



Great Lakes East Comprehensive Assistance Center

News for the Region

A quarterly e-newsletter for educators in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio

Winter 2008

Systemic Support for Student Success

During the past two and a half years, Great Lakes East Comprehensive Assistance Center has provided a newsletter that covers current topics and offers timely resources, adding features solicited through regular needs-sensing and special requests. We sincerely hope that the content we provide strengthens your knowledge in some tangible and practical way.

This issue's topic, systemic support for student success, is an important one. It is easy to say that all children can learn given the time and resources; however, believing it with all your heart is something different. Changing students' attitudes from "I can't" to "I can" is critical. Those of us involved in the student development process—parents, siblings, educators, community members—have an obligation to help students become active, responsible, and successful adults. We all need to foster the skilled mediators and facilitators of educational improvement within ourselves and our communities, schools, districts, and states.

Our three states in the region have been tirelessly involved in such facilitation: designing and implementing a curriculum to change instructional and assessment practices and increase student achievement (Indiana), addressing disproportionate student representation in special education programs through focused monitoring for noncompliance and technical assistance (Michigan), and making a concerted effort to develop widely understood school improvement processes and universally accessible data tools (Ohio). More information about these initiatives can be found within this newsletter. Besides these features, which illustrate a practice perspective, we also offer a research perspective through REL Midwest's Fast-Response Projects as well as a policy perspective about how forging collaborative partnerships can ease policy challenges facing states. We hope that featuring topics from these three perspectives (practice, research, and policy) will assist each of us in finding at least one way to fulfill our obligation to become a part of the systemic support for that one student we know.

Barbara Youngren, Director
Great Lakes East Comprehensive Assistance Center
and Great Lakes East staff members

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This quarterly e-newsletter delivers useful, relevant, and timely information related to the NCLB Act to educators in the three states of the Great Lakes East region: Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.



Highlights of the Quarter

I. Designing and Implementing a Curriculum in Indiana: A Strategy for Increasing Student Achievement and Changing Teacher Instructional and Assessment Practices

By Jayne Sowers, Ed.D., Great Lakes East—Indiana State Manager

The door hits the wall hard as the twins burst into the house. “Mom, we got our report cards today!” they shout. Sharing in her second-graders’ excitement, Mom quickly opens the cards. But something is wrong. Lucy, who is the stronger writer of the two, received a checkmark under “Needs significant improvement.” Luke, on the other hand, received “Mastered.” Mom carefully reads the standard alongside the checkmarks: “Writes a brief description of a familiar object, person, place, or event that: (a) develops a main idea and (b) uses details to support the main idea” (Indiana Standard 2.5.2). Baffled by the results, Mom makes appointments to meet with the twins’ teachers the next day.

In the conference, both teachers provide examples of the children’s homework, simple book reports, and reading diaries that were used to determine their grades. Both teachers also share a checklist or rubric they use to grade student work for this standard:

Luke’s Teacher’s Checklist

- Copies the main idea from the reading.
- Rewrites two details from the reading.

Lucy’s Teacher’s Checklist

- Writes original sentence presenting the main idea.
- Presents three or more details in own words.
- During the six-week period, writes a total of eight descriptions.
- Uses capital letters to begin sentences and punctuation at the end of sentences.

“Ah!” Mom sees the problem! The two teachers have very different expectations, even though both teach second grade. Each teacher interpreted the state writing standard differently, with Lucy’s teacher having much higher expectations of her students than Luke’s teacher.



Lee Ann Kwiatkowski, director of Title I Programs at IDOE, listens as a district staff member explains the unpacking of the standards on a curriculum map to determine the skills to be taught.

This is not an uncommon occurrence within grade levels in the same school and across schools in the same district. What has happened, or rather, what has *not* happened? Teachers have not held discussions and come to agreements on exactly what a standard means—what skills underlie the learning of the standard, how it is quantified and measured, or what it looks like when students have a basic knowledge versus mastery of it. The solution for this variance in expectations is for teachers to “unpack” the state standards to determine the specific content to be taught, the skills to be learned, the assessments to be used to determine student learning, and the timeline to be established for the teaching to occur. In short, the teachers need to *design their curriculum*.



Curriculum Design: A Central Focus of District Improvement

Assisting districts in developing and implementing a new language arts curriculum is a major strategy of the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) Division of Compensatory Education/Title I in improving student achievement. Numerous case studies, surveys, and reviews of the research point to “an aligned curriculum” as a major characteristic of high-performing schools and districts (EdSource, 2006; Kercheval, 2001; Marzano, 2003; Murphy, 2007; Walberg, 2007; Zavadsky, 2006).

Through workshops and development of tools, IDOE and Great Lakes East are currently assisting districts in the processes of curriculum design (see p. 13 for the Indiana state update). Numerous benefits emerge as the teachers map and align the curriculum and as the newly designed, common curriculum is implemented in classrooms districtwide. Those benefits include the following:



Jayne Sowers, Indiana state manager, assists IDOE to lead district staff members in identifying similarities and differences on skills taught by 10 fourth-grade teachers across the district.

- **Agreement on the Skills and Increased Rigor.** Designing a new curriculum requires teachers to “map” or write down what they are currently teaching and then share that information within and across grade levels. Through months of discussion, the skills that encompass the broader standards are determined by groups of similar grade-level teachers. These skills are then shared with the teachers in the grades before and after them (e.g., Grade 6 teachers meet with Grade 5 and Grade 7 teachers) to ensure that students are well-prepared to enter the next grade. In addition, the teachers examine the level of cognitive demand required in the skills to create challenging expectations from one grade to the next, resulting in a rigorous and engaging curriculum.
- **Sharing of Formative Assessments That Inform Teaching.** By definition, *curriculum* focuses on daily and weekly classroom assessments (formative assessments) as opposed to end-of-the-semester and year-end tests or state-mandated, standardized assessments. Formative assessments acknowledge students’ various preferences for demonstrating their knowledge through the use of such activities as oral presentations, projects, demonstrations, team presentations, and traditional quizzes and tests. When carefully studied, the results of formative assessments allow teachers to determine the specific task or piece of the problem that the student has not yet grasped. The teacher then focuses on the student’s specific needs through reteaching, presenting the information in a different way, utilizing peer-teaching, providing more practice, or implementing numerous other techniques to supplement the student’s learning.
- **Sharing of Instructional Practices That Work.** As teachers share *what* they teach, the conversation often naturally turns to *how* they teach it. They learn about others’ ways of presenting the information, the value of different learning styles, and differentiated instruction. Collaborative team discussions provide a nonthreatening yet informative process for sharing instructional practices and adopting those that are working well for other teachers.
- **Alignment Among the Skills Described in the Curriculum, the State Standards, and the State Assessments.** Curriculum mapping provides a systematic process for teachers to interpret each state standard and create a corresponding set of skills that all teachers agree to teach. In this manner, the skills correspond to or are aligned with the state standards. Taking this principle further, if this set of skills is taught and learned, then the students will have “mastered” the more global state standards.



