STATELINE MIDWEST

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THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS | MIDWESTERN OFFICE

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A compilation of articles that appeared in the publication *Stateline Midwest* in 2021 on policies related to education and workforce development

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RISE OF SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH

Increasingly, states are looking for ways to bring these services to students, and encourage partnerships with local providers who can deliver specialized care

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

In one Cleveland suburban district, licensed psychologists are regularly visiting schools and delivering clinical levels of care to students.

Hundreds of miles away, in the southernmost part of the state, a small district is converting part of its board offices (located on the same campus as its schools) into a school-based health center. There, young people will get access to an array of services, including mental health treatment.

These are two of the more than 3,000 local initiatives across Ohio getting state support because of legislative action taken two years ago — an unprecedented, $675 million funding commitment by the state to help schools provide nonacademic, wraparound services to students.

"As much as we like to say the education system is about academics, the reality is that those issues of student wellness are tremendously important to enabling a successful academic experience," Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria says.

"If children come to school hungry, or can't see the whiteboard, or have a high level of trauma or stress, they're not going to be in a position to be educated."

Mental health, above all other types of eligible services, is what schools targeted for support through Ohio's new Student Wellness and Success Fund.

That choice is not surprising, DeMaria says, considering what he has heard from school administrators, teachers and parents on listening tours across the state. And that was before the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of people of all ages.

Across the country, "there was a ton of activity, pre-COVID, around state actions to support mental health and schools," says Alex Mays, senior national program director for the Healthy Schools Campaign.

If anything, circumstances of the past year will only heighten this activity.

"For a variety of reasons, the education sector is increasingly seeing its role as supporting the mental health of students and staff," says Dr. Sharon Hoover, co-director of the National Center for School Mental Health.

"At the same time, we see the behavioral health sector recognizing schools as an important venue for service provision. We also have more and more examples of how to structure those services and get reimbursed for them in the school setting."

POLICY OPTIONS FOR STATES

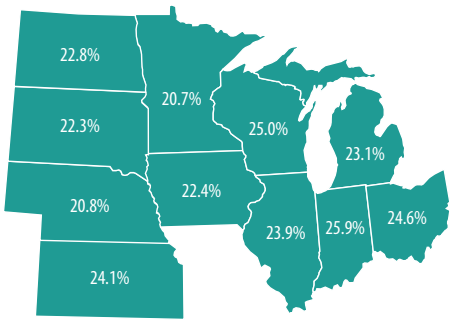
Hoover points to a number of state-level, school-centered policies and investments that can help young people.

One strategy is to improve mental health literacy among students.

"Just like we'd want young people to know about their physical health and nutrition as part of health education, we want them to understand mental health — how do you obtain

COVER STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

% OF 3- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS WITH A MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, DEVELOPMENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL PROBLEM



Source: Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, "2018-2019 National Survey of Children's Health"

% OF CHILDREN, AGES 3-17, WITH A MENTAL/BEHAVIORAL CONDITION WHO RECEIVE TREATMENT OR COUNSELING

State	Received treatment or counseling for condition	Did not receive treatment or counseling for condition
Illinois	65.5%	34.5%
Indiana	49.3%	50.7%
Iowa	61.8%	38.2%
Kansas	52.7%	47.3%
Michigan	57.8%	42.2%
Minnesota	65.3%	34.7%
Nebraska	59.1%	40.9%
North Dakota	66.8%	33.2%
Ohio	57.9%	42.1%
South Dakota	66.8%	33.2%
Wisconsin	52.6%	47.4%

Source: Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, "2017 -2018 Survey of Children's Health"

NEW FUNDING MECHANISMS HELP SCHOOLS BECOME HUBS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and maintain positive mental health," Hoover says.

Some states (New York and Virginia) have begun requiring mental health education as a part of the school curriculum, and Illinois was the first U.S. state to adopt standards for social emotional learning.

Another option for states is to set a goal or requirement for the number of school-employed psychologists, social workers, counselors and nurses per student. (The ratio in nearly all states is currently below recommended levels.)

"Those staff are critical to providing universal mental health prevention and supports in the schools, and that can reduce the needs for higher levels of care," Hoover says.

"It's not just looking immediately at what community providers we can bring in to the school."

