



April 2017

## GREAT LAKES BEAT

GREAT LAKES  
Comprehensive Center  
at American Institutes for Research

 AIR  
AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

*From left to right in the foreground: Caryn Ward (State Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based Practices), Steven Dibbs (Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest), Seena Skelton (Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center), and Andrew Morrill (Center on School Turnaround) discuss their centers' work in Michigan at the March 2, 2017, Michigan Strategic Technical Assistance Partnerships meeting.*

## Director's Corner

Have you wondered what's ahead for Great Lakes Comprehensive Center (GLCC)? Here's the story. This is the fifth year of our five-year U.S. Department of Education cooperative agreement to serve state education agencies (SEAs) as they implement, support, scale up, and sustain initiatives statewide. The U.S. Department of Education has decided that an expected recompetition for another five-year award will not take place this year. Instead, the secretary of education recently waived the requirements that generally limits projects to no more than five years duration. These waivers allow GLCC and the 21 other comprehensive centers around the country to continue to receive funding for an additional year—through September 2018—contingent upon the availability of federal funds. By late spring, we should have a good sense of whether or not funding will be available to support a one-year extension of GLCC's work with our SEA partners. We hope to have good news soon. We'll keep you posted.



**GARY APPEL**  
Director

## State Work

### Indiana



### Every Student Succeeds Act

**Project Lead:** Jayne Sowers, Ed.D.

**The Need.** Through a cross-agency planning process under the leadership of new Superintendent Jennifer McCormick, Ph.D., the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is creating an action plan for Indiana educators and leaders to carry out the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). IDOE is planning to have a well-designed ESSA implementation plan for the September submission date to the U.S. Department of Education.

**Milestone.** GLCC is providing technical assistance to IDOE as the new leadership team works to create the Indiana plan for the implementation of ESSA. Frank De Rosa and Jayne Sowers met with the IDOE policy director, Patrick McAlister, in February 2017 to discuss the ESSA requirements, initiate planning efforts, and determine the specific GLCC technical assistance supports. GLCC also facilitated a collaborative effort between IDOE and the State Support Network, which provides individualized, collective, and universal technical assistance to states and districts. Indiana is now an active member of the Network's "Planning for School Improvement Under ESSA" Community of Practice along with Ohio, South Carolina, Missouri, and Minnesota. The Network provides support to these states and districts in the development or modification of school improvement policies to align with the requirements of ESSA.

**Expected Result.** IDOE will develop its ESSA plan with stakeholder input and will utilize best practices and research for instructional strategies, for trainings for educators, and for supporting comprehensive and targeted schools.

### Excellent Educators

**Project Lead:** Tara Zuber

**The Need.** Indiana, like many states, faces teacher recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in finding candidates from diverse backgrounds.

**Milestone.** In February 2017, GLCC met with the new chief talent officer, Scott Syverson, Ph.D., to discuss plans for addressing teacher recruitment and retention. As a result of this meeting, GLCC is connecting IDOE with other states that are conducting media campaigns to increase teacher recruitment and with experts within American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Comprehensive Center Network. GLCC meets regularly with IDOE to develop the media plan to increase teacher recruitment and raise the profile of teachers in Indiana. IDOE continues to actively participate in the Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy (T4TLA) alongside GLCC and district leadership from

Kokomo Community School Corporation. T4TLA facilitates collaborative planning to address teacher recruitment and retention. GLCC, IDOE, and Kokomo are partnering with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders in the development of a professional learning module and framework focused on mentoring and new teacher induction. The mentoring module and framework piloted in Kokomo will serve as a model for districts around the state that are implementing mentor programs. Mentoring programs help retain teachers in the profession and build relationships among teachers within a school.

**Expected Result.** Using multiple strategies, Indiana will increase teacher recruitments and diversify the teacher pipeline.

## Michigan



**BERSHERIL BAILEY**  
Michigan State Manager



**ANDREA GUIDEN**  
Senior Researcher



**TARA ZUBER**  
Researcher

### Strategic Partnerships

**Project Leads: Bersheril Bailey and Andrea Guiden**

**The Need.** The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) receives a wide range of technical assistance from many external providers. A wealth of assistance can result in lack of coordination and sometimes duplication of effort. MDE requested GLCC support to maximize the impact of technical assistance and minimize duplication of services and burden of misalignment.