Furthermore, most states attempt to determine whether their standards are aligned with their statewide assessments. If the state assessments are aligned with or match the state standards, then the skills outlined in the newly designed curriculum will also align with the state assessments. This three-way alignment increases the probability of students doing well on the statewide assessments.

- **Continuity for Students Who Transfer.** Student mobility is a concern of many districts, especially those in urban areas. As an example, a seventh-grade student in School A does not encounter the standard of “Explain the effects of common literary devices,” such as symbolism, imagery, and metaphor (Indiana Standard 7.3.7), in the fall because his English teacher presents these concepts in March. In January, the student makes an in-district transfer to School B. His English teacher at this school covered literacy devices in November. Thus, this student is never exposed to this standard in seventh grade due to the lack of continuity in when the standard and its related content and skills are taught. When a district-level curriculum exists, with agreed-upon timelines for teaching content and skills, however, students who transfer between schools are guaranteed exposure to all of the standards for their grade level.

Although designing a new curriculum is not a simple process and requires hours of teachers’ and principals’ professional development time, the advantages for both teachers and students are extensive and greatly increase the likelihood of improved student achievement.

Teachers have the opportunity to do the following:

- Determine the skills that are inherent in the standards and, therefore, need to be taught.
- Incrementally evaluate their students’ learning through formative assessments.
- Plan and alter their teaching based on students’ learning needs as indicated in the formative assessment results.
- Share instructional practices among themselves that have proven successful with specific students.
- Create a curriculum of increasing cognitive difficulty and demand that reflects high expectations for all students.
- Provide academic continuity for students who move from school to school.

Students benefit from the following:

- An organized, hierarchical, and spiral approach to learning.
- Being well-prepared in the previous grade level for the tasks at the next grade level.
- Teachers who understand their learning needs and respond to those needs by individualizing instruction.
- A rigorous curriculum that increases their engagement, interest, and motivation.
- Similar skills taught and expected from one school to the next.
- Increased performance on state assessments as the curriculum, standards, and assessments are aligned.



The benefits, for both teachers and students, clearly demonstrate why IDOE's Division of Compensatory Education/Title I and Great Lakes East have made curriculum design and implementation a central focus for its school districts in improvement.

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II. Michigan Addresses Disproportionate Student Representation in Special Education

By Darren Woodruff, Principal Research Analyst, American Institutes for Research

Michigan's FFY 2006 Annual Performance Report, under IDEA 2004, calls for focused monitoring of district policies, procedures, and practices and the development of improvement plans in school districts with overrepresentation or underrepresentation of students of specific races and ethnicities due to inappropriate or noncompliant identification. Great Lakes East is providing support to the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education, as the state designs its focused monitoring for noncompliance and technical assistance for local school districts regarding disproportionality. The results of this collaborative effort are a deeper understanding of the issues, means for measuring district disproportionate representation, and the integration of the disproportionality review system into the continuous improvement and monitoring system (CIMS) that is being redesigned for the 2008–09 school year.

Work on issues of disproportionality began with a thorough exploration of the literature to identify ways to assess the level of disproportionality in a district and possible causes of inappropriate identification for special education. The results of this review laid the groundwork for integrating the work on disproportionality into the state's current CIMS, a model for monitoring districts relative to key IDEA 2004 indicators.



To assess the level of disproportionality in a district, special education placement data for student racial or ethnic groups are compared in order to calculate a risk ratio for each group of students in comparison to the others. Typically two types of risk ratios are used to assess disproportionality: weighted risk ratio (WRR) and alternate risk ratio (ARR). WRR assesses the risk that students of a particular racial or ethnic category are overrepresented or underrepresented among students receiving special education or related services and weighs district-level risk according to the racial and ethnic composition of the state. The ARR allows data to be analyzed when there are small numbers of students in the comparison group and is used when there are fewer than 10 students in the district comparison group. Both WRR and ARR measures allow MDE to determine which student groups have a level of risk for special education placement that indicates disproportionate representation in their school district. Risk ratios are calculated when the racial and ethnic distribution of the district's student population varies significantly from the state racial distribution.

Using quantitative measures, MDE identified several districts with disproportionate overrepresentation due to inappropriate identification during FFY 2005 and FFY 2006. These districts are still within the 12-month window of compliance to show evidence of improvement. There were no districts found to have underrepresentation due to inappropriate identification. As an outcome of this process, evidence exists that districts have already begun to work toward meeting the state standard for improvement by increasing their focus on Child Find, referral, evaluation, and determination of eligibility processes and providing professional development and other resources for teachers and administrators at the local, intermediate, and state levels. The following recommended steps are included in the state standard for improvement:

1. Develop a districtwide vision for the education of all students.
2. Review traditional school practices to identify factors that may contribute to student challenges.
3. Provide professional development to increase teacher capacity for working with diverse student, parent, and community groups.
4. Increase the involvement of diverse groups of parents in the educational process.

To address issues related to disproportionality, Great Lakes East is actively helping MDE to build its capacity in developing processes to support districts in meeting federal and state regulations and creating systems that effectively respond to cultural differences for student results. Additional areas of technical assistance include, but are not limited to, assisting MDE in providing greater access for all students to general education programs through the use of response to intervention models, reviewing and monitoring student referral data, enhancing curriculum and professional development, creating useful data systems, and providing appropriate support services for all students. The state's disproportionality work will result in statewide improvement in special education and support related to No Child Left Behind Act performance indicators.



III. Focused Improvement Planning Process in Ohio

By Mark Mitchell, Great Lakes East—Ohio State Manager

There has been a concerted effort in Ohio to develop a common language of school improvement, widely understood school improvement processes, and universally accessible data tools aligned with the Ohio School Improvement Framework. The framework articulates four stages of improvement:

- Stage 1: Identifying Critical Needs
- Stage 2: Developing a Focused Improvement Plan
- Stage 3: Implementing the Plan with Fidelity
- Stage 4: Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Plan

The [Fall 2007 e-newsletter](#) described much of the Stage 1 work. This article builds on that piece to describe Stage 2: Developing a Focused Improvement Plan.

During Stage 1, the Decision Framework focuses a district data team on identifying critical needs facing a district and analyzing root causes of problems that lead to aligned and focused strategies for improvement. The District and School Diagnostic Instruments, developed by RMC Research Corporation, enable the collection of qualitative data from classroom observations, document review, and interviews to develop a more holistic view of district and building needs. Data from the diagnostic process feed into the Decision Framework and result in a data-based needs assessment. This Stage 1 work becomes the foundation for the focused improvement planning in Stage 2.

As with all processes aligned to the Ohio School Improvement Framework, the focused improvement planning process is designed to be used by any district, but it will be used specifically with state support teams and state diagnostic teams as they work with districts in need of improvement and corrective action.