INCREASE IN SCHOOL-PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS

That kind of outside help, though, can be essential, especially in delivering specialized, higher-level care to students. Many of the new state-funded initiatives in Ohio, for example, involve partnerships between the schools and local providers.

Minnesota has one of the Midwest's longest-running, comprehensive programs. Its grants for school-linked mental health services date back to 2007; they bring practitioners into the school building for direct care and treatment, assessments of student needs, and training of staff.

Separately, Minnesota has a "safe school levy," a provision in state law that permits local districts to collect property taxes for specific purposes, including the hiring of licensed school counselors, nurses, psychologists and social workers, as well as contracting with mental health professionals.

Minnesota Sen. Greg Clausen

Sen. Greg Clausen, a leading legislative advocate of school-based mental health, traces his interest in the issue back to his past experience as a school principal and administrator.

"There were a number of students where you saw the need, and there was a frustration that we didn't have a lot of services we could provide," Clausen says. "And then when we tried to go outside the school, it was, 'Well, we can get you in in three months.'

"It really provided the spark that we needed to do something."

According to Mays, who tracks state activity across the country for the Healthy Schools Campaign, Michigan has emerged as a leader in recent years on school-based mental health — for example, appropriating $31 million for schools to bring in licensed behavioral health providers and changing the state's Medicaid program so that it can cover services for general-education students (those who don't have an individualized education plan).

"The challenge you run into a lot is whether a state program is sustainable or whether it's just a one-off," Mays says.

"That why I think it's important for states to look at ways to tap into health care funding, like Medicaid.

"If these services were being provided in a hospital or a community clinic, it would be reimbursed, no questions asked. Schools should be recognized as another site of service."

That change in Medicaid policy, she adds, is needed specifically for services being provided by school-employed staff. (Outside mental health providers already can be reimbursed.)

According to Hoover, a variety of funding streams are now available to provide for school-based mental health, including new federal grants, greater flexibility in public and private insurance plans, and programs being developed by the states themselves.

Ohio's $675 million Student Wellness and Success Fund is a case in point.

"Maybe 10 years ago, you would have heard the argument, 'This is not what schools ought to be about,'" DeMaria says. "Not anymore."

MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

7.1% | *% OF 3- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS WITH DIAGNOSED ANXIETY*

3.3% | *% OF 3- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS WITH DIAGNOSED DEPRESSION*

7.4% | *% OF 3- TO 17-YEAR-OLDS WITH DIAGNOSED BEHAVIOR PROBLEM*

47.1% | *% INCREASE IN NUMBER OF SUICIDES AMONG 10- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS OVER PAST DECADE*

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

EXAMPLES OF STATE ACTIONS IN MIDWEST TO BOLSTER SCHOOL-CENTERED MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES

To improve early detection of student needs, school-entry health exams in **Illinois** must include screenings for social and emotional well being (SB 565 of 2017). Illinois also was the first U.S. state to adopt standards for social emotional learning.

Under a 2019 law (SB 325), **Indiana** has begun offering grants for schools to develop plans that help students in need of mental health services. These plans (developed with parental involvement and consent) can include school-based or outside services.

Iowa's top school official is helping lead that state's first-of-its-kind, stand-alone Children's Mental Health System. Created two years ago (HF 690) to close gaps in access and improve services, this system is overseen by a state board, with the Department of Education director serving as one of two standing co-chairs.

Legislative appropriations in **Kansas** in recent years have led to the creation of mental health intervention teams in select school districts. School liaisons and clinical therapists in the community work on these teams; they help identify students in need and connect them to appropriate services.

According to Alex Mays of the Healthy Schools Campaign, **Michigan** is a national leader on school-based mental health, noting it was one of the first U.S. states to have such services covered by Medicaid. This year, too, legislators dedicated nearly $37 million for mental health services in schools.

More than a decade ago, **Minnesota** launched the groundbreaking School-Linked Mental Health Services program. Along with bringing clinical-level care to schools, the program helps identify children with serious mental health needs.

A bill introduced this year in **Nebraska** (LB 87) would dedicate a portion of lottery proceeds to grants that train teachers and other school personnel in mental health first aid. The goal: Ensure students in crisis get immediate help, and get connected to appropriate services in the community.

