide district teams from the across the region with the opportunity to examine the practice of research-based formative assessment. Featured are Margaret Heritage, assistant director, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, and W. James Popham, Ed.D., professor emeritus, UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

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



### ILLINOIS

**Six Chicago Schools Begin Longer School Day**—*Chicago Tribune*, September 27, 2011

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-longer-school-day-0927-20110927,0,5847574.story>

“Six Chicago Public Schools that extended their school days by 90 minutes beginning Monday, the culmination of a contentious push by CPS leaders and Mayor Rahm Emanuel to increase one of the shortest school days in the nation.”

**Illinois Likely to Seek Relief From No Child Left Behind Law**—*Chicago Sun-Times*, September 23, 2011

<http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/7835484-418/illinois-likely-to-seek-relief-from-no-child-left-behind-law.html>

“Illinois likely will be among states to apply for relief from burdensome student-achievement requirements under an overhaul of the No Child Left Behind law that President Barack Obama proposed Friday.”

**Brizard, Teachers Union Agree on More Rigorous Curriculum**—*Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 2011

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/education/ct-met-cps-curriculum-0831-20110831,0,1304923.story>

“After weeks of public feuding over teacher salaries and longer school days, Chicago Public Schools chief Jean-Claude Brizard and the teachers union came together Tuesday to embrace a more rigorous curriculum for CPS students beginning the 2012–13 school year.”

**Simon to Lead Classrooms First Commission**—Office of the Governor, August 23, 2011

<http://www.illinois.gov/PressReleases/PressReleasesListShow.cfm?RecNum=9675>

“Lt. Governor Sheila Simon will lead a state commission charged with cutting school district administration costs and redirecting those tax dollars to students and classrooms, thanks to legislation signed today by Governor Quinn.”

**Illinois ACT Score Remains at Top of the Class for States That Test at Least 90 Percent of Students**—Illinois State Board of Education, August 17, 2011

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/news/2011/aug17.htm>

“The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) today announced the graduating Class of 2011’s composite ACT score is the highest of the 10 states that test 90 percent or more of their students. Additionally, Illinois’ composite score of 20.9 continues the state’s long-term trend of incremental improvement.”



**NBC's Williams Grills Walker at NYC Education Summit**—*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, September 26, 2011

<http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/news/130600148.html>

“NBC News Anchor Brian Williams discussed education reform with 10 state governors in New York City Monday for NBC’s Education Nation summit, but Williams focused much of his attention on Gov. Scott Walker and his controversial reforms in Wisconsin.”

**Evers Welcomes Accountability Proposals From President Obama**—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, September 23, 2011

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_108.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_108.pdf)

“State Superintendent Tony Evers issued the following statement regarding the announcement by President Obama and the U.S. Department of Education on waivers from broken federal accountability requirements.”

**MPS ‘Voucher Tax’ Statement OK’d**—*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, September 22, 2011

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/130397178.html>

“A proposal to make more transparent the tax that citizens pay for private-school vouchers was approved Thursday night by the Milwaukee School Board.”

**Global Schools, Global Business—A Day in Wisconsin**—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, September 20, 2011

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8wIDxo\\_srY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8wIDxo_srY)

“In the spring of 2011, Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers visited two schools that demonstrate the power of global literacy. That afternoon he helped kick off a dialogue between educators and business representatives about how they can work together to ensure students graduate with the global competence, the cultural adaptability, businesses are looking for. This video features many of the best parts of the day.”

**Framework for Education’s Future Centers on Four Powerful Questions**—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, September 15, 2011

[http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_101.pdf](http://dpi.state.wi.us/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_101.pdf)

“Despite the rancor and shattered trust of the state’s politics, State Superintendent Tony Evers struck a serious tone in his State of Education address Thursday to move education past the problems of adults to an urgent focus on children and their future.”

**Wisconsin’s Cuts to School Aid Steepest of 24 States Studied**—*CapTimes*, September 6, 2011

[http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/blog/article\\_f4f6e008-d848-11e0-a158-001cc4c03286.html](http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/blog/article_f4f6e008-d848-11e0-a158-001cc4c03286.html)

“Wisconsin has the dubious distinction of reducing state aid per student this school year the most of 24 states studied by an independent, Washington-based think tank, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.”

