



## Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center

# News for the Region

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

Fall 2008

## Quality Educators as Partners in Change

In this issue, we continue to address a topic that many educators are discussing: Students need quality teachers to succeed. However, teachers and students alone can't make the success happen. A diverse group of leaders at the state, district, and local levels needs to work together for the same result—student proficiency. Through ups and downs and “implementation dips” and “highs,” everyone in education is obligated to make meaningful change happen.

What is needed for change? First, teachers and students must have good working conditions. On p. 12, Joyce Lieberman describes four components of working conditions and offers creative ways for states to support districts and schools.

Second, change has a ripple effect: It starts at one level and travels to the others. Mark Mitchell explains this phenomenon on p. 6 and outlines Ohio's large-scale effort known as the Ohio Improvement Process. The state has been focusing on the district level as the unit of educational change and training regional district improvement facilitators to ensure consistent use of the process across the system.

Third, educators at all levels need continual, tailored support to sustain the change. Multiple supports for schools in improvement is key. Indiana's new initiative, the Institute for School Leadership Teams, demonstrates such supports by developing the knowledge and skills of a small group of teacher leaders alongside their principal with the ultimate goal to improve student achievement (see Jayne Sowers's article on p. 2). It is truly rewarding to witness so many educators combining efforts to help schools and districts across the region. It is even more rewarding to catch glimpses of hope among educators—a hope that together they can make a difference for their students. We, in turn, hope that the illustrative examples and informative resources in the following pages will help you find successful ways of linking your systems.

Barbara Youngren, Director  
Great Lakes East Comprehensive 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.

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## Highlights of the Quarter

### Indiana Institute for School Leadership Teams: The Story of a School in Improvement

By Jayne Sowers, Ed.D., Indiana State Manager

What does it take for a school to improve? The answer, according to the teachers and principals of Indiana schools in improvement, is simple—*hope*. In schools that consistently do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), teachers, principals, parents, and, yes, the students, tell us that they feel hopeless. The way out seems complicated, confusing, and unreachable. Exhaustion persists; fear of state testing days pervades; and morale declines. What can a state education agency (SEA) possibly do to help a school in such a downward spiral? The following story from Beardsley Elementary School in Elkhart, Indiana, provides some answers to that daunting question.

#### In the Beginning—July 2008

In the beginning, the principals and teachers of five school leadership teams from high-poverty, low-performing Title I urban elementary schools were invited to join the newly created Indiana Institute for School Leadership Teams. The Institute, developed through the Indiana Department of Education—Office of Title I, Academic Support with the assistance of Great Lakes East, implemented its first component, the Summer Academy, in July. The five school leadership teams did not relish spending three of their summer days at the Academy, nor did they hold much hope that the experience would be worthwhile. In fact, the assistant principal of Beardsley Elementary School, Val Priller, expressed her concern:

“I was expecting three days of dictated school reform with unrealistic expectations. I was expecting a good scolding and little support for our reform. I was expecting very little help and *not* individually based projects.”

Fortunately, the Academy did not meet her low expectations; rather it exceeded them. After the Summer Academy, Priller wrote

“The Summer Academy didn’t meet my expectations—thank goodness! The Summer Academy changed my professional life. As a school leader, I got to experience the change process the way it should be. The entire process from day 1 to day 3 was empowering and energizing. I am so very fortunate to have been a part of such an organized, well planned, needs-based initiative.”

Longtime educator and assistant superintendent of Elkhart Community Schools, Dr. Tom Neat, agreed with Priller’s conclusion: “It was extremely powerful—what happened in three days this summer!”

What was it that made a difference? What did the SEA provide for the school teams that allowed Beardsley and the others to experience such a positive attitude and an outlook of hope? The voices from Beardsley offer some insights into the three “differences” that the Institute afforded them:

- The assignment of Distinguished Principals, who had led their own schools out of improvement, to each school leadership team.  
“It was about Julie Bakehorn [our Distinguished Principal] because she was in a school like ours.”—Teacher  
“I was encouraged by the success of other school districts in our position. I was encouraged by their [the Distinguished Principals’] willingness to share their blueprint for success.”—Todd Dowiat, teacher



- The development of a *team* of leaders, not principals alone.

“I truly understood and nurtured the idea of developing teacher leaders. Letting the teachers and educational coaches lead the team was the most powerful concept and process I have ever seen. Watching some of these educators open up their professional capacity was exciting and fresh. The synergy of ideas flowing from this team was incredible.”—Val Priller, assistant principal

- The provision of dedicated *days*—not minutes or hours—to work together as a team.

“It’s the critical amount of time; you had the uninterrupted time to work together. The Institute provided for the time and collaborative setting for the schools”—Dr. Tom Neat, assistant superintendent



**Beardsley Elementary School  
Leadership Team**

**Back Row (Left to Right):** Todd Dowiat, teacher; Elena Huys, teacher; Deb Yoder, teacher; Jenny Sager, principal; Julie Bakehorn, distinguished principal; Anita Grove, teacher; Carla Hochstetler, teacher. **Front Row (Left to Right):** Jenny Hinman, teacher; Elaine Fiwek, teacher; Micki Berry, teacher; Val Priller, assistant principal

Through these different components, Beardsley’s team gained not only new information but developed a plan of action, created a focused team, and left with a sense of hope. According to Priller,

“Beardsley left with a leadership team so vested in the success of our school and its goals, it was incredible. The knowledge about AYP, reading

our individual results, planning our next steps based on our AYP results, and involving every member of our team in this effort has changed Beardsley. We are a united front that I truly have never seen in my years of being an educator.”

## Returning Home—August 2008

What happened after the “high” of the Summer Academy? All five teams returned home excited and encouraged that with the action plan they developed, their schools could make AYP—maybe not this year but within two years. They were ready to share their new knowledge and plans with their colleagues. But what was the best way to share what they had learned and done at the Institute? What was key to gaining buy-in from the rest of the school staff? Fortunately, before leaving the Academy, the teams developed a specific plan for the first three months of school, including staff orientation and beginning-of-the-year school meetings. Teacher Todd Dowiat described the process of transferring his team’s knowledge and excitement to the rest of the Beardsley staff.

“The Academy gave us a concrete plan, a direction for our school to follow with the tools needed to achieve our goals. Between July and October, our team met a few more times to solidify our goals and work on a blueprint for each grade level to follow. We started on the first day of school by introducing it to our staff much in the same way the Academy introduced it to us.”

Principal Jenny Sager emphasized the key role of the team’s presentation.

“The presentation that the teachers did when school started was like watching a movie. The primary teachers were supporting other teachers. It was unbelievable. I believe that the presentation that the teachers made that day made the difference.... I even felt that with those who are naysayers. The team’s presentation just blew me away.”





And Priller added, “Wow! This was a successful process. The entire tone of the building was transformed into a focused, planned, well-oiled machine.”

Todd Dowiat and other teachers provided their view of their presentation.

“Our presentation was well organized and motivating. Many of the staff were motivated and excited themselves after hearing the details. The plan was complete and simple to follow. The staff was on board and willing to give it a try.”—Todd Dowiat, teacher

“I think it helped that we gave the teachers the materials—the plan, the steps, the data.”  
—Teacher

“We set the expectation for what it is that is to be done this year.”—Teacher

Dr. Neat, assistant superintendent, attended that first staff meeting of the year at Beardsley:

“I watched with pride for I sensed the transformation that the Beardsley staff members had undergone since the Summer Institute in July. That August staff meeting was all about teacher leadership and teachers teaching to other adults. The power of watching the Beardsley staff that morning was a very professional and personally moving moment for me. After the presentations by the staff, the room was filled with a feeling of self-confidence and a passion from committed and caring adults to implement the essential work with their students.”

## **The First Two Months of School: September to October**

Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+), the state’s standardized test, is the focus of all Indiana schools in the fall. Occurring about six weeks after the school year begins, the test is difficult for students returning to school after a long summer. Teachers work diligently to review last year’s English Language Arts and mathematics

content during those first few weeks of school. This review was the task before Beardsley’s staff as well. But this year, they enacted a different approach to the review. By disaggregating the student data and determining specific student needs, the staff, with the School Leadership Team’s support, worked diligently to individually tailor the review.

## **What’s Next? The Next Three Months of School: November to January**

With the fall ISTEP+ testing almost completed, the school leadership teams developed a new action plan for October through December. The plan of the Beardsley team includes connecting student data with classroom instruction. On the early release day (half day), November 12, the School Leadership Team guided the staff in reviewing their core standards and the data-determined focus areas of need: improving vocabulary, reading comprehension, and computational skills. The staff will work for the next several months to examine and improve their instructional practices in these areas specifically, implementing the most effective approaches, including ways to differentiate their lessons. Frequent formative assessments will round out their approach of establishing a continual link between data, curriculum, and instruction.

Beardsley’s team is also considering the phenomenon of the “implementation dip” or gap. They learned at the Institute’s first School-Year Session for the School Leadership Teams held on October 16 about this concept. It seems that once the excitement of a new program or initiative passes, people may experience a loss of energy or enthusiasm. One Beardsley teacher realized this was occurring in her school:

“I feel the dip, too. I feel like we gave them the materials, the binder, scaffolding for the teachers; then ISTEP+. Now, we wait.”



To help the teams lead their schools through this possible downtime, the October School-Year Session provided the teams with time to devise the next three-month plan and to determine ways to counter the implementation gap and respond to staff who are resistant to change. Examples of action steps that the Beardsley team wrote in its plan for November through January include these ideas:

- Some team members will visit their Distinguished Principal's school in Indianapolis to gain a vision of how and what the principal is doing in her own school.
- The Distinguished Principal plans to spend a day at Beardsley immediately following the release of the ISTEP+ scores in December. She will assist the team in disaggregating the data to determine which students did well and which will continue to need additional assistance.
- Beardsley's Distinguished Principal (as well as the other Distinguished Principals) is well aware of the possibility that the schools may *not* make AYP and the impact of this outcome for all involved. The ways the Beardsley team plans to address such results include assisting the school to do the following:
  - Chart their scale scores the last several years to show their growth over time.
  - Benchmark scores against the previous AYP rates to show that, under the prior requirements, the school would have made AYP.

- Celebrate any growth, even if AYP was not met.
- Be encouraged that often good growth or a surge occurs the second year as the changes become "the way of doing things."