Over a two-month period, Sheryl Poggi, a consultant at Great Lakes East, led a small planning group of assistant superintendents, regional staff from educational service centers (ESCs) with state support teams, and staff from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The planning document for Stage 2: Developing a Focused Improvement Plan was generated from this group and not only represents the best thinking of the group but also draws on current research and evidence-based practice. The planning document is organized around a three-phase process:

1. **Prepare for plan development.** Build effective district leadership teams, develop (or revisit) a vision and mission, and identify data priorities based on Stage 1 work.
2. **Develop goals, strategies, and indicators.** Generate a limited number of goals from problem statements, articulate focused strategies from root cause analysis work, and generate performance and progress indicators.
3. **Align actions and budget.** Link actions to specific research-based strategies, attach a budget and funding sources to actions, and facilitate public review of the improvement plan and adoption by the board.



Several district superintendents and assistant superintendents have reviewed the planning document and offered comments. In addition, Ohio's Committee of Practitioners has reviewed components of the planning document and offered valuable feedback. This extensive document will be used by external facilitators, including state support team and state diagnostic team members, as well as ESC staff. A smaller version of this document, along with a process checklist, is under development and will be offered to district leadership teams.

This focused improvement planning process will be piloted by regional facilitators from each of Ohio's state support team regions who will work with school districts through Ohio's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). It is anticipated that three cohorts composed of 16 districts each will participate during the first three years of the grant. Each of these districts will receive technical assistance from state support team regional facilitators, which will include support in planning Stage 2 focused improvement and using Stage 1 tools (e.g., District and School Diagnostic Instruments and Decision Framework) to identify the areas of greatest need. The professional development provided through the SPDG will focus on developing high-performing district and school leadership teams effective in using data to improve instructional practice and student performance. As such, the professional development will be aligned with the Ohio Improvement Framework and the essential leadership practices identified by the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council, a broad-based stakeholder group that is being facilitated by Brian McNulty from the Leadership and Learning Center in Denver, Colorado. Training for state support team members on how to use this improvement planning process began in December 2007 and will continue through February and March 2008.

Special Reports

Policy Perspective: Leveraging Partnerships to Improve Student Achievement

By Paul Kimmelman, Ed.D., Learning Point Associates



The year 2007 will not be remembered for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. After a significant attempt by Chairman Miller in the U.S. House of Representatives and a minimal attempt by Chairman Kennedy in the U.S. Senate, the process unraveled. Those who wanted changes made to the law can only hope that it will be done in 2008. Unfortunately, officials who closely monitor the activities of Congress don't give much hope that it will be done in 2008 and only a glimmer of hope that it could even be done in 2009. The agenda for Congress is filled with a number of other priority issues, and the presidential election will be the focus of most political activity during the year. Not

reauthorizing the law is far from a victory for those who oppose it, however. For now, NCLB remains the same, and the current provisions are what states and districts must comply with in order to avoid sanctions and receive federal funds. For states attempting to meet the rigorous challenges of the student accountability provisions in NCLB, the prognosis only becomes more difficult without some changes to the adequate yearly progress (AYP) determinations. So, our comprehensive center partnering with states to help increase student achievement will continue, but the bar moves higher and the sanctions could become more severe.



In addition to the task of meeting the requirements of NCLB, the news about U.S. student achievement compared to their international peers has not been encouraging. Two recent studies only give impetus to the advocates for more rigorous standards and assessment to determine the progress of students in core subjects.

The 2006 Program for International Assessment found that 15-year-old Americans ranked lower than their peers in other developed countries. Thirty countries participated in the study. The subjects tested were mathematics and science (Baldi, Jin, Skemer, Green, & Herget, 2007, p. iii).

The news was not much better for elementary students, either. Although American fourth-grade students scored higher than their peers in 22 of 39 countries on the Progress in International Literacy Study, there was no growth from the first assessment in 2001 (Baer, Baldi, Ayotte, & Green, 2007, p. iii). Still, the trend seems to be holding that elementary students are performing fairly well, whereas older U.S. students seem to fall behind.

I like to think that the purpose of these assessments is to guide our work and focus on improvement. Working in a new context, states, along with their comprehensive centers, can focus on building the capacity of schools to help students achieve greater success. The goals that our Great Lakes East and West states have set for our collaborative work should provide a substantial opportunity to leverage our resources and achieve the anticipated results. The “old” model of expecting states to do the work independently is no longer sufficient. The “new” model—the federal government funding comprehensive centers to support the work of states—is a logical plan, and these partnerships should result in better strategies to improve teaching and learning.

The previous discussion is an ominous introduction to an article about how policy can be used to improve student achievement. Yet, there is some sense that despite the flaws in NCLB, the Act has led to different leadership approaches to improve education systems. Leaders are using data for accountability, discussing and debating teacher quality and compensation models, and bringing more focus using better curriculum resources for what and how students are taught. The efforts of educators today present a different response to the need for reform than almost 50 years of commission reports, calls for reform, and studies on how to improve education prior to NCLB. For the most part, those reports “gathered dust” on bookshelves and didn’t elicit a sincere effort to bring about change. Today, states are working together to design new plans to improve their services; their education leaders are setting challenging benchmarks for student success; and in some places, teachers are earning higher salaries and being rewarded for their work based on some form of merit ratings. It is difficult not to argue with those who say NCLB is a “total failure” in light of some of the more significant reform efforts that are under way in many states and districts. At the least, it can be said that federal policy has been a “lightning rod” for different thinking about how all students should be taught.

What are some innovative and effective ways that collaborative partnerships can ease policy challenges facing states? Click [here](#) to e-mail the author.

Policies that include sanctions might not be the most favored methods to achieve results to those who are affected by it, but until some states and districts were seriously impacted by NCLB, not much was changing. Now, more thought is given to how curriculum is selected, teachers compensated, and subgroups of student achievement analyzed, using data for decision-making and making that data available for all to see. The “carrot-and-stick” policy approach tends to work despite its shortcomings.



That said, there is a critical need for Congress to correct the flaws in NCLB so that states can focus on the important issues and the processes to improve student achievement and teacher quality, particularly in high-needs, high-poverty schools, without devoting too much time to thinking about the consequences of sanctions. The top priority must be to ensure that these schools receive the services they so desperately need.

That task requires more contemporary thinking about leadership. For many years, the overarching concept of leadership in education has been the “great man” theory in a hierarchical organizational structure. More progressive thinking about leadership suggests that leaders must work in teams and develop partnerships with those who can contribute to their success but who may sometimes be deemed competitors. For example, multiple states working together with their comprehensive centers and regional education laboratories as a consortium focusing on a complex problem could lead to diverse solutions from a variety of perspectives rather than using only in-house staff to generate new ideas and solutions. Engaging the private sector as part of that team might further enhance the opportunity for innovative thinking. The public sector has been slow to accept the notion that the private, for-profit sector can offer added value to its work. Yet, business leaders are learning that, in certain instances, partnerships with competitors are advantageous. That is why NBC also has MSNBC.

