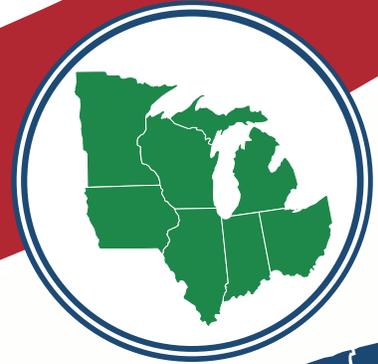


# Identifying and Addressing Regional Education Needs

U.S. Department of Education



Midwest Regional Advisory Committee



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# **The Midwest Region:**

## **A Report Identifying and Addressing the Region's Educational Needs**

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## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities and results of the Midwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), 1 of 10 RACs established under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.). The RACs were formed to identify the region’s most critical educational needs and develop recommendations for technical assistance to meet those needs. The technical assistance provided to state education agencies (SEAs) aims to build capacity for supporting local education agencies (LEAs or districts) and schools, especially low-performing districts and schools; improving educational outcomes for all students; closing achievement gaps; and improving the quality of instruction. The report represents the work of the Midwest RAC, which includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Committee members convened three times and reached out to their respective constituencies between July 19, 2016, and August 31, 2016. Members of the Midwest RAC represented a variety of stakeholders, including LEAs and SEAs; institutions of higher education; practicing educators; and organizations serving educators. The members collaborated, communicated, and shared resources using Communities360<sup>o</sup>, an interactive online platform hosted within the larger GRADS360<sup>o</sup> system housed within the secure U.S. Department of Education environment. Table A provides a list of committee members and their affiliations.

**Table A. Midwest RAC members**

Member Name	Affiliation	State
Emilie Amundson	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	Wisconsin
Ronald Fielder	University of Iowa	Iowa
Maya Kruger	College Prep Elementary School	Minnesota
Lee Ann Kwiatkowski	Metropolitan School District of Warren Township	Indiana
Asta Sepetys	Wisconsin Heights Middle School/High School	Wisconsin
Charles Wilson	The Ohio State University	Ohio

Members reviewed a regional profile containing educational statistics and other relevant data to inform their individual assessments of the challenges facing their region. Despite the presence of several large metropolitan areas such as Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul, 49 percent of school districts in the Midwest region are rural, 21 percent are town based, 26 percent suburban, and 5 percent city (NCES [National Center for Education Statistics] n.d.). Approximately two-thirds of the public school students in the Midwest region are White, while 15 percent are Black and 12 percent are Hispanic (NCES 2015).<sup>1</sup> Discussions with RAC members revealed that major education-related initiatives in the Midwest region include college and career readiness, virtual learning, and implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). See appendix A for detailed tables on the educational characteristics of the region.

Members also collaborated to develop a plan for soliciting information on the region’s educational needs. Members engaged stakeholders and disseminated information using the following strategies: (1) administrated an online survey, (2) made phone calls and sent emails to relevant contacts informing them of the survey and encouraging them to respond, (3) created posts on social media encouraging

<sup>1</sup> Percentages were calculated by multiplying the number of public school students, summing across region, and dividing by the total number of public school students.

participation in the survey, and (4) conducted in-person meetings with various stakeholders where possible. Members focused their efforts on distributing the survey to the widest possible group of stakeholders.

As a result of the committee's outreach efforts, a total of 2,246 individuals responded to the survey and other outreach methods. Of the respondents, 717 were teachers, 440 were principals, 263 were superintendents, and 165 were parents, grandparents or guardians. Additional feedback came from other members of the public including higher education, business, and government.

Each committee member prepared a report containing a needs assessment and specific recommendations for future technical assistance based on his or her assessment of the region's unique educational environment, the survey results, and the results of other data collection efforts.

Committee members of the Midwest RAC identified five needs. They are listed in ranked average order of priority as listed by RAC members:

- ▶ preparing students to be college and career ready;
- ▶ ensuring equity and addressing issues of disproportionality;
- ▶ creating and implementing effective, stable accountability and measurement systems;
- ▶ training, recruiting, and retaining highly effective teachers; and
- ▶ establishing a support infrastructure.

Committee members also developed the following set of five broad recommendations for technical assistance to better address the region's educational needs:

- ▶ **Convene experts and stakeholders.** This recommendation was made specifically to provide assistance in defining and identifying measures of college and career readiness.
- ▶ **Identify and disseminate research-based best practices.** Priority topics include college and career readiness, retaining highly effective teachers and leaders, and establishing professional learning communities.
- ▶ **Identify or compile a list of tools and resources.** Members recommended creating a repository of regionally-based programs that follow best practices. Additionally, they recommended identifying and sharing examples of evaluation systems that are acceptable under ESSA. Specifically, examples that focus on improving schools, such as qualitative evaluation of teachers and schools with metrics that describe what is being done well and what needs improvement.
- ▶ **Provide professional development/training for educators.** Topics include identifying cultural and social factors that influence teacher effectiveness in the classroom, how to address the needs of students at different socioeconomic levels, strategies for improving instruction, and aligning teaching practices with state standards.
- ▶ **Facilitate partnerships and collaboration.** This includes collaboration among educators, law enforcement, and mental health agencies in the community and between high-need schools and university teacher preparation programs.

See appendix B for each committee member's individual needs assessment and recommendations for addressing those needs.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

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This report represents the regional needs assessment from the Midwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). The Midwest region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The RAC members used statistical data from the Midwest regional profile (appendix A); conducted data collection and outreach activities to obtain input from various constituencies; and met three times between July 16, 2016, and August 31, 2016, to assess regional needs and how to address those needs.

## A. Legislative Background

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The RACs are authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.). Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107–279) directs the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to establish not less than 20 comprehensive centers to provide technical assistance to state, local, and regional educational agencies and to schools. The technical assistance is to be directed toward implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and to achieving goals through the use of scientifically valid teaching methods and assessment tools for use by teachers and administrators in the following areas:

- ▶ core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts;
- ▶ English language acquisition;
- ▶ education technology;
- ▶ communication among education experts, school officials, teachers, parents, and librarians;
- ▶ information that can be used to improve academic achievement; close achievement gaps; and encourage and sustain improvement for schools, educators, parents, and policymakers within the region in which the center is located; and
- ▶ teacher and school leader in-service and preservice training models that illustrate best practices in the use of technology in different content areas.

## B. Regional Background Information

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A variety of educational data sources informed the development of the Midwest regional profile, which provides a descriptive snapshot of the educational landscape in the region. The RAC members used these data to inform their individual assessments of the region's most pressing needs. The regional profiles include sections on demographics; SEA capacity; educational resources; teacher preparation, qualifications, and certification; and student educational attainment. Summaries of the data presented in each section of the profiles appear below. See appendix A for the descriptive tables and charts that represent this regional profile.

### *Education-Related Demographics of the Midwest Region*

Educational attainment in the Midwest region varies from state to state. In most Midwestern states, residents are somewhat less likely to complete a college or graduate degree than the national average, but they are somewhat more likely to complete high school. According to the *2015 Digest of Education Statistics* (NCES 2015), 13 percent of adult Americans have not graduated from high school, and 30

percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. In the states that represent the Midwest region, however, five of seven states have below-average percentages of adults with at least a bachelor's degree but all have above-average rates of high school completion compared to the United States as a whole. Illinois has the highest percentage of adults with less than a high school education (approximately 12 percent of its adult population, which is still less than the national average). Minnesota has the highest percentage (34 percent) of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher, though Illinois is a close second, with 33 percent.

Like the United States as a whole, a large portion of Midwest school districts are rural. Despite the presence of several large metropolitan areas such as Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul, 49 percent of school districts in the Midwest region are rural, 21 percent are town based, 26 percent are suburban, and 5 percent are in a city (NCES 2015). Even with the preponderance of rural districts, approximately 20 percent of the nation's public schools (18,920 of 94,758) are located in the Midwest region. These schools employ 535,764 teachers responsible for educating 8,615,678 students in 3,433 individual school districts. Approximately 17 percent of the nation's 44,620 private schools are also located in the region (NCES n.d.).

On average, public school students in the Midwest are less racially and ethnically diverse than the rest of the nation. Roughly half of the country's public school students are White, compared to two-thirds of public school students (66 percent) in the Midwest. Black students account for the next-largest percentage of Midwest students, at 15 percent, and 12 percent are Hispanic. Three percent classify themselves as Asian, and 3 percent consider themselves to be two or more races. Students who are Pacific Islander or Alaska Natives represent less than 1 percent each of the public school population (NCES 2015). Racial and ethnic diversity varies substantially from state to state within the Midwest region; for example, nearly 80 percent of public school students in Iowa are White, while only 50 percent of students are White in Illinois. Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio all have above-average numbers of Black students, while fewer than 10 percent of students in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are Black. Despite being less diverse than the U.S. as a whole, however, the number of minority students in the Midwest region has increased substantially in recent years (see section C).

Although students in the Midwest and across the United States are increasingly diverse, educators have been and continue to be overwhelmingly White. The most recent U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey showed that 82 percent of public school teachers nationwide identified as White – a number that has hardly changed in more than 15 years (U.S. Department of Education 2016). The same survey shows even higher proportions of White teachers in Midwestern states, ranging from 83 percent in Illinois to 99 percent in Iowa. In all Midwestern states but Illinois, at least 92 percent of teachers identify as White (U.S. Department of Education n.d.). Compared to the national average, Midwestern public school students are somewhat less likely to receive some school-based supports, such as free or reduced-price lunch or English language learning (ELL) services. Almost half of public school students in the region (46 percent) received free or reduced-price lunch in 2013, compared to 52 percent nationwide, and just over 5 percent of students received ELL services, compared to 9 percent nationwide. With regard to students with disabilities, the Midwest is comparable to the rest of the nation as a whole; 14 percent of students in the region have disabilities, while the national average is 13 percent. Use of school services varies between Midwest states; for example, Minnesota public school students are the least likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch (38 percent), while Ohio students are least likely to receive ELL services (3 percent).

## Major Education-Related Initiatives

Major education-related initiatives in the Midwest region include college and career readiness, virtual learning, and implementation of ESSA. These topics are discussed in more detail below.

Performance on college readiness assessments such as the ACT and SAT is one way to assess college readiness. The average ACT composite score in the United States is 21. Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin all have mean scores above the national average, while Illinois and Michigan have mean scores below that average. It is important to note, however, that in both states with composite scores below the national average, almost all eligible students participate in the assessment, which generally lowers the average score because students from all ability levels are tested. In states with lower participation rates, the students tested are often more likely to be higher achieving.

The average SAT composite score in the United States is 1,490. Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin all record mean scores above that average. Indiana's mean score is below that average. But, more than two-thirds of students in Indiana participate in the assessment.

Advanced placement (AP) courses and scores on AP exams are also predictors of college enrollment and performance. Midwest region students account for approximately 15 percent of all AP students across the country. In all the Midwest states, more than half of the AP tests taken resulted in a score of 3 or higher.

The states in the Midwest region have begun programs to increase both college and career readiness. Some examples of these programs follow:

- ▶ Indiana's College and Career Pathways provides an aligned sequence of secondary/postsecondary courses leading to credentials, certifications, and associate or baccalaureate degrees that are in high demand in Indiana.
- ▶ Illinois participates in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment for English/language education and math, and that state's board of education's 2016 Strategic Plan has explicitly outlined a goal that 90 percent or more of students graduate from high school ready for college or a career. The Illinois State Board of Education received a \$100,000 career readiness grant to develop an action plan to better prepare students for careers.
- ▶ Michigan is focusing on early literacy, graduation requirements, the Michigan Merit Curriculum, and personalized learning options.
- ▶ In Minnesota, a personal learning plan is given to all 9th-grade students, including academic scheduling, career exploration, 21st century skills, community partnerships, college access, all forms of postsecondary training, and experiential learning opportunities. The Minnesota Career Information System is Internet based and offers a wealth of career, educational, and labor market information in one comprehensive, easy-to-use tool.
- ▶ Wisconsin plans to make college and career readiness a top priority with its Every Child a Graduate 2017 initiative that aims to increase graduation rates from 85.7 percent to 92 percent, close graduation and career and college readiness gaps, and adopt the Fair Funding for Our Future plan to make school finance more equitable and transparent.

- ▶ Ohio has four regional centers that help middle schools, high schools, and career centers that have adopted the High Schools that Work model; it has implemented the Career-Based Intervention, a work-based learning and academic intervention program for students (aged 12–21) identified as disadvantaged and having barriers to career and academic success.

States in the Midwest region are using and expanding virtual education to supplement, enhance, and expand educational opportunities to K–12 students. Virtual or online courses can be used for credit recovery, credit advancement, scheduling conflicts, or to address teacher shortages. Online courses provide students, particularly in rural areas, with opportunities to take courses their schools might not otherwise offer. They also provide an alternative for students when they cannot attend school because of inclement weather, long-term illness, or other reasons. Statewide virtual schools include Wisconsin Virtual School; Iowa Learning Online; Illinois Virtual School; Indiana Virtual School; Ohio Virtual Academy; Michigan Virtual School, a division of Michigan Virtual University; and Minnesota Virtual High School. States in the Midwest are also using online courses for teacher training and professional development. Research is needed regarding what makes online schools or courses successful in this context.

ESSA was signed into law December 10, 2015. Many states in the Midwest region are now in their outreach stage of implementation. For example, early in 2016, the Iowa Department of Education convened four public forums across the state to discuss an ESSA transition plan. In several other states, the plan for execution of ESSA is set for early 2017, after multiple opportunities for education and input on various topics related to the law.