In recent years, **North Dakota** has started and expanded a prevention and early intervention program in the schools. The pilot initiative helps schools integrate behavioral health strategies into existing educational and support systems for students.

Ohio is investing a historic amount of state dollars this biennium on student wellness. The $675 million Student Wellness and Success Fund goes to projects developed by local schools. That includes new school-based mental health services and partnerships with community providers.

Across **Saskatchewan**, at least one staff member in every school will receive training this year on "mental health first aid" — for example, recognizing symptoms of students in crisis, providing initial assistance and connecting them with professional care. Saskatchewan is spending $400,000 on this training.

In **South Dakota**, as part of the state's Project AWARE initiative, system of care coordinators are forging new relationships between local school districts and the state's community mental health centers. These coordinators help assess student needs and develop action plans.

Students in **Wisconsin** are being empowered to recognize the warning signs of depression and suicide among their peers, and then offer evidence-based supports. State funding for peer-to-peer training is the result of last year's passage of AB 528. Wisconsin high schools can now apply for state grants.

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BIG FUNDING BOOST FOR SCHOOLS

With state finances strong, Michigan closes 'equity gap' and Ohio enacts new aid formula; challenges for states remain in adequately funding supports for at-risk students

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

For many years, Michigan legislators have been chipping away at a persistent disparity in how the state's schools are funded.

It is known as the "equity gap": higher-wealth districts with greater amounts of per-pupil spending than those of their lower-wealth counterparts. Though in part the legacy of an old system largely reliant on local property taxes, the gap continued long after enactment of a new funding model (added to the state Constitution in 1994) that had the state take over the funding of school operations.

This year, with Michigan's fiscal health strong, a bipartisan budget agreement was reached to spend $723 million to finally close that gap, with a disproportionate share of new state dollars going to lower-funded, lower-wealth districts. All districts will now receive $8,700 per-pupil — a milestone that both Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Republican-led Legislature hailed as "historic."

Michigan Sen. Wayne Schmidt

"It's been a priority of mine since I got in the Legislature," says Sen. Wayne Schmidt, a state legislator since 2009 who represents a part of Michigan with some of those traditionally lower-funded schools.

"It's going to make a big difference. Yes, the problem was acute in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, but you also see the gap across the state, including Detroit Public Schools. Closing it means we have more money to attract and retain quality teachers, and to make improvements in the technology of our classrooms."

A year ago, few would have predicted that Michigan would be in a strong enough fiscal position to close that gap as early as 2021. Amid a collapsing state and national economy at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Schmidt says, the talk had been of potential cuts in school funding.

"As quickly as some of our revenues were drying up, we saw some rebounds later on that were beyond our beliefs," he says.

Michael Griffith, a senior researcher and policy analyst for the Learning Policy Institute, says it's been a roller-coaster period across the country for school funding and related state policies.

First, there were big fears about the pandemic's impact on school finances, but what followed was an economic recovery and an unprecedented federal relief package. The American Rescue Plan Act alone sets aside $123 billion for states and school districts to spend on education between now and 2026. (Michigan is using own-state funding to close the equity gap.)

"Coming up with plans and recommendations on how to spend their share has been so overwhelming that it's taken up everyone's time [on school funding]," Griffith says. "Just now, in the last couple of months, states have had some breathing space to start thinking about some of the areas they were thinking about prior to the pandemic."

'FAIR FUNDING' IN OHIO

One state that seemingly got a head start is Ohio.

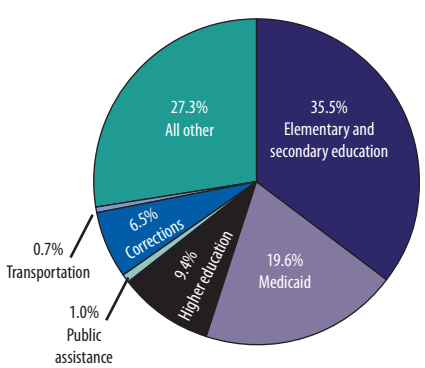
COVER STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

REVENUE SOURCES FOR K-12 SCHOOLS IN MIDWEST (2019)