As funding for education becomes more difficult to increase, the private sector offers the potential for leveraged partnerships that might create innovative solutions to raising student achievement and training teachers. A willingness to open the door to partners may well help states comply with some daunting policy challenges.

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Research Perspective: Coordinated System of Support for State Education Agencies

By Marianne Kroeger, REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates



SEAs across the country have a coordinated system of federally funded support available to them through the comprehensive centers, the regional educational laboratories (RELs), and other providers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Together, these programs offer content expertise, technical assistance, and resources to meet individual state needs and priorities related to NCLB implementation.



REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates is one of 10 RELs funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and represents the fifth consecutive contract awarded to Learning Point Associates to operate the region's educational laboratory. Under the direction of Steven Cantrell, Ph.D., REL Midwest serves the educational needs of seven Midwestern states: Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The Great Lakes East Comprehensive Assistance Center and the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Assistance Center draw upon the research conducted by REL Midwest and the national REL network in providing technical assistance designed to raise the capacity of states to help districts and schools meet the goals of NCLB.

In carrying out its mission to enhance school improvement efforts through education research and proven practices, REL Midwest conducts Fast-Response Projects focused on high-priority education issues identified through ongoing regional needs assessments. Fast-Response Projects result in *Issues & Answers*, a series of reports that meet IES standards for scientifically valid research.

Issues & Answers reports from all 10 RELs are available on the [regional educational laboratory website](#). The reports address a variety of subtopics with the general categories of implementing NCLB, improving schools, and raising achievement.

Three REL Midwest *Issues & Answers* reports are available now. [Examining District Guidance to Schools on Teacher Evaluation Policies in the Midwest Region](#) provides a snapshot of teacher evaluation policies across a demographically diverse sample of districts in the Midwest. Among the patterns to emerge from the findings are that many district policies distinguish between beginning and experienced teachers; few policies spell out consequences for unsatisfactory evaluations; most evaluations are summative reports used to support decisions about retaining teachers and granting tenure, rather than for professional development; and vague terminology leaves evaluation policies open to interpretation. The report's findings lay the groundwork for additional research and identify several questions that require further investigation, including "What is the role of state departments of education in the teacher evaluation process?" and "What is the impact of different evaluation models and practices on teacher effectiveness?"

[Getting the Evidence for Evidence-Based Initiatives: How the Midwest States Use Data Systems to Improve Educational Processes and Outcomes](#) shows that despite a wealth of data at the school, district, state, and federal levels, the objectives of data-based decision making in education have not been fully realized. Common challenges include outdated and incompatible systems for collecting and storing information, inefficient systems for accessing and using data, and constraints on resources and capacity. The report suggests that states would benefit from technical assistance to improve the quality of data, support with technical challenges, and guidance on how to use information effectively to inform decision making and planning.

[New Data Needed: Improving Survey Research on Two-Year College Experiences](#) illustrates that although two-year colleges are enrolling new kinds of students, offering new options, and serving new labor market demands, parents, educators, and policymakers are giving advice and making policies based on old understandings. Such understandings may be outdated, misleading, and even harmful. The report identifies the kinds of information that research can obtain to answer questions regarding such issues as unseen barriers in two-year colleges, implications of new pathways through college, and ways that college can improve labor market outcomes.



Among the reports from other regional educational laboratories that may be of interest to the Midwest are the following:

- REL Central's [*Using Strategy Instruction to Help Struggling High Schoolers Understand What They Read*](#)
- REL Southwest's [*Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement*](#)
- REL Northwest's [*"Coach" Can Mean Many Things: Five Categories of Literacy Coaches in Reading First*](#)

More REL Midwest studies are nearing completion and will be highlighted in future editions of this publication. In the meantime, visit the [regional educational laboratory website](#) for descriptions of research projects under way across the country. The site features an [e-mail-based alert service](#) designed to inform you about all new content posted.



Spotlight on the Second Research to Action Forum: "Advancing Assessment and Accountability"

Information provided by REL Midwest

What: The invitation-only event will bring together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from across the Midwest to inform state goals for advancing assessment and accountability systems. It is a working session designed to provide participants with information about state-specific needs.

When: March 6–7, 2008

Why: To help practitioners and policymakers use research about assessment and accountability to inform decisions concerning practice; to encourage researchers to engage in more rigorous and relevant applied research concerning assessment and accountability; to present research and best practices that have been collected by regional educational laboratories, regional comprehensive centers, and others; to develop concrete ideas for improving each state's policies and practices related to assessment and accountability.

Who: Stakeholders from seven Midwest states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin), officials and key staff of state education agencies; policymakers (legislative staff, governors' staff, school boards, and boards of regents); practitioners (superintendents, principals, and teachers); researchers in education and public policy; and higher education administrators

State-Specific Forum Topics:

- Illinois: Universal Design of Statewide Assessments
- Indiana: Formative Assessment to Improve Instruction
- Iowa: Formative Assessment to Support Instruction
- Michigan: Next-Generation Assessment and Accountability Systems
- Minnesota: Foundational Elements of a Statewide Accountability System
- Ohio: Formative Assessment at the High School Level
- Wisconsin: Balanced Statewide Assessment Systems

Partners: REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates; Great Lakes East; Great Lakes West; North Central Comprehensive Center; Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center; and West Wind Education Policy Inc.



Focus on States

In this section, Great Lakes East state managers provide regular updates on current state plans undertaken by each state in the region with a specific focus on NCLB implementation efforts. The e-mail addresses of the state managers are included.



INDIANA

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How are SEAs assisting their school districts in improving student achievement? In Indiana, the SEA—with the assistance of Great Lakes East—provided support during the past few months in two areas: (1) designing the English/language arts curriculum and (2) improving the district improvement plans.

Supporting Districts in Need of Improvement: Curriculum Design. As described in the previous [Fall 2007 e-newsletter](#), the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) Division of Compensatory Education/Title I selected the NCLB sanction of designing a new curriculum with corresponding professional development for those districts in corrective action (Year 3 of “in improvement” status). The process of designing a new curriculum that is aligned with the standards as well as aligned within grade levels and across grade levels is a complex task requiring several years to complete.

To support its districts in corrective action, IDOE—with assistance from Great Lakes East—sponsored a three-day workshop on mapping and aligning the curriculum on October 8, 2007. More than 230 district and school staff members attended a one-day introductory workshop in Indianapolis. A two-day workshop followed October 9–10 with 200 participants learning how to implement the process of mapping and aligning the curriculum in their districts.

Using the ideas of Fenwick W. English and the model developed by Heidi Hayes Jacobs, participants learned that the first step is to create different levels of teams (e.g., grade, school, district) with specific roles to organize and communicate the curriculum initiative to all staff. In addition, at this time, software systems for mapping need to be reviewed. Once one is selected, teachers receive training on how to use it. Then, the “mapping” begins. Each teacher develops “diary maps,” recording the concepts, skills, formative assessments, and corresponding state standards that he or she taught that week or month. Through a process lasting several months, teachers learn how to share their diary maps with one another in collaborative teams in order to increase the clarity and conciseness of their entries. Months later, teachers meet in groups to begin creating a “consensus map”—the content, skills, assessments, timelines, and their corresponding state standards that represent the districts’ agreed-upon teaching and learning content and skills for students and teachers.