## The Outcome

What has been the outcome of the School Leadership Teams for Beardsley Elementary School? In terms of improving student achievement scores, we don't know yet. In terms of teacher and principal morale, their comments speak for themselves:

"I know that the focused effort will impact student achievement in a positive way."

—Val Priller, assistant principal

"We now have high hopes that our children will benefit from our experience with the Institute."—Todd Dowiat, teacher

"I have hope—we can do this—we can help those six students who, if they pass ISTEP+, will allow us to be in Safe Harbor."—Stated by a teacher with tears in her eyes

*Hope* is indeed a very good outcome for a school in need of improvement.



## The Ohio Improvement Process: A Systemic Approach to Improving Education for All Students

By Mark Mitchell, Ohio State Manager

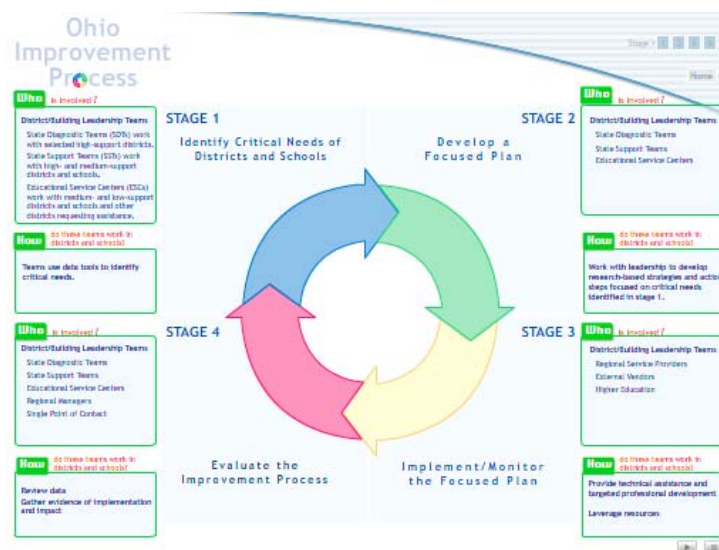
Michael Fullan (2007) describes the frailty of change in his book *The New Meaning of Educational Change* as follows: “The main reason that change fails to occur in the first place on any scale, and does not get sustained when it does, is that the infrastructure is weak, unhelpful, or working at cross purposes” (p. 18). He argues that the difficulty of sustaining change at the classroom level occurs when other levels of the system (school, district, regional agencies, and state) don’t change in ways that enhance coherence, alignment, connectedness, synergy, and capacity for continuous improvement.

Today, many of our educational systems can be described as somewhat incoherent, misaligned, disconnected, not positively synergistic, and not well positioned to create capacity for continuous improvement. Although frequently in these systems, the heroic efforts of some teachers, principals, and central office staff do produce improved learning for students, these improvements are not sustainable as people move on to other opportunities (or burn

out). These same systems, however, can produce positive, synergistic change and better outcomes for students if they are well supported. This support must come from aligned and connected improvement processes, capacity-building tools, and coherent structures. In addition, adults at all levels of the system must be focused on student performance regardless of their role.

Ohio has embarked on just such a large-scale effort, known as the Ohio Improvement Process, to positively impact its educational system. It adopted a two-pronged approach to the effort: (1) focusing on the district level as the unit of change and (2) seeking to ensure that improvement processes, structures, and tools are used consistently and that improvement plans are monitored for fidelity of adult implementation and impact on student performance. Great Lakes East has provided significant support to Ohio through the design of the Ohio Improvement Process. All Ohio districts are expected to implement this process (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Ohio Improvement Process**



[View larger image.](#)



## The Ohio Improvement Process

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Ohio Improvement Process involves four stages, which have a common connection throughout: the focus on district and building leadership teams; improvement processes; system support structures; and data, planning, and monitoring/implementation tools. Across the four stages, three tools—District and Building Decision Framework, Consolidated Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CCIP), and Implementation Management/Monitoring Tool—focus the work and the conversations of district and building leadership teams. The focus and connectedness of this work across stages in turn support coherence and alignment within the system.

**Stage 1: Identify Critical Needs of Districts and Schools.** The major tool in this stage is the District and Building Decision Framework. This framework is organized around critical components that define districts and buildings, known as levels within this tool:

- Level I: Student Performance (includes student achievement data by building, grade level, and disaggregated student group)
- Level II: Instructional Management (Curriculum, Assessment, Instructional Practice, Educator Quality, and Professional Development)
- Level III: Expectations and Conditions (Leadership, School Climate, Parent/Family, Student, and Community Involvement)
- Level IV: Resource Management

Each of these levels poses essential questions that district leadership teams must address with state, district, or local data. At the completion of the District Decision Framework, district leadership teams identify two to three critical concerns and probable causes contributing to those concerns. These concerns become the goals, and the causes are translated into strategies that become the district improvement plan and are entered into the CCIP in

Stage 2. Each district will define two goals focused on student proficiency (e.g., reading and/or mathematics) and one goal focused on expectations and conditions (e.g., leadership, school climate). In addition, districts may identify one more goal. Building leadership teams work through a similar process using the Building Decision Framework to identify action steps that align with and support district-identified goals and strategies.

**Stage 2: Develop a Focused Plan.** The major tool in this stage is the CCIP. It provides the structure and the vehicle for submitting most district-level and building-level improvement plans to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Great Lakes East has worked closely with a statewide working group since fall 2007 to develop an additional tool, the *Ohio Improvement Process Facilitator's Guide*, which details the process for developing focused improvement plans. Focused improvement plans also include information on how to identify adult implementation indicators and progress indicators that become part of the Stage 3 work.

**Stage 3: Implement/Monitor the Focused Plan.** The major tool in this stage is the Implementation Management/Monitoring Tool, which provides an organizing structure for how the plan will be implemented throughout the district. This tool brings together the results of Stages 1 and 2 (goals, strategies, and action steps) at the district and building level. It includes indicators for adult implementation of actions and strategies as well as indicators for progress toward attainment of student performance goals. It is a management tool because it details timelines for implementation and roles and responsibilities to assist districts in fully implementing focused strategies and action steps at all levels of the system to achieve district goals.

**Stage 4: Evaluate the Improvement Process.** District leadership teams will use the Implementation Management/Monitoring Tool to provide guidance on what and when to monitor (implementation and progress indicators). The tool





helps keep districts focused on their goals, fidelity of implementation, and impact of the process on changes in adult practice and student achievement. At the state level, Great Lakes East and RMC Research Corporation are part of a working group that is designing a state system of support evaluation. The ODE working group is designing a framework for the evaluation to extract evidence for the health of Ohio's system of support. The framework will include key cross-cutting indicators (i.e., "high leverage" indicators) across all levels of the system: classroom, school, district, region, and state. The design of the Ohio Improvement Process and how it has been implemented so far are reflected in some of the existing statewide supports described in this section.

## State Supports for the Ohio Improvement Process

Ohio has in place some elements that offer supportive structures and a supportive environment for the design and implementation of the improvement process.

**Consolidated Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CCIP).** The plan is an automated, online tool that provides a structure for the submission of district goals, strategies, and action steps for improvement of student performance. This tool also serves as a unified grants application for federal, state, and competitive grant funding. The use of this tool reinforces some of the behaviors in the system that ODE wants to see: the development of one coherent district plan with aligned building plans and an intentional linkage and alignment of resources to strategies and actions described in these plans.

**Ohio's Regional System of Support.** Another asset that supports the Ohio Improvement Process is a regional system of support. The regional system consists of 16 state support team regions and 58 educational service centers (ESCs) along with other regional supports such as information technology centers, which provide data analysis support to districts. Recently formed state support teams integrated special education and general education supports into one group that facilitates the Ohio Improvement Process.

**Strong Vision and Leadership.** A large-scale systemic effort, such as the Ohio Improvement Process, is subjected to potential and real challenges at all levels of the system. The eventual success of this effort requires people with leadership and vision to clearly articulate and communicate what this process might look like; plan for the future; anticipate and work through design and implementation challenges; and resolve to see the process implemented statewide with fidelity.

**Redefinition of Leadership.** Fundamental to the implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process has been the work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC), an initiative co-led by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and ODE. The Council is made up of educational leaders from across Ohio who represent each level of the system. Working closely with Brian McNulty of the Leadership and Learning Center, the Council has articulated a set of essential practices for superintendents, district leadership teams, and building leadership teams. This collaborative effort has been guided by the philosophy of Richard Elmore from the Harvard Graduate School of Education: The purpose of leadership is one of improving instructional practice and performance, *regardless of role*.

The work and conversations of district and building leadership teams as they move through the Ohio Improvement Process will both stimulate and reinforce essential practices identified through the OLAC process.

These teams are part of the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), which is designed to support the implementation of a unified system of improvement to meet the needs of **all** students through the Ohio Improvement Process. Great Lakes East has played an active, supportive role in the design and facilitation of training for these district and building leadership teams and for regional facilitators.





Another element in each stage of the Ohio Improvement Process is the system of support, whether it comes in the form of state support teams, ESC staff, or state diagnostic review teams. Implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process by all districts depends upon a highly functioning state system of support.

## Redesign of Ohio's System of Support

A state-level design team has been formed to help guide implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process and consists of regional providers from each of Ohio's 16 state support team regions. The team has been instrumental as advisors to ODE, as mentors to other providers, and as designers and facilitators of training sessions hosted by Great Lakes East. In collaboration with ODE, Great Lakes East has facilitated the work of this team, which has taken a leadership role in supporting the design of

regional provider training. For example, from August 4 to August 8, 2008, state-level design team members facilitated and trained state support teams. During this four-day training, state support teams learned how to model processes such as using the Decision Framework with a district leadership team and developed facilitation skills in helping districts to identify critical needs and probable causes. The state support teams had opportunities to practice these new facilitation skills with each other.

As a result of these trainings, the state support teams are working to assist medium- and high-support districts identified within Ohio's differentiated accountability work. As one of six states approved to use a differentiated accountability model, ODE has organized district and school support under the following categories.