## C. Challenges Affecting Regional Needs

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RAC members' data collection efforts identified several challenges affecting the Midwest region's education needs. The challenges affecting the region are briefly summarized below:

- ▶ **Significant changes in student demographics, resulting in an ever-widening academic preparedness gap.** Throughout the Midwest region, the student population has undergone a shift in its demographic and socioeconomic composition. Between 2000 and 2010, for example, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent. Many school districts lack the resources and expertise to address the unique educational needs of these students (e.g., ESL and bilingual programs, extracurricular programs). Additionally, lower SES students (a large number of whom are minority students) encounter more barriers to educational opportunities and resources than their middle-class counterparts, resulting in a higher proportion of students who are “at risk” and a larger achievement gap.
- ▶ **Lack of transparency at all levels of the education system.** Underpinning the needs identified by Midwest RAC members was a desire to have ready, consistent access to important information, such as details related to funding pathways and educational mandates/initiatives. Members noted that legislation requiring school districts and educators to comply with certain policies and requirements without notice or direction is challenging. Educators reported feeling they do not have a voice in the process, and that they spend significant amounts of time learning about and catching up on the details of each mandate to the detriment of teaching their students.
- ▶ **Lack of tested, research-based best practices related to effective instruction.** In the face of ever-changing educational requirements and mandates, RAC members consistently reported a

need for research-based best practices that have been tested and demonstrated concrete, positive outcomes for students. Many of the recommendations rely on existence of or development of evidence based best practice resources.

## D. Data Collection and Outreach Strategies

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A main priority of each RAC was to solicit input from numerous constituencies, including teachers, principals, SEA and LEA administrators, governors, institutions of higher education/community colleges, postsecondary technical programs, school boards, parents, education professional organizations, teachers unions, local government, youth organizations, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, and business leaders.

RAC members received briefs, PowerPoint presentations, and other RAC-related materials that describe the purpose of the Comprehensive Centers program and how technical assistance builds the capacity of SEAs and LEAs. These materials were disseminated to their educational organizations and their professional networks.

RAC members conducted needs sensing and data collection between July 19, 2016, and August 31, 2016. Methods included disseminating an online survey link through email, social media, or posting on public websites; personal phone calls; and small meetings or focus groups. The online survey asked respondents to identify their state and affiliation and allowed them to identify needs and make recommendations through open-ended responses in comment boxes.

RAC members had access to a Communities of Practice website to help facilitate interactions and align data collection activities. RAC members were referred to the website as a repository for resources available to them, such as previous RAC reports, data profiles describing demographics and educational statistics in each region, sample needs assessment responses, note-taking templates for their data-collection activities, and meeting notes. The website also included a draft email RAC members could use to send to contacts asking them to participate in the survey. RAC members held three meetings internally to review the data collected and discuss the needs and the strategies to address those needs.

A total of 2,218 individuals took the online survey. An additional 228 provided feedback through group discussions with school board members, superintendents, curriculum directors, teachers, parents, and other community representatives and informal, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, including state education agency staff, superintendents, teachers, businesspeople, and community members. Table 1 illustrates responses received through the survey and other data collection efforts in each of the states.

Table 2 shows the number of responses received and the self-identified roles of the respondents.

**Table 1. Members of the public submitting comments by state**

State	Number of individuals providing feedback	Percent
Illinois	396	16
Indiana	163	7
Iowa	148	6
Michigan	646	26
Minnesota	160	7
Ohio	461	19
Wisconsin	472	19
Total Midwest region	2,446	<b>100</b>

Note: Some percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

**Table 2. Members of the public submitting comments by stakeholder group**

Role	Number of individuals providing feedback	Percent
<b>State level</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3</b>
SEA staff	39	2
State board of education	21	1
Other, state level	9	<1
<b>Local district or regional level</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>22</b>
Superintendent or director of schools	263	11
School board member	214	9
LEA or central office	32	1
Education service agency	10	<1
Other, local or regional level	10	<1
<b>School level</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>36</b>
Principal or other school administrator	440	18
Librarian	194	8
Curriculum specialist or instructional coach	44	2
Parent/grandparent/guardian	165	7
Student	18	1
Other, school level	27	1
<b>Classroom level</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>29</b>
Teacher	717	29
<b>Community level</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>9</b>
Higher education	125	5
Community member	50	2
Business	23	1
Other, community level	34	1
<b>Other or missing</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,446</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Some percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

## Chapter 2. Educational Needs and Recommendations for Addressing the Needs

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**R**AC members used information from the regional profile, input from constituencies, and committee members' individual expertise to identify the region's most pressing educational need areas and to make recommendations accordingly. Overall, individual members of the Midwest RAC identified the following five needs:

- ▶ **Preparing students to be college and career ready.** College and career readiness ranked high in the survey responses and in individual responses from RAC members, who emphasized that high school graduates need both hard and soft skills to either enter the workforce or attend college. This includes the acquisition of less tangible characteristics such as perseverance, communication, teamwork, and leadership in addition to the traditional English and math taught in schools. RAC members said they saw a need for an overarching discussion on what the phrase “college and career readiness” means to different stakeholders such as educators, parents, and individuals from business and industry.
- ▶ **Ensuring equity and addressing issues of disproportionality.** All but one RAC member identified “ensuring equity” as a top educational priority for the Midwest region. Members noted the Midwest region has recently undergone dramatic demographic changes with respect to student SES and language minority status. Midwest RAC members noted that educators in this region are currently ill-equipped to deal with the pressures that correlate with supporting the diversity of student needs, and that closing the achievement gap will only be possible once all students have equitable access to educational opportunities and resources.
- ▶ **Creating and implementing effective, stable accountability and measurement systems.** Midwest RAC members prioritized improving the assessment and accountability systems currently used. This includes the need for a stable assessment system that can be compared year-to-year rather than what is perceived to be constantly changing tests and state report cards. Several members expressed that the current emphasis on standardized testing takes the focus away from providing a multifaceted, well-rounded education and burdens educators with strict adherence to specific curricula. RAC members expressed a need for technical assistance to create evaluation systems that are acceptable under ESSA, and which would focus on improving schools.
- ▶ **Training, recruiting, and retaining highly effective teachers.** Some Midwest RAC members identified that strengthening instructional effectiveness of existing teachers would be the most effective way to ensure students emerge from secondary school prepared for college or a career, while other RAC members indicated that strengthening teacher training programs at the university level would be the most effective approach. Midwest RAC members identified a need to coordinate efforts between high needs schools and universities to strengthen teacher preparation programs, establish teacher mentorship and coaching models or programs between highly effective instructors and newer teachers, and provide professional development on improving instruction. They expressed a need for (1) a mechanism to establish professional learning communities and instructional support and leadership, (2) a means to clarify the role of school leaders in instructional effectiveness, and (3) a way to align state and common core standards with effective teaching practices.

- ▶ **Establishing a support infrastructure.** Several RAC members discussed the need to develop an infrastructure that would enable teachers and educators to support one another for a variety of purposes. Although state education staff convene at the beginning or end of initiatives, the time in the middle—when states are trying strategies and adapting them—is when more frequent and sustained communication could be most helpful. Members saw a need to create sustained communities of practice and networks of SEA staff to support one another through 3–5 years of ESSA implementation. These networks and communities of practice could help SEAs build their internal capacity to synthesize and integrate multiple initiatives that compete for priority. Similarly, members emphasized the need to build content-expert networks across states on a variety of key topics. These networks would pool resources, share content, and host joint professional learning experiences and help educators connect research to practice by disseminating information on research findings and best practices. The networks and infrastructure created could be instrumental in providing input into state and/or federal programs and initiatives while they are still in the planning stages.

Across all priority need areas, RAC members requested a mechanism to identify and showcase best and promising practices from around the country, conduct training directed at those practices, and facilitate partnerships with others who are successfully engaging in those practices. The committee members’ recommendations fell into five broad categories:

- ▶ convene experts and stakeholders;
- ▶ identify and disseminate research-based best practices;
- ▶ identify or compile a list of tools and resources;
- ▶ provide professional development/training for educators; and
- ▶ facilitate partnerships and collaboration.

Table 3 provides a high-level summary of the recommendations expressed related to the priority need areas.

**Table 3. Summary of needs and recommendations by committee member**

Member name	Recommendation
<b><i>Preparing students to be college and career ready</i></b>	
R. Fielder	Identify and showcase examples of college and career readiness and success best and promising practices from around the country; and provide technical assistance information and training about those practices
C. Wilson	Help SEAs assess the college and career readiness of students by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting and disseminating longitudinal studies on high school graduates (similar to the Department of Education’s Early Childhood studies, NELs, ELS, B&amp;B, etc.)</li> <li>• providing technical assistance to state departments of education so SEAs can study college remediation rates, college dropout rates, and college graduation rates of a school’s graduate</li> </ul>
L. Kwiatkowski	Help students acquire intangible skills by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• documenting and disseminating best practices to support student attainment of skills such as perseverance, communication, teamwork, and leadership and how to embed other less tangible 21st century skills into limited instructional time</li> <li>• compiling and disseminating resources on integrating technology into teaching and competency-based education</li> </ul>

Member name	Recommendation
A. Sepetys	<p>Promote a broader and more comprehensive vision and collaborative pursuit toward readiness by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with SEAs to create a common dialogue for differentiated career readiness and life readiness needs</li> <li>• promoting opportunities for SEAs to participate in schools-to-industry sharing and schools-to-outside agency sharing to inform what is needed for students to be college and career ready</li> <li>• organizing or supporting SEA outreach campaigns to with parents, agencies, industries, and extended communities</li> </ul>
<b><i>Ensuring equity and addressing issues of disproportionality</i></b>	
R. Fielder	<p>Conduct training and professional development on topics related to equity or disproportionality, evaluate the success of various initiatives, identify and disseminate best practices, and assist with the development of state policies</p>
E. Amundson L. Kwiatkowski	<p>Address opportunity and achievement gaps by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing and implementing training to help SEA staff understand how their cultural and racial identities impact education, equity, and excellence</li> <li>• leveraging national experts to produce and deliver highly researched and powerful professional trainings SEAs can use to equip teachers with the necessary skills to identify achievement gaps, hypothesize potential root causes, and identify potential solutions</li> <li>• providing technical assistance on advancing and sustaining effective classroom practices that genuinely engage and motivate all students. This includes student-centered learning environments and evidence-based practices shown to have potential in closing achievement gaps among student groups</li> </ul>
C. Wilson	<p>Reduce the enrichment gap by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supporting SEAs efforts to encourage districts to develop and test enrichment strategies that would boost the extracurricular and enrichment participation rates for disadvantaged students</li> <li>• compiling and disseminating research on improving existing after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Helping to rigorously evaluate the ideas and programs piloted or implemented within region</li> </ul>
C. Wilson A. Sepetys	<p>Improve outcomes for low SES students and reduce disproportionality by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing and summarizing research on the factors outside school that lead to differences in achievement between children from lower SES backgrounds and those from middle-class backgrounds</li> <li>• providing or summarizing research on school-based programs and curricula that will offset those negative effects on lower SES children</li> <li>• providing professional development training on addressing students' socioeconomic needs; convene consortiums of educators, law enforcement, and mental health agencies in multi-area "think tanks" to create concrete measures SEAs can use to address the needs of socioeconomic disproportionality</li> </ul>
R. Fielder	<p>Identify and disseminate information about ways districts can successfully reduce the achievement gap, and provide professional development and training in those practices and how to scale them up</p>
<b><i>Creating and implementing effective, stable accountability and measurement systems</i></b>	
C. Wilson	<p>Help SEAs develop or identify alternative teacher assessments by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing technical assistance and research to reorient states from ranking teachers and schools to focusing on improving schools</li> <li>• Assisting states in developing qualitative evaluation metrics and forms that will be descriptive of what is being done well and what is in need of improvement</li> </ul>

<b>Member name</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
C. Wilson	Help states adjust to changes in measurement systems, provide assistance to help states pilot changes to standards, report cards, and state examinations before mandating statewide changes; then make adjustments based on feedback and results
M. Kruger	Improve accountability systems, and develop accountability systems that use more than high-stakes testing, by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helping SEAs understand ESSA’s accountability components and how to measure them</li> <li>• supporting SEAs in creating alternative measurement plans that are acceptable under ESSA for holding schools accountable</li> </ul>
<b><i>Training, recruiting, and retaining highly effective teachers</i></b>	
R. Fielder	Increase instructional effectiveness by identifying and disseminating best practices research, providing professional development and training, and demonstrating how to evaluate programs and strategies
M. Kruger	Help SEAs promote communication between high-needs schools and universities to strengthen teacher preparation programs. Teachers and schools should be able to communicate their needs to universities, whose expert professors can prepare teachers for addressing these needs
L. Kwiatkowski	Document and disseminate best strategies for retaining the most highly effective teachers and leaders
L. Kwiatkowski	Support SEA efforts to work with colleges and universities in the region to redesign teacher preparation programs so that teachers and leaders are prepared to teach/lead in 21st century schools
<b><i>Establishing a support infrastructure</i></b>	
E. Amundson	Create sustained communities of practice and networks of state department staff focused on learning from and supporting one another through 3–5 years of ESSA implementation, rather than shifting gears to the next initiative
E. Amundson	Help SEAs build internal capacity to pause, plan, and synthesize internal initiatives to strategically integrate them. Help SEAs strategically map how to align these initiatives and simplify the workload of the districts
E. Amundson	Build content-expert networks across states on a variety of key topic areas; create steering committees of these experts for work on particular topics to pool resources, share content, and host joint professional learning experiences
E. Amundson	Help connect SEA staff to emergent research by creating annotated bibliographies that are easy to read and understand, and convening states to talk and learn together from researchers in the field
A. Sepetys	Assist SEAs as they pilot new education initiatives by helping them understand the perceptions of all stakeholders, including teachers, who currently feel significant frustration with initiatives and legislation passed on to them to implement without having been given a chance to provide input on either the problem or the solution
<b><i>Other</i></b>	
R. Fielder	Improve the use of personalized learning by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying and disseminating information on research and best practices</li> <li>• conducting evaluations</li> <li>• providing training and professional development</li> <li>• assisting states and in identifying competencies and how to evaluate those competencies</li> </ul>
L. Kwiatkowski	Support small and rural schools by documenting and disseminating best practices related to ways that small and rural schools can better leverage limited resources or collaborate with others to help minimize the burden of requirements embedded in federally funded programs
L. Kwiatkowski	Support greater access to early childhood education by documenting and disseminating best practices related to how high-poverty districts can support families of preschool-aged children. This should include strategies, funding mechanisms, and best implementation practices