In Indiana, districts in corrective action status are to complete their consensus maps within two years; however, agreements of “what to teach” and “when to teach it” will begin to emerge even during the early stages of diary mapping. Although the “how to teach it” remains the prerogative of individual teachers, the sharing of instructional practices is a natural extension of sharing diary maps. These agreements and discussions lead to improved consistency within and across grade levels and higher expectations from one grade to the next, thus, potentially increasing student achievement. As the districts continue their quest to design curricula, their stories will be presented in future newsletters.



Supporting Districts in Need of Improvement: Beyond District Improvement Plans. According to NCLB nonregulatory guidelines, all districts in need of improvement are required to submit improvement plans. During their initial meetings with IDOE in February 2007, newly identified districts received assistance in disaggregating the data for their student groups not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) and in the initial development of their improvement plans. As IDOE's Title I and Great Lakes East staff reviewed the submitted plans in summer 2007, it became evident that districts needed more information about how to measure the effectiveness of their implemented practices and processes.

In response, IDOE's Title I and Great Lakes East sponsored the "Beyond District Improvement Plans" workshop on November 16 with 160 district teachers and administrators in attendance. In the opening session, the districts reviewed writing SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals and learned about appropriate ways to measure whether those goals were met. They received assistance in editing their plans in terms of measuring effectiveness and attended two additional sessions: (1) "Planning Professional Development for Teachers of English Language Learners" provided by Olga Tuchman, education consultant at IDOE's Division of Language Minority and Migrant Programs and (2) "Planning Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disabilities" presented by Sharon Knoth, assistant director of IDOE's Division of Exceptional Learners.



MICHIGAN

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Statewide System of Support. Great Lakes East is assisting MDE's Office of School Improvement as it seeks to understand the impact of Michigan's statewide system of support and works to refine and improve the system. During meetings in November and December, plans began to emerge to conduct a program assessment through surveys, site visits, and interviews. The assessments will focus on key elements of the system including coaches, principals who have participated in the Principals' Fellowship, mentors, and auditors. Great Lakes East assisted MDE's partner—the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators—to create a report in December for MDE on approaches used by other states to support districts with schools in corrective action.

Increasing Teacher Quality. The work in the area of the State Professional Learning Strategic Plan has been two-fold and continues to focus on individual professional development plans (IPDPs) and a professional development review system for schools and districts. In late October, the stakeholder group's structures and processes committee met and continued drafting the IPDP process. In December, the committee met with the stakeholder group's field test and evaluation committee to present the IPDP template and coplan the field test of the IPDP process. Regional focus groups of teachers, mentors, and principals were conducted in January to seek input from the field on the process. The data from those focus groups will be used to finalize the IPDP process for the spring field test in schools.

In addition to the IPDP work, Great Lakes East continued working with the Office of Professional Preparation and Licensing staff members and other stakeholders on developing a professional development review system for districts, schools, and individuals to assess the quality of their professional development as they work to support teacher learning and the IPDP. In October and November meetings, the core team revised standards for



professional development for all three levels as they worked to embed MDE's vision and standards for professional development. The Michigan Staff Development Council in partnership with MDE is leading the effort. Core team members represent the Michigan Education Association and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts. Plans to pilot the review system in the spring are under way.

Supporting English Language Learners (ELLs). Great Lakes East continues to work with MDE's Office of School Improvement in refining and beginning the implementation of the state's five-year ELL strategic plan. After receiving additional input from the statewide ELL Advisory Committee in late September, the strategic plan was finalized for implementation. One component of the strategic plan—professional development—seeks to set up regional capacity-building activities. With support from the Center for Applied Linguistics (Great Lakes East subcontractor), MDE is planning to roll out a plan with an initial focus on action research. Another long-term professional development goal is to provide a common framework to disseminate ELL information across the state. Great Lakes East continues to provide support for this larger capacity-building effort.

Special Education. Work continued with MDE's Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) CIMS staff. In November, site visits were completed for the 14 school districts selected based on their 2005–06 data. These visits built on the work conducted by the districts through the self-review process introduced to them last spring as part of MDE's technical assistance plan. Prior to the visits, the site visit team developed a monitoring system, student file review process, and interview protocols. In November, a second group of districts came together for technical assistance and an introduction to the self-review process. Whereas the primary focus of the first round was overrepresentation of racial and ethnic groups in special education, OSE/EIS also was obligated to assess districts with underrepresentation, which resulted in a district telephone interview protocol that examines district identification policies, procedure, and practices.

High School. Great Lakes East continues working with MDE to increase collaboration with intermediate school districts (ISDs) and regional education service agencies (RESAs) across the state to share resources to increase student achievement in high schools. MDE met in late January to bring together ISD and RESA representatives to share the latest information regarding what is being done at the state level to assist high-priority schools. In addition, ISDs and RESAs had the opportunity to collaborate and share information regarding high school redesign and assistance for high-priority schools.

In late October, MDE's Office of Special Education high school transition project coordinator requested research on what other states are doing related to the work of the high school redesign and special education inclusion project. Great Lakes East prepared a report highlighting current research and the experience of other states and shared with the transition project steering committee. Another request was made by the Office of the Superintendent in November for information regarding alternative programs in other states. With assistance from the National High School Center, Great Lakes East provided information to the deputy superintendent.

During November and December, Great Lakes East participated in weekly meetings with MDE representatives and Governor Jennifer Granholm's education policy advisors to discuss high school redesign. The advisors shared questions and concerns from a statewide "listening tour" they conducted to gather information from local education agencies and intermediate school districts across the state. The MDE and Great Lakes East team collaborated to identify ways to assist districts in need of improvement, including what policies and procedures need to be revisited. Also, in January, a member of the Great Lakes East high school team was invited to join a core team formed by State Superintendent Flanagan on a tour of two innovative Renaissance 2010 high schools in Chicago. The team visited Team Englewood and Noble Street College Prep Academy with Governor Granholm.



OHIO

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Statewide Data System (D3A2). On December 14, the D3A2 Professional Development Committee met for its year-end quarterly meeting. At this meeting, members received an update on the efforts to operationalize D3A2 in districts across Ohio. Mark Mitchell presented a fully functional version of the Ohio Data Primer that includes three of the four modules. The Ohio Data Primer is a Web-based tool organized around modules and presented as a tutorial followed by practice in which users can visually display data in a graphic form and also bring in their own student achievement data. The primer is intended to be used as a data training tool by principals with their staff and also by teachers who are novice data users. There was broad support among the committee members for the launch of the primer with selected districts, with the only significant addition being a short audio introduction to the primer that would be accessed via the Web.