Low Support	Medium Support	High Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District and all buildings in improvement status fail to meet less than 20% of adequate yearly progress (AYP) measures.</li> <li>Supported by educational service centers (ESCs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District and all buildings in improvement status fail to meet 20%–29% of AYP measures.</li> <li>Supported by state support teams or ESCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District and all buildings in improvement status fail to meet more than 29% of AYP measures.</li> <li>Supported by state support teams</li> </ul>

Table adopted from *Ohio's Differentiated Accountability Model*, ODE, and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

State diagnostic teams trained to conduct district and school improvement diagnostic reviews will also provide an intensive review of high-support districts. The diagnostic review process, developed by RMC Research Corporation, enables the collection of data across the district based upon observations, interviews, and reviews of documents.

To enable the district assistance in the low-support level, the state support teams are providing training and mentoring to ESC staff on how to better understand and use the Ohio Improvement Process and its aligned tools and processes. Those ESC providers who complete training in the Ohio Improvement Process become part of the regional

provider network. As the capacity of this support system increases to help districts implement the Ohio Improvement Process with fidelity and consistency, this system will reduce the frailty of change and lead to a more coherent, aligned, connected, synergistic, and improved system for the benefit of all students.

## The Work Ahead

The focus for 2008–09 will remain on building the capacity of the state system of support (state support team and ESC staff) to effectively work with district leadership teams and to reach a high level of implementation with fidelity across Ohio. Great



Lakes East continues to assist the state-level design team and ODE to design the necessary tools and supports for Stages 3 and 4 of the Ohio Improvement Process.

## Reference

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

## Great Lakes East Regional and Collaborative Meeting: Regional High School Dialogue Centers on Multiple Pathways to Graduation

By Victoria Cirks, Great Lakes East

This year, an estimated 1.23 million students in the class of 2008 failed to graduate (Diplomas Count, 2008). As the class of 2012 walked into high schools across the region this fall, educators and policymakers are facing the question of how to ensure that each of those freshmen students graduates.

On September 10–11, 2008, Great Lakes East and the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center hosted their third regional high school dialogue on Multiple Pathways to Graduation. This meeting built upon the conversations that began during the dialogue on standards and policies (April 2008) and on 21st century learning (May 2008) and included state teams from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

As the states in the Great Lakes region are establishing more rigorous graduation standards and implementing new policies relating to 21st century skills, educators raise questions and require guidance about many different ways students could gain access to the new curricula. In response to state requests for exemplars of models and programs that encompass these multiple pathways, Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West invited staff from a number of innovative programs throughout the region to share information about their programs. Of particular interest were the topics of student engagement and dropout prevention.

To kick off the meeting and emphasize the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) commitment to multiple graduation pathways, the

participants watched one of Superintendent Mike Flanagan's [podcasts](#). MDE's representatives Mary Alice Galloway, Special Assistant to the Chief Academic Officer; Betty Underwood, Director of the Office of School Improvement; and Glenna Zollinger-Russell, Supervisor of the Office of Career and Technical Education, then gave opening remarks to discuss the importance of anchoring multiple pathways to graduation to a rigorous core curriculum and to share how Michigan is using seat-time waivers to promote these alternative pathways.

The meeting presentations fell into one of four overall topics: technology/online learning, rigorous and relevant senior year, college/dual credit, and seat-time alternatives:

- **Technology/Online Learning.** Within the Great Lakes region, there were presentations from the [Wisconsin Virtual School](#) and [Indiana's New Technology High School Network](#) (University of Indianapolis, Center for Excellence in Leadership of Learning)
- **Rigorous and Relevant Senior Year.** Illinois's [New Trier High School](#) and [John Hersey High School](#) and Michigan's [University Prep Academy](#) and [University High School](#) discussed how their programs ensure rigorous and relevant senior-year experiences for their students.
- **College/Dual Credit.** Michigan's [Mott Middle College](#) and Illinois's [Dunham Early College Academy](#) at Waubensee Community College discussed their college/dual credit partnerships.



An outside-the-region perspective emerged from New Hampshire and its efforts to move away from seat time as the method for earning credit toward graduation. Fred Bramante from the New Hampshire State Board of Education spoke about New Hampshire's efforts to eliminate the Carnegie Unit through the state's [high school redesign initiative](#) and move toward a competency-based system of awarding credit.

In addition to learning about these innovative programs, state teams applied an adapted version of the National High School Center's Mapping High School Improvement Initiatives in the State Tool to examine their current work regarding multiple pathways to graduation.

After two days of interaction and learning, the participants left armed not only with additional information about how multiple pathways are being implemented in districts but also with a

strengthened regional network. Their responses about the meeting highlighted collaboration and learning about current initiatives in the region as the most important and valued activity.

They also showed a strong interest in continuing to discuss the importance and necessity of increased collaboration in the next regional high school dialogue, which is scheduled for January 15–16, 2009. This meeting will focus on Building Coalitions and Fostering Partnerships and will invite a number of secondary and postsecondary educators and policymakers.

## Reference

Diplomas count 2008: School to college. (2008). *Education Week*, 27(4), 35. Retrieved October 27, 2008, from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2008/06/05/index.html>



## Special Reports

### Why Working Conditions Matter for Quality Teaching and Learning

By Joyce Lieberman, Ed.D., Learning Point Associates

*“While business often focuses on employee satisfaction, many schools often struggle to address critical working conditions—isolating teachers in classrooms, denying them basic materials to do their job, inundating them with nonessential duties, providing them with little input into the design and organization of schools, and offering little opportunity for career advancement and professional growth.” (Hirsch & Emerick, 2006, p. vii)*

As we continue to deliberate the issue of quality teaching and learning (see our [Summer 2008 E-Newsletter](#)), particularly as it applies to recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators, working conditions is an important component to consider. In 1991, Jonathan Kozol’s book *Savage Inequalities* brought the inequities of the working conditions in some of our nation’s schools to light, placing this issue onto the national radar screen. These inequities remain today in too many of our schools, particularly in urban areas.

Literature highlights four key components of working conditions (see the Great Lakes East website for an [annotated bibliography](#) of references that informed this work):

- **Component 1.** Collaborative, positive, and team-oriented school culture that facilitates effective teaching.
- **Component 2.** Classroom management and discipline.
- **Component 3.** Schools that are safe, clean, and appropriately equipped for teaching.
- **Component 4.** Reasonable teachers’ workloads.

For each of these components, this article provides a brief overview of research-based best practices that should be considered to ensure positive working conditions. In addition, the article highlights examples of strategies employed to recruit and retain highly qualified educators at the district and school level. It also explores several ways in which SEAs are currently addressing these areas. As the current practices show, the four components have the potential for improving working conditions when they are enacted. As a result, the ability of schools and districts to recruit and retain highly qualified educators becomes more effective.

For quality teaching and learning to become widespread, leaders at the state, district, and school levels need to work in sync. Some will take a more active role than others at times. It is reasonable to note that districts and schools may not have the capacity to address all aspects of working conditions. State support is necessary.

How can SEAs provide support to districts and schools in creating good working conditions?  
Click [here](#) to e-mail the authors and share your ideas.

### State’s Support in Improving Working Conditions in Districts and Schools

The major role of the state in supporting districts and schools is to provide technical assistance. This can be accomplished in several ways:

- Develop networks of schools and districts that experience the same issues and connect them with reputable experts, facilitators, and consultants to help them improve.





- Assemble a database of research-based best practices and models to improve working conditions, including data from other states and districts.

A recent report released by the CTQ offers more recommendations for states (Hirsch & Emerick, 2006, p. ix):

- “Create professional development modules and usable tools for schools to support working conditions data analysis and the creation of data-driven strategies for improving working conditions.”
- “Create working conditions assistance teams—comprised of teachers, principals, and other educators from schools with positive climates—to assist schools who request help in reforming working conditions.”
- “Ensure resources are available to support schools in implementing data-driven working conditions reform, with priority going to high-needs schools.”
- “Develop a working conditions Web portal that documents schools with positive working conditions and amasses success reform models.”

Addressing some of these components depends purely on school leaders’ abilities to foster a particular tone or environment at the school. Others, however, require substantial resources beyond schools and districts and need to involve state leaders.

A recent example of such involvement is North Carolina, where teachers across the state have participated in multiple iterations of a survey on their working conditions. The survey was supported by the state’s governor and administered by CTQ (Hirsch & Emerick, 2006). CTQ has worked with a number of other states to administer this survey, such as Mississippi, Arizona, and Alabama.

The four components of working conditions are described in the following section along with ways a team of state, district, and school leaders can play a part in fostering quality teaching and learning.

## **Component 1. Collaborative, Positive, and Team-Oriented School Culture**

This working condition component is important from several perspectives. It helps to balance the isolation teachers often feel, ensures that teachers feel appreciated and are part of a professional learning community, and improves a school/district’s ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Three subcomponents comprise Component 1.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration among teachers in the same school and across the district must be encouraged, and common time must be set aside for it. This is important because collaboration among colleagues contributes to a positive working environment that will improve teacher retention. It also allows for growth and sharing that will help teachers to be more effective in their practice. Some strategies to foster collaboration include the following:

- Offer orientations for working with intergenerational teams to facilitate a positive working environment.
- Provide sufficient time for teachers to grow professional learning communities and share their expertise with others.
- Group teachers of similar subjects or grade levels together to increase teacher effectiveness.

**Positive climate.** This subcomponent fosters a trusting and professional school climate. It can be addressed in two ways:

- Create learning communities at multiple levels (e.g., grade, content, shared students).



- Have school leaders, including teacher leaders, set examples of positive, professional conduct and collaboration.

**Flexible curriculum.** This subcomponent addresses curriculum, instruction, and assessment. District and school leaders must assure that the curriculum is neither overprescribed nor underprescribed, with flexibility for teaching other than to the test. This allows teachers the professional courtesy and freedom to adapt curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet the individual needs of their students.

## Component 2. Classroom Management and Discipline

For teaching and learning to be effective, teachers must be able to manage their classrooms. Classroom management is regularly cited across literature as the single most difficult skill for new teachers to master (Feng, 2007; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Johnson, 2006). Component 2 consists of three aspects.

**Professional development.** In order to ensure that teachers can apply best practices in classroom management, districts and schools must provide ongoing professional development. Professional development in this area should begin during the induction process and in collaboration with mentoring.