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## **Appendix A. Region Educational Profile**

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## Demographics

Understanding the demographic makeup of the states in each region helps to establish the context for the educational issues that are most pressing. This section presents tables from the *Digest of Education Statistics*, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and *American FactFinder* related to

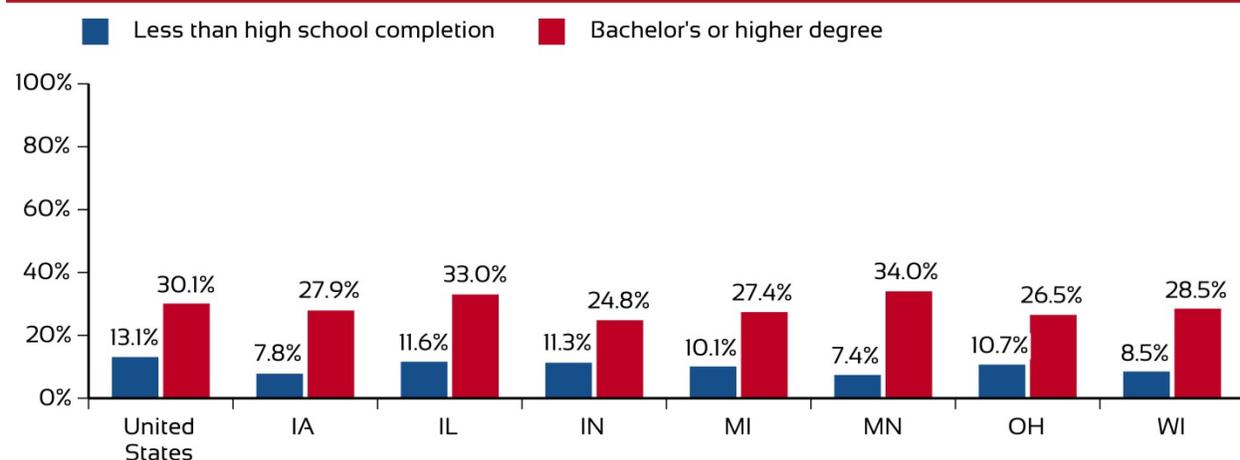
- ▶ The educational attainment of the adult population;
- ▶ The poverty rate, median household income, and unemployment rate;
- ▶ The overall number of students, teachers, and schools, both public and private;
- ▶ The racial/ethnic distribution of students served by public schools;
- ▶ Participation in public school services (free or reduced-price lunch program, English language learners, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, state-sponsored pre-kindergarten); and
- ▶ The percentage of the population who speak a language other than English at home.

### A. Educational Attainment

The highest level of education completed by the adult, working-age population (25- to 64-year-olds) is a proxy for human capital—the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population. Higher educational attainment (a bachelor’s degree or higher) is associated with better income and employment. Figure 1 displays the percent of the adult population with less than a high school diploma in 2014 and the percent with a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2014.

Additional information about the **educational attainment of young adults** and differences by race/ethnicity can be found in the latest *NCES Condition of Education*.

**Figure 1. Educational attainment by state, 2014**



Source: 2015 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 104.80. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_104.80.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.80.asp).

## B. Economic Indicators

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Table 1 displays socioeconomic indicators such as the percentage of persons and percentage of children below the poverty level in 2014. The table also displays the median annual household income in 2014 and the unemployment rate in May 2016.

**Table 1. Selected socioeconomic indicators, by state**

State	Percent of Persons in Poverty, 2014 <sup>a</sup>	Percent of Children Ages 5 to 17 in Poverty, 2014 <sup>a</sup>	Annual Household Income (Median), 2014 <sup>b</sup>	Unemployment Rate, May 2016 <sup>c</sup>
United States	15.1	20.3	\$53,700	4.9
Illinois	14.0	19.0	\$57,400	6.4
Indiana	14.9	20.1	\$49,400	5.0
Iowa	11.9	15.6	\$53,700	3.9
Michigan	15.7	20.2	\$48,800	4.7
Minnesota	10.9	12.9	\$61,500	3.8
Ohio	15.4	21.0	\$49,300	5.1
Wisconsin	12.6	16.3	\$52,600	4.2

Source: <sup>a</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 102.40. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_102.40.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_102.40.asp?current=yes).

<sup>b</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 102.30. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_102.30.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_102.30.asp?current=yes).

<sup>c</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics Monthly Unemployment Report. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>.

## C. Schools and Students

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Tables 2 through 5 contain school and student demographics such as the total number of schools, teachers, and students; the racial/ethnic distribution of students in public schools; the percentage of schools by urbanicity; and the percentage of Title I schools.

**Number of schools, teachers, and students.** Table 2 displays the number of schools, teachers, and students in fall 2013 for public and private schools.

**Table 2. Count of schools, teachers, and students, by sector and state, fall 2013**

State	Public			Private		
	Schools <sup>a</sup>	Teachers <sup>b</sup>	Students <sup>c</sup>	Schools <sup>d</sup>	Teachers <sup>d</sup>	Students <sup>d</sup>
United States	94,758	3,113,764	50,044,522	33,620	441,500	5,395,740
Illinois	4,149	136,355	2,066,990	1,550	19,050	281,360
Indiana	1,875	59,823	1,047,385	870	8,390	121,230
Iowa	1,378	35,397	502,964	‡	4,580	56,150
Michigan	3,501	85,786	1,548,841	780	10,150	141,590
Minnesota	2,203	54,413	850,973	500	6,420	85,260
Ohio	3,585	106,010	1,724,111	1,160	16,890	238,620
Wisconsin	2,229	57,980	874,414	900	11,500	160,650

‡ Reporting standards not met.

Source: <sup>a</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 216.43. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_216.43.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_216.43.asp?current=yes).

<sup>b</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 208.30. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_208.30.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_208.30.asp?current=yes).

<sup>c</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.40. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_203.40.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.40.asp?current=yes).

<sup>d</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 205.80. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_205.80.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_205.80.asp?current=yes).

**Percentage of public school students by race/ethnicity.** Table 3 displays the racial/ethnic background of public school students in fall 2013.

**Table 3. Percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and state, fall 2013**

State	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races
United States	50.3	15.6	24.8	4.8	0.4	1.0	3.0
Illinois	49.9	17.6	24.6	4.5	0.1	0.3	3.1
Indiana	70.9	12.3	10.2	1.9	0.1	0.2	4.5
Iowa	79.0	5.3	9.7	2.2	0.2	0.4	3.2
Michigan	68.3	18.3	6.8	2.9	0.1	0.7	2.8
Minnesota	70.7	9.7	8.2	6.4	0.1	1.7	3.3
Ohio	72.6	16.3	4.5	1.9	0.1	0.1	4.5
Wisconsin	72.4	9.7	10.5	3.6	0.1	1.2	2.4

Source: 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.7. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_203.70.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.70.asp).

**Percentage of school districts by urban-centric locale.** Table 4 displays the percentage of school districts classified by the Census locale codes. The large, midsize, and small city codes were summed to create the total number of city districts. The large, midsize, and small suburban codes were summed to create the total number of suburban districts. The fringe, distant, and remote town codes were summed to create the total number of town districts. The fringe, distant, and remote rural codes were summed to create the total number of rural districts. The percentages of districts within each of the four major locale codes are presented.

**Table 4. Percentage distribution of public school districts, by urban-centric locale and state, 2013–14**

State	City	Suburban	Town	Rural
United States	5.7	22.9	18.4	53.0
Illinois	3.4	39.7	19.7	37.2
Indiana	10.5	16.9	22.0	50.5
Iowa	3.8	4.0	22.3	69.9
Michigan	6.4	27.6	17.2	48.9
Minnesota	2.7	12.0	25.3	59.9
Ohio	3.2	32.8	18.9	45.0
Wisconsin	4.0	18.2	22.7	55.0

Source: *National Center for Education Statistics Rural Education in America*, table A.1.a.-1. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/a.1.a.-1.asp>.

**Percentage of Title I schools.** Table 5 presents the total number of schools and the percentage of schools that were eligible for Title I in 2010–11. A Title I eligible school is one in which the percentage of children from low-income families is at least as high as the percentages of children from low-income families served by the local education agency (LEA) as a whole, or because 35 percent or more of the children in the school are from low-income families.

**Table 5. Number of schools and percentage by Title I status, 2010–11**

State	Number of Operating Schools	Percent Title I
United States	98,817	67.4
Illinois	4,361	75.0
Indiana	1,936	75.4
Iowa	1,436	68.1
Michigan	3,877	73.1
Minnesota	2,392	35.7
Ohio	3,758	77.5
Wisconsin	2,238	68.6

Source: *Number and Types of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2010-11*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/pesschools10/tables/table\\_02.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/pesschools10/tables/table_02.asp).

## D. Participation in Public School Services

Tables 6 and 7 provide information about participation in public school services.

**Public school services.** Table 6 provides the percentage of students in public schools who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, participated in English Language learner programs, were served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act Part B, or participated in programs for gifted and talented students.

**Table 6. Percentage of public school students participating in school services**

State	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, 2013–14 <sup>a</sup>	English Language Learners, 2013–14 <sup>b</sup>	Students with Disabilities, 2013–14 <sup>c</sup>	Gifted and Talented, 2006 <sup>d</sup>
United States	52.0	9.3	12.9	6.7
Illinois	51.4	9.3	14.2	5.8
Indiana	49.2	5.4	16.2	7.9
Iowa	40.9	4.6	12.9	8.2
Michigan	48.3	4.6	12.9	3.4
Minnesota	38.4	6.9	14.6	8.8
Ohio	44.6	2.5	14.8	7.3
Wisconsin	41.9	4.9	14.0	6.4

Source: <sup>a</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 204.10. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_204.10.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.10.asp?current=yes).

<sup>b</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 204.20. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_204.20.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.20.asp?current=yes).

<sup>c</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 204.70. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_204.70.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.70.asp?current=yes).

<sup>d</sup> 2014 Digest of Education Statistics, table 204.90. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_204.90.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.90.asp?current=yes).

**Prekindergarten participation and per-student spending.** The National Institute for Early Education Research publishes a yearly *State of Preschool* report with **profiles of each state**. The state profiles provide detailed information on access to preschool, quality standards, and resources. Table 7 displays the percentage of 3-year-old and the percentage of 4-year-old population enrolled in prekindergarten and state spending per child enrolled in prekindergarten.

**Table 7. State-funded prekindergarten programs, 2015**

State	State Spending per Enrolled Child	Percent of 4-Year-Old Population Enrolled in State-Funded Program	Percent of 3-Year-Old Population Enrolled in State-Funded Program
United States	\$4,489	29	5
Illinois	\$3,161	27	20
Indiana	<sup>(1)</sup>	N/A	N/A
Iowa	\$2,987	61	3
Michigan	\$6,447	32	N/A
Minnesota	\$7,824	1	1
Ohio	\$4,000	5	2
Wisconsin	\$3,802	64	1

<sup>(1)</sup> Data collection in progress.

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2015-state-profiles](http://nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2015-state-profiles).

## E. Other

Table 8 contains linguistic indicators such as the percentage of the population who speak English only at home, the percentage who speak Spanish at home, the percentage who speak another Indo-European language at home, and the percentage who speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home.

**Table 8. Percentage of population 5 years and older by language spoken at home and by state**

State	Language Spoken at Home, Percent of Population 5 and Older				
	English Only	Spanish	Other Indo-European Language	Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	Other Languages
United States	79.1	13.0	3.7	3.3	0.9
Illinois	77.5	13.2	5.6	2.8	1.0
Indiana	91.8	4.6	2.2	1.1	0.4
Iowa	92.6	3.9	1.6	1.3	0.5
Michigan	90.9	2.9	2.9	1.5	1.8
Minnesota	89.1	3.8	2.1	3.1	1.8
Ohio	93.3	2.2	2.5	1.1	0.8
Wisconsin	91.4	4.5	2.1	1.6	0.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder*.

## State Education Agency Capacity

State Education Agencies (SEAs) are the primary customers of the Comprehensive Centers. Understanding the capacity in the SEA, the number of districts served, and the governance structure of each state provides context. Data in this section come from the *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, the Education Commission of the States report, *50-State Comparison: K–12 Governance Structures*, and Achieve’s report, *Leadership Turnover: 2015 Year of Significant Change in State Education Leadership*.

Table 9 displays the number of agencies in each state. Table 10 displays the governance model (e.g., who is elected, who is appointed). Table 11 shows changes in education leadership over the past 2 years (2015 and 2016).

**Table 9. Number of education agencies in 2013–14, by type and state**

State	Total	District/LEA	RESA	State	Independent Charter Schools and Other
United States	18,194	13,491	1,522	255	2,923
Illinois	1,068	861	195	5	7
Indiana	408	295	31	4	78
Iowa	355	346	9	0	0
Michigan	907	548	56	6	297
Minnesota	548	332	63	3	150
Ohio	1,116	618	104	4	390
Wisconsin	466	422	16	3	25

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 214.30. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_214.30.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_214.30.asp?current=yes).