**Trying to Reform Schools, With Fewer Resources**—*CapTimes*, September 1, 2011

[http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/blog/article\\_6771719a-d478-11e0-85fd-001cc4c03286.html](http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/blog/article_6771719a-d478-11e0-85fd-001cc4c03286.html)

“Movers and shakers with a stake in Wisconsin education met this week in Madison, ostensibly to begin creating a method to ensure state students are college- or career-ready when they graduate from high school.”



## ELSEWHERE IN THE NATION

### College and Career Ready Students

**President Obama on No Child Left Behind Flexibility**—The White House, September 23, 2011

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2011/09/23/president-obama-no-child-left-behind-flexibility>

“To help states and schools move forward with developing a world-class education system, the Obama administration will enable states to request flexibility from specific mandates under No Child Left Behind, in exchange for a real commitment to undertake education reform.”

**Making Progress Preparing More Students for College**—National School Boards Association, August 17, 2011

[http://schoolboardnews.nsba.org/2011/08/making-progress-preparing-more-students-for-college/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+boardbuzz+%28BoardBuzz%3A+NSBA%27s+Daily+Weblog%299](http://schoolboardnews.nsba.org/2011/08/making-progress-preparing-more-students-for-college/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+boardbuzz+%28BoardBuzz%3A+NSBA%27s+Daily+Weblog%299)

“There was a slight increase in the percent of 2011 high school graduates ready for college English, math, social science, and science courses, according to ACT’s *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2011* report released today.”

**States Begin Reporting Uniform Graduation Rate, Reveal More Accurate High-School Completion Outcomes**—U.S. Department of Education, July 27, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/states-begin-reporting-uniform-graduation-rate-reveal-more-accurate-high-school->

“The U.S. Department of Education announced today that this summer states will begin reporting high school graduation rates for the 2010–2011 school year using a more rigorous, uniform four-year adjusted cohort, first developed by the nation’s Governors in 2005. Transition to the common rate reflects states’ efforts to generate greater uniformity and transparency in calculating high school graduation data, and meets requirements of a federal regulation established in October 2008.”

## A Complete Education

### **\$180 Million Awarded to Six States for Comprehensive Literacy Program Aimed at Children, Birth–Grade 12**—U.S. Department of Education, September 27, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/180-million-awarded-six-states-comprehensive-literacy-program-aimed-children-bir>

“More than \$180 million in grants were awarded to six states through the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program, which helps states pursue a comprehensive approach to improving literacy outcomes for all children—birth through grade 12, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities. Thirty-five states applied for the funding.”

### **Obama Administration Releases Final Application for Race to the Top-Early Learning**

**Challenge**—U.S. Department of Education, August 23, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-releases-final-application-race-top-early-learning-challeng>

“Today the Obama Administration released the final application for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), which will provide \$500 million in State-level competitive grants to improve early learning and development programs.”

## Education Systems

### **The State of Education: The Governors’ Perspective**—NBC News Education Nation, September 26, 2011

<http://www.educationnation.com/index.cfm?objectid=2C7A681E-E906-11E0-B00E000C296BA163&aka=0>

“At the largest gathering of governors to focus on education, 10 state chief executives discuss education and economic competitiveness—from pre-k to higher education. Brian Williams moderates this special session at the Education Nation Summit.”

### **U.S. Department of Education Releases Proposed Requirements for Race to the Top Round**

**Three**—U.S. Department of Education, June 23, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-proposed-requirements-race-top-round-three>

“The U.S. Department of Education released today the proposed requirements for Race to the Top round three (RTT3), a \$200 million grant fund to continue State-led K–12 reform. RTT3 will invite finalists from round two—Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and South Carolina—to apply for a grant that supports a portion of their previously established Race to the Top plan and includes a meaningful focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.”