State	Federal	State	Local
Illinois	6.3%	40.7%	53.1%
Indiana	7.4%	61.9%	30.8%
Iowa	6.9%	52.8%	40.3%
Kansas	8.4%	64.2%	27.4%
Michigan	8.0%	57.7%	34.3%
Minnesota	5.1%	64.3%	30.6%
Nebraska	7.1%	32.3%	60.6%
North Dakota	10.5%	54.7%	34.8%
Ohio	6.9%	39.9%	53.8%
South Dakota	13.7%	34.1%	52.3%
Wisconsin	6.6%	55.1%	38.3%

Source: CSG Midwest calculations using U.S. Census Bureau data

STATE GENERAL-FUND SPENDING IN FY 2020



Source: National Association of State Budget Officers, "State Expenditure Report"

STATE SCHOOL FUNDING OFTEN IS LIFELINE FOR LOW-WEALTH DISTRICTS, AT-RISK STUDENTS

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As in Michigan, legislators in Ohio are putting more money into K-12 schools, an increase of 8.7 percent this biennium, according to Gov. Mike DeWine. And the General Assembly also tackled a pre-pandemic priority for many Ohio school administrators and legislators: an overhaul of the school funding formula.

Enactment of HB 110 marked the culmination of years of work in developing what's known as the "Fair School Funding Plan," says Katie Johnson, deputy executive director of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials.

Yes, improved fiscal conditions helped get this funding overhaul to the finish line. But Johnson says the real key to success was the process established from the start by two legislators, one Republican (Rep. Bob Cupp, now speaker of the House) and one Democrat (Rep. John Patterson, since term-limited out of office).

"They were committed to it being a bipartisan effort, and they brought in a working group of practitioners, local superintendents and school treasurers, at the very beginning in order to develop the plan," Johnson says.

"That was the key. They all rolled up their sleeves and dug into the details, and developed the formula together."

> "There are places that just don't have any wealth, and they are struggling [to fund their schools]."
>
> *Michael Griffith, senior researcher and policy analyst, Learning Policy Institute*

3 NOTABLE REFORMS IN OHIO

Johnson points to three fundamental changes in Ohio's new funding formula.

First, she says, it better accounts for the actual costs of providing an education and making that the basis of the state's statutory per-pupil funding levels.

For example, how much must a district spend to have class sizes of 23 in the younger grades or 27 in high school, to hire and retain a sufficient number of special education teachers, and to provide enough student supports (guidance counselors, librarians, etc.)?

The old model did not address those kinds of questions in any kind of rational or systematic way, Johnson says.

In contrast, the new one does.

To determine each district's "base costs," the formula uses factors such as student-to-staff ratios; the average statewide salaries of teachers and other school employees (from superintendents on down); and each district's expenses related to technology, building operations and employee benefits.

Secondly, legislators crafted a new way of "equalizing" state funding, a way to ensure lower-wealth districts receive more money from the state in order to reach per-pupil funding levels that cover their base costs. Two factors now will be used to determine the relative wealth of each district: property values and the income levels of residents.

If the school funding formula is fully implemented over the next six years, the average per-pupil funding level in Ohio will reach $7,200. That compares to $6,020 during the last school year, according to the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Johnson says the third big change involves the funding of charter schools and scholarship programs for students to attend private schools. The state now will directly provide these dollars, rather than the previous approach of deducting a portion of the aid going to local public school districts.

'IS YOUR SYSTEM BALANCED?'

In every state, in every legislative year, the funding of K-12 schools is a high priority for lawmakers. It makes up more than one-third of state general-fund spending, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers.

Though exactly how schools are financed can vary considerably from state to state (local vs. state share, details of the funding formulas, etc.), Griffith says there are some underlying principles that should guide all legislatures.

"Are you taking care of everyone?" he says. "Is your system balanced so that every kid gets an adequate education?"

He notes that in his home state of Colorado, the property value of a single home in the town of Aspen can be equal to the property value of entire districts.

"For a state, then, you're getting the balance right when you have a school district like Aspen covering almost all funding itself, and then you're devoting the state dollars to boost up the low-wealth districts," he says. "Because there are places that just don't have any wealth, and they are struggling."

The new formula in Ohio and a closing of the equity gap in Michigan are examples of states trying to find a better balance in school funding.