NOTE: RESA = Regional Education Service Agency

**Table 10. State governance**

State	Governance Model	Legislature	Local School Boards
Illinois	Governor appoints board, board appoints chief	The legislature has a house appropriations elementary and secondary education committee, a house elementary and secondary education committee and a senate education committee.	892 local boards; members appointed and elected
Indiana	Appointed board, elected chief	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	290 local boards; members appointed and elected
Iowa	Appointed board, appointed chief	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	371 local boards; members elected
Michigan	Elected board, board appoints chief	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	553 local boards; members appointed and elected
Minnesota	No state board of education; governor-appointed chief	The legislature has a house education policy committee, a house K-12 education finance committee, a senate education committee and a senate E-12 education budget division committee.	343 local boards; members elected
Ohio	Elected/appointed state board; board-appointed chief	The legislature has a house education committee, a senate education committee and a legislative committee on education oversight.	612 local boards; members appointed and elected
Wisconsin	No state board of education; elected chief	The legislature has an assembly education committee, an assembly education reform committee and a senate education committee.	426 local boards; members elected

Source: Education Commission of the States. (2013). *50-State Comparison: K-12 Governance Structures*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <http://www.ecs.org/k-12-governance-structures/>.

**Table 11. State education leadership changes in 2015 or 2016**

State	New Governor	New State Board Members	New Chief State School Officer	New State Higher Education Officer
Illinois	Bruce Rauner-R, Jan 2015	6/9 voting members	Tony Smith, Apr 2015	N/A
Indiana	N/A	5/11 voting members	N/A	N/A
Iowa	N/A	N/A	Ryan Wise, Jul 2015	N/A
Michigan	N/A	N/A	Brian Whiston, Jul 2015	Daniel Hurley, Jul 2015
Minnesota	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	N/A	1/19 voting members	Paola DeMaria, Jul 2016	N/A
Wisconsin	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Achieve. (2015). *Leadership Turnover: 2015 Year of Significant Change in State Education Leadership*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <http://www.achieve.org/files/LeadershipTurnover2015.pdf>.

## Educational Resources

Indicators of educational resources include school finance information such as revenues and expenditures, access to fiber and broadband connectivity, and pupil-to-teacher ratios. Data for the tables presented in this section come from the *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, *American FactFinder*, and *Education Superhighway's 2015 State of the States* report on broadband connectivity in public schools.

Table 12 provides the total revenue for each state by source of funds.

**Table 12. Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source, 2012–13**

State	Total Revenue (in Thousands)	Percent Revenue From Federal	Percent Revenue From State	Percent Revenue From Local
United States	\$603,686,987	9.3	45.2	45.5
Illinois	\$26,879,107	8.6	26.1	65.3
Indiana	\$11,887,836	8.7	56.0	35.3
Iowa	\$6,033,012	7.8	51.7	40.5
Michigan	\$18,632,336	9.8	58.7	31.5
Minnesota	\$11,215,788	6.3	64.5	29.2
Ohio	\$22,609,388	8.6	43.5	47.9
Wisconsin	\$10,809,097	7.9	45.0	47.2

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 235.20. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_235.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_235.20.asp?current=yes).

Table 13 provides the per-pupil expenditures and the percentage of expenditures on instruction, support services (student support, instructional staff, general administration, operations and maintenance, student transportation, and other support services), and other (food services, capital outlay, interest on debt).

Additional data on total current expenditures for elementary and secondary education by function, subfunction, and state is available through NCES. See [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015301/tables/table\\_03.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015301/tables/table_03.asp).

**Table 13. Per-pupil expenditures, 2012–13, by function**

State	Per-Pupil Expenditures	Percent Instruction	Percent Support	Percent Other
United States	\$12,020	54.4	31.3	14.3
Illinois	\$13,880	54.1	32.8	13.1
Indiana	\$10,605	51.7	33.0	15.4
Iowa	\$12,110	52.2	28.8	19.0
Michigan	\$11,810	51.5	34.2	14.3
Minnesota	\$12,746	56.7	26.0	17.3
Ohio	\$12,807	50.3	34.7	15.0
Wisconsin	\$11,972	56.1	33.8	10.1

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 236.75. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_236.75.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_236.75.asp?current=yes).

Table 14 provides another look at education expenditures. The last column provides an index of state and local education expenditures (excluding capital outlay) to total expenditures (excluding capital outlay, utilities, and intergovernmental expenditures).

**Table 14. State expenditures on education, fall 2013**

State	Total Enrollment <sup>a</sup>	Total Direct State and Local Expenditures <sup>b,c</sup>	State and Local Education Expenditures <sup>b,d</sup>	Percent of Education of Total Expenditures
United States	50,044,052	\$2,366,783,591	\$796,049,064	33.6
Illinois	2,066,990	\$96,266,751	\$35,943,825	34.5
Indiana	1,047,385	\$42,113,656	\$16,585,880	35.7
Iowa	502,964	\$23,770,954	\$9,965,300	36.8
Michigan	1,548,841	\$69,746,964	\$27,992,574	36.8
Minnesota	850,973	\$43,384,498	\$16,012,561	33.3
Ohio	1,724,111	\$83,250,259	\$32,380,740	34.0
Wisconsin	874,414	\$42,584,985	\$16,775,852	36.5

Source: <sup>a</sup> 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.20. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_203.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.20.asp?current=yes).

<sup>b</sup> American FactFinder, United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/govs/local/>.

<sup>c</sup> Total direct expenditures do not include capital outlay, utilities, and intergovernmental expenditures.

<sup>d</sup> Total education expenditures do not include capital outlay.

Table 15 displays school district broadband connectivity for each state. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set a minimum Internet access goal of 100 Kbps per student. The table provides the percentage of school districts in each state meeting that goal. Districts with access to fiber connections are more likely to meet the minimum connectivity goal. The second column of table 15 presents the percentage of school districts in the state with access to fiber connections. The FCC funds upgrades to fiber networks. The FCC also subsidizes the deployment of wired and wireless networks in schools. Accessing the E-rate budget for Wi-Fi networks is an indicator of whether districts are aware their E-rate budget can be used to upgrade Wi-Fi networks. Lastly, \$3/Mbps is a price target that will enable school districts to meet Internet access goals.

Additional information and maps of district fiber connectivity are available through the Federal Communications Commission website (<https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/e-rate-fiber-map/>).

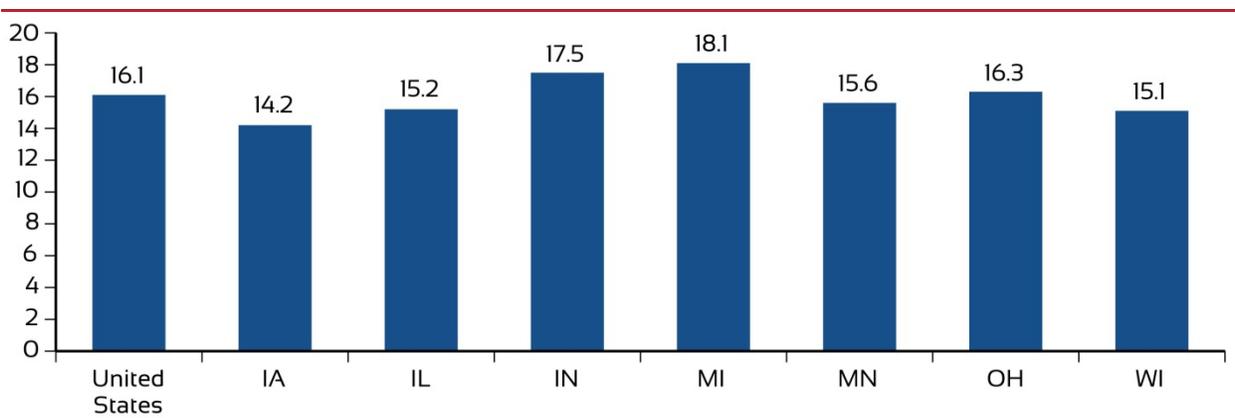
**Table 15. School district broadband connectivity, 2015**

State	Percent of School Districts			
	Meeting the Minimum 100 Kbps per Student Goal	That Have Fiber Connections to Meet Bandwidth Goals	That Accessed their E-Rate Budget for Wi-Fi Networks	Meeting the \$3/Mbps Internet Access Affordability Target
Illinois	71	88	54	11
Indiana	69	87	41	1
Iowa	87	72	37	2
Michigan	77	76	37	53
Minnesota	75	78	56	14
Ohio	75	82	59	7
Wisconsin	76	90	58	14

Source: Education Superhighway. (2015.) *2015 State of the States*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [http://stateofthestates.educationsuperhighway.org/assets/sos/full\\_report-55ba0a64dcae0611b15ba9960429d323e2eadbac5a67a0b369bedbb8cf15ddbb.pdf](http://stateofthestates.educationsuperhighway.org/assets/sos/full_report-55ba0a64dcae0611b15ba9960429d323e2eadbac5a67a0b369bedbb8cf15ddbb.pdf).

Another educational resource is teachers. Figure 2 presents the pupil-to-teacher ratio.

**Figure 2. Pupil to teacher ratio, fall 2013**



Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 208.40. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_208.40.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_208.40.asp?current=yes).

## Teacher Preparation, Qualifications, and Certification

Tables 16 through 20 display data on teacher preparation programs, the percentage of teachers who completed their training in a different state from where they are teaching, and ways teacher preparation programs are addressing shortages of highly qualified teachers.

All the data come from the Title II Reports National Teacher Preparation Data file.

**Table 16. Number of completers of teacher preparation programs in 2013–14, by program type and state**

State	Total Enrollment	Total Completers	Completers by Program Type		
			Traditional	Alternative, IHE-Based	Alternative, not IHE-Based
United States	465,540	180,745	149,369	13,011	18,365
Illinois	14,699	6,454	6,169	232	53
Indiana	7,222	3,510	2,837	673	N/A
Iowa	7,142	2,404	2,382	22	N/A
Michigan	11,287	3,951	3,839	112	N/A
Minnesota	7,549	3,057	3,041	16	N/A
Ohio	17,366	6,066	6,066	N/A	N/A
Wisconsin	8,867	3,741	3,525	N/A	216

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>.

NOTE: IHE = Institute of Higher Education

**Table 17. Percentage of completers of teacher preparation programs in 2013–14, by program type and state**

State	Total Completers	Program Type		
		Percent Traditional	Percent Alternative, IHE-Based	Percent Alternative, not IHE-Based
United States	180,745	82.6	7.2	10.2
Illinois	6,454	95.6	3.6	0.8
Indiana	3,510	80.8	19.2	0.0
Iowa	2,404	99.1	0.9	0.0
Michigan	3,951	97.2	2.8	0.0
Minnesota	3,057	99.5	0.5	0.0
Ohio	6,066	100.0	0.0	0.0
Wisconsin	3,741	94.2	0.0	5.8

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/DataTools/2015/AllStates.xls>.

**Table 18. Number and percentage of newly licensed teachers who received their credential from a teacher preparation program in a different state**

State	Total Number Receiving Initial Credential in the State in 2013-14	Total Number Who Completed Their Teacher Preparation Program in Another State	Percent Who Trained Out of State
United States	254,272	56,718	22
Illinois	20,668	4,164	20
Indiana	3,095	394	13
Iowa	2,648	311	12
Michigan	5,010	458	9
Minnesota	4,068	2,161	53
Ohio	7,509	1,103	15
Wisconsin	5,092	934	18

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5\\_01](https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01).

**Table 19. Do teacher preparation programs address shortages of highly qualified teachers by area of certification or licensure, subject, or specialty?**

State	Area of Certification or Licensure	Subject	Specialty
Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indiana	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michigan	No	No	No
Minnesota	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ohio	No	No	No
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5\\_01](https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01).

**Table 20. Description of ways teacher preparation programs are addressing shortages of highly qualified teachers**

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
Illinois	Highly qualified teachers; No Child Left Behind Act funds. If a school district has an overall shortage of highly qualified teachers, as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), or a shortage of highly qualified teachers in the subject area of mathematics, science, reading, or special education and have not met AYP for three years, then the school board must spend at least 40% of the money it receives from Title II grants under the Act on recruitment and retention initiatives to assist in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers (in a specific subject area if applicable) as specified in paragraphs (1)(B), (2)(A), (2)(B), (4)(A), (4)(B), and (4)(C) of subsection (a) of Section 2123 of the Act until there is no longer a shortage of highly qualified teachers (in a specific subject area if applicable). As the number of highly qualified teachers in the district increases, however, the school board may spend any surplus of the minimum 40% of funds dedicated to addressing the highly qualified teacher shortage in any manner the school board deems appropriate.

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
Indiana	<p>Teacher preparation programs continue to work with alternative route candidates who are on Emergency Permits and Transition to Teaching permits. Several preparation programs have joined a statewide STEM initiative to increase STEM teachers by providing STEM coursework to current teachers wanting to expand their expertise and licensure to STEM content areas.</p> <p>Indiana has four institutions with programs for Woodrow Wilson Fellows which target math and science shortages. Indiana has an active partnership with Teach for America and The New Teacher Project Fellows who work in shortage areas in high needs districts. For more information regarding alternative routes please see the link "Alternative Teacher Preparation Routes".</p> <p>Highly qualified teacher verification and documentation in Indiana is handled at the corporation level. The Department of Education assists individuals in determining whether they are highly qualified, or what actions they would need to take to become highly qualified. The forms are provided also. The school corporations are to keep this information in the teachers file. For more information regarding Highly Qualified please see the link "Highly Qualified."</p>
Iowa	<p>The Board of Educational Examiners adopted rules to create a teacher intern license which allows an individual who possesses a baccalaureate degree and who meets other requirements an opportunity to become a secondary school teacher. The teacher intern route to licensure is an effort to address the shortage areas in teaching. The Regent Institutions have collaborated to establish a teacher intern program and one of their goals is to provide more high school teachers in the shortage areas that are highly qualified.</p> <p>The shortage list is published and distributed to the Institutions of Higher Education and school districts. Communication efforts continue to recruit exemplary high school students and career changing adults to become teachers.</p> <p>The Department of Education and the Board of Educational Examiners have had several informal conversations with the various higher education institutions encouraging programs to look at the way they are preparing science teachers and librarians, for example, and to think of ways to encourage more teacher education candidates to consider completion of shortage area endorsements.</p>
Michigan	<p>At this time, The Michigan Department of Education does not coordinate efforts among the Educator Preparation Institutions to address shortages of highly qualified teachers.</p>
Minnesota	<p>The extent to which highly qualified shortage areas are addressed by certification, subject, and specialty varies by institutions in Minnesota.</p>
Ohio	<p>At this time there are no highly qualified teacher shortage areas in Ohio. Statewide, 98.7% of elementary and secondary courses are taught by Highly Qualified Teachers.</p>
Wisconsin	<p>Traditional educator preparation programs continue to look at ways to address shortage areas. Approved alternative route to licensure programs supply the state with educators for critical shortage content fields, which include content areas difficult to fill due to geographic location. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a \$2.2 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to train 100 mathematics, science and special education teachers through the alternative route to licensure programs. Thirty-seven partnering school districts, in high-need geographic areas of the state, will benefit from the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers.</p>

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5\\_01](https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01).