## Fostering Innovation and Excellence

**Six Wild Ideas for Ideal Schools**—*Washington Post*, September 25, 2011

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/class-struggle/post/6-wild-ideas-for-ideal-schools/2011/09/25/gIQA9OqewK\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/class-struggle/post/6-wild-ideas-for-ideal-schools/2011/09/25/gIQA9OqewK_blog.html)

“A month ago, I suggested that readers stop asking me what’s a good school and come up with their own ideas. I wanted fresh concepts, including some that were already operating and producing better achievement without putting too much strain on staffs and students.”

**The Best Ideas for Fixing K–12 Education**—*Forbes*, September 21, 2011

<http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2011/1010/opinions-human-ingenuity-conversation-fixing-education-forbes-staff.html>

“We asked billionaires on The Forbes 400 list, as well as our own contributors, for their best ideas for fixing K–12 education in the U.S.”

## Great Teachers and Leaders

**Significant Pay Gap for Teachers in Schools Serving More Latino and African-American Students, According to New U.S. Department of Education Data**—U.S. Department of Education, September 27, 2011

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/significant-pay-gap-teachers-schools-serving-more-latino-and-african-american-st>

“The Department of Education today released new data showing that in school districts around the country, teachers at schools with more Latino and African American enrollment are paid \$2,500 less on average than teachers in the district as a whole.”

**Teachers Are Put to the Test**—*Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 2011

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903895904576544523666669018.html?mod=WSJ\\_WSJ\\_US\\_News\\_3](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903895904576544523666669018.html?mod=WSJ_WSJ_US_News_3)

“Teacher evaluations for years were based on brief classroom observations by the principal. But now, prodded by President Barack Obama’s \$4.35 billion Race to the Top program, at least 26 states have agreed to judge teachers based, in part, on results from their students’ performance on standardized tests.”

**The Missing Link in School Reform**—*Stanford Social Innovation Review*, August 1, 2011

[http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the\\_missing\\_link\\_in\\_school\\_reform/](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_missing_link_in_school_reform/)

“In trying to improve American public schools, educators, policymakers, and philanthropists are overselling the role of the highly skilled individual teacher and undervaluing the benefits that come from teacher collaborations.”

## RESOURCES

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

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### **Webinar: Exploring the New National Research Council’s “Framework for K–12 Science Education”**—Center on Instruction, September 2011

<http://centeroninstruction.org/webinar-exploring-the-new-national-research-councils-framework-for-k-12-science-education>

“The Center on Instruction held a webinar September 21, 2011, entitled “Exploring the New National Research Council’s Framework for K–12 Science Education”, presented by COI-Science Director Craig Strang, along with Vanessa Lujan, and Lynn Barakos of the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California at Berkeley.”

### **Guidance for Developing and Selecting Assessments of Student Growth for Use in Teacher Evaluation Systems (Extended Version)**—Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, September 2011

<http://www.aacomptcenter.org/cs/aacc/view/rs/27187>

“AACC partners Joan Herman, Margaret Heritage, and Pete Goldschmidt provide comprehensive advice for including test scores in teacher evaluations.”

### **Increasing Collaboration at State Education Agencies: Providing Support for Students With Disabilities in Charter Schools**—National Charter School Resource Center, August 2011

<http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/webinar/increasing-collaboration-state-education-agencies-providing-support-students-disabilities-ch>

“The National Charter School Resource Center hosted a webinar August 24, 2011, which highlighted two successful models in which state directors of special education work collaboratively with charter school program leaders to improve the quality of special education services in charter schools.”

### **SEA Communities of Practice: Learning More About the Charter Schools Program Assurances**—National Charter School Resource Center, August 2011

<http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/webinar/sea-communities-practice-learning-more-about-charter-schools-program-assurances>

The National Charter School Resource Center hosted a webinar August 10, 2011, to help SEA Charter Schools Program (CSP) leaders learn more about the CSP assurances. Federal officials discussed the background and history of the assurances, reviewed the compliance elements and the timeline, and provided examples from compliant states.

**Aligning Career and Technical Education With High-Wage and High-Demand Occupations in Tennessee**—REL Appalachia, August 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=242>

“This REL Appalachia report examines the availability of career and technical education program areas in Tennessee high schools, concentrations completed by high school graduates in these program areas, and how these concentrations align with jobs in the labor market. It looks at how these outcomes differ statewide and by region within Tennessee and identifies corresponding high-wage and high-demand occupations projected over 2006–16.”