That work is far from done. In Ohio, for example, it remains to be seen whether the legislature can or will fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan over the next six years. HB 110 only commits to using the new formula for the next two years, and more state dollars will be needed in future budgets to reach the average spending level of $7,200 per pupil.

According to Michigan State University professor David Arsen, Michigan's foundation formula for schools has long failed to recognize the costs of providing an adequate education, or to account for the variance in these costs across districts — greater transportation expenses in rural areas, for example, or the additional resources needed in schools with larger numbers of English language learners, special education students, or young people at risk of falling behind or failing.

Outside its unweighted foundation formula, Michigan does provide additional financial supports for higher-need schools and students, and its recently enacted education budget includes new money for school-based mental health programs as well as for districts to hire additional counselors, psychologists, nurses and social workers.

Lastly, more money will to go Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program, a preschool initiative for 4-year-olds who are from lower-income families or who are at risk of school failure (due to neglect, a diagnosed disability, a developmental delay or other factors). Gov. Whitmer says

the program can now expand to enroll 22,000 more children, ensuring preschool access to all who qualify.

In Ohio, extra aid goes to schools based on their number of distinct student populations: gifted, low-income, special needs and English language learners. What's new in HB 110 is dedicated funding in the formula for districts to provide physical and mental health services, after-school programming and family supports.

MULTIPLE NEEDS, WEIGHTS

Looking ahead, Griffith expects states across the country to focus more on better serving at-risk students. That means clearly defining what "at risk" means, better identifying students in need of additional supports, and then providing adequate levels of funding.

"What I'm starting to talk to states about is when you think about at-risk, think about it as levels," he says.

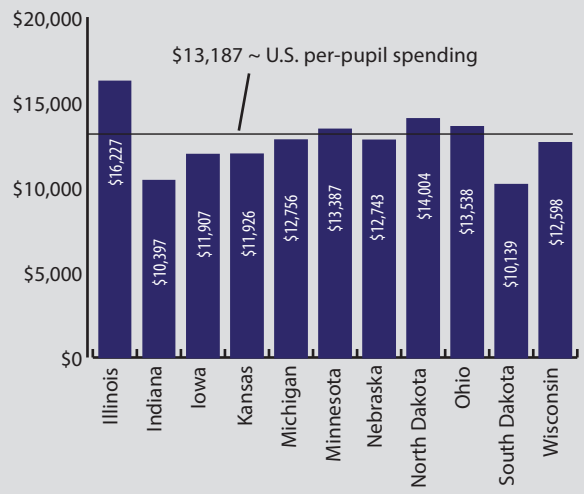
"So maybe you have a general at-risk student, but then you're going to provide more resources for kids with higher levels of need. Take, for example, foster youths experiencing homelessness or migrant student populations.

"They're going to require all the wrap-around services. You have kids where the school is worried about finding them shelter for the night, or getting them food services."

The way a state funds its schools, he adds, goes a long way in determining whether these students receive the supports and services that put them on a path toward educational success.

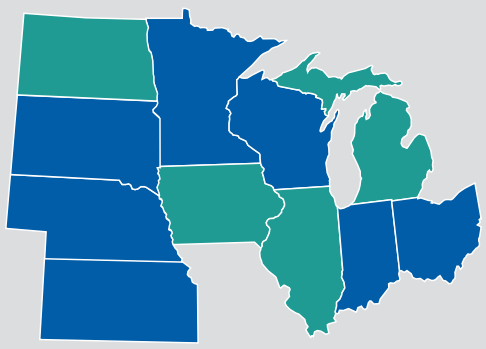
"My hope is that [legislators] will look at the research out there and then change at-risk funding accordingly, so that they do not have a single weight for 'at risk' but instead multiple weights based on student needs," Griffith says.