## Student Educational Attainment

Indicators of student educational attainment include

- ▶ Fourth grade literacy;
- ▶ Advanced Placement participation and performance;
- ▶ performance on college readiness assessments (ACT and SAT);
- ▶ averaged freshman graduation rates; and
- ▶ college completion rates.

### A. Fourth Grade Literacy

Research has shown that students who are not reading well by third grade have a higher probability of dropping out of high school. Each state uses different assessments of reading and literacy. Table 21 presents results from the 2015 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment.

**Table 21. Percentage at each achievement level on the 2015 4th grade NAEP reading assessment, 2015**

State	Achievement Level				
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	At or Above Proficient
United States	32	33	27	8	35
Illinois	32	33	26	9	35
Indiana	25	35	31	9	40
Iowa	29	34	29	9	38
Michigan	37	35	24	5	29
Minnesota	29	32	30	9	39
Ohio	28	35	29	8	38
Wisconsin	29	34	29	8	37

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *The Nation's Report Card*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from [www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading\\_math\\_2015/#reading/state/acl?grade=4](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading/state/acl?grade=4).

### B. Advanced Placement Participation and Performance

Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and performance on AP exams are predictors of college enrollment and performance. By taking AP courses, students are exposed to college-level course material while in high school. There are currently more than 30 AP courses. At the end of the school year, students in AP courses have the opportunity to take the associated AP exam. The exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Many colleges and universities grant college credit, depending on the score. Each college has discretion for awarding credit based on AP exam performance, but generally a student must earn at least a 3 to receive college-level credit. Table 22 provides the number of students who took an AP course in 2015, the number of exams taken, the average exam score, and the percentage of exams scored 3 or higher. There are more exams taken than students taking AP courses because individual

students may take more than one AP course in a given year. The College Board provides detailed reports for each state, available [here](#).

**Table 22. AP participation and exam performance, 2015**

State	Number of Students Taking AP Course	Total Number of Exams Taken	Average Exam Score (1 to 5 Scale)	Percent of Exams Scored 3 or Higher
United States	2,416,329	4,343,547	2.82	57
Illinois	105,205	193,929	3.01	63
Indiana	46,466	77,086	2.63	51
Iowa	12,449	19,787	2.96	63
Michigan	59,525	98,135	3.02	65
Minnesota	42,814	70,699	3.04	66
Ohio	65,367	114,370	3.04	65
Wisconsin	41,398	70,007	3.07	67

Source: *College Board State Summary Reports*. Retrieved July 12, 2016, from <https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/participatioN/Ap-2015>.

### C. Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks

The two primary college readiness assessments in the United States are the ACT® and the SAT. Both tests have historically been taken by high school students planning on attending college. The test taken is largely a function of the state where a student attends high school. Recently, several states began providing all students the opportunity to take college readiness assessments. In 2015, 13 states had 100-percent participation of graduates in the ACT assessment: Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming. Because not all students participate in the ACT® and/or SAT assessments, it is not appropriate to make comparisons between states. When larger percentages of students in a state participate in the assessment, the average score is generally lower because students from all ability levels are tested. In states with lower participation rates, the students tested are often more likely to be higher achieving.

The ACT® consists of four subject area tests (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science), which are often combined for a composite score. ACT® sets benchmarks for each subject-area test. The ACT® benchmarks are the scores associated with a 50-percent chance of earning a B or higher in corresponding first-year college courses. The ACT® benchmarks are 18 in English, 22 in both Mathematics and Reading, and 23 in Science.

The SAT consists of three subject area tests (Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing). The College Board sets a benchmark for the SAT composite score associated with a 65-percent probability of obtaining a first-year GPA of a B-minus or higher. The SAT college readiness benchmark is a 1550 composite score. The College Board produces detailed program results for each state. The state reports provide additional details and breakdowns by student subgroup. See more at <https://www.collegeboard.org/release/2015-program-results>.

**Table 23. ACT® and SAT participation and mean scores, 2015**

State	Percent of Graduates Taking ACT® <sup>a</sup>	Average ACT® Composite Score <sup>a</sup> (Benchmark 21.25)	Percent of Graduates Taking SAT <sup>b</sup>	Average SAT Composite Score <sup>b</sup> (Benchmark 1550)
United States	51 to 60	21.0	N/A	1,490
Illinois	91 to 100	20.7	0 to 10	1,802
Indiana	41 to 50	22.1	71 to 80	1,473
Iowa	61 to 70	22.2	0 to 10	1,755
Michigan	91 to 100	20.1	0 to 10	1,788
Minnesota	71 to 80	22.7	0 to 10	1,778
Ohio	71 to 80	22.0	11 to 20	1,657
Wisconsin	71 to 80	22.2	0 to 10	1,771

Source: <sup>a</sup> *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015*. Retrieved July 2, 2016, from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-report-2015.html?page=0&chapter=9>.  
<sup>b</sup> *The College Board Program Results, SAT State Profile Reports*. Retrieved July 15, 2016, from <https://www.collegeboard.org/release/2015-program-results>

**Table 24. Percentage of ACT® and SAT test takers meeting college readiness benchmarks, 2015**

State	Seniors Taking ACT® <sup>a</sup>	Met ACT® College Readiness Benchmark				Seniors Taking SAT <sup>b</sup>	Met SAT College Readiness Benchmark <sup>b</sup>
		English <sup>a</sup>	Reading <sup>a</sup>	Mathematics <sup>a</sup>	Science <sup>a</sup>		
United States	59	64	46	42	38	N/A	42
Illinois	100	63	41	41	37	4	79
Indiana	41	72	54	52	44	71	38
Iowa	67	75	55	48	48	3	74
Michigan	100	59	40	34	34	4	78
Minnesota	78	74	57	58	53	5	78
Ohio	73	71	54	49	45	14	65
Wisconsin	73	74	53	52	49	4	78

Source: <sup>a</sup> *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015*. Retrieved July 2, 2016, from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-report-2015.html?page=0&chapter=9>.  
<sup>b</sup> *The College Board Program Results, State Reports*. Retrieved July 15, 2016, from <https://www.collegeboard.org/release/2015-program-results>.

## D. Public High School Graduation Rates

The adjusted cohort graduation rate (known as ACGR) measures the percentage of public school students who attain a regular high school diploma within 4 years of starting 9th grade for the first time.

**Table 25. Adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students overall and by race/ethnicity, 2013–14**

State	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
United States	82	87	73	76	89	70
Illinois	86	90	77	81	94	82
Indiana	88	90	75	83	89	84
Iowa	91	92	79	82	90	78
Michigan	79	83	65	69	89	65
Minnesota	81	86	60	63	82	51
Ohio	82	87	63	69	88	74
Wisconsin	89	93	66	78	90	81

Source: 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 219.46. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_219.46.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_219.46.asp?current=yes).

## E. College Completion Rates

One way that secondary schools measure their performance is by the transition of high school graduates into postsecondary education or the labor force. One source of longitudinal data on postsecondary enrollment and completion is the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Following are data from a new report that shows 6-year outcomes for students aged 20 or younger at time of first entry. A detailed report and data tables are available for download from NSC (see <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport10-statesupplement/>).

Table 26 shows 6-year completion rates for students aged 20 or younger who were first-time degree-seeking students who started their postsecondary studies in fall 2009. The states refer to the state where a student entered an institution of higher education, not the state where a student graduated from high school.

**Table 26. Overall 6-year completion rates for students aged 20 or younger who were first-time, degree-seeking students in postsecondary institutions in fall 2009, by institution type**

State	4-Year Public	4-Year Private Non Profit	2-Year Public
United States	64.97	76.02	40.72
Illinois	73.48	77.17	47.38
Indiana	N/A	79.12	20.10
Iowa	82.59	75.35	49.31
Michigan	70.21	N/A	37.98
Minnesota	73.18	81.68	56.79
Ohio	62.52	72.81	38.67
Wisconsin	71.74	73.15	48.83

Source: Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P., Yuan, X., and Harrell, A. (2015, February). *Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Attainment Rates* (Signature Report No. 8a). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

## **Appendix B. Needs and Recommendations From Committee Members**

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# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Emilie Amundson

**Affiliation:** Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

**Priority Need 1.** *The newly passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) brings opportunities for increased flexibilities state to state. With these flexibilities comes the opportunity for state to state innovation and learning that will strengthen the entire US system.*

**Justification:** In the online survey, several key stakeholder groups surfaced goals and objectives, such as college and career readiness for every student, ensuring equitable access to high quality educators, and supporting lowest performing schools and districts as priorities for the comprehensive centers. All of these priorities could be addressed through ESSA by states in different ways. One of the intents of providing more flexibility to the states is to ensure that states can become laboratories of excellence for best practices in these key areas that impact equity.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Comprehensive Centers could meet the need by creating networks of state department staff focused on learning from and supporting one another in these key areas. Comprehensive centers should focus on creating sustained communities of practice that span the life of the grant cycle, as opposed to convening states on particular topics for one meeting, or even one year. As these best practices begin to emerge around school and district improvement, accountability, equitable access to high quality teachers, the networks will already be intact and the relationships built. Too often, states are convened only to all begin their planning, or in turn, to learn from the one state out far ahead. Both of these models miss the time in the middle where states are trying strategies, tweaking them, seeing early successes, and still are willing to learn from one another. My stakeholders encourage the comprehensive centers to develop lasting systems and structures to support SEAs over 3-5 years of ESSA implementation, rather than shifting gears to the next initiative.

**Priority Need 2.** *SEA staff deal with nearly every issue surfaced in the needs sensing process, yet often lack the internal capacity to connect these initiatives in ways that lighten the load for the stakeholders they serve. SEAs need support making internal strategic connections.*

**Justification:** SEA staff often lack the ability to prioritize among the competing priorities outlined in the needs sensing survey, primarily because SEAs must support all of this work. Often, as initiatives move faster than our own internal ability to communicate about them to our colleagues, we miss opportunities for proactive and strategic connection making that could actually simplify the landscape for our stakeholders. Comprehensive Centers are well poised to help SEAs pause, plan, and synthesize in ways that will make an impact on strategy or workload for the stakeholders we serve.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Comprehensive Centers could meet the need outlined above by offering coaching services on strategic integration of initiatives. Often lacking in an SEA, we need a person with the time, knowledge and expertise to help us see the connections afoot in our initiatives, and help us strategically map how to better align them in ways that simplify the work of the districts we serve. Initiatives like educator effectiveness, positive behavioral interventions, achievement gap closing instructional strategies and practices, and academic and career planning are all ways to work on school improvement, yet each are often implemented from their own silo, which leaves

LEAs, principals, teachers and others feeling overwhelmed at the sheer volume of work, and the lack of resources, time and focus to do the work, feedback that was evident in the needs assessment survey from these groups. Comprehensive Centers should focus on building SEA capacity to connect internal efforts, which will in turn make an impact on the efforts of district and school personnel.

***Priority Need 3. SEA staff often lack the time, resources, or scope to deliver high quality professional development that is research based, high quality and powerful.***

**Justification:** While SEA staff are often former school and district educators, many grapple when arriving at the SEA with a role that is a blend of policy, technical assistance, compliance and professional learning. Though professional learning on the topics surfaced in the needs sensing survey is generally valuable, sometimes it can feel like a crowded field of voices, all singing from slightly different hymnals. The professional learning for educators on culturally responsive practices developed by the Wisconsin SEA is not too terribly different than that developed by Minnesota, and yet we rarely share our professional learning strategies, ideas, slides, activities, and implementation processes with one another. The Comprehensive centers can play a regional role in helping states find fertile ground for building and sharing professional learning, and for backing that professional learning up with a strong research base.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Comprehensive Centers could meet the need outlined above by offering to convene experts from across SEAs on a particular topic (personalized learning, mental health, culturally responsive practices, etc) and could facilitate a process to uncover what currently exists on a particular topic across states, what can be shared or streamlined, what might be created together that doesn't currently exist for future use by all states in particular region, and are there areas within a topic area that could benefit from additional training, research backing, white papers, convenings, etc. These are places where the comprehensive centers would be well poised to add additional value to a particular topic area. Proceeding in this way would also minimize the feeling of "crowdedness" when, for example, the comprehensive center decides to proceed with a content based professional learning opportunity that may be duplicative or contradictory to an SEA training. If content expert networks were built across states on a variety of key topic areas, these networks could form a de facto steering committee for work on particular areas; pooling resources, sharing content, and hosting joint professional learning experiences.

***Priority Need 4. SEA staff must be connected to emergent research to inform the policies and technical assistance they provide.***

**Justification:** SEA staff are often challenged for the time to read and consume educational research. However, research is of primary importance to making informed policy and implementation decisions.