**Small class sizes.** Schools and districts must ensure that class size is small enough that teachers can handle discipline problems and teach effectively. One example of SEA involvement is Wisconsin's [Student Achievement Guarantee in Education](#) class-size reduction program. Smith, Wolnar, and Zahorik (2003) found that this program accomplished the following:

- Increased student achievement
- Upheld gains through third grade
- Was most beneficial to African-American students

- Narrowed the achievement gap between African-American and white students
- Compensated for poor attendance

Often, smaller class size is not possible. In these cases, leadership can provide teachers with aides, parent volunteers, coteaching models, and professional development on learning centers and differentiated instruction to better meet the needs of students in large classes.

**Discipline support.** Teachers need to know that when there are discipline issues, district and school leadership will support the teacher and be consistent in how it deals with student discipline infractions.

## Component 3. Schools Are Safe, Clean, and Appropriately Equipped for Teaching

Positive school culture and strong classroom management contribute to good working conditions. The National Education Association (NEA) is lobbying for state and federal laws and school policies to ensure school safety, including alternative programs for chronically disruptive or troubled students. NEA supports legislation that requires states, districts, and schools to have plans to prevent and respond effectively to bullying and harassment, and it is in favor of gun laws that keep firearms out of students' hands (see <http://www.nea.org/schoolsafety/index.html>).

The bottom line is that we must feel safe (Maslow's hierarchy of needs [1943]). Historically, the school has been considered to be a safe zone. Yet many schools are located in unsafe neighborhoods, rife with gang activity. The Broken Windows Theory uses a metaphor to examine how rundown neighborhoods can affect students:

“Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside. Or consider a sidewalk. Some litter accumulates.



Soon, more litter accumulates. Eventually, people even start leaving bags of trash from take-out restaurants there or breaking into cars” (Wilson & Kelling, 1982, pp. 2–3).

Too often, teachers and students attend schools that are dilapidated, dirty, and covered in graffiti. What message does this send to educators, students, and the larger educational community about the value of education? Research shows that guaranteeing a safe environment should be considered from two perspectives (Jekielek, Brown, Marian, & Lippman, 2007; Ricketts, 2007; Roberts, Wilcox, May, & Clayton, 2007). The first is to prevent physical and mental violence by creating policy to dissuade behavior. A number of districts across the country have adopted zero-tolerance policies—the key is to ensure that they are implemented consistently. This requires communication across all stakeholder groups so that there is a common understanding of unacceptable behavior and the consequences.

The second perspective is to ensure that any potentially dangerous building/grounds maintenance problems are addressed immediately. Although the school’s maintenance staff have a big responsibility in the upkeep of a school, it is everyone’s responsibility to keep the school clean. This requires creating a school culture that recognizes excellence in cleanliness.

Besides establishing a culture of safety, schools must equip teachers with teaching resources. Teachers must have the curricular resources—materials and time—needed for effective instruction. Every student must have up-to-date textbooks, additional resources, and access to technology. It is not uncommon for teachers to spend personal funds to purchase additional materials. Districts and schools can provide stipends to teachers to cover these costs. In addition, they can partner with or enlist the local community groups and businesses to cover the cost of resources needed that may not be covered in the budget.

## Component 4. Reasonable Teachers’ Workload

The research (Johnson, 2006; Reeves, Emerick, & Hirsch, 2007) defines teachers’ workload in several ways: Assigning teachers to teach those subjects in which they are fully proficient academically; limiting the number of preparations required; and hiring a sufficient number of teachers and other school personnel so that teachers can focus on ensuring that every student achieves. It is not uncommon for new teachers to be assigned to work with a school’s hardest to reach students or to teach a variety of classes—oftentimes, they are assigned the classes that “no one else wants to teach.”

District and school strategies to ensure that teachers’ workload is reasonable so they can promote teaching and learning include building time into the regular school day for teachers to have time to properly plan, prepare, and reflect. They can also reduce the bureaucratic burden on teachers by providing sufficient administrative support, allowing teachers to devote more time to meeting students’ individual needs. Oftentimes, this requires negotiations with other stakeholder groups, more specifically, unions. Relationships between different groups are critical to assure long-term district and union commitment to reasonable staffing responsibilities and expectations.

## Conclusion

Clearly, the issue of working conditions is complex, with many points of intersection (e.g., professional development, mentoring and induction, and leadership). CTQ research sums up this issue:

“Working conditions matter—most notably, access to good principals and skilled colleagues, smaller class sizes and student loads, high-quality professional development, and classroom resources necessary to help students meet high academic standards.” (Barry, 2008, p. 771)



Working conditions relate to nearly every other aspect of teacher quality policy, from beginning teacher induction to teacher leadership. Examining working conditions is an important way of enabling highly effective teachers to do their jobs well and to remain committed to teaching. This effort requires participation from multiple stakeholder groups at the school, district, and state level.

**At the School Level...**Leadership at the school level must reach out to parents, community, and business members to involve them in various school activities. For example, school leaders can recruit parents to serve on committees, volunteer in classrooms, or present their life experiences as related to curriculum in classes or schoolwide. Relationships with community and business members can benefit schools by serving as another set of eyes and ears when students are out of school. They can also serve as role models, sources for donations, and bridges between school and the larger community. Ongoing, two-way communication is key for creating, maintaining, and enhancing relationships.

**At the District Level...**District leadership needs to reach out to these groups, too, extending relationships across schools and throughout the community. In addition, they need to take the lead in reaching out to state leadership—serving as a liaison between the state and schools.

**At the State Level...**State leadership's role is similar from a state and national perspective. State boards of education can support districts and schools through technical assistance in areas of research-based best practices, grant writing and other financial support, understanding the larger political and economic climate, and serving as a liaison between federal initiatives and district and school accountability.

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## REL Updates: New Resources Respond to Regional Informational Needs

By Marianne Kroeger, REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates

State education agencies and educators across the Midwest can tap two new resources from the regional educational laboratory (REL) program for information on pressing education issues. *Ask A REL*, a collaborative reference-desk service provided by the 10 RELs, functions much the same way as a technical reference library. Visit the [REL website](#) for complete instructions on how to submit your question.

**REL Technical Briefs** is a new report series designed to help educators obtain evidence-based information on a wide range of topics. All REL Technical Briefs meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research, and two technical briefs are available now from REL Midwest.

[\*State Policies on Teacher Evaluation Practices in the Midwest Region\*](#) responds to a request to provide

practitioners and policymakers with a view of state-level policies and procedural requirements for guiding teacher evaluation practices at the district level. Building on the Issues & Answers report [\*Examining District Guidance to Schools on Teacher Evaluation Policies in the Midwest Region\*](#), this brief reveals how state policies address teacher evaluation practices and briefly describes other state-level initiatives that include teacher evaluation features. Chris Brandt, Julia Thomas, and Matt Burke of Learning Point Associates prepared the brief that focuses on the seven states served by REL Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

[\*Calculating the Ability of Within-School Teacher Supply to Meet the Demands of New Requirements: The Example of the Michigan Merit Curriculum\*](#) describes how to calculate a potential undersupply



of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in core content areas based on state graduation requirements. Representatives from the Michigan Department of Education and the Center for Educational Performance and Information requested assistance in estimating Michigan's capacity to adequately staff its high schools to meet the course requirements of the new Michigan Merit Curriculum. The study team devised a formula to estimate the number of additional FTE teachers needed for each subject at each Michigan high school. The formula was calculated using Michigan-specific values for key variables. Such an analysis may be particularly useful when new graduation or course requirements are being planned. Schools can adjust the variables in the formula (such as class size and number of periods taught by each FTE teacher) to fit their own needs.

Vanessa Keesler, Adam Wyse, Nathan Jones, and Barbara Schneider of Michigan State University prepared the brief.

More REL Midwest studies are nearing completion and will be highlighted in future editions of this publication. In the meantime, visit the [REL website](#) to view and download the latest publications and products from all 10 RELs. The site features an e-mail-based alert service designed to inform you about all new content posted. Among the reports from other RELs that may be of interest to the Midwest is REL Central's [Preparing Teachers to Teach in Rural Schools](#). It describes how nine teacher preparation programs in the Central Region prepare their graduates for teaching positions in rural areas.



## 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 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act implementation efforts. The e-mail addresses of the state managers are included.



### INDIANA

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Between August and October 2008, a number of events occurred in Indiana to support its schools and districts in improvement. Great Lakes East with other external providers assisted the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)—Office of Title I Academic Support in planning, implementing, and reviewing several of the supports to the schools and districts.

#### Training of Instructional Coaches for the Indiana Differentiated Accountability Model

A two-day kickoff for 50 instructional coaches of Indiana's Title I schools with greatest need was launched on September 9–10. External trainers Sonia Caus Gleason, senior consultant, Learning Innovations at WestEd, and Cheryl Williams, director of Outreach Services, Learning Innovations at WestEd, led the training for English language arts and mathematics coaches from comprehensive schools as identified through the recently federally approved Indiana Differentiated Accountability Model.

On the first day, the participants learned about the 10 roles that coaches serve, such as resource provider, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, and data coach, and received a personal copy of the book *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches* (Killion & Harrison, 2006) published by the National Staff Development Council. The participants discussed the importance of clarifying their various roles as coaches with their principal, classroom teachers, and assistants. With the diagnostic assessments of Wireless Generation and Acuity being a new requirement for comprehensive schools, two Indiana practitioners gave a presentation, which received high marks, on how their schools use the data from the assessments to determine students' individual learning needs and provide the appropriate instruction.

"Collaboration" was a theme of the second day, as it is central to the instructional coaching process. The presenters provided a set of tools, referred to as the "Seven Norms of Collaboration" (Center for Adaptive Schools, 2006). The coaches will receive continued support between training sessions through small-group conference calls with the trainers, and their principals will receive a newsletter following each training.

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## The Indiana Institute for School Leadership Teams: Starting the School Year

As announced in the [Summer 2008 Great Lakes East e-newsletter](#), IDOE Office of Title I Academic Support with Great Lakes East's assistance embarked on a new support for schools in improvement, known as the Institute for School Leadership Teams. Five Title I elementary schools began the Institute in late spring, participated in a highly successful three-day Summer Academy, and developed their school leadership team plans to roll out in their schools this fall.