PER-PUPIL SPENDING IN MIDWEST, FROM ALL SOURCES, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

PER-PUPIL FUNDING: HIGH-POVERTY VS. LOW-POVERTY DISTRICTS IN 2018

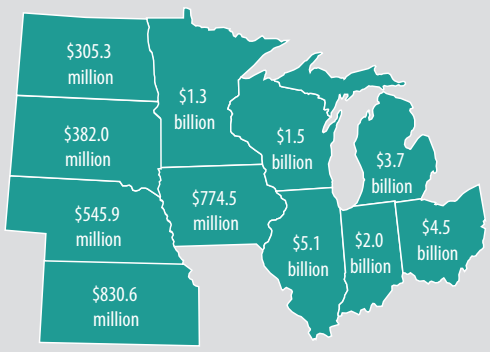


On average, high-poverty districts received more per-pupil funding than low-poverty districts

On average, low-poverty districts received more per-pupil funding than high-poverty districts

Source: Education Law Center

$ GOING TO STATE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEMS FROM AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT*



* Five percent of funds from the American Rescue Plan Act must be used to address learning loss, 1 percent for summer enrichment, and 1 percent for after-school programs. The federal law also sets aside money for services that help students experiencing homelessness.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education and The Council of State Governments

FIRST PERSON: EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME CHILDREN WITH HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

'Minnesota model' combines use of scholarships, Parent Aware rating system

by Minnesota Sen. Carla Nelson
(*sen.carla.nelson@senate.mn*)

When I was a young girl both of my parents worked — my dad as a principal and my mom as a teacher.

So, every day, my mom dropped my brother and me off at Grandma Bowman's home. Grandma Bowman wasn't our real grandma; that's just what we called her. She was my family's day care provider in the little town where I grew up, where everyone knew everyone.

Child care has changed a lot since then, in large part because we have learned about the importance of early brain development. Brain scientists tell us that up to 80 percent of brain development happens by age 3.

We also know that achievement gaps can be measured as early as age 1. The data send a clear, urgent message: we must stimulate young brains early in life.

IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY, CHOICE

Armed with this knowledge, today's parents expect the use of early-learning best practices, such as an evidence-based curriculum, well-equipped learning environments, and opportunities for play that support fast-developing young brains. Parents don't merely want child care. They want the kind of high-quality child care that forms the foundations of education.

Taxpayers are demanding quality, too.

Research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis shows that taxpayers can yield a return of up to $16 for every $1 invested in helping low-income children access quality early-learning programs.

However, economists stress that the highest returns are only available if the investment goes to high-quality programs that are successfully preparing low-income children for kindergarten.

> The highest returns on investment occur if it goes to high-quality programs that are successfully preparing low-income children for kindergarten.

On the flip side, research from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Institute of Child Health and Human Development shows that low-quality programs not only don't produce a high return on investment, they can actually set vulnerable children backward.

Fortunately, high-quality child care can come in many shapes and sizes.

We've seen in Minnesota that best practices can be adopted in homes, schools, centers or churches. That's great news, because parents want and need the ability to choose the setting that is right for their family.

As a former teacher, I have seen the impact of high-quality child care first hand. I think of a kindergartner who did not know how to open a book to read, opening it with the spine on the right. You don't see that with children who have experienced a high-quality program.

I am a firm believer that the first and most important teacher in a student's life is the parent. But many parents from all walks of life are working full time and need assistance; quality programs provide the help that they and their young children need. So, when I think about child care, what I think about is adequately preparing young children to enter school.

What should that look like?

THE 'MINNESOTA MODEL'

Along with other states, Minnesota has been a leader in providing high-quality child care that prepares kids for school.

As a first-year lawmaker in the Senate in 2011, I began working with the business community on this issue.

Our state's business community was, and is still, very concerned about Minnesota's achievement gaps, which are some of the worst in the nation. Those gaps pose a threat to having the kind of educated workforce needed to compete in the global economy.

After reviewing the best available research, business and civic leaders raised $20 million in private funds to identify an effective way to use early learning to address achievement gaps.

From 2006 to 2011, the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation piloted and vigorously evaluated early versions of Early Learning Scholarships and Parent Aware Ratings, which some have come to call the "Minnesota model."

After results of that pilot program proved very encouraging, I helped pass legislation to bring Early Learning Scholarships and Parent Aware statewide, and have been fighting since then to maintain and expand these programs.

To date, the state has awarded more than 50,000 of these scholarships, and every year, 100,000 young children are served in Parent Aware-rated programs. This is one of my proudest achievements in public office.

Thanks to the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation pilot program and evaluations, scholarships are aligned with four research-based principles.