A review of the Professional Development Data Module II also was presented to the committee at the meeting. This module is focused on building understanding of Ohio's testing system. The purpose of this module and the other three modules is to build knowledge about D3A2 and how it can be utilized to improve instruction and develop skills to effectively use a variety of data to improve instructional practice and student performance. Lynn Ochs of the Hamilton County Educational Service Center also presented Module I graphics designed to help users understand what D3A2 is and how it can help schools and districts. Teachers will eventually access these modules through regionally based facilitated professional development sessions and online courses. A link to the primer may be built into one or more modules.

Lastly, a final version of the superintendent and central office staff data tool known as Move Ahead was presented to the committee. This tool includes a performance rubric that district leadership teams can employ to assess district practices in using data for continuous improvement. It also provides structures and guidance for administrators in using other tools like the Decision Framework to conduct root cause analysis, facilitate professional development on the use of data, and communicate with stakeholders and the media about student performance. The Move Ahead tool is strongly aligned with the planning document for Stage 2 of the Ohio Improvement Framework: Developing a Focused Improvement Plan, which offers structures, tools, and processes that enable districts to use data in a more rigorous and focused way to drive improvement.

Redesign of Statewide System of Support (Stage 2: Developing a Focused Improvement Plan). Under the leadership of Sheryl Poggi, a consultant at Great Lakes East, the working group has developed a draft of a focused improvement planning process for districts and buildings to follow. Three documents are being prepared: (1) An extensive facilitator's manual, which will include research and processes that a state support team member or an external facilitator can use in working with a district leadership team; (2) a 10-page expanded checklist that includes some guidance for district leadership teams and questions that guide the process; and (3) a three-page abbreviated checklist. The focused planning process will be piloted in selected districts under the State Personnel Development Grant (See the Ohio highlight article on p. 7).

Emerging Work. The next step in the Stage 2 work is to pilot the improvement planning process with selected districts. Great Lakes East will work with ODE to design the training for state support team members and the first district cohort and participate as part of the training and design team.



In the News

The following articles were selected to provide you with easy access to news and publications addressing the key NCLB-related topics within each Great Lakes East state and across the nation in the last quarter.



INDIANA

State's Schools Battle High Dropout Rates With New Approaches—*The Indianapolis Star*, January 23, 2008

<http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080123/LOCAL/801230486/1006/LOCAL>

"Indianapolis schools have turned to night schools, mentors and graduation coaches, schools in malls, and beefed-up courses on study skills for 'C' and 'D' students in an effort to see more students earn diplomas."

Indiana High School Graduation Rates Released—Indiana Department of Education, January 22, 2008

<http://www.doe.in.gov/reed/newsr/2008/01-January/GradRate.html>

"About three-quarters (76.5 percent) of Indiana students earned a high school diploma within four years in 2007, a 0.4 percent increase over the year before."

Poll: Education System Lacking—*The Indianapolis Star*, January 10, 2008

<http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080110/LOCAL/801100471&template=printart>

"Indiana residents see a need for change in the state's education system and would alter how funding goes to school districts, the boundaries of school districts and even the way teachers are paid, a new poll suggests."

ISTEP+ Passing Rates Up in 2007—Indiana Department of Education, December 12, 2007

http://www.doe.state.in.us/reed/newsr/2007/12-December/07_ISTEP+_results.html

"Compared to one year ago, the state showed one-percentage point gains in English/language arts, math and science. The most significant progress occurred in Grades 7 through 9, which improved by two to three percentage points on average."

Computer-Based Teaching Tools Vault Indiana to National Forefront of Instruction, Assessment—

Indiana Department of Education, December 7, 2007

http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/reed/newsr/2007/12-December/computer-based_system.html

"Beginning next fall, Indiana will help teachers improve student learning by offering new computer-based instructional tools to local schools on a voluntary basis. These resources offer educators unlimited access to on-demand checkups of student progress from kindergarten through Grade 8."

Indiana Department of Education Acquires smartDESKTOP—Indiana Department of Education, October 29, 2007

<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/reed/newsr/2007/10-October/smartDESKTOP.html>

"The Indiana Department of Education and The Learning Collaborative, an affiliate of the Indiana Humanities Council ... announced the transfer from the IHC to the IDOE of the smartDESKTOP service for teachers. The smartDESKTOP, developed with support from the Lilly Endowment, is a suite of Web-based tools for teachers launched in 2005 offering online resources in the areas of instruction, collaboration, curriculum development, and student assessment."



MICHIGAN

Granholtz Fights to Protect Michigan Way of Life—*michigan.gov*, January 29, 2008

<http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,1607,7-192--184578--,00.html>

"In her sixth State of the State address, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm ... said, '... We have to focus on four things—a job for every worker, affordable health care for every family, safe places to live and work for all of us, and quality education for our citizens, kids and adults.' Among the education initiatives is 'Establishing a 21st Century Schools Fund, a \$300 million investment to help Michigan school districts replace large, impersonal high schools that have low academic achievement and high dropout rates, with small high schools that use strong personal relationships, consistent discipline, and real-world relevance to help at-risk students achieve high academic goals that prepare them for college and workplace success.' "

Governor Wants Smaller Schools—*The Detroit News*, January 28, 2008

<http://www.detroitnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080128/POLITICS/801280376>

"Gov. Jennifer Granholm will propose in her State of the State address ... a plan to spend \$300 million on as many as 100 smaller, more personalized high schools to replace larger schools whose students are doing poorly and have high dropout rates."

East Lansing Schools Look at Widening Language Offerings—*Lansing State Journal*, January 24, 2008

<http://www.lsj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080124/NEWS05/801240376/1006/news>

"Spanish and French already are taught at MacDonald Middle School and East Lansing High School, while German is a high school-only offering. The plan, if respondents give the go-ahead, is to begin offering languages to elementary students and add at least one Middle Eastern or Asian language. ... it's not just a question of whether the district will offer world languages at the elementary level, but how."

Michigan Teacher of the Year Named Finalist for National Teacher of the Year—Michigan Department of Education, January 8, 2008

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818_34785-183116--,00.html

"Current Michigan Teacher of the Year June Teisan [a seventh grade science teacher at Harper Woods Secondary School with more than 20 years of classroom experience] has been named one of four finalists for the nation's top teaching honor—National Teacher of the Year."

More Michigan High Schools Not Making Adequate Yearly Progress: "Education Reforms Need Time To Work"—Michigan Department of Education, November 30, 2007

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818_34785-180977--,00.html

"The percentage of Michigan high schools not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) this past year increased by over nine percent. ... 'This isn't unexpected,' said state Superintendent of Public Instruction Mike Flanagan. 'We changed our high school graduation requirements because we knew we needed higher standards to prepare our kids for the demands of college and the work world. These results just remind us how critical that change was.' "

Department of Education Sets the Date for 5th and 6th Grade

MEAP Writing Tests—Michigan Department of Education, October 19, 2007

http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818_34785-178480--,00.html

"To prevent another security breach of the Grade 5 and 6 MEAP writing prompts, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is requiring that all fifth and sixth graders in the state be given the replacement writing prompts as the first school activity on Wednesday, November 7, 2007."