**Superintendent Turnover in Kentucky**—REL Appalachia, August 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=279>

“This REL Appalachia report, *Superintendent Turnover in Kentucky*, is the state’s first detailed description of superintendent turnover. It intends to help policymakers and other leaders better understand turnover so that they can develop new programs to prepare, recruit, and retain superintendents. The report describes superintendent turnover statewide, by rural status, and by Appalachian and non-Appalachian region over 1998/99–2007/08 and also looks at how turnover varies by 2007/08 school district characteristics.”

**RTI Integrity Rubric and Worksheet**—National Center on Response to Intervention, August 2011

<http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-integrity-rubric-and-worksheet>

“The RTI Essential Components Integrity Rubric and the RTI Essential Components Integrity Worksheet are for use by individuals responsible for monitoring the school-level fidelity of Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation. They may also be used by schools for self-appraisal; however, they were not designed for compliance monitoring and therefore should not be used for this purpose. The rubric and the worksheet are designed to be used together and are aligned with the essential components of RTI.”

**RTI: Considerations for English Language Learners (ELLs)**—National Center on Response to Intervention, August 2011

<http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/rti-considerations-english-language-learners-ells>

“This placemat was developed to accompany the brief, *RTI for English Language Learners: Appropriately Using Screening and Progress Monitoring Tools to Improve Instructional Outcomes*. It addresses, at-a-glance, specific considerations for English language learners (ELLs) when implementing the four essential components of a response to intervention (RTI) framework.”

**RTI in Middle Schools: Frequently Asked Questions**—National Center on Response to Intervention, August 2011

<http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/0572%20MS%20RTI%20FAQs%20d5%5B1%5D.pdf>

“This resource provides guidance for middle schools implementing RTI by answering frequently asked questions and providing ‘snapshots’ of current middle school practices around the essential components of RTI. This document is useful as guidance for state departments of education, local education agencies, and school-level personnel as they move forward with RTI implementation at the middle school level.”

**Teacher Tenure or Continuing Contract Laws**—Education Commission of the States, August 2011

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/94/93/9493.pdf>

“More state legislatures are beginning to embed teacher performance evaluation in decisions to grant tenure or to explicitly state the terms of contracts. And an increasing number of states are distinguishing between renewal at the end of a teacher’s contract and dismissal during the term of a contract. This document updates ECS’ 50-state look at teacher tenure and continuing contract laws.”

**Number of Instructional Days/Hours in the School Year**—Education Commission of the States, August 2011

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/95/05/9505.pdf>

“This ECS StateNote answers: How long is the school year? When does school begin? How long does a day need to be to count as a ‘full day’ of instruction?”

**Achievement Trends of Schools and Students in Arizona’s Title I School Improvement Program**—Regional Educational Laboratory West, July 2011

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=265>

“The brief describes for 2005/06–2008/09 the numbers and distribution of Arizona public schools and students across school levels (elementary, middle, high) for three school types: Title I Schools in Improvement (participating in the school improvement program, a public program to improve the academic performance of students in schools not meeting adequate yearly progress for at least two consecutive years); Title I Schools Not in Improvement; and non-Title I schools.”

**Relative Impact of Interventions to Improve Achievement and Retention in Postsecondary Occupational Programs**—National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, July 2011

[http://136.165.122.102/UserFiles/File/Tech\\_Reports/NRCCTE\\_Relative\\_Impact\\_report.pdf](http://136.165.122.102/UserFiles/File/Tech_Reports/NRCCTE_Relative_Impact_report.pdf)

“This study seeks to identify which interventions are most effective in improving retention and academic outcomes for students in postsecondary occupational<sup>1</sup> programs, and how student characteristics mediate and moderate these effects, with the goal of determining what works best for which types of students.”

**Early Warning Indicator Systems**—Education Commission of the States, July 2011

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/94/36/9436.pdf>

Boosting high school graduation rates is a growing concern to educators and policymakers. Research shows that students who fail to graduate from high school exhibit clear signs of dropping out. Access to student data has prompted state and school district officials across the country to develop “early warning indicator systems” to efficiently identify students who are at risk of dropping out and provide targeted supports to get them back on track and graduate. This ECS StateNote highlights the statewide early warning indicator systems in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama and the Philadelphia Public Schools districtwide system.