On October 16, 2008, the School Leadership Teams returned to Indianapolis to share their successes and struggles since July and plan for the upcoming three months. However, the number of schools decreased from five to four as a district determined that its principal and key staff needed to remain in the building rather than attend the Institute. This is not a surprising outcome—a last-minute change in principals is a common occurrence in urban, high-poverty schools, which tend to suffer from a revolving door of leadership, last-minute changes, and numerous initiatives to implement.

Of the four remaining schools, three had focused their July through September activities on obtaining and/or using student data to plan instruction and/or preparing students for the fall Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+), Indiana's standardized assessment. All three schools reported newly found school focus and energy in preparing students for ISTEP+ through the use of data and of a school vision that making adequate yearly progress (AYP) *was* a possibility. The fourth school focused on improving student behavior through implementing rituals and routines with fidelity to be observed through principal walk-throughs of this activity. The team reported that the school was in the implementation stage. Overall, all four schools reported good “buy-in” and energy from their school staff toward the concept of the School Leadership Team as a means to improve student achievement.

However, when much energy is expended, it may be followed by a lack of energy, known in the literature as the “implementation dip.” Presenter Nick Hardy, senior program associate, Learning Innovations at WestEd, provided the information, and the Distinguished Principals shared personal experiences of implementation dips in their schools. The presenter also discussed expecting resistance from some staff as the teams continue their activities. He introduced ways that teams might counter resistance and help people through that time.

In the afternoon, the teams planned their next three months of activities. Several considered proactive ways to deal with the possibility that the school does not make AYP, following the release of ISTEP+ scores. Several teams plan to visit their Distinguished Principal's school soon in order to observe firsthand the use of high-quality instruction, curriculum, and assessment. For others, their Distinguished Principal plans to be with the school when ISTEP+ results are released to model disaggregating the data to determine next steps.

As described by one participant, the most valuable part of this first School-Year Session of the Institute was the realization “that we need all the parts of our team to create a united front. Our school will succeed with guidance and a positive attitude. [We need to] have a plan, implement it, and follow through.” A full story of one School Leadership Team's journey is provided on page 2 in this newsletter.





## MICHIGAN

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### Statewide System of Support

**Michigan's Statewide System of Support.** Throughout July and October, Great Lakes East facilitated meetings of the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) Statewide System of Support Partners' Team. The team's partners include Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, Michigan State University, Michigan Institute for Educational Management, North Central Association, and Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative. Representatives from these organizations gathered to assess Michigan's current plan for its statewide system of support and develop a more aligned and refined plan for 2008–09.

In August, Great Lakes East joined MDE in meeting with leadership from Detroit Public Schools to identify how to adapt MDE's statewide system of support plan for Detroit Public Schools. In September, Great Lakes East planned and facilitated MDE's premeeting in Chicago prior to the Center for Innovation & Improvement's annual Institute. At that meeting, Kerstin Carlson LeFloch of the American Institutes for Research shared the results of two recent national research projects on statewide systems of support and discussed possible implications for Michigan's work. The participants discussed refinements for the 2008–09 plan of Michigan's statewide system of support and made plans to gather data from key players in the current system to help inform ongoing improvement of the work.

### Teacher Quality

**Individual Professional Development Plans.** In September 2008, Great Lakes East facilitated a meeting with MDE's Office of Professional Preparation and a team of key leaders in Michigan education who had shaped the design of Michigan's Professional Learning Strategic plan and had drafted the individual professional development plan template and process. The purpose of the meeting was to review three different versions of the template and process. The review feedback came from regional focus groups of teachers, mentors, and principals who reviewed the individual professional development plan earlier this year. After much discussion and deliberation, the team of MDE, Great Lakes East, and the American Institutes for Research representatives, drawing on the most applicable aspects of each version, recommended a hybrid of the three versions. Also recommended were additional tools and guidance materials to support the beginning teacher in completing the individual professional development plan. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion by Mark Jenness, Ed.D., from Western Michigan University's Science and Mathematics Program Improvement Center, regarding the design of the 2009 field test this fall. The field test will help the team reassess the quality of the individual professional development plan and determine if it accomplishes its purpose.

**Teacher Preparation Redesign Initiative.** During summer 2008, Great Lakes East staff worked with three of MDE's consultants (interns), all doctoral candidates, to assist in a standards alignment project. Specifically, the task was to check for alignment between Michigan's Grade Level Content Expectations, High School Content Expectations, Certification Standards for Elementary Teachers, and Professional Standards for Michigan



Teachers. The alignment for English language arts has been completed, and work is now in progress on the mathematics standards. On October 20, 2008, Great Lakes East staff met with MDE staff to discuss ways to strengthen the final report of standards review. Moving forward, Great Lakes East will provide support to the MDE consultants in strengthening the findings and recommendations, particularly in making connections between what research tells us and the recommendations. In addition, Great Lakes East staff will offer guidance on strengthening the policy report for mathematics. After both reports are complete, Great Lakes East staff will assist MDE to use the results of the alignment studies and reports as a foundation for developing a Michigan framework for excellence in teacher preparation.

## High School

**High School Redesign.** Great Lakes East continues its work with MDE's Office of School Improvement to increase student achievement of all student subgroups through the high school core team, formed by MDE and Great Lakes East. Great Lakes East has been helping MDE create an online tool where all MDE offices as well as their partners from various teams can have single access to information about Michigan's high school reform and can share information about their work. The core team met on September 17, 2008, to discuss issues and concerns about the use of the tool so that the MDE offices and their partners find it useful. The goal of the tool is to help users identify promising practices and areas for collaboration and to increase the coherence of the high school improvement work across Michigan.

In addition to the online tool, Great Lakes East assisted MDE by providing research from the National High School Center on promising practices for high school improvement. Research reports included the [\*Report on Key Practices and Policies of Consistently Higher Performing High Schools\*](#) and the [\*Eight Elements of High School Improvement: A Mapping Framework\*](#), which can be found on the [National High School Center website](#). These research reports and other relevant information supplement the online tool, where MDE staff members and key partners working on high school redesign can access this information.

On October 20, 2008, Great Lakes East worked with MDE to facilitate a focus group from Ingham County at the statewide Dropout Prevention Leadership Summit. The summit convened educators, parents, students, and community members from across the state to learn more about the dropout crisis, why graduating more students from high school is critical for our society and economy, and how everyone can work together locally to keep students in school.

**Alternative High Schools.** Great Lakes East is working with MDE to identify solutions to the issues and barriers that impact increased student achievement in alternative high schools. Great Lakes East conducted a survey of the members of the alternative education work group. The work group consists of educators from various districts across the state, as well as representatives from MDE's Office of School Improvement, Office of Education Technology; Office of Education, Assessment and Accountability; the Superintendent's office; and the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals. The survey was used to prioritize the issues and barriers and identify the top three. This information was provided to MDE's Deputy Superintendent Sally Vaughn, Ph.D., for review and determination of next steps. Great Lakes East will facilitate a meeting with Dr. Vaughn and the alternative education work group to determine next steps.

Also, Great Lakes East is providing assistance to MDE in facilitating the work of a subcommittee of the alternative education work group. The subcommittee is developing a recommendation for a statewide definition of alternative education. Its members met in August and September and are preparing to present the



recommendation to the work group and Dr. Vaughn at the next meeting. Once approved by the deputy superintendent, the definition will be submitted to the Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Flanagan for approval and presentation to the state board of education.

**English Language Learners (ELLs).** As part of the implementation of MDE's ELL strategic plan, Great Lakes East is assisting MDE to create and refine communication tools for the ELL educators, such as presentations to district leaders and classroom teachers. The presentations outline a rationale and general scope of necessary services to effectively serve ELLs, especially in low-incidence districts (districts with very few ELLs). These presentations will be used by ELL directors across the state with their local leaders and teachers.

As part of this work, Great Lakes East has been collaborating with MDE's Office of School Improvement (OSI) and Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) to combine two current state ELL advisory committees from both offices. Great Lakes East focuses on designing meeting formats and content to facilitate joint committee implementation starting in November. This integration, based on MDE's request, will combine two important committees, which provide input on services to the state's ELLs. Also, Great Lakes East has been assisting MDE in reviewing current instructional and administrative best practices in serving migrant education students and the state's ELL population in light of Michigan's revised high school graduation requirements.

In addition to the ongoing Great Lakes East support to MDE regarding ELLs, a new line of assistance became available in September, when Great Lakes East applied for and received supplemental funding from the U.S. Department of Education to help MDE increase ELL achievement on state accountability tests. The project, titled "Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners in the Great Lakes Region," outlines planned assistance to Illinois and Michigan through June 30, 2009. Work began on the Michigan component of the project in October with a kickoff planning meeting with MDE's OSI and OEAA leadership. Planned activities include facilitating two focused regional forums for the five states in the Great Lakes region with a goal to share and leverage current resources regarding the development of assessments and assessment accommodations for ELLs. Specifically for Michigan, this additional support will strategically expand technical assistance for the statewide ELL strategic plan and its assessment and standard integration component.



## OHIO

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Great Lakes East continues to assist the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) with intensive support in the area of state systems of support. This state update focuses on the state system of support work as evidenced through the district and school improvement support system redesign; namely, the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) implementation and training of the state support teams.

**District and School Improvement Support System Redesign.** The Ohio Improvement Process illustrated in Figure 1 in the Ohio feature article on pages 6–10 of this issue, shows how ODE is building a coherent statewide system in which structures, processes, tools, and people are aligned and connected. This improvement process is now being tested through SPDG process. At the same time, ODE has launched capacity-building efforts to train



state support teams and educational service center (ESC) staff to facilitate the Ohio Improvement Process with high-, medium-, and low-support districts.

**SPDG Implementation.** Implementation of the SPDG process is now in its second year. During the first year, 16 Cohort 1 district leadership teams have moved through Stages 1 and 2 of the Ohio Improvement Process. In Stage 1, the district leadership teams used the District Decision Framework tool to identify critical needs in their districts. In Stage 2, they developed a district improvement plan, including focused goals, research-based strategies, and aligned action steps. Trained regional facilitators have worked with each of the district leadership teams during this time and will continue to provide assistance in Year 2.