OHIO

Ohio Education Program Targets At-Risk High School Freshmen—*The Plain Dealer*, January 24, 2008

<http://www.cleveland.com/news/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/news/120116735630070.xml&coll=2>

"The program is part of Gov. Ted Strickland's \$20 million initiative to close the achievement gap and raise the graduation rates of students with the highest rates of failure. For the next two years, the state will spend about \$1,500 on each of the students involved in the program."

Ohio Department of Education Names 96 Schools of Distinction—Ohio Department of Education, January 16, 2008

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=466634586242883439>

"Superintendent of Public instruction Susan Tave Zelman ... announced that 96 schools have been selected as 2006–2007 *State Superintendent's Schools of Distinction*. ... The Ohio Department of Education administers the award program to recognize schools whose students, including students with disabilities, achieve high academic performance."

Ohio Classrooms Gain 135 National Board Certified Teachers—Ohio Department of Education, December 5, 2007

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=894423743775481152>

"The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) ... announced that 135 Ohio teachers have joined the ranks of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT), the highest credential in the teaching profession. ... Ohio ranks fifth nationwide in the total number (2,757) of National Board Certified Teachers. The number of Ohio teachers achieving the designation has more than doubled in the past six years (from 1,334 in 2001)."

State Board of Education Recognizes High-Performing Schools and Districts—Ohio Department of Education, October 22, 2007

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=397686323192716931>

"The 139 school districts that received an 'Excellent' designation on the 2006–2007 Local Report Card are receiving a congratulatory letter. ... Banners will be presented to 62 districts that have received an 'Excellent' designation for at least five consecutive years. The 1,150 individual schools that earned an 'Excellent' designation will receive a congratulatory letter and a certificate to be displayed in the school."



ELSEWHERE IN THE NATION

Assessment and Accountability

Statement by Secretary Margaret Spellings on the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) Results—U.S. Department of Education, November 28, 2007

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/11/11282007.html>

"The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) ... released the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). This assessment, focusing on students' reading comprehension and literacy, was administered to a random sampling of approximately 5,000 fourth graders from across the United States."

Full report available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008017.pdf>



Study Compares States' Math and Science Scores With Other Countries—*The New York Times*, November 14, 2007

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/14/education/14students.html?_r=1&ex=1352869200&en=2a0b04dbb5263177&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss

"The study equated standardized test scores of eighth-grade students in each of the 50 states with those of their peers in 45 countries. Experts said it was the first such effort to link standardized test scores, state by state, with scores from other nations."

Full report available at <http://www.air.org/publications/documents/phillips.chance.favors.the.prepared.mind.pdf>

High Schools

Schools to Offer Pay for Scores—*The Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 2008

http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore_city/baltimore.ci.schools23jan23033219%2C0%2C4929013.story?coll=bal_tab01_layout

"The Baltimore school system will pay high school students who improve their scores on the state graduation exams up to \$110 each, a controversial plan that would be a first in Maryland."

Statement by Secretary Margaret Spellings on the 2006 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) Results—U.S. Department of Education, December 4, 2007

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/12/12042007.html>

"The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ... released results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA assesses science, math, and reading skills of 15-year-old students in the principal industrialized countries every three years."

Innovation and Improvement

Embracing "Response to Intervention"—U.S. Department of Education, January 18, 2008

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/23/20rti.h27.html?tmp=1430133255>

"Iowa's school district officials are among the most enthusiastic promoters of the method, which is garnering intense interest among educators around the country. ... The state shares resources among its many small school districts through its area education agencies. The Heartland AEA, the largest of 10 in the state, has been cited often in research for its approach to RTI."

Secretary Spellings Invites Eligible States to Submit Innovative Models for Expanded Growth Model Pilot—U.S. Department of Education, December 7, 2007

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/12/12072007.html>

"U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings ... announced that she is opening the growth model pilot to all eligible states saying, 'our work on reauthorization has shown broad bipartisan support for growth models and now, many states have improved data systems so they can track individual student growth over time.'"

Instruction

Arts Education Touted as Key to U.S. Innovation Agenda—*Education Week*, January 24, 2008

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/30/21arts.h27.html?tmp=1199116023>

"A majority of U.S. voters agree that building students' imaginations to equip young people with the ability to innovate is as important as teaching them the academic basics, according to a poll commissioned by an advocacy coalition for education in the arts."



Girls Make History by Sweeping Top Honors at a Science Contest—*The New York Times*, December 4, 2007

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/04/nyregion/04siemens.html?_r=1&ex=1354510800&en=0dff4361ae7bb55f&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&oref=slogin

“Girls won top honors for the first time in the Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology, one of the nation’s most coveted student science awards, which were announced yesterday at New York University.”

Reading Study Shows Remarkable Decline in U.S.—National Public Radio, November 19, 2007

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16435529&ft=1&f=1013>

“The National Endowment for the Arts has released a study on reading trends in the U.S. The study shows ‘startling declines’ in ‘how much and how well’ Americans are reading.”

Full report available at <http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.pdf>

NCLB

Statement on the National Assessment of Title I Final Report—U.S. Department of Education, November 15, 2007

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/11/11152007.html>

“This report confirms what we already know about the core requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—states have made tremendous progress in meeting the goals of the law, but to ensure every student is achieving on grade level by 2013–14, we must accelerate our efforts to improve student achievement.”

Full report available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20084012/>

For a Key Education Law, Reauthorization Stalls—U.S. Department of Education, November 6, 2007

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/06/washington/06child.html?ex=1352091600&en=d0ca0d5fdbc78aa2&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

“The leaders of the Senate and House education committees are signaling that time has run out for reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act this year, leaving prospects for rewriting it uncertain during the presidential campaign in 2008.”

Student Subgroups

Inclusion: The Latest Trend in Educating Disabled—National Public Radio, November 19, 2007

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16435563&ft=1&f=1013>

“Michele Norris talks with Joseph Shapiro about trends in educating students with disabilities, such as inclusion, an effort to have disabled kids learn alongside other children.”

Reading Aid Seen to Lag in ELL Focus—*Education Week*, October 22, 2007 (free subscription required)

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/10/24/09ell.h27.html?tmp=454002342%20>

“Educators and experts across the country who work with English language learners are moving toward a consensus that the federal Reading First program needs to be refined to become more effective for children acquiring English.”

Teacher Quality

To Draw Top Teachers to Troubled Schools, Foundation Will Offer \$30,000 Stipends—*The Washington Post*, December 20, 2007

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/19/AR2007121902292.html>

“The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation launched a \$17 million effort ... to improve teacher education and steer highly qualified teachers to high-poverty and struggling schools.”