**Neuroscience and Special Education**—Project Forum, July 2011

<http://www.nasdse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=MleZ4KBTInU%3d&tabid=36>

“The purpose of this document is to provide a brief overview of how links are being developed between the rapidly expanding field of neuroscience and the practice of special education.”

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

October 2011			
<b>Dates:</b>	October 25–26	<b>Topic:</b>	2011 Expanding Learning Time Convening
<b>Location:</b>	Boston	<b>Audience:</b>	Education leaders, policymakers, and funders
<b>Format:</b>	Convening	<b>Sponsors:</b>	National Center on Time and Learning and Harvard Graduate School of Education
<b>Dates:</b>	October 27–28	<b>Topic:</b>	2011 National PBIS Leadership Forum
<b>Location:</b>	Rosemont, Illinois	<b>Audience:</b>	State, district, or regional leadership teams adopting and implementing schoolwide PBIS
<b>Format:</b>	Forum	<b>Sponsors:</b>	OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports with support from the Illinois PBIS Network
November 2011			
<b>Date:</b>	November 1	<b>Topic:</b>	2nd Annual Public Education Transformation Convening: <i>Getting Learning Right the First Time—Every Time</i>
<b>Location:</b>	Brookfield, Wisconsin	<b>Audience:</b>	Pilot districts staff
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Cooperative Education Service Agency 1, and Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
<b>Date:</b>	November 1	<b>Topic:</b>	Planning for HS Higher Education Alignment
<b>Location:</b>	Palos Hills, Illinois	<b>Audience:</b>	High school administrators and institution of higher education administrators
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Illinois Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Illinois Board of Higher Education
<b>Date:</b>	November 2	<b>Topic:</b>	Planning for HS Higher Education Alignment
<b>Location:</b>	Chicago	<b>Audience:</b>	High school administrators and institution of higher education administrators
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Illinois Community College Board, ISBE, and Illinois Board of Higher Education

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**Your Access to the Region**  
A quarterly e-newsletter for educators in Illinois and Wisconsin

**Date:** November 7  
**Location:** Decatur, Illinois  
**Format:** Convening Meeting

**Topic:** Planning for HS Higher Education Alignment  
**Audience:** High school administrators and institution of higher education administrators  
**Sponsors:** Illinois Community College Board, ISBE, and Illinois Board of Higher Education

**Date:** November 8  
**Location:** Belleville, Illinois  
**Format:** Meeting

**Topic:** Planning for HS Higher Education Alignment  
**Audience:** High school administrators and institution of higher education administrators  
**Sponsors:** Illinois Community College Board, ISBE, and Illinois Board of Higher Education

**Date:** November 14  
**Location:** Iowa City, Iowa  
**Format:** Working meeting

**Topic:** Navigating the Path to College  
**Audience:** Participants at Midwestern Higher Education Compact's Annual Policy Convening  
**Sponsor:** Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest

**Dates:** November 17–19  
**Location:** Phoenix  
**Format:** Forum

**Topic:** Annual Policy Forum  
**Audience:** State superintendents of education and education policymakers  
**Sponsor:** Council of Chief State School Officers

**Dates:** November 17–19  
**Location:** St. Louis  
**Format:** Convention and expo

**Topic:** 2011 ACTE Annual Convention and Career Tech Expo  
**Audience:** Association for Career and Technical Education members  
**Sponsor:** Association for Career and Technical Education

#### December 2011

**Date:** December 6  
**Location:** Chicago  
**Format:** Working event

**Topic:** Supporting Research-Based Formative Assessment in Schools and Classrooms  
**Audience:** District teams  
**Sponsor:** Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest

#### 2012

**Dates:** February 27–29, 2012  
**Location:** Denver  
**Format:** Conference

**Topic:** 2nd Annual Green Schools National Conference  
**Audience:** School administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, students (university and K–12), nonprofits, corporations, and for-profit organizations  
**Sponsor:** Green School National Network

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

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