As the work continues into the second year, the Cohort 1 district leadership teams have identified a building leadership team that can test the improvement process. The goal is to develop a building leadership team structure and determine adult behaviors and practices throughout the districts as detailed by the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council. Each building leadership team will work with their district leadership team to complete a Building Decision Framework and identify action steps at the building level that align with district-identified goals, strategies, and action steps. Finally, district and school improvement plans will then be submitted to the state online consolidated planning and funding tool called the Consolidated Comprehensive Improvement Plan.

In the second year of SPDG, Cohort 2—another group of 16 district leadership teams—will begin the same improvement process (albeit somewhat accelerated) and receive support. The support includes trained regional facilitators: one experienced from the Cohort 1 work and one facilitator new to the SPDG work.

During the SPDG design and training period, ODE and its external support team, including Great Lakes East, has learned much about what it takes to move districts through the Ohio Improvement Process. Some of the considerations include the following:

- Common challenges that district leadership teams face as they move through the improvement process.
- The kinds of support and training required for facilitators to be effective.
- How this improvement work best translates into a focused plan that can be implemented throughout the district.

At this point in the process, ODE is poised to build the capacity of SPDG districts to implement their plans and help them move into and through Stage 3 of the Ohio Improvement Process. In this stage, the district leadership teams will be responsible for the systematic monitoring of adult implementation indicators and strategy progress indicators to ensure that implementation stays on track. This scrutiny indicates that plan implementation with fidelity requires a change in practice at *all* levels of the system—these essential practices are detailed in the OLAC work.

In many ways, the SPDG work has provided ODE and its partners with valuable insights that can be used to make the district and school improvement process even more effective for the larger state system of support—state support teams and ESC staff. The state support teams and the ESC staff are trained to facilitate the Ohio Improvement Process with districts in high-, medium-, and low-support status. Along with regional facilitators, they receive instrumental support and guidance from the state level design team regarding the design, training, and mentoring.





**State Support Team Training: August 2008.** The state-level design team, facilitated and supported by Great Lakes East team members Sheryl Poggi and Claudette Rasmussen, played an instrumental role in the design and facilitation of the state support team training held on August 4–8. One of the primary outcomes of this meeting was to ensure that the 16 state support teams have the skills and knowledge to consistently facilitate Stages 1 and 2 of the Ohio Improvement Process. This August training resembled an immersion experience for state support team members to work with the tools and processes of the Ohio Improvement Process to master the following:

- Introduce the Ohio Improvement Process to superintendents and district leadership teams.
- Conduct and facilitate the identification of critical needs through the Decision Framework.
- Develop a district improvement plan with focused goals and aligned strategies.

Each training day began with an introductory whole-group session led by ODE staff, SPDG Cohort 1 district teams, and SPDG regional facilitators. Most of the training occurred during regional breakout sessions. State-level design team members presented content and processes and provided opportunities for state support teams to practice their facilitation skills and the application of new knowledge. At the end of each day, state support teams were invited to debrief and think about how they might apply new learning and skills to their local context.

Although this training enhanced understanding and refined the necessary skills to facilitate Stages 1 and 2 of the Ohio Improvement Process, the real test comes as these state support teams begin working with assigned priority districts in fall 2008 through winter 2009. To ease this challenge, the larger state system of support is involved. It includes ESCs—a total of 58 centers across Ohio. Along with ODE staff members, the state support teams provided a series of regional trainings in fall 2008 to train ESC staff in facilitating use of the Decision Framework (Stage 1) with low-support districts. Additional training on Stage 2 facilitation will follow.

As part of these trainings, the state-level design team continues to improve the *Ohio Improvement Process Facilitator's Guide* and plan for additional training of ESC staff and state support team members. It also continues to provide significant guidance for improving tools and processes used during the SPDG implementation. A focus of future training of state support teams is to build the capacity of district leadership teams to implement and monitor their improvement plans (Stages 3 and 4 of the Ohio Improvement Process).

## The Work Ahead

In some ways, the most challenging aspects of full implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process lie ahead. The SPDG work will continue to serve as a test of the process and will provide valuable insights into how improvement processes, training, and tools can be improved. District implementation and monitoring of these focused improvement plans will require significant changes in practice at the district level. District leadership teams will probably play a significant role in monitoring the degree of adult implementation of strategies and actions and evidence of growth through progress and impact indicators detailed in the plan. Building leadership teams will ensure that strategies and actions detailed in the plan are implemented—including high-quality professional development and the use of common formative assessments. The district leadership team will also evaluate the improvement process and its impact upon student performance; this evaluation will inform the next cycle of improvement. Currently, the larger evaluation of state systems of support is under design with the support of Great Lakes East (see the feature article on pages 6–10).



## In the News

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



### INDIANA

#### **Reed Fulfills Pledge to Visit Schools in All 92 Indiana Counties for Fourth Time as State Superintendent of Public Instruction**—Indiana Department of Education, November 3, 2008

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/reed/newsr/2008/11-November/ReedVisits.html>

“On the eve of Hoosiers choosing the state’s next superintendent of public instruction, Dr. Suellen Reed—Indiana’s longest-serving and first female chief state school officer—will fulfill her pledge to visit schools in all 92 counties for the fourth consecutive time.... Reed embarked upon the practice of visiting schools in all 92 counties when she first took office in January 1993 as a way to stay in touch with school corporations’ concerns and to support ongoing improvement efforts at the state and local levels.... [Her] tenure as state superintendent concludes in January 2009.”

#### **New Schools Chief Eager to Start New Job**—*The Indianapolis Star*, November 8, 2008

<http://www.indystar.com/article/20081108/NEWS04/81108002>

“[Indiana’s new State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett] says issues like vouchers aren’t even on his radar screen right now, and that local school districts should make the call on consolidation. Bennett is more focused on creating an ambitious plan for January, when he takes the spot that’s been held for 16 years by outgoing GOP schools chief Suellen Reed.”

#### **SAT Scores Flat for Indiana, Nationwide**—Indiana Department of Education, August 26, 2008

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/reed/newsr/2008/08-August/SAT.html>

“SAT results released today revealed that scores for the high school class of 2008 remained relatively flat both nationally and in Indiana compared to a year ago.... Despite the current decline, Indiana has gained 32 points since 1990 and narrowed the performance gap with the nation from 29 points to 13 points over that period.... In contrast to Indiana’s SAT participation rate, about 22 percent of Hoosier students take the ACT, the nation’s other prominent college entrance exam. Indiana students scored above the national average on the ACT for the 18th consecutive year in 2008.”

#### **U.S. Education Secretary Appoints IDOE Assistant Superintendent to National Council**—Indiana Department of Education, August 14, 2008

<http://www.doe.in.gov/reed/newsr/2008/08-August/NTAC.html>

“Wes Bruce, Indiana Department of Education Assistant Superintendent for the Center for Accreditation, Assessment and Licensing, was appointed by Margaret Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education, to serve on the National Technical Advisory Council (NTAC). Bruce is one of 16 appointed by Spellings for the NTAC, a panel of advisors formed to assist the U.S. Department of Education on complex and technical issues regarding the design and implementation of state standards, assessments and accountability systems.”



### MICHIGAN

#### **Eight Out of 10 Michigan Schools Made Adequate Yearly Progress Last Year**—Michigan Department of Education, August 25, 2008

[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818\\_34785-198825--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818_34785-198825--,00.html)

“‘While this shows that all schools are not where they need to be, or where we want them to be, 80 percent are meeting the higher goals and helping students achieve,’ said State Board of Education President Kathleen N. Straus. The total number of schools making AYP [adequate yearly progress] is fewer than the previous school year—from 3,153 in the 2006–07 school year to 3,003 in 2007–08—noted the Department of Education.”



## **Michigan Merit Exam Scores Show Slight Increases This Year**—Michigan Department of Education, August 7, 2008

[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818\\_34785-197760--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-37818_34785-197760--,00.html)

“High school juniors were tested this past spring on the MME [Michigan Merit Exam], which includes the college entrance exam, the ACT. Compared to the results from spring 2007, the percentage of Michigan public school 11th graders who scored at the proficient or advanced levels improved slightly in the subjects of reading, writing, English language arts, and science. There was no change in the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in math. There was a slight decline in the students who scored proficient or advanced in social studies.”

## OHIO

### **State Board of Education Selects Next State Superintendent of Public Instruction**—Ohio Department of Education, October 14, 2008

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=634966842462288291>

“The State Board of Education unanimously voted to appoint Deborah Delisle as the next state superintendent of public instruction.”

### **Schools of Promise Exceed High Standards of Achievement 2007–08**—Ohio Department of Education, October 10, 2008

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=176932285893294762>

“The State Superintendent’s *Schools of Promise* program, administered by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), recognizes schools across Ohio that are demonstrating high achievement in reading and mathematics for all groups of students, despite the fact that 40 percent or more of these students come from low-income backgrounds. Students in these schools met or exceeded the state standard of 75 percent passage in reading and/or mathematics for the school year 2007–2008. In *Schools of Promise*, all student groups meet the federal requirement of Adequate Yearly Progress.”

### **Ohio Students Show Continued Progress**—Ohio Department of Education, August 26, 2008

<https://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/cncs/view.asp?id=155828229572675981>

“The statewide average of all students’ test scores—the performance index score—has increased by more than 25 percent since it was introduced in 1999–2000, from 73.7 to 92.3.... Ohio’s graduation rate for 2006–2007 (the most recent year of available data) is 86.9 percent. For eight of the past 10 years, the state’s graduation rate has increased, up from 79.8 percent in 1996–1997.”



## ELSEWHERE IN THE NATION

### —Assessment and Accountability—

#### **U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings Unveils Indicators to Track Nation's Education Progress at Aspen Institute Summit in Washington, D.C.**—U.S. Department of Education, September 15, 2008

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/09/09152008.html>

“U.S. Secretary of Education...unveiled five education indicators that will complement No Child Left Behind by providing a snapshot of national trends. These indicators—Achievement, Achievement Gap, High School Graduation, College Readiness, and College Completion—show educational performance over time to inform future debate on reform.”



## **Top State Education Policy Organizations Form Expert Advisory Group on International Benchmarking**—Achieve, Inc., September 8, 2008

<http://www.achieve.org/node/1029/>

“Three of the nation’s leading education policy organizations today united to ensure American students in every state are receiving a world-class education. The National Governors Association (NGA), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Achieve, Inc. have joined to provide to states a roadmap for benchmarking their K–12 education systems to those of top-performing nations.”

