



February 2017

GREAT LAKES BEAT

Norma Jean Sass (center), chief deputy superintendent in Michigan, discusses Michigan's strategic plan with Melisa Mulder (left), the Read180 District Coordinator/Literacy Coach for Kentwood Public Schools and advisory board member, and Bersheril Bailey (right), the state manager for Michigan.

Director's Corner

Great Lakes Comprehensive Center (GLCC) has a compelling story to tell about the impact of our technical assistance support in our partner states and across the Great Lakes region. Now more than ever, we believe that it is crucial that the story reaches a wider audience. With that goal in mind, our parent organization, American Institutes for Research (AIR), has created a short video highlighting the work of GLCC and AIR's three other regional comprehensive centers in two important areas—promoting equity and reducing the achievement gap. These two areas are central to our work with the 13 states that AIR's regional comprehensive centers serve.



A screen shot from the video, with AIR's 13 comprehensive center states highlighted.

The just-released video focuses on four state equity projects, including the Michigan School Discipline Alternatives project. We hope that you enjoy learning more about the comprehensive centers and this example of how GLCC and our sister centers at AIR support state education agencies.

Please [share the video](#) with your colleagues. If you would like more information on any of the four projects seen in the video, please let me know and I will connect you with the right person. E-mail me at gappel@air.org.

State Work

Indiana



FRANK DE ROSA
Indiana State Manager



TARA ZUBER
Researcher



STACY RUSH
Senior Researcher



CHRIS RAUSCHER
Senior TA Consultant

Excellent Educators

Project Lead: Tara Zuber

THE NEED. Indiana, like many states in the United States, struggles with teacher recruitment and retention, particularly of diverse candidates and educators.

MILESTONE. In 2016, Indiana joined the first cohort of the Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy (T4TLA), organized through the collaborative efforts and expertise of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) at AIR, and the Center on School Turnaround (CST) at WestEd. The academy brings together leadership from one to two districts, a state team, and members of the relevant comprehensive center to develop a plan for improving recruitment and retention in the involved district(s). After the first national meeting in December and a follow-up meeting with the state, the Indiana team, which includes members from IDOE, Kokomo School Corporation leaders, and Great Lakes Comprehensive Center staff, developed a plan centered on mentoring and providing enhanced, lengthened induction. GLCC is an active member of the team discussions and has provided research and examples related to mentoring and induction.

EXPECTED RESULT. Although this plan does focus on change in one district, it is expected that the mentoring framework will serve as a pilot for any district in Indiana and in T4TLA.

Support for the State Development Network (SDN) Local Education Agencies

Project Leads: Tara Zuber, Stacy Rush, and Chris Rauscher

THE NEED. The Indiana SDN provides opportunities for collaboration among districts with similar challenges, an effective guided process for planning and implementing change, and a dedicated state case manager for each district. Sixteen districts, divided into two cohorts, participate in the SDN. Cohort 2, which consists of seven otherwise well-performing districts, focus on closing significant achievement gaps within their schools. Indiana has asked GLCC to assist with Cohort 2 by providing expertise and tools.

MILESTONE. GLCC has provided a framework for organizing the yearlong support, including four in-person professional development and planning meetings, an abbreviated root-cause analysis process, and a reflection protocol that helped districts assess their first semester progress and discuss their strengths, challenges, and needs heading into the second semester.

EXPECTED RESULT. The Cohort 2 districts will implement policies and practices that narrow their achievement gaps.

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) is working to reduce duplication and foster an aligned, coherent education system at all levels.

MILESTONE. On October 12 and 13, 2016, GLCC met with MDE staff to begin the work and conduct a scan, using questions developed by the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices technical assistance center. These questions include how resources are used, how to align what various offices at MDE are doing now, and who are the technical assistance providers involved. To acquire this information, GLCC, along with a communication specialist from the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP), interviewed MDE office directors in October. The GLCC team is analyzing the data from these interviews and will present the final report in February.