**Recommended Strategy:** Comprehensive Centers should stay abreast of the latest educational research, and develop tools, resources and papers that help to connect policy decisions to the research that supports them. Creating annotated bibliographies that are easy to read and understand, and convening states to talk and learn together from researchers in the field are two concrete ways the comprehensive centers can meet the needs.

**Priority Need 5. SEA and LEA staff need professional learning experiences focused on closing opportunity and achievement gaps.**

**Justification:** Across all stakeholder groups surveyed, equitable educational opportunities for every child was a sub current running underneath many of the priority actions and needs surfaced. However, not all educators have the training in culturally responsive practices, and cultural competence that will spur meaningful change and action.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Comprehensive Centers could work with SEAs to develop or identify regional training that seeks to help educators and SEA staff understand how their own how cultural and racial identities impact their work in education, equity and excellence. In Wisconsin, we have few districts where the racial identities of the educator workforce is truly representative of the students we serve across our state. Knowing this, we must better understand how this could potentially impact our ability to deliver a high quality learning experience for every child. Comprehensive centers could leverage national experts to produce and deliver highly researched and powerful professional learning to educators regionally to better equip us with the skills needed to teach and reach each and every child.

# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Ronald S. Fielder, Ph.D.

**Affiliation:** University of Iowa

## **Priority Need 1. Preparing Students to Be College and Career Ready.**

To succeed in the current and future workplace, it is increasingly important that all high school graduates pursue & complete either a higher education degree or training that provides skills necessary to successfully enter the workforce. Advancements in technology and automation have rendered traditional service and manufacturing jobs obsolete, jobs that historically did not require training beyond high school. The retiring baby-boomer generation will leave many good paying jobs open for those who can demonstrate both the hard and soft skills necessary to succeed. The term “career ready” is now viewed as equally important to being “college ready.” Thus, institutions and communities across America are engaged in numerous efforts to address this need.

**Justification:** Responses for this priority on both the forced choice as well as open-ended aspects of our needs survey were nearly double that of any other category (other than funding issues which are beyond the scope of the Centers). In addition:

- ▶ Iowa Department of Education leaders listed this area among their top 5 priorities
- ▶ The Iowa State Board of Education includes the following as a current goal; “Individuals will pursue postsecondary education in order to drive economic success (post-secondary education). In addition, the following priority is listed, “Students across Iowa, regardless of geography, will have access to robust Career and Technical Education learning opportunities.
- ▶ The Iowa Association of School Boards has a number of legislative priorities targeted toward “making sure that students graduate from high school prepared for college or to enter the workforce.”
- ▶ Iowa’s Area Education Agencies also verbalize commitment to this need area by stating that, “graduates..... will be prepared for success in post-secondary studies, a career, and citizenship.” Toward that end they are committed to assist in identifying and tracking student post-secondary success.
- ▶ Data on the most recent Iowa Condition of Education report shows a decline in the number of high school graduates intending to pursue post-secondary education or training.

Iowa stakeholders see this as a high priority in their responses and in their intentions and should focus on increasing the number of those planning on pursuing post-secondary education/training.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** The Centers could play a key role in addressing this priority need. It would appear that many schools/districts are pursuing this need through partnerships with one another, higher education, community colleges, business & industry, associations, etc. A Center could be most helpful by identifying and showcasing best/promising practices from around the country; and then provide technical assistance, information, & training directed at those practices. They could link states and districts with others who are proving their success. In addition, The Centers could convene & facilitate new partnerships in the region – within states and/or across states. It should not be

overlooked that the area of “personalized learning” is relevant to this need area as districts work to change the delivery system of public education in hopes of increasing the number of engaged learners willing to pursue post-secondary opportunities.

### **Priority Need 2. Ensuring Equity, Including Addressing Issues of Disproportionality.**

Iowa is no different than many Midwest region states that are seeing dramatically changing demographic and socio-economic shifts. The number of minority students attending public schools in Iowa has more than doubled since 2001, with Hispanic student growth at nearly 200%. In addition, there has been dramatic growth of students qualifying for free and reduced school meals. The number of English language learners has doubled in the last ten years. These shifts have created enormous challenges for school districts, many of which lack the expertise & resources necessary to improve our success with these valuable future citizens. The number of “at-risk” students attending our schools has increased significantly as a result of these shifts.

**Justification:** Both the Iowa and overall Midwest survey results showed this area deserving of prioritization. Our Nation cannot afford to fail this “new face” of public school learners. The following supports this area as being a high priority:

- ▶ Reading, math, and science assessments in Iowa show improvement in many areas for minority students, but achievement for those students remains far below that of white students. Gains in achievement for white students were higher than the gains for minority students.
- ▶ Achievement results for African American and Hispanic are the lowest for all sub-groups.
- ▶ While some recent improvement has been shown regarding drop-out rates for all students, those rates are lowest among all sub-groups for African American, Native American, & Hispanic students.
- ▶ Minority students are referred more frequently than are whites for behavior &/or disciplinary problems.
- ▶ The Urban Education Network has a goal directed toward analyzing the current Iowa funding formula to determine the degree to which the formula adequately supports initiatives to address the problem of underachieving students.
- ▶ The Iowa Assn. of School Boards support adequate and on-time funding for ESL students, and supports additional resources for drop-out prevention and “at risk” students.
- ▶ School Administrators of Iowa call for all students to enter school ready to learn and all students achieving at a high level.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** “Ensuring equity” is a multi-faceted concept. It includes access, opportunities, resources, social justice, disproportionality, diversity training, minority teacher and leader hiring, etc. The role for Centers might include the following:

- ▶ Diversity/Social Justice training & professional development
- ▶ Identification & dissemination of best practices
- ▶ Convening & facilitating community partnerships
- ▶ Preservice training for teachers & administrators

- ▶ Evaluating success of Midwest initiatives/interventions
- ▶ Assistance in developing state policies that help address this priority area

### **Priority Need 3. Developing Strategies for Personalized Learning.**

Iowa and the Midwest survey data both supported the inclusion of this topic as a high priority. Most of our school improvement efforts in the last 30 years have been directed at fixing or improving the traditional delivery system of public education. Many now argue that with powerful tools and 24/7 access to high quality content through the Internet, the old delivery system has become obsolete. “Personalized Learning” has become a general catchall term used to describe delivery system innovation where students take more responsibility for their own learning. It includes terms/practices such as competency based education, standards-based education/grading, blended learning, digital learning, certification training, etc.

**Justification:** To many educators, it has become imperative to work on the current system while building a new one, especially if we believe that obsolescence is upon us. The Iowa State Board of Education, Department of Education, & Legislature have taken action in the last decade to support various aspects of personalized learning, including competency-based education. In addition, the following add to the justification of this area, as a priority need:

- ▶ A realization that there are limits to how an existing system can be improved
- ▶ The Urban Education Network of Iowa has called for a redefinition of high school
- ▶ The Iowa State Board of Education has established the following among its 2016 priorities: Adopt innovative learning opportunities such as competency based education, online learning, summer learning, & career/technical education.
- ▶ Most of the state professional associations in Iowa do not include aspects of personalized learning in their goals or priorities.
- ▶ Iowa Department of Education leaders articulated “personalize learning” as one of the top priorities for the state.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** The following are possible roles that Centers could play in supporting the area of personalized learning:

- ▶ Identify and disseminate information about states or districts that are doing exemplary work in personalized learning practices such as New Hampshire, Iowa, & Oregon.
- ▶ Identify promising research about personalized learning practices.
- ▶ Emphasize the critical link between standards and competencies.
- ▶ Assist and advise districts in how educator roles will change as these practices proliferate.
- ▶ Assist states and districts in the identification of competencies and how to evaluate demonstration of competency.
- ▶ Identify and support model “personalized learning” districts. (i.e. The Big Ideas School in Cedar Rapids).

#### **Priority Need 4. Supporting Low-Performing Schools and Closing the Achievement Gap.**

Both Midwest and Iowa results on the survey showed this topic as a high priority. While it is closely related to the priority need of Equity and Disproportionality, it is more broadly related to issues such as quality of instruction and school effectiveness, leadership, assessment practices, turn-around strategies, as well as a broader inclusion of sub-group performance beyond just minority or low socio-economic students. Iowa is like most other states in that some schools perform better than others and multiple sub-groups have gaps in achievement. While progress is being made, additional technical assistance and expertise is welcome.

**Justification:** Iowa still has a number of districts and schools that are underperforming and are targets for major improvement. Progress is being made for some schools and sub-groups, but significant work remains. Those that are making progress seem to be those schools that are carrying out the following in unison: high functioning Professional Learning Communities, practices based on an RTI (MTSS) framework, & formative assessments done with integrity. The following add justification for the establishment of this area as a priority need:

- ▶ State assessment data that shows multiple sub-groups under-achieving and schools that are under-performing.
- ▶ Iowa Department of Education Leaders see this as one of 5-6 critical priorities for the state.
- ▶ Minority and special education students are not achieving at optimum levels in reading, math, or science.
- ▶ The Iowa Urban Education Network established achievement for “at-risk” students as one of four goals.
- ▶ The Iowa Association of School Boards established a number of legislative priorities that include advocacy for early literacy and solutions to dropouts and low achievement for “at risk” students.
- ▶ The State Board of Education’s strategic plan calls for all children entering school ready to learn and that those students will all achieve at a high level. In addition the Board calls for reducing the achievement gap.
- ▶ Iowa’s Area Education Agencies current goals include reducing the learning gaps by half for those students with IEPs, as well as for those in disaggregated sub-groups by 2018.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** It is clear to many that addressing the achievement gaps in our schools will require bold, innovative, & informed efforts. It is essential that Iowa schools adopt practices that are working in schools with similar characteristics. Thus, it is clear that a major role for the Centers would be to *review the research and nationwide practices to identify what is working in the majority of districts that have been successful in reducing the achievement gap and increasing the performance of schools*. The centers can play a role in linking schools/districts with those exemplary programs. They can also provide teachers and administrators professional development and training in those practices that hold promise, as well as how to “scale up” those practices. Additional roles Centers could play include: technical assistance, facilitation, evaluation, etc.

#### **Priority Need 5. Improving Instructional Effectiveness.**

Iowa survey respondents articulated multiple and varied needs related to the broad theme of Improving Instructional Effectiveness. Within this theme, the following words and phrases were expressed by Iowa

stakeholders: improving instruction, better instructional support, effective teaching, quality of teaching, improving instructional leadership, best practices, research on instruction, evaluation of instructional staff, class size, recruitment & retention of adequate numbers of teaching & leader professionals, etc. In summary, it can be stated that these stakeholders believe that effective teaching is the key to increasing achievement in our schools as well as supporting the previously mentioned four priority needs.

**Justification:** The Regional Advisory Council survey results, especially for Iowa, indicate that aspects of instructional effectiveness are important and deserving of Comprehensive Center support. This theme was among the top five topics selected as a priority by Iowa stakeholders.

In addition the following provide justification for this theme:

- ▶ Iowa Department of Education Leaders indicated that “improving instructional leadership” is among its current highest priorities.
- ▶ For the last couple of years, instructional leadership/effectiveness has been a significant focus in Iowa. An entire new “teacher leader” program was funded and implemented statewide. Thus, it is easy to see why this topic is currently important to Iowa stakeholders.
- ▶ Currently, the Urban Education Network (12 or more largest school districts in Iowa) has established the following as one of their goals, “In collaboration with instructional staff, develop a process for the inclusion of student learning as one factor in the evaluation of instructional personnel.”
- ▶ The Iowa Association of School Boards currently supports, “Researched based professional development and initiatives that provide educators with training, support and time to work together so they can...successfully teach all students.”
- ▶ As one of its guiding principles, the Iowa State Board of Education believes that, “Educators need ongoing support and professional development to improve student leadership. In addition, one of their 2016 Priorities is to improve teacher and leader preparation.
- ▶ Iowa’s Area Education Agencies aspire to provide the supports and accountability for implementation of evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, and scalable best practices in all Iowa schools.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Because of the broadness of this priority need area, it is difficult to focus on specific strategies. However, it is felt that the Centers could best assist with the following aspects of the theme: improving instruction & effective research-based teaching practices. Toward that end, the following are suggested roles for the Centers:

- ▶ Review and dissemination of best practices research on instructional effectiveness.
- ▶ Professional development & training in the following areas: improving instruction, instructional support/leadership, the role of professional learning communities and peer review as part of instructional improvement, how to scale-up research based best practices in a whole school or district, the role of the principal in school & instructional effectiveness.
- ▶ Collaborate with and broker the services of others to assist schools and districts. An example would be to examine the successes of and learn from teacher mentoring/induction programs such as the New Teacher Center in Santa Clara, California.
- ▶ Evaluate or demonstrate how to effectively evaluate intervention programs & strategies

- ▶ Assist states and schools in aligning state and common core standards to effective teaching practices.

# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Lee Ann Kwiatkowski

**Affiliation:** Metropolitan School District of Warren Township, Indiana

## ***Priority Need 1. College and Career Readiness***

**Justification:** The growing complexity and increasing demands of the 21st century workforce, exacerbated by ever-increasing technological advances, leave little dispute that today's students' readiness for college and career require innovative education delivery practices.

While districts have a fairly solid handle on English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in postsecondary coursework (or workforce entry upon graduation), educators and employers continue to struggle with "teaching" those "less tangible" 21st century skills.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Share best practices from states or districts that are successfully supporting students to develop skills such as perseverance, communication, teamwork, and leadership. Provide context on how and where practices were implemented. For example, include information about how much instructional time is needed, whether strategy was implemented in rural or urban settings, if strategy helped close achievement gaps.

Additional best practices that could be compiled and shared include: incorporating technology in instruction, improving student depth of knowledge, and implementing competency-based and personalized learning.