## **U.S. Education Secretary Appoints 16-Member Council to Advise on State Standards, Assessments and Accountability Systems**—U.S. Department of Education, August 13, 2008

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/08/08132008.html>

“U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings ...announced the appointment of 16 members to the National Technical Advisory Council (NTAC), which Spellings announced as part of the proposed regulations to strengthen No Child Left Behind. The Council’s purpose is to advise the Department on complex and technical issues regarding the design and implementation of state standards, assessments and accountability systems.”

## **High Schools**

### **SAT® Scores Stable as Record Numbers Take Test**—College Board, August 26, 2008

<http://www.collegeboard.com/press/releases/197846.html>

“A record number of students in the class of 2008 took the SAT this year, with a higher percentage of first-generation students than last year and a high rate of minority student participation.... This year’s average scores mirror those of last year, indicating that student performance held steady despite the increase in the number of test-takers.”

### **Fourteen States Plan to Link End-of-Course Exams to High School Graduation by 2015**—Center on Education Policy, August 13, 2008

[http://www.cep-dc.org/\\_data/n\\_0001/resources/live/HSEEAug2008NewsRelease.pdf](http://www.cep-dc.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/HSEEAug2008NewsRelease.pdf)

“In its seventh annual report on high school exit exams, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) finds that exit exams continue to have a significant impact on American education. By 2012, 74 percent of the nation’s public school students in 26 states will be required to pass an exit exam to graduate, according to the report. In a shift from recent testing policy, however, more of these students will be required to take end-of-course exams as states move away from comprehensive and minimum competency tests....”

### **College Board to Debut an 8th-Grade PSAT Exam**—*Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2008

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-test8-2008aug08,0,1941799.story>

“The College Board, which owns the SAT, PSAT and other tests, plans to introduce an eighth-grade college assessment exam in 2010.... The new test would be voluntary..., [b]ut critics noted that the PSAT, which also is voluntary, was taken last year by 3.4 million students, and said the new test would just boost the pressures for students considering college.”

## **Innovation and Improvement**

### **States Work Hard to Implement NCLB’s ‘State Systems of Support’ Requirement to Help Low-Performing Schools, But Face Challenges**—American Institutes for Research, September 17, 2008

[http://www.air.org/news/pr/air\\_schoolHelp.aspx](http://www.air.org/news/pr/air_schoolHelp.aspx)

“Only one-third of state education officials say their departments have adequate capacity to help improve low-performing schools as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), according to a survey of all 50 states by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The study, conducted with a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, found that states—which were already struggling with shrinking budgets—were constrained to design their NCLB support systems around what they thought they could accomplish. This leaves open the question of whether the supports provided were those needed by schools. Research on effective state systems of support was lacking when NCLB was enacted, but as part of this study, AIR shares a research-based framework for state officials and policy analysts for assessing and refining their systems.”





## Instruction

**Report: Retool Instruction of U.S. Will Fail**—*eSchool News*, September 10, 2008

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=55173&i-d>

“Creating a 21st-century education system that prepares students, workers, and citizens to triumph in the global skills race is the central economic competitiveness issue currently facing the United States, according to a new report from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). The report provides a sobering wake-up call for the nation’s civic and education leaders.”

**Full report titled *21st Century Skills, Education, and Competitiveness* available at**

[http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/21st\\_century\\_skills\\_education\\_and\\_competitiveness\\_guide.pdf](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/21st_century_skills_education_and_competitiveness_guide.pdf)

**U.S. Department of Education Announces States Participating in Supplemental Educational Services Pilot for 2008–2009 School Year**—U.S. Department of Education, August 4, 2008

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/08/08042008.html>

“Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia have been approved to allow school districts to offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES) to students attending Title I schools in year one of school improvement status. Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Indiana have been approved for the same flexibility under the Differentiated Accountability pilot program announced earlier this month.”

## NCLB

**It’s Time to Collaborate**—*EdNews*, October 30, 2008

<http://ednews.org/articles/30201/1/Its-Time-to-Collaborate/Page1.html>

“When Congress did not reauthorize the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act this past year, many people who do not like the law and its accountability requirements were relieved. However, the real question is this: Is the law dead, or was the congressional inaction simply temporary? The answer is that members of Congress most likely will reauthorize the law and potentially include more rigorous accountability. Although changes will be made to the law based on some past implementation challenges, there is little evidence to indicate that the fundamental concepts that have raised so much debate will be eliminated.”

## Teacher Quality

**“Doing What Works” Website Adds New Guidance on Effective Teaching**—U.S. Department of Education, September 25, 2008

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/09/09252008.html>

“Just click on <http://dww.ed.gov>, and enjoy an engaging and interactive experience with *Psychology of Learning: How to Organize Your Teaching*, the latest addition to the site, which will empower educators and administrators with research-based strategies to help instructors organize their teaching and improve student learning.”

**Researchers Identify Best Strategies for Supporting New Science Teachers**—*Science Daily*, September 9, 2008

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080909142318.htm>

“Now, new research from George Mason University’s New Science Teachers’ Support Network (NSTSN) has identified the most vital forms of support for new science teachers—providing them with in-classroom support and quality courses in how to teach science.”

**NBPTS Expands Credentialing in High-Need Districts**—*Education Week*, August 13, 2008

<http://www.nbpts.org/index.cfm?t=downloader.cfm&id=939>

“[The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) is taking a hands-on approach to foster more board-certified teachers in high-need school districts. The board’s [Targeted High Need Initiative Comprehensive Candidate Support Centers](#) will give resources—both financial and professional—to a handful of partner school systems, teacher colleges, and professional groups such as teachers’ unions so they can create an infrastructure to recruit and train more teachers to become board-certified in districts seeking to raise student achievement.”



## **U.S. Department of Education Announces \$2.4 Million in Grants to 20 Institutions to Improve Special Education Teacher Training Programs—U.S. Department of Education, July 29, 2008**

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07292008.html>

“The U.S. Department of Education today announced the award of \$2.4 million in grants to 20 institutions in 15 states to help train highly qualified teachers of students with high incidence disabilities, such as learning disabilities, emotional disturbance and mental retardation. The awards, made under the Special Education Preservice Training Improvement Grants Program, are meant to improve the quality of special education teacher preparation programs and ensure that graduates meet the highly qualified teacher requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).”

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## **Resources**

This section provides current resources and research available from regional comprehensive centers, national content centers, RELs, and other technical assistance providers.

### **Framework for High-Quality English Language Proficiency Standards and Assessments: Brief—Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, October 2008**

[http://www.aacompcenter.org/pdf/framework\\_brief.pdf](http://www.aacompcenter.org/pdf/framework_brief.pdf)

“This brief is an introduction to a Framework for High-Quality English Language Proficiency Standards and Assessments (Framework). It presents the intended purpose, uses, and organization of the Framework, as well as key background information and assumptions.”

### **A Call to Restructure Restructuring: Lessons From the No Child Left Behind Act in Five States—Center on Education Policy, September 23, 2008**

[http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document\\_ext.showDocumentByID&nodeID=1&DocumentID=248](http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document_ext.showDocumentByID&nodeID=1&DocumentID=248)

“This report synthesizes findings from CEP’s research on how the No Child Left Behind Act’s school restructuring requirements are being implemented in Michigan, California, Maryland, Ohio, and Georgia. Document reviews and interviews with state officials were conducted in the five states, and case study research was carried out in 19 districts and 42 schools. Among the report’s findings are that more schools have entered restructuring and many remain in that status for multiple years; the ‘any other’ restructuring option is the most popular option in the states studied; and the five states varied greatly in the supports they offered restructuring schools.”

### **Examining Context and Challenges in Measuring Investment in Professional Development: A Case Study of Six School Districts in the Southwest Region—REL Southwest, September 2008**

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL\\_2008037.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf/REL_2008037.pdf)

“This study is an exploratory inquiry into the context and challenges of measuring investment in professional development in six Southwest Region school districts. The study estimated annual spending of approximately \$150–\$600 per pupil—or 2–9 percent of total spending. These figures likely underestimate the full investment in professional development in these districts because of the inability to track more integrated professional development activity that is a natural part of a teacher’s workday or week.”

### **Public School Graduates and Dropouts From the Common Core of Data: School Year 2005–06—National Center for Education Statistics, September 2008**

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008353rev.pdf>

“This report presents the number of high school graduates, the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR), and dropout data for grades 9 through 12 for public schools in school year 2005–06. The counts of graduates, dropouts, and enrollments by grade (which serve as the denominators for the graduation and dropout rates) are from the Common Core of Data (CCD) nonfiscal surveys of public elementary/secondary education.”



## **State Policies and Procedures and Selected Local Implementation Practices in Response to Intervention in the Six Southeast Region States—REL Southeast, September 2008**

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL\\_2008063.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2008063.pdf)

“This report describes how six state education agencies and three local education agencies in the Southeast Region are adopting and implementing Response to Intervention—an education approach designed to provide effective, evidence-based interventions for struggling learners.”

## **One-in-Five and Growing Fast: A Profile of Hispanic Public School Students—Pew Hispanic Center, August 26, 2008**

<http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/92.pdf>

“Using data from the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS), this report presents information on the demographic characteristics of Hispanic students in public schools. It compares Hispanic public school students with their non-Hispanic counterparts. The large sample sizes available in the ACS also enable detailed comparison of Hispanic students across generational groups.”

## **Evaluating the Impact of Interventions That Promote Successful Transitions From High School—National High School Center, August 2008**

[http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/ResearchBrief\\_ImpactofInterventions\\_073108.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/ResearchBrief_ImpactofInterventions_073108.pdf)

“This Research Brief focuses on the challenges and opportunities presented in evaluating whether the interventions achieve their goals of increasing students’ educational attainment, employment, and earnings after high school.”

## **Math Education Practices for Students With Disabilities and Other Struggling Learners: Case Studies of Six Schools in Two Northeast and Islands Region States—REL Northeast and Islands, August 2008**

[http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL\\_2008053a.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2008053a.pdf)

“This report describes in-depth practices at six schools that are making targeted efforts to improve math education for students with disabilities and other struggling learners. It examines each school’s practices for improving the math learning of all students as well as specific supports for students with disabilities and other struggling learners and identifies the challenges that schools face to serve students with diverse needs.”