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

Early Warning System Supports

Project Lead: Tara Zuber

THE NEED. The high school graduation rate in Michigan has shown significant improvement in recent years. The 2014-15 graduation rate was 79.8% as compared to 74.3% in 2010-11. Still, many groups of students continue to struggle on the pathway towards high school graduation. GLCC and MDE are working together to adapt the Early Warning Implementation and Monitoring System (EWIMS), a research-based system, to the Michigan context and are developing supporting resources that MDE can provide to Michigan intermediate and local school districts. [EWIMS](#) is an evidence-based 7-step implementation process designed by researchers at AIR and the National High School Center.

MILESTONE. As a first step, GLCC held two initial training sessions with MDE-selected pilot schools. These three schools, in two districts, will implement EWIMS in the 2016–17 school year and provide feedback on the tools and protocols. GLCC facilitates monthly meetings with the MDE core team and plans to meet with pilot school teams in March.

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' need.

Ohio



Ohio's Early Literacy Plan

Project Lead: Mark Mitchell

THE NEED. The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP), which is used across Ohio as a way to implement Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), requires updates to better support effective implementation.

MILESTONE. In November 2016, GLCC met with Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and with the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) to discuss needed updates to OIP resources and training of regional and internal district staff to support effective implementation and monitoring of the OIP. A second meeting in January 2017 engaged OLAC, state support team members, and ODE to begin updating the OIP resources and training.

EXPECTED RESULT. This work will update OIP resources and revise both the content and structure of OIP training in order to strengthen implementation of LETRS among districts and schools.

English Learners and Early Literacy

Project Lead: Mark Mitchell

THE NEED. Ohio has a goal that Ohio educators will design and deliver lessons that integrate content and language instruction so that English learners, especially those in Grades K–3, can access grade-level concepts while developing literacy and academic language skills.

MILESTONE. In collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), GLCC is providing regional professional development using CAL's program called, "What's Different About Teaching Reading to Students Learning English?" The professional development discusses how to combine this program with LETRS to increase district- and school-level impact. On November 4, 2016, GLCC met with early literacy staff at ODE to discuss a crosswalk of the LETRS and "What's Different?" programs.

EXPECTED RESULT. The crosswalk will identify aspects of each program that will help regional early literacy specialists, teacher-based teams, and teachers in districts with English learners.

Regional Work

2016 Joint Advisory Board Meeting



From left to right: Cheryl Harris (AIR), Jayne Sowers (AIR), David English (AIR), Jayne Sowers, Cheryl Harris, Deb Gurke (AIR), Linda Forward (Director of Education Improvement and Innovation at Michigan), Melissa Mulder (READ180 district coordinator/literacy coach for Kentwood Public Schools), Norma Jean Sass (Chief deputy superintendent for Michigan), and Bersheril Bailey (Michigan state manager, AIR).

On October 26–27, 2016, GLCC and Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) hosted a joint annual advisory board meeting. The purposes of the meeting were to discuss the successes and challenges of the 2015–16 grant year and plans for the 2016–17 grant year. Specifically, the advisory board meeting had three purposes: (1) to increase knowledge of ESSA and connections to deeper learning; (2) to share and review the portfolios of technical assistance work of GLCC and MWCC; and (3) to engage advisory board members with

constructive conversations about how the work of GLCC and MWCC can be strengthened and leveraged. A total of 33 advisory board members and state education agency (SEA) representatives were in attendance across the two centers. At the GLCC breakout session, Bersheril Bailey, Frank De Rosa, and Mark Mitchell each gave an “ignite-style” presentation to showcase one of the projects in their states. Our evaluation team, Julia Marchand and Sharon Herpin of WestEd, shared their early findings from surveys and interviews with SEA staff in all three states. Overall, the evaluation data show that GLCC is providing high-quality tools and supports that align with federal initiatives.

“Ultimately, there is no way that I would be able to have made this much progress on this project if I didn't have their support ... I'm very grateful for the help that I get and I could not do it alone, for sure.”