**Milestone.** On March 2, 2017, GLCC hosted the Strategic Technical Assistance Partnerships Meeting in Chicago. The meeting is one of a series of steps in GLCC's initiative to facilitate the coordination, alignment, and leveraging of MDE technical assistance resources and providers. It brought together MDE leadership and 42 participants across 19 federally funded technical assistance centers from around the country. Center representatives collaborated to identify how technical assistance projects are aligned to Michigan's "Top 10 in 10" strategic plan, to explore ways that technical assistance providers can coordinate and leverage technical assistance to MDE, and to examine how national content centers can best support current technical assistance. Chief deputies Norma Jean Sass and Sheila Alles stated that the meeting "was a great first step in aligning [technical assistance] supports for [MDE] Top 10 work. We greatly appreciated the time that went into the planning, presentations, engagement, and process. We walked away feeling that the participants were very interested in contributing to our work and in supporting our efforts in Michigan." The meeting set in motion efforts to develop a "Top 10 in 10" technical assistance alignment template for MDE, showing alignment of technical assistance services to MDE goals. GLCC will regularly convene participants to continue to collaborate on this initiative. The first of these convenings took place on April 5. To increase technical assistance providers' understanding of implementation science, Dale Cusumano, senior implementation specialist with the State Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based Practices Center, shared the center's work with MDE to build a strong systemic infrastructure. GLCC facilitated a discussion on ways technical assistance projects and resources can inform and support a strong systemic infrastructure at MDE.

**Expected Result.** A coherent and aligned system that maximizes the impact of technical assistance and minimizes the duplication and fragmentation of services provided to MDE.



*Participants and presenters attending the Strategic Technical Assistance Partnerships Meeting on March 2, 2017. Meeting presenters included in these photos are Claudette Rasmussen (GLCC, second photo on top), Brandy Archer (MDE, second photo on bottom), Norma Jean Sass (MDE, third photo on top), and Andrea Guiden (GLCC, fourth photo on top).*

## **Early Warning System Supports**

**Project Lead:** Tara Zuber

**The Need.** In 2014–15, the dropout rate in Michigan was 9.2%, which was higher than the national average of 6.5%. In 2015–16, the dropout rate was 8.9%. Although the state has demonstrated some success for many students, significant disparities remain among student subgroups. In the 2014–15 school year, the four-year graduation rate was 67.3% for African American students, 72.1% for Hispanic students as well as English learners (ELs), 67.5% for economically disadvantaged students, and 57.1% for students with disabilities. Schools need evidence-based tools and resources—an early warning system—to better identify and support individual students struggling to reach on-time graduation, allowing the state to achieve its mission of helping all students graduate ready for careers, college, and community.

**Milestone.** In response to the dropout rate, GLCC and MDE are working together to adapt the Early Warning Implementation and Monitoring System (EWIMS) for the Michigan context and implement it within Michigan schools and districts. To customize EWIMS for Michigan schools, GLCC and MDE co-developed a draft of an EWIMS implementation guide tailored to Michigan. For example, the draft includes information on using Michigan’s early warning system tool located in the regional data hubs. The MDE core team for this initiative is soliciting feedback about the guide from intermediate school districts (ISDs), districts, and schools. GLCC staff members Tara Zuber and Mara Schanfield presented on EWIMS implementation at the School Improvement Facilitators Network meeting on March 15, 2017. In addition to sharing an overview of EWIMS with ISDs across Michigan, the GLCC team also identified potential reviewers for the EWIMS support materials GLCC is creating. On March 14 and 16, GLCC met again with the schools working on EWIMS this school year. As a result of this meeting, GLCC has a better understanding of each school’s progress and has identified next steps, including additional resources for the planned suite of supports that will facilitate implementing EWIMS across the state.

**Expected Result.** MDE will have resources to equip schools with the skillsets that are necessary to make data-driven decisions to leverage school resources targeted to their students' needs.

**Sources:** State of Michigan. (2016b). MI school data: 2014–15 graduation dropout snapshot. Statewide: 4-year (2015 graduation cohort) / all students. Retrieved <http://tinyurl.com/jmhk3yp>  
State of Michigan. (2016c). MI school data: 2014–15 graduation dropout snapshot. Statewide: 4-year (2015 graduation cohort) / race/ethnicity / all students. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/jmhk3yp>  
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). The Condition of Education 2016 (NCES 2016-144), Status Dropout Rates. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>

## Ohio



### Ohio's Competency-Based Education Pilot Program

**Project Co-Leads:** Karen Sanders, Ph.D., and Mark Mitchell

**The Need.** One of the legislative requirements of the Ohio Competency-Based Education (CBE) pilot program is periodic reporting by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to the legislature regarding implementation and impact of the program across the five CBE pilot program sites.

**Milestone.** Karen Sanders developed and refined the CBE pilot program annual performance review with valuable input from Wendy Surr, AIR Deeper Learning Initiative lead. Other collaborators included ODE staff members Buddy Harris and Holly Lavender and GLCC researcher Tara Zuber. The online form enables a systemic assessment of the CBE pilot program by incorporating metrics that align with CBE best practices; enabling pilot sites to select indicators that provide meaningful information to their schools; and providing a standardized format that will allow for statewide analysis. The annual performance review is organized into four main sections: assessment of progress with key features (areas) of CBE planning and infrastructure; indicators of CBE implementation at different levels of the system; annual, end-of-year metrics such as numbers of classrooms, teachers, and others implementing CBE; and open-ended response items that will inform policy development and scale-up of the CBE program.