- First, financial help is targeted to children in low-income families who can't access quality early-learning programs. Research shows that this kind of targeted investment yields the highest return on investment for taxpayers.
- Second, scholarships are available early in life, from birth to age 5, before achievement gaps grow too large and become difficult to close.
- Third, by making these scholarships flexible, parents are empowered and put in the driver's seat. Parents can choose from an array of high-quality programs to find one that best fits their individual preferences and needs.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our scholarship program demands quality. Scholarships can only be used at programs that use kindergarten-readiness best practices, as measured by our research-driven Parent Aware rating system.

The results have been amazing.

Privately funded, third-party evaluations found that children in Parent Aware-rated programs make significant gains on kindergarten readiness measures: vocabulary, early math skills, social competence and executive function, and phonics. Low-income children make the biggest gains of all.

Evaluations also showed that flexible scholarships helped low-income families access high-quality programs, and were very popular with providers and parents.

The only problem with these Early Learning Scholarships is that there aren't enough of them, due to lack of state funding. Currently, 35,000 low-income children under age 5 still can't access high-quality programs. We continue to search for a bipartisan way to fund more scholarships.

Beyond our experience in Minnesota, it has been very gratifying to see similar approaches adopted around the nation.

There are at least 18 state or municipal initiatives that are aligned with a majority of the tenants of what we call the "Minnesota Model of Early Learning." In other words, these jurisdictions have programs that are targeted to the children most in need, tied to quality, start early in life, and offer families flexibility and choice.

A few notable examples: Quality First Scholarships in Arizona, Indy Preschool Scholarships, Erie's Futures Fund in Pennsylvania, and Maryland's Child Care Scholarship Program. All have significant similarities to our approach in Minnesota, with interesting twists that we're studying.

'ALL HANDS ON DECK' MOMENT

Child care is no longer just about keeping children sheltered, fed, safe and healthy. For students to be successful in school and life, they also need to have their brains stimulated in quality, play-based early-learning programs. The stakes are high for our taxpayers, communities, economy and most-vulnerable children.

This must be an "all hands on deck" moment. We are failing too many disadvantaged children by shutting them out of opportunities that build equity.

At the state, local and national levels, we have to do a better job to ensure that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. The Minnesota model provides a proven path forward.

Sen. Carla Nelson is chair of the Minnesota Senate Taxes Committee and previously served as chair of the E-12 Finance and Policy Committee. She has been a member of the Minnesota Legislature since 2003. Sen. Nelson is a graduate of CSG Midwest's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development.

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Responses to any FirstPerson article are welcome, as are pieces written on other topics. For more information, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or *tanderson@csg.org*.

FIRST PERSON: HOW AND WHY I CONTINUE PUSH FOR COMPREHENSIVE, STATE-LEVEL DYSLEXIA LEGISLATION

Legislative proposals include universal screening tool, multi-tiered system of support

by Michigan Sen. Jim Runestad
(SenJRunestad@senate.michigan.gov)

Iganmie tyrnig to rade in a wrlod wehre lal yuro wrsod aer jmubled.

If you are a "normal" reader, the sentence you just read makes no sense. But for the estimated 108,000 to 217,000 children in Michigan with dyslexia, it is how the sentence "Imagine trying to read in a world where all your words are jumbled" might look.

Growing up as a student with dyslexia, I know how difficult it can be when this disorder is not properly addressed. And as a former educator, I can also testify how much better it can be for students to get the proper training and instruction when dealing with dyslexia.

Several decades after I graduated from high school, my home state of Michigan still does not have a comprehensive strategy to address dyslexia. I have heard from countless parents, teachers, students and administrators that there is simply not enough help for those with this disability.

This has contributed, at least in part, to the fact that approximately one in three Michigan fourth-graders do not have adequate reading skills. In order to improve childhood literacy and open new opportunities for students at all levels, there needs to be a much more focused approach to not only screening for dyslexia, but to supporting those dealing with it.

EARLIER THE HELP, THE BETTER

Dyslexia is a learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor decoding abilities. The disorder is the most common learning disability that affects reading and writing.

Good reading skills are the basis for future academic or professional success. Study after study also indicates how important it is to intervene early on.