WestEd

GLCC facilitated projects to move work forward, contributed to strategic planning, and helped build credibility.

GLCC staff served as meeting and process facilitators, and built strong working relationships with state staff at multiple levels.

Great Lakes and Midwest Deeper Learning Initiative



The Deeper Learning Initiative (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 students need to be able to transfer and apply their learning to novel problems and contexts. Progress made since June 2016 is summarized below.

CROSS-STATE CONVERSATION SERIES. On June 29, 2016, the Initiative hosted its third cross-state conversation event featuring Paul Leather, deputy superintendent for the New Hampshire Department of Education. Leather shared his state's journey toward competency-based education (CBE) and approaches to the measurement of student competencies at the local level. An audio recording of Leather's presentation is available [here](#).

Currently in the Great Lakes and Midwest regions, four states (Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan) are engaged in CBE initiatives and are at varying levels of planning and implementation. During Year 4, the Initiative supported states' interest in CBE by offering the first series of Cross-State Conversations on a variety of CBE-related topics. On December 13, 2016, state representatives from Illinois, Ohio, Iowa, and Michigan launched the next series of Cross-State Conversations. State staff will be engaged in designing their own community of practice (CoP) and will help design, plan, and facilitate monthly meetings that will feature outside experts on CBE-related topics, such as building the capacity of educators to implement CBE and assessing student competencies. The cross-state series is co-led by Rachel Trimble and David Blumenthal, researcher from the CCRS Center, joined by Janet Twyman, the director of innovation and technology for the Center on Innovations in Learning.

A DEEPER LOOK AT ESSA. At the annual Joint Advisory Board Meeting held on October 26, 2016, the Initiative hosted an evening event entitled "A Deeper Look at ESSA." After an introduction to deeper learning Wendy Surr, the event featured a keynote by AIR vice president Angela Minnici. Minnici provided an overview of ESSA legislation and highlighted the opportunities inherent in ESSA for promoting deeper learning. To take a closer look at ESSA, advisory board members were assigned to teams and had the opportunity to visit four stations set up around the room. At each station, there was a short video about core concepts, ideas, or research underlying deeper learning. As a group, the participants briefly discussed the video and identified key ESSA provisions they felt best fit their stations' deeper learning action area.

LOOKING UNDER THE HOOD OF COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION WEBINAR. On November 6, 2016, the Initiative hosted a webinar to highlight key findings from an AIR Study of Competency-Based Education. The study, funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, examined policies and practices in 18 high schools in three states and explored how students' CBE experiences were associated with positive changes in their learning capacities. The webinar was attended by state education staff from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, and it featured two of the study's partners, Paul Leather, deputy commissioner for the New Hampshire Department of Education, and Ryan Krohn, director of the Institute for personalized learning in Wisconsin. The two state education leaders shared their reflections on the study's findings, and implications for their state work. For a copy of the CBE Study report, [click here](#). To hear the webinar recording, [click here](#).

OHIO CBE PILOT WORKSHOP. On December 1, 2016, Wendy Surr joined Ohio State Manager Mark Mitchell and GLCC team member Karen Sanders facilitated a two-hour workshop for members of the ODE CBE Pilot Workgroup. During this session, district and school leaders had the opportunity to hear highlights from the AIR study, "Looking Under the Hood of Competency-Based Education," learn more

about the key features associated with a CBE approach, and gauge the extent to which their own local CBE initiatives reflected these desired CBE features. Sanders presented an outline of a draft performance review process of the CBE pilot program sites. The process included approaches to quantitative and qualitative data collection and measures of success. This review process may be adapted for use by ODE during the 2017 CBE pilot program review cycle.

The Deeper Learning team has recently added new resources to the [Deeper Learning Initiative website](#), including updated research findings from the Study of Deeper Learning, [Graduation Advantage Persists for Students in Deeper Learning Network High Schools](#).

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The Great Lakes Comprehensive Center 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. Great Lakes Comprehensive Center is one of the 15 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and its work is administered by American Institutes for Research.