**Expected Result.** The performance review form and process will provide ongoing feedback to ODE about progress toward full implementation of the CBE pilot program and also measures key metrics that are predictive of targeted student outcomes. The first performance review will occur in spring 2017.

### ELs and Early Literacy

**Project Leads:** Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and GLCC

**The Need.** In order to meet the needs for lesson design and instruction that supports early literacy among a growing EL student population in Ohio, the capacity of the regional system to deliver EL professional learning to districts and schools must also increase.

**Milestone.** GLCC and CAL (Jen Himmel and Annie Duguay) have collaborated with the Lau Center at ODE to design a series of online, interactive webinars focused on aspects of early literacy instruction for EL students. The first webinar was held on February 28 with a focus on CAL’s program: *What’s Different About Teaching Reading to Students Learning English: Vocabulary Instruction*. Following this webinar, regional staff and district leaders who attended the webinar are expected to deliver professional learning to district and school staff and gather evidence of the degree to which professional learning was reflected at the classroom level. The second webinar took place on March 31 and included time for regional staff and others to share their experience training others and addressed any questions or concerns.

**Expected Result.** This professional learning design—interactive webinar followed by delivery of professional learning and reflection—will build greater regional capacity to provide future EL professional learning for district and school staff that should translate into improved early literacy outcomes for EL students.

## Regional Work

### Great Lakes and Midwest Deeper Learning Initiative



The [Deeper Learning Initiative](#) helps states advance policies and practices that promote deeper learning by students, including students’ core content knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that students need to be able to transfer and apply their learning to novel problems and contexts. Progress made since February 2017 is summarized next.

**CROSS-STATE CONVERSATION SERIES.** On February 28, 2017, the Initiative kicked off its second year of events with a presentation by David Ruff, executive director of the Great Schools Partnership, and Mary Ann Snider, deputy commissioner for the Rhode Island Department of Education, titled *“Balancing State Support & Pressure to Promote Competency Based Education.”* This event was attended by key state staff from Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan as well as state managers and representatives from the Council of Chief State School Officers Innovation Lab Network. Participants engaged in a lively discussion with guest speakers and shared their own approaches and challenges related to building educator capacity. A recording of the webinar event is available on the [Deeper Learning website](#) (under “Archived Events”). This Cross State Conversation series is facilitated in partnership with the Center for Innovations in Learning and the College and Career Readiness and Success Center. This spring the series will feature two other guest speakers and will also host bi-monthly meetings to facilitate cross-state sharing.

**DEEPER LEARNING ALIGNED EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES.** ESSA allows states to take a lead role in identifying suitable evidence-based practices for use by districts and schools. To support states in bringing a deeper learning focus to their approved or recommended evidence-based practices, the Regional Deeper Learning Initiative, and Great Lakes and Midwest Comprehensive Center staff—in partnership with the State Support Network and Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest—is engaging with several interested states in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions to create lists of evidence-based practices aligned with deeper learning outcomes. With state input, the Regional Deeper Learning Initiative will identify focal area(s) of interest associated with deeper learning. These practices will be categorized by three levels indicating strength of evidence—strong, moderate, or promising—and will specify links between practices and specific deeper learning outcomes (e.g., critical thinking,

communication skills). For more information on this new project, contact Deeper Learning lead Wendy Surr [wsurr@air.org]

The Deeper Learning team has recently added new resources to the [Deeper Learning Initiative website](#), including a [report released by iNACOL](#).

## Our Resources

### Practices of the Highest Performing States in Education

“What are the state education agencies (SEAs) that are considered to be high performing doing that results in successful students and excellent teachers?” This is the question that MDE posed to GLCC staff. Authors Jayne Sowers, Ed.D., and Bev Mattson, Ph.D., addressed these questions in their October 2016 paper, “Practices of the Highest Performing States in Education.”

GLCC used EdWeek’s [2015 Quality Counts Report](#), which draws on 2010–14 data, for its analyses. The GLCC review concluded that the top six states receiving the highest state grades for 2015 were Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Maryland (receiving “B”) and Pennsylvania, New York, and Minnesota (receiving “B-”).

GLCC studied relevant documents, available on state websites, from these six states, including the U.S. Department of Education documents, particularly the Race to the Top and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, state initiatives, policies, and innovations.

The paper’s summary provides a short list of those initiatives that are similar across all six states, and therefore may be seen as “best practices” by these successful states, and those initiatives that are unique to a single state but for which the state has experienced success and considers them “promising practices.” Due to the lack of data (as most of the initiatives are fairly new), the initiatives’ successes in terms of changing teacher or leader practices or in improving student achievement are anecdotal, at best. However, the initiatives on the list could be considered at least as emerging promising practices given their implementation in other states. If you would like a copy of this report, please contact Valera Lane (vlane@air.org).

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GLCC provides technical assistance to the state education agencies in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. This assistance is tailored to each state’s individual needs and addresses the priorities of the U.S. Department of Education. GLCC is one of the 15 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and its work is administered by AIR.