## **NCTAF/GSU Induction Project: Final Report—Cross Career Learning Communities, August 2008**

[http://www.nctaf.org/resources/research\\_and\\_reports/nctaf\\_research\\_reports/documents/fy08reportFinal.pdf](http://www.nctaf.org/resources/research_and_reports/nctaf_research_reports/documents/fy08reportFinal.pdf)

“The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) and Georgia State University (GSU) developed a model for induction of new teachers in urban high need schools. This model has been funded by the Wachovia Foundation and implemented in high needs schools in metropolitan Atlanta. The goals of the model are to support new teachers with current technological aids, opportunities for professional development, and a supportive community that enhances teaching ability and careers. The expected outcomes of this support for teachers are a higher retention rate for teachers and increased student achievement.”

## **Preparing High School Students for Successful Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Employment—National High School Center, August 2008**

[http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition\\_073108.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/PreparingHSStudentsforTransition_073108.pdf)

“This Issue Brief reviews lessons from studies of selected policies and programs designed to improve students’ preparation for postsecondary pathways. Special emphasis is placed on ways to help those who traditionally face substantial barriers to success, including low-income students, African-American and Latino students, and students with disabilities.”

## **Striking the Balance: Career Academies Combine Academic Rigor and Workplace Relevance—National High School Center, August 2008**

[http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/MDRC\\_CareerAcademiesSnapshot\\_08-11-08.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/MDRC_CareerAcademiesSnapshot_08-11-08.pdf)

“This brief describes the Career Academy model and focuses on one Career Academy in Oakland, California, to illustrate how the model works.”



## **Out of Many, One: Toward Rigorous Common Core Standards From the Ground Up**—Achieve, Inc., July 2008

<http://www.achieve.org/files/CommonCore.pdf>

“Since 2005, states have made rapid progress in raising standards to align with the real-world expectations of employers and postsecondary faculty in the increasingly competitive global marketplace. To date, 22 states have aligned their high school standards with these real-world goals. To get there, each state convened employers and postsecondary faculty, along with K–12 educators, to articulate what students need to know and be able to do to succeed after high school. This report presents an analysis of the college- and career-ready standards for English in 12 states and for mathematics in 16 states.”

## **Effective Science Instruction: What Does Research Tell Us?**—Center on Instruction, 2008

<http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Characteristics%20of%20Effective%20Science%20Instruction%20REVISED%20FINAL.pdf>

“This brief endeavors to distill the research on science learning to inform a common vision of science instruction and to describe the extent to which K–12 science education currently reflects this vision. A final section on implications for policy makers and science education practitioners describes actions that could integrate the findings from research into science education.”

## **EPAS® State of the Nation Report 2007: Mathematics**—ACT Inc., 2008

[http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/math\\_report.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/math_report.pdf)

“The purpose of this report is to examine results in mathematics for the ACT Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) in schools nationwide. EPAS consists of three programs: EXPLORE® (for students in grade 8 or 9), PLAN® (for students in grade 10), and the ACT® test (for students in grade 11 or 12).”

## **Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008**—National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2008

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0807GRADCOUNTS.PDF>

“Governors are continuing to fulfill the commitments made in the Graduation Counts Compact, and the evidence shows that states remain committed to improving the quality and accuracy of the high school graduation rate they report. States are staying on track with the efforts they reported in 2006. Many more are now reporting a graduation rate calculated using a consistent, high-quality measure than did so when the Compact was signed in 2005. Further evidence suggests that a significant majority of the states—38—plan to fulfill the commitment by the end of 2010. By 2012, 45 plan to do so, and all but one will have the data to do so.”

## **Calendar of Events**

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

### **OCTOBER 2008**

<b>Dates:</b>	October 6–7	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Math, Science, and Social Studies: A Focus on English Language Learners in Middle School</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Minneapolis, MN		
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Audience:</b>	Instructional leaders in state and regional agencies, school districts, schools, colleges of education, and publishing companies
		<b>Sponsors:</b>	Center for Research on the Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE) in collaboration with University of Houston; California State University, Long Beach; Center for Applied Linguistics; Harvard University; University of Texas at Austin; University of California, Berkeley





<b>Dates:</b>	October 15–16	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">2008 LEP Partnership Meeting</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b>	State Title I and Title III directors, LEP state assessment and accountability staff, education decision-makers, researchers
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	LEP Partnership; U.S. Department of Education; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition
<b>Dates:</b>	October 16–17	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">NCTM Cleveland Regional Conference &amp; Exposition</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Cleveland, OH	<b>Audience:</b>	All grade-level mathematics teachers, higher education representatives, researchers, professional development staff
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsors:</b>	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM); Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics; Greater Cleveland Council of Teachers of Mathematics
<b>Dates:</b>	October 22–26	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">52nd Annual Conference “Pioneering Educational Frontier”</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Houston, TX	<b>Audience:</b>	Urban school superintendents, school board members, deans of colleges of education, senior school district administrators
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Council of the Great City Schools
<b>Dates:</b>	October 23–24	<b>Topic:</b>	Fall 2008 Comprehensive Centers’ Directors Meeting
<b>Location:</b>	New Orleans, LA	<b>Audience:</b>	Comprehensive Center Directors, Assistant Directors, and U.S. Department of Education personnel who work with the Comprehensive Center Network
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting (Invitation only)	<b>Sponsors:</b>	U.S. Department of Education; Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL
<b>Dates:</b>	October 24–26	<b>Topic:</b>	ASCD Conference on Teaching & Learning “Professional Practices that Work”
<b>Location:</b>	Los Angeles, CA	<b>Audience:</b>	Educators and educator leaders
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
<b>Date:</b>	October 28	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">TESOL–The New York Times Knowledge Network Live Interactive Webcast and Colloquia <i>Falling Through the Cracks: Meeting the Needs of Adolescent English Language Learners</i></a>
<b>Location:</b>	Online	<b>Audience:</b>	K–12 (especially secondary) school language and content teachers; K–12 (especially secondary) district- and site-based coordinators and administrators working with English language learners; state education policymakers and other stakeholders
<b>Format:</b>	Webcast (for fee)	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL); The New York Times Knowledge Network



<b>Dates:</b>	October 29–31	<b>Topic:</b>	Regional Follow-Up to the National RTI Summit
<b>Location:</b>	Rosemont, IL	<b>Audience:</b>	Teams of five to six SEA staff from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin; policy-level representatives of Cabinet, Title I, Title III, special education, curriculum and instruction, in-house CEIS/RTI teams.
<b>Format:</b>	Regional Follow-up (Invitation only)	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West Comprehensive Centers; North Central Comprehensive Center; Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center; Mid-Continent Comprehensive Centers; North Central Regional Resource Center
<b>Dates:</b>	October 29–31	<b>Topic:</b>	NASDTEC 12th Professional Practices Institute “Shared Responsibility: Safety from Within”
<b>Location:</b>	St. Louis, MO	<b>Audience:</b>	Investigators, attorneys, state credentialing/licensing officials, higher education preparation program officials, standards-and-practices board members, educator associations, law enforcement officers, school district administrators
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)
<b>Dates:</b>	October 30– November 1	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Annual Conference “Above and Beyond”</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Denver, CO	<b>Audience:</b>	Middle-level educators
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Middle School Association

## NOVEMBER 2008

<b>Dates:</b>	November 10–12	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Third Annual What Works Conference: “Building Capacity for a Systems Approach to Improving Educator Quality”</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b>	RCCs, SEAs, and other national organizations
<b>Format:</b>	Conference (Invitation only)	<b>Sponsor:</b>	The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) at Learning Point Associates
<b>Dates:</b>	November 16–18	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">2008 PEN Annual Conference</a>
<b>Location:</b>	San Francisco, CA	<b>Audience:</b>	Local education fund members, educators at all levels, PEN members and nonmembers
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Public Education Network
<b>Dates:</b>	November 16–19	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Carrying the Torch of Dreams—Every Student Graduates</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Atlanta, GA	<b>Audience:</b>	Educators and policymakers
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Dropout Prevention Network
<b>Dates:</b>	November 19	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">Cultivating Success: The Changing Context of Rural Education</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Web	<b>Audience:</b>	State and district representatives
<b>Format:</b>	Webinar	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia



<b>Dates:</b>	November 20–21	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">2008 Technology Innovators Conference: Thriving in a Global Marketplace</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Washington, DC	<b>Audience:</b>	Technology innovators, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, OSEP projects
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Center for Technology Innovation

## DECEMBER 2008

<b>Date:</b>	December 2	<b>Topic:</b>	REL Midwest Leadership Forum: Quality School Leadership
<b>Location:</b>	Rosemont, IL	<b>Audience:</b>	State-level leaders working to improve school principal recruitment, preparation, succession, and support
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	REL Midwest
<i>(Invitation only)</i>			

<b>Dates:</b>	December 3–6	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">23rd AESA Annual Conference “Preparing Students...Delivering Success”</a>
<b>Location:</b>	Phoenix, AZ	<b>Audience:</b>	Educational service agency staff, board members, educators, policymakers
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Association of Education Service Agencies

<b>Dates:</b>	December 17	<b>Topic:</b>	Statewide Systems of Support (SSOS) Webinar: SSOS Research to Practice
<b>Location:</b>	Web	<b>Audience:</b>	State- and district-level educators, practitioners, researchers, technical assistance providers
<b>Format:</b>	Webinar (Details TBD)	<b>Sponsor:</b>	U.S. Department of Education (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Special Education Programs)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>Dates:</b>	January 15–16	<b>Topic:</b>	State Education Agency High School Meeting: A Regional Discussion “Building Coalitions and Fostering Partnerships”
<b>Location:</b>	Rosemont, IL	<b>Audience:</b>	SEA representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
<b>Format:</b>	Meeting	<b>Sponsors:</b>	Great Lakes East, Great Lakes West
<i>(Invitation only)</i>			

<b>Dates:</b>	February 19–22	<b>Topic:</b>	<a href="#">The National Title I Conference</a>
<b>Location:</b>	San Antonio, TX	<b>Audience:</b>	Title I program staff
<b>Format:</b>	Conference	<b>Sponsor:</b>	National Association of State Title I Directors

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