## ***Priority Need 2. Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders***

**Justification:** In a time when recruitment and retention of the most effective educators is at a premium, urban districts continue to struggle in supporting the critical work of their most highly effective teachers and building leaders and, in fact, risk staff burn out with frustrating State & federal mandates (e.g., performance evaluation systems that are perceived by teachers as unfair; State assessments and accountability systems that are unreasonable and take far too much time to administer).

Rural and small schools struggle to recruit and retain teachers to their communities.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Compile and share best practices and research on retaining highly effective teachers, particularly in high-needs districts.

Support or facilitate partnerships between Schools of Education in the region and SEAs to ensure teacher preparation programs are meeting needs, especially for teaching 21st century skills.

## ***Priority Need 3. Support for Small and Rural Schools***

**Justification:** Federally funded programs, such as Title I and Special Education, offer critical resources to districts and are a vital source of support to small and rural schools. However, rural and small district leaders routinely voice concerns (during State and regional meetings) that the embedded program requirements place significant burdens on districts without the central office manpower traditionally

found in larger and urban districts. All too often, one person—with multiple district roles—is the sole individual responsible for all administrative functions of federally funded programs. Funding and resources are a major problem for small schools.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Compile and share best practices and examples of how small and rural schools or districts have pooled resources to distribute costs. For example, using distance or online learning to offer more courses or share highly qualified teachers. Increase access to research and strategies that have been evaluated through federal grant programs or centers.

#### **Priority Need 4. Early Childhood**

**Justification:** Over the past decade, 40 states have initiated state-funded preschool programs, which serve about one-quarter of all 4-year-olds. Findings from these preschool programs, coupled with findings from longitudinal studies conducted over the past several decades (HighScope Perry Preschool Project; the Abecedarian Preschool program), have shown that high-quality preschool can improve school readiness, particularly for children of color and children who are non-native English speakers. Children who participated in the Perry Preschool Project were more likely to complete high school, become employed, and avoid incarceration.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Compile and share strategies and funding mechanisms to support families of pre-school-aged children in States that do not fund pre-school programs or where families of highest-need students cannot afford quality preschool opportunities.

Additional best practices could include: share best practices when providing early childhood experiences, including such strategies as increasing or decreasing play-centered activities versus academic focus; describe other strategies that districts could offer to support families of very young children in preparation for their children's future attendance in district elementary schools.

#### **Priority Need 5. Equity/Closing the Gap**

**Justification:** The powerful issues of poverty and race have historically impacted educational opportunities of students. Across time, we have seen that access, alone, to supplementary federal (e.g., Title I) and State funding resources designed to ameliorate these concerns, did not equate to optimal usage, or the significant reduction in achievement gaps.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Compile and share best practices for closing achievement gaps such as: helping school leaders advance and sustain effective classroom practices that engage and motivate all learners; creating student-centered learning environments.

Provide instructional strategies or practices that are evidenced-based as having the potential to close achievement gaps among student groups.

**Other needs shared by stakeholders:** *Funding, Accountability (getting rid of A-F model), Assessments (reduce testing), Creating a statewide data system*

# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Maya Kruger

**Affiliation:** Aurora Charter School, Minnesota

**Priority Need 1. Schools, districts, and states need assistance in ensuring an equitable, transparent, and stream lined funding system that adequately supports the needs of students and tracks the relationships along the way.**

**Justification:** In the Midwest region, priorities centered on ensuring adequate and equitable funding for schools by the means of a closer watch on decisions made by the state, districts, and schools. Specifically, stakeholders want to know how the money is being distributed at each level as well as how those decisions are made. Feedback shows that teachers and schools are confused by their need to seek funding from the private sector, through levies, and by donation. While some stakeholders explained that they felt their individual school leadership teams were ill equipped to handle the budgets of their schools, many felt that money was being lost along the way through a trickle down system. As one teacher was quoted, “it’s like tracing water droplets from a waterslide in the dark—no one seems to know where it’s coming from, where it’s going to, or who decided that in the first place. And it seems so much is lost along the way”. In addition, many stakeholders lamented about unsteady streams of finances—money had then gone—that disrupts consistency, provides only a short-term fix, or causes greater problems down the road by implementing unsustainable systems.

**Recommended Strategy for Addressing Concerns Surrounding Funding:** To address the priority of ensuring equitable and adequate funding, the Comprehensive Centers can establish an online, easy to access, and transparent database used between the state, districts, and schools that would expose the streams and flow of funding between the three levels. The liaison that establishes this database would train state, district, and school employees to continue this database after the grant or RCC removes itself from the equation.

This database would allow any curious person to easily track how their school is funded and how it stands up to other schools in the district and state. This database would hold all three levels accountable by transparently tracking the streams of funding. By doing so, school, districts, and state employees can alter, evolve, or better support, the current systems, or algorithms, already in place. Those in charge of the database, or data entry, would be responsible for tracking monetary flows and making visible these flows and the decision making behind them. Within this, lies the opportunity for districts and schools to make better use of the funds they have available, locate grants, and/or seek assistance. Most importantly, this liaison who establishes this would ensure that the database is easy to maintain for districts and schools to continue tracking the monetary flow transparently and accessibly.

**Priority Need 2. Preparing students to be college and career ready. Universities need to prepare teachers to be highly effective so they can aptly prepare students for post-high school life.**

**Justification:** In the Midwest region, stakeholders expressed concern over their own abilities and the abilities of others to prepare students for life after high school. Lack of cultural competency, a diminishment of life skills, and inequitable funding leave many teachers struggling to have what they

need to adequately teach and prepare students for life. Many stakeholders elaborated that they felt this unpreparedness led to graduating classes with severe loopholes in readiness. Noting on their college experience, educators commented that they felt they experienced a breadth of study, but not a depth of study. This breadth familiarized them with education but did not prepare them for the high stakes needs of the classroom. One educator commented, “I began my first year with no idea of all the pieces I would be in charge of, or that I would have to handle. I could write a lesson plan and I could make it inclusive to all students on paper... but implementing it and writing it were different. I had no framework for teaching under the conditions of an urban classroom.”

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** To address the priority of preparing students to be college- and career-ready, the Comprehensive Centers could coordinate communication between high needs schools and universities to strengthen teacher preparation programs.

Our students can't be prepared for life after school, if educators aren't prepared for them while they're in school. Facilitating efforts between schools and universities allows universities to stay up to date and pre-service teachers to have an education that centers more clearly on current and changing issues. Collaborations such as this will eliminate the swift learning curve that occurs the first year of teaching. Teachers and schools will be able to communicate their needs to universities, whose expert professors can prepare teachers for addressing these needs. Pre-service teachers will benefit from the pre-teaching preparation and the opportunity to work more in depth with the schools they will soon be working in. Overall, the true benefactors would be the students for they would have teachers equipped to support them.

Key components would be as follows:

- ▶ Establish communication between schools and universities.
- ▶ Facilitate a conversation surrounding the current or most pressing needs within schools.

As a result of the technical assistance, Universities would evolve/re-shape their preparation programs to match these needs. Additionally, pre-service teachers, while studying, would work with these same schools so as to build a framework or schema that their preparation program could be filed with.

**Priority Need 3. Preparing students to be college- and career-ready. Schools need to reduce the stakes of testing in order to have the freedom to better prepare students for college and careers.**

**Justification:** In the Midwest region, stakeholders were clear that testing disrupts their ability to prepare students for college, careers, and life. High stakes testing burdens educators with strict adherence to preparation curriculums, requires financial resources, and in a zero-sum mentality, takes focus and efforts away from other important facets of a well-rounded and effective education. Current emphasis on testing as a means of measurement for school growth and success leaves little room for the arts, mental health, social-emotional learning, and life skills, vocational, or tech training. In addition, stakeholders in the Midwest believe that testing does not provide a clear image of student growth and success and can therefore not be used as a sole measurement for schools or as a heavily weighted measure of student success.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** To address the priority of preparing students to be college- and career-ready, the Comprehensive Centers could work with educators, schools, districts,

unions, and community groups, to create alternative measurement plans that are acceptable under ESSA for holding schools accountable. They will facilitate the conversations for, and creation of, aligned means for measurement of school goals that reduce the stakes of testing. The Comprehensive Centers could create an online space where measurement plans and resources can be stored and accessed by states or schools.

Plan:

- ▶ Comprehensive centers could disseminate information to help educators, schools, and districts understand ESSA's accountability components in terms of the freedom schools have in goal development and accountability for reducing the stakes of testing; as well as the procedure schools must follow to enact these measures.
- ▶ Comprehensive centers could support SEAs as they work with schools and districts to understand the goals to be measured and to create means to measure them by.
- ▶ Comprehensive centers should share these resources online and make them accessible to other schools and districts.

# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Asta Sepetys

**Affiliation:** Wisconsin Heights Middle School/High School, Wisconsin

**Priority Need 1. Stakeholders need a clearer and more collective vision for what is defined and promoted as College and Career Readiness.**

**Justification:** Student preparedness is a common theme in dialogue amongst educators, parents, students, and other community stakeholders. The topic of *College and Career Readiness* was highly conspicuous in stakeholder interviews, in ongoing collegial and student dialogues, and underscored by RAC Midwest survey results. The portion less scrutinized is the unique perspective in which every stakeholder interprets and/or philosophically believes [or wishes] to be *College and Career Readiness*. There is a clear disconnect in our educational system and vision. Little time is spent or available to teachers who are “in the trenches” to have any dialogue with community leaders, outside agencies, business and industry representatives, health professionals and parents, working toward finding the steps and measures necessary to unite in a collective and holistic development of the child. Educators and stakeholder representatives from PK-12 schools, technical colleges, universities, parents, community members, business and industry representatives are all operating in silos, and although there have been some attempts made to create common language for *College and Career Readiness*, the objectives toward this goal are skewed. The educational system needs a vehicle to close the pockets of interpretation and promote a broader, more comprehensive and cohesive PK through Career/College/Beyond vision of readiness for young people to become useful members of society.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** In order to close the pockets of interpretation and to promote a broader and more cohesive and comprehensive vision and collaborative pursuit toward readiness, Comprehensive Centers could assist by providing opportunities for common dialogue:

- ▶ Provide strategies and professional development opportunities to invest all educators and stakeholders in creating a common dialogue for differentiated career readiness and life readiness needs.
- ▶ Spearhead and organize opportunities for educators to participate in schools-to-industry sharing.
- ▶ Spearhead and organize opportunities for educators to participate in schools-to-outside agency sharing.
- ▶ Spearhead and organize opportunities for educators to participate in collective dialogue with educators at all levels to create established buy-in for career and life skills readiness goals.
- ▶ Organize/support outreach campaigns so that educators may communicate and work with parents, agencies, industries, and extended communities, in order to promote a paradigm shift from viewing the PK-12 school as a silo to recognizing it as simply a small piece of the puzzle whose interlocking pursuit amid extended community connections happens to assist with a child’s long-range life goals.

## ***Priority Need 2. Educators need resources and strategies to address the ever increasing issues associated with socioeconomic disproportionality.***

**Justification:** Educators are facing increasing pressures from a growing and diverse socio-economic population. Midwest survey results and numerous interviews with teachers and administrators identified a significant need to address these increasing pressures. Educators do not feel equipped to support the multiple, differentiated needs of students. More and more frequently, the traditional classroom is led by one professional educator who must address an abundance of needs for various students within the class, a practice which proves overwhelming for that sole staff member, and ineffective for student learning. Throughout my interviews and discussions, primarily with secondary school educators and administrators, a critical urgency appeared among educators to find the interventions necessary to help close the preparedness gap as students approach adulthood and societal responsibility.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** In order to provide support and relief for educators' growing pressures and lack of resources necessary to address socio-economic disproportionality within their student populations, Comprehensive Centers could assist by helping SEAs identify opportunities for:

- ▶ Professional development training for educators to learn how to address the socioeconomic student needs in our schools
- ▶ In-service and training by best practice educators embedded in the field of PK-12 education on how to directly address the needs of students with academic and achievement gaps evident due to socio-economic difficulties.
- ▶ Consortiums of educators, law enforcement, and mental health agencies to convene in multi-area "think-tanks" to create concrete measures for schools in addressing the needs of socio-economic disproportionality.
- ▶ Professional development training in the art of team-teaching.

## ***Priority Need 3. Educators who are in the PK-12 public school trenches need to have more opportunities to become the voice for our educational system.***

**Justification:** The collective experience, wisdom, and understanding of children's developmental needs in my interviewed educator stakeholder groups was tremendous. Without exception, every interview and dialogue included significant frustration on the part of educators with the initiatives and legislation passed on to them to implement. These directives often lack the funding, training, and notice to employ successfully. Some of these directives include, but are not limited to, crisis training, safe schools training, mental health awareness, medication training, frequent changes in educator effectiveness, behavior initiatives, and the ever-shifting academic requirements, standards, and assessment measures.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** In supporting the PK-12 educator's voice in the establishment of programs and solutions within the educational system, Comprehensive Centers would assist by providing, encouraging, and promoting opportunities for PK-12 best practice educators to have more voice in their comprehensive educational system. These best practice educators could be peer nominated or self-identified. Comprehensive Centers could establish statewide programs to coordinate and seek out the best practitioners currently working in schools, and compensate their time for the contribution of valuable input to statewide and federal programs and initiatives, prior to

implementation. These best practice educators could also be used to help put into practice trial initiative programs within their own schools, in order to create a more practical and transitional approach to implementing statewide sweeping programs.

# Individual Needs Assessment

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**Name:** Charlie Wilson

**Affiliation:** The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

## **Priority Need 1. Closing the enrichment gap.**

Educators need strategies, best practices, and professional development for tailoring instruction to close the enrichment gap. In addition, schools need after-school programs, weekend programs, and summer programs to close the enrichment gap.

Centers need to help SEAs understand that the definition of public education must be expanded to include before-school, after-school, and summer programs for low SES students, so that they have the kinds of enrichment opportunities that higher SES kids get.