States Venture Into Teacher Performance Pay—Stateline.org, October 9, 2007

<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=246599>

“The controversial idea of paying teachers based not on how long they’ve been teaching but on how much their students learn got a boost when a key congressman recently proposed adding pay-for-performance money for teachers in high-poverty schools to the next version of the federal No Child Left Behind education law.”

Resources

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

What Americans Think About Their Schools—Education Next/Hoover Institution, Fall 2007

http://media.hoover.org/documents/ednext_20074_12.pdf

“Here we report the opinions of both the public at large and three ethnic subgroups (whites, African Americans, and Hispanics). We also distinguish the views of those who have worked for the public schools from those who have not.”

They’re Not Little Kids Anymore: The Special Challenges of New Teachers in High Schools and Middle Schools—National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality/Public Agenda, October 2007

http://www.publicagenda.org/lessonslearned1/pdfs/lessons_learned_1.pdf

This report is the first in a series of reports called *Lessons Learned: New Teachers Talk About Their Jobs, Challenges and Long-Range Plans* and is based on a nationwide survey of first-year teachers.

Are Private High Schools Better Academically Than Public High Schools?—Center on Education Policy, October 2007

http://www.cep-dc.org/data/n_0001/resources/live/Private%20Schools%20Report.pdf

Policymakers, parents, and other interested citizens often assume that private schools, on the whole, are better academically than public schools. But is this empirical assumption actually supported by evidence?

Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs With Appropriate Interventions—National High School Center, October 2007

http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf

This report outlines steps that schools can take to identify at-risk students and provide the necessary support systems and relevant interventions to assist students in obtaining a high school diploma.

Guidelines for Ensuring the Technical Quality of Assessments Affecting English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities: Development and Implementation of Regulations—Assessment and

Accountability Comprehensive Center, September 2007

http://www.aacompcenter.org/pdf/AACC_Guidelines.pdf

“These guidelines, prepared by the Special Populations Strand of the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC), focus on the technical quality of assessments for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs).”



Upcoming Events

For additional listings, check the Great Lakes East website for the [Calendar of Events](#).

FEBRUARY 2008

Dates: February 6–8	Topic: NCLB: No Child Left Behind Statewide Conference
Location: Chicago, IL	Audience: Illinois educators and policy makers
Format: Conference	Sponsor: Illinois State Board of Education
Dates: February 9–12	Topic: National Reading Recovery & K–6 Classroom Literacy Conference
Location: Columbus, OH	Audience: Reading Recovery professionals; K–6 classroom teachers; Title I teachers and coordinators; school administrators, principals, superintendents, and school board members; reading specialists; literacy coaches/coordinators; curriculum specialists; school librarians; Reading First coordinators; university professors; literacy advocates
Format: Conference	Sponsors: Reading Recovery Council of North America, Heinemann, Rigby, Seedling Publications, SongLake Books, Steps to Literacy
Dates: February 11–15	Topic: Leveraging Resources: 3rd Annual Joint Meeting of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Comprehensive and Equity Assistance Centers and the Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance and Dissemination Projects
Location: Washington, DC	Audience: OSEP TA&D Network, comprehensive centers, equity assistance centers
Format: Meeting	Sponsors: OSEP, OESE, Federal Resource Center
Dates: February 14–17	Topic: National Conference on Education
Location: Tampa, FL	Audience: School administrators and school leaders
Format: Conference	Sponsor: American Association of School Administrators
Date: February 19	Topic: Making Algebra Work: Instructional Strategies That Deepen Student Understanding
Location: Online	Audience: Mathematics teachers (Grades 6–12), mathematics department chairs, principals, district-level mathematics supervisors, mathematics technical assistance providers, and professors of preservice mathematics teachers
Format: Webcast	Sponsor: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement



Dates: February 22–24
Location: San Antonio, TX
Format: Conference

Topic: [National Association of Secondary School Principals \(NASSP\) Convention 2008: “Build the Team—Lead the Charge”](#)

Audience: Principals, assistant principals, school administrators, superintendents, Grades 9–12 classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, school counselors

Sponsors: The College Board, Scholastic, Virco, Home Builders Institute, Corwin Press, Pearson, Minnesota Life, Lifetouch Portrait Studios, Jostens, Eye on Education

Date: February 26
Location: Online
Format: Webinar

Topic: [Data Use Webinar](#)

Audience: Comprehensive centers, SEAs, LEAs, educators

Sponsor: Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center

Dates: February 27–28
Location: Milwaukee, WI
Format: Meeting

Topic: Combined Great Lakes East Annual Advisory Board Meeting and Great Lakes West Advisory Council Meeting

Audience: Great Lakes East staff, Great Lakes East Advisory Board members, Great Lakes East state liaisons and subcontractors, representatives from Great Lakes West, Great Lakes West Advisory Council members and staff, representatives from REL Midwest, representatives from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (invitation only)

Sponsors: Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West

MARCH 2008

Dates: March 6–7
Location: Chicago, IL
Format: Working session

Topic: [Research to Action Forum: “Advancing Assessment and Accountability”](#)

Audience: Officials and key staff of state education agencies; policymakers (legislative staff, governors’ staff, school boards, and boards of regents); practitioners (superintendents, principals, and teachers); researchers in education and public policy; higher education administrators (invitation only)

Partners: REL Midwest, Great Lakes East, Great Lakes West, North Central Comprehensive Center, Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, West Wind Education Policy

Dates: March 12–14
Location: Fort Lauderdale, FL
Format: Conference

Topic: [National Afterschool Association Conference](#)

Audience: Before school, afterschool, and summer school programs; youth-serving organizations; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; parks and recreation departments; and administrators from all public, private, faith, school, and community-based sectors.

Sponsors: JC Penney Afterschool Fund and Scholastic



Dates: March 13–14	Topic: March Issue Forum
Location: Arlington, VA	Audience: Title II Conference attendees (invitation only)
Format: Forum	Sponsor: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality
Dates: March 15–17	Topic: 2008 Annual Conference & Exhibit Show “Reinventing Schools: Courageous Leadership for Positive Change”
Location: New Orleans, LA	Audience: Education professionals, policymakers
Format: Conference	Sponsor: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Dates: March 24–28	Topic: 2008 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting and Exhibition
Location: New York, NY	Audience: Education researchers
Format: Conference	Sponsor: American Educational Research Association

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dates: April 4–8	Topic: Leadership and Learning for the Next Generation: The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 2008 Annual Convention & Exposition
Location: Nashville, TN	Audience: Principals, assistant principals, school administrators, superintendents, K–8 classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, school counselors
Format: Conference	Sponsors: AIG Retirement, Lifetouch Portrait Studios, NOVA Southeastern University, Corwin Press, Virco
Dates: April 9–12	Topic: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2008 Annual Meeting and Exposition: “Becoming Certain About Uncertainty”
Location: Salt Lake City, UT	Audience: Mathematics educators
Format: Conference	Sponsor: Utah Council of Teachers of Mathematics

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