**Justification:** During the summers, affluent students spend their days at camp or traveling the world with their families, picking up knowledge, skills, and social connections that will help them thrive at school. These experiences are usually not accessible to their less affluent peers. Robert Putnam in his book *Our Kids* and in his report “Closing the Opportunity Gap” argues that there is a growing class gulf in spending on children’s enrichment and extracurricular activities such as sports, summer camps, piano lessons, trips to the zoo, etc. The upper-middle class is spending large amounts of money to enhance its children’s experience and education, while other students must make do with far less.

Even more importantly, according to the United States Census Bureau, the enrichment gap also shows up in participation rates. The Census Bureau tracks involvement in out-of-school sports, clubs, music lessons, dance lessons, Hebrew lessons, etc. According to the Census Bureau, children whose parents have advanced degrees are three times likelier to participate in sports than those whose parents dropped out of high school. The picture looks much the same for clubs and lessons, as well as for high school students’ involvement in extracurricular activities.

After school, over the weekend, and during the summer, affluent students work on projects that take the form of artistic, creative, vocational, and enrichment activities that give them meaning and direction. These activities often develop passions that propel affluent students to long-term success and spark the “grit” to stay in school, avoid trouble, and select better peer groups.

Many studies attest to the positive impact of participation in extracurricular and enrichment activities. Several studies have established a causal link between participation in high school athletics and positive long-term outcomes. Participation in high school sports has been shown to increase significantly college going and labor force participation. The demonstrated benefits for high school athletes include higher grades, increased graduation and college completion rates, and a decrease in antisocial behaviors. Similar results have been found for students who participate in other extracurricular activities, such as clubs, especially if they play leadership roles or are deeply committed.

As several stakeholders mentioned in the focus groups, enrichment activities help students develop “non-cognitive and social and emotional skills.” As one math teacher said, “Sure, you can try to teach grit in math class, but I think that you will be much more successful teaching grit in football, karate, piano, violin, or dance activities.”

One survey respondent urged Centers to “provide professional development for social and emotional learning in schools.” Another requested that Centers assist in “provid[ing] programs to help develop children’s self-esteem.”

Unfortunately, the vast majority of low- and moderate-income children do not have full access to the extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that are so valuable for young people. Educators claim that they need strategies, best practices, professional development, and various programs (after-school, week-end, and summer) that will make it likelier that poor students will take part in high-quality enrichment along with their affluent peers.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Educators need to know how to beef up and improve existing after-school, weekend, and summer programs. In addition, educators need research that demonstrates what kinds of programs have a strong causal link with long-term outcomes. Educators need research demonstrating the benefits of getting rid of “pay-to-play” fees for high school sports and other extracurricular activities. As one teacher said, “If participation in sports and clubs have positive benefits for students, why do we erect financial barriers to them?”

Comprehensive Centers could *support SEAs as they encourage school districts to develop and test enrichment strategies that would boost the extracurricular and enrichment participation rates for disadvantaged students*. The Centers should provide technical assistance to states that have limited capacity and resources to create new programs. The Centers could *provide access to evaluators (researchers through universities, research firms, or other federal programs) who would rigorously evaluate the ideas and pilot programs that the school districts try out*. Then, the Centers could find out which of these ideas dramatically raise participation in a cost-effective way and get positive long-term results.

The Centers could play a critical role in creating a world where the summer, weekend, and after-school experiences of poor students are not as radically different as they are today for the rich students, and where every American child gets to enjoy the ups and downs of participating in activities that develop passions and “grit.”

## **Priority Need 2. Closing the achievement gap.**

School-based social and economic improvement programs that will improve the outcomes of lower-social-class children are desperately needed if we are to make significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

**Justification:** It is widely recognized that students’ social and economic characteristics shape their cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Unfortunately, however, many policymakers resist accepting that non-school disadvantages necessarily depress outcomes. Instead, they tend to look to better schools and teachers to close achievement gaps. These strategies have done little to close achievement gaps.

Consequently, educators must become more active in addressing social class characteristics that depress achievement. Numerous social class characteristics depress outcomes and adversely influence child development. Among these are parenting practices that impede children’s intellectual and behavioral development, single parenthood, parents’ irregular work schedules, inadequate access to primary and preventive health care, exposure to and absorption of lead in the blood, parental unemployment, parental low wages, housing instability, stress, malnutrition, health problems like asthma, and concentration of disadvantage in segregated neighborhoods.

For example, with respect to parenting practices that impede children’s intellectual and behavioral development, lower-social-class parents tend to engage in fewer educationally supportive activities with young children, such as reading aloud or playing cognitively stimulating games. Lower-social-class parents also tend to exert more direct authority and offer children fewer choices in daily interactions, leaving them less prepared for critical thinking when school curricula expect it. Parents’ failure to engage in educationally supportive activities has been found to be associated with students’ poorer academic and behavioral outcomes.

Educators need research and professional development so that they can develop school-based programs and curricula that can offset the effects of parenting practices that impede children’s development. Specifically, students from lower-social-class backgrounds need access to the high-quality after-school and summer programs that offer cultural and organizational activities that are typically attended by middle-class and upper-class students.

Several survey respondents rated “educating parents of poverty on importance of education,” “support to low income families,” and “parental involvement supporting their child’s needs and being able to offer safety and security at home” as critical educational needs. Others pleaded for “funding to provide preschool and parent education.”

Many survey respondents also urged that Centers assist in providing early childhood access to Pre-K for all students.

In addition, children whose parents are less educated or who live in low-income neighborhoods are less likely to have personal physicians or nurse practitioners, or receive necessary referrals to specialists. While I have been unable to locate any research that directly associates physician access with children’s cognitive or non-cognitive outcomes, a relationship is easy to intuit. Children with limited access to primary and preventive health care are more likely to have routine and preventable illnesses, causing more frequent absences from school. There are numerous studies demonstrating the deleterious impact that absences have on students’ academic and behavioral outcomes.

Again, educators need research and professional development so that they can develop school-based health centers that will efficaciously address the primary and preventive health care that lower-class students need in order to improve their academic and behavioral outcomes.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** *Expand access to quality research.* Educators need research on the factors outside of school that lead to differences in achievement between children from lower-social-class backgrounds and those from middle-class backgrounds. Educators need research showing the effect of children’s social conditions on their cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, and how educators can develop school-based programs and curricula that will offset those negative effects on lower-social-class children.

*Provide examples of best practices in parent outreach and involvement.* As one survey respondent emphasized, Centers should “[t]rain administrators to recognize the importance of welcoming and involving parents in their child’s daily education, fund outreach programs to help parents understand their child’s needs at every age level, and provide [assistance] for support staff such as social workers, counselors, and other mental health workers.” Many respondents listed “parenting classes” and “additional supports to meet student needs, especially with mental health” to be critical educational needs. Another pleaded, “Help us develop strategies and programs that simply help every child develop to their [sic] full potential.”

*Identify professional development that will enable educators to address the special needs of lower-social-class children.* Closing the education achievement gap by improving the outcomes of lower-social-class children requires that we reform their social conditions. Educators need technical assistance and training that will assist them to develop programs and curricula that will improve the living conditions of lower-social-class children and their families and that will likely have a palpable impact on children's achievement. The greater the gaps that remain in such conditions, the greater the gaps that will likely remain in achievement by race and social class.

### **Priority Need 3. Understanding which students are college or career ready.**

Many educators have emphasized that they need long-term longitudinal studies to determine whether their schools' graduates are, in fact, college and career ready, and, if not college and career ready, in what areas graduates are falling short so that schools can revise their instruction to assure that all students are college and career ready.

**Justification:** All educators want their student to be fully prepared to transition into adulthood after graduation. Schools, however, have little resources or capability to do follow up studies after their students graduate to determine whether they have been successful in helping their students be ready for life. Consequently, educators receive no feedback as to how well they are doing in making sure that their students are college and career ready. As one focus group member asked, "How do we know whether we are being successful in preparing students to be life ready?" Another wanted to know whether we are successful in "preparing students to be independent learners."

As another focus group member succinctly put it, "We have no way to know whether we are turning out college and career ready graduates without research and data as to what happened to them after they graduated. It would be incredibly helpful if Assistance Centers would help states collate and report data on what happened to our graduates one, three, five, and ten years after graduation."

Some states study and report the remediation rates for students who attend state community colleges and universities. However, these studies are deficient on many counts and are of little value to K-12 educators trying to assess the effectiveness of their efforts to make their graduates college ready. One shortcoming, for example, is that these studies only report on the remediation rates of public college students, excluding completely the students attending private colleges and out-of-state colleges. Because many of a high school's best graduates tend to enroll in highly selective private colleges or out-of-state universities, educators find these state studies to be of no value in informing them of the quality of education that they are providing to their graduates.

The United States Department of Education has done Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies. For example, the Department's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 asked a nationally representative sample of entering kindergarteners' parents about the number of books in their homes, a measure considered a reliable indicator of home intellectual environment. ECLS-K: 2011 also surveyed parents about literacy activities—reading aloud, telling stories, doing art—conducted with their entering kindergarteners.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** The Department of Education should conduct longitudinal studies similar to the Department of Education's Early Childhood studies on graduates. The Centers could also provide technical assistance to state departments of education so that SEAs could do studies on college remediation rates, college dropout rates, and college graduation rates of a school's

graduates so that high schools would know whether their graduates were college and career ready, and in what areas their graduates are deficient.

Regarding college and career readiness, Centers could help states determine whether students are pushed to specialize or focus on specific professions too early. Is 13 or 14 too early to start picking a profession or specialty, especially given how fluid our economy is and the studies showing that many of today's students will have almost a dozen professions/careers before they retire? Centers could examine research on and explore whether students should be exposed to professions/careers before having them embark on an educational plan. Right now, internships tend to be most common near the end of a student's college or vocational education. Centers could provide research and technical assistance to help SEAs:

- ▶ expose students to professions and careers before developing their educational plan;
- ▶ investigate whether internships should be earlier; and
- ▶ look into whether gap years during the educational process would make sense for exploring careers.

#### **Priority Need 4. Improving teachers and schools.**

In recent years, some so-called education reformers have focused more on rating or ranking teachers, schools, and school district than on improving the quality of teaching and education that is occurring in the schools. Educators consistently maintain that the measuring of teachers and schools has interfered with attempts to improve teachers and schools.

**Justification:** Ranking teachers and schools has proved to be counterproductive to improving student outcomes. As one survey respondent pleaded, "Stop interfering with learning. Teachers know how to teach. Let them teach instead of always having to prove their worth." Similarly, another respondent declared, "Stop connecting funding to standardized testing. People know the problems and want to fix it, cutting their bottom line doesn't help." One respondent urged, "Removing [the] focus on standardized testing as a basis for [evaluating] teachers." Many rated improving assessment and accountability as the top priority.

A common refrain among the survey respondents is that states, school districts, schools, and principals focus far too much on assessments and accountability, and focus too little on improving student learning. As one said, there is too much "focus on assessments and accountability, which is not where the focus should be." Another listed "stopping all high stakes testing and punitive measures against schools and staff" as her highest priority. Others listed "eliminating all state testing and across-the-board mandates" as their top priority.

To a large degree, ratings and rankings of schools and teachers are correlated with the demographics and socio-economic status of the students in the teachers' classroom or in the school. As one focus group participant said, "Everyone knows that the best way to change the standardized test scores of a teacher's or school's students is to change the demographics of the students."

The Performance Index that is used in Ohio to rank schools and school districts relies exclusively on standardized test scores and is highly correlated with the percentage of free or reduced lunch students that are tested.

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Centers should provide technical assistance and research to reorient states from ranking teachers and schools to focusing on improving schools. Qualitative evaluation of teachers and schools will be far more effective in improving education. Centers should assist states in developing qualitative evaluation metrics and forms that will be descriptive of what is being done well and what is in need of improvement.

**Priority Need 5. In many states, educators need a moratorium on constant changes in academic standards, state-mandated tests, and state report cards.**

**Justification:** Constant changes in state standards, state-mandated tests, and state report cards create enormous disruption and chaos in the classroom. Furthermore, the constant changes make year-to-year comparisons of teachers and schools impossible.

Furthermore, changes are usually imposed statewide. When there is a glitch or unanticipated consequence of the change, all students in the affected cohort are harmed.

One survey respondent ranked “[l]ess testing and focus on student yearly growth using many platforms, not just testing that changes every year” as a critical educational need. Others listed “consistent, fair testing” as a need. Some respondents mentioned “inconsistency of student assessment” as an important need that Centers should address. Reducing standardized testing in order to allow best instructional practices instead of “teach to the test” was a common refrain among survey respondents. For example, one respondent pleaded that “too much time is focused on assessment.” Another argued, “[R]educing the amount of assessment in elementary schools, there are too many assessments that take up instructional time.”

Finally, one educator summarized this priority need in a very cogent fashion: “Educators are tired of one new initiative after another, of one more mandate after another, each promising fantastic results in student achievement. And many of these “new” ideas are repackaged ideas that have been around for years. Instead, American schools need support and guidance to reduce the number of band aids and to refocus on the essentials of productive teaching and efficient learning. I learned at a conference this summer of a school principal who challenged his teachers to focus on the one thing they need to do best, whether reading or writing or math, and to put all else secondary. The teachers felt unburdened to be able to focus on one important goal, student achievement in the focus area improved, and morale of both staff and students improved because there was less stress. That’s what CAS can do for low-performing schools: Give them the assistance to let go, refocus, and work toward a reachable, realistic goal.”

**Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance:** Centers should provide technical assistance and guidance to states to reduce the constant changes in standards, report cards, and state examinations. Furthermore, Centers should aid states in developing pilot changes before mandating statewide changes. Before a change in education policy goes statewide, states should be encouraged to first pilot the change with a small number of representative schools to make certain that the change is an