Science shows us that good reading skills are the basis for future academic or professional success. Study after study also indicates how important it is to intervene early on.

Researchers have found that it is easier to help struggling readers in kindergarten and first grade than later on, and that struggling readers need help "early and often." The sooner they get the help, the better off they will be.

But while more than two-thirds of states already have programs in place to identify children who show signs of dyslexia, Michigan law barely mentions dyslexia at all.

In the year 2021, having no statewide strategy to screen and treat dyslexia is simply unacceptable.

That is why I, along with several of my Republican and Democratic colleagues in the Michigan Senate, introduced legislation last year that would finally do something to fix that. Michigan Senate Bills 1172–1175 would have provided much-needed steps to address dyslexia early on in a student's schooling.

Under the legislation, educators would have been adequately trained to understand dyslexia, to identify students who are struggling with learning the code, and to teach these students to break the code. A five-member advisory committee of individuals who understand the struggle firsthand would have employed their experiences and knowledge to develop a dyslexia resource guide.

Michigan Sen. Jim Runestad grew up as a student with dyslexia. He is now hoping to pass legislation to help current and future students in his home state dealing with this disorder.

Other bills in the legislative package would have required school districts to screen children each year from kindergarten through third grade for reading difficulties using a universal screening assessment. If the assessment indicated that a child was experiencing difficulty learning to decode, the school district would have to provide a multi-tiered system of support.

Legislation would also have required our state's teacher-preparation institutions to offer instruction on the characteristics of dyslexia, the consequences of dyslexia, evidence-based interventions, and methods to develop a classroom infrastructure that meets the needs of these students.

The Michigan Department of Education would have provided schools with "instructional methods and curriculum resources" that work for students with dyslexia by the 2023-24 school year.

All in all, this package of bills would have offered the first comprehensive statewide strategy to help students struggling with dyslexia.

It is a strategy that is long overdue.

In developing the bills, we worked with experts in the field, including Lauren A. Katz, one of the founders of the Literacy, Language, and Learning Institute in Ann Arbor, Mich. Dr. Katz said the legislation has far-reaching potential.

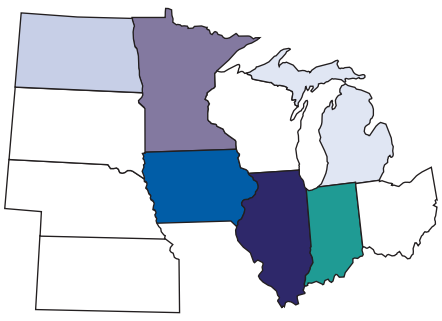
"Michigan children, no matter where they live or how much money their parents have, will receive instruction and intervention that is grounded in cognitive science," Katz said of the bills. "And they will receive this instruction and intervention early — during a critical window of time, before negative consequences have kicked in."

Nikolai Vitti, superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools Community District, said in a statement that "these proposed bills are the most promising K-12 reform-minded legislation I have seen since being superintendent in Detroit." Vitti is another advocate, like me. who has personally experienced dyslexia.

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR BILLS

In a time of great disunity in our country, this bipartisan dyslexia legislation shows that folks from both sides of the aisle can still come together for the good of those we represent.

DYSLEXIA-RELATED REQUIREMENTS IN MIDWEST*



- Screening of students, pre-service and in-service training for teachers, interventions for students
- Screening of students, pre-service and in-service training for teachers
- Screening of students, in-service training for teachers, interventions for students
- Pre-service training for teachers and interventions for students
- Screening of and interventions for students

* Other Midwestern states have dyslexia-related laws, but no requirements as described above. Michigan's law is not specific to dyslexia but does include language that could help identify students with this learning disorder and provide interventions.

Source: National Center on Improving Literacy

While we may not agree on everything, we can at least agree on the need to give every student the opportunities they deserve. Together we can make a real difference for the most vulnerable.

I have made it my mission to work with whomever I can to stand up for the forgotten. And if there is anyone who needs to be remembered, empowered and emboldened in our school systems, it is students with dyslexia.

While we missed a great opportunity to pass meaningful reform last year, I will be reintroducing this legislation again this term, because these students need help now.

There is a long way to go to get dyslexia reforms passed, at least in our state. But I am optimistic that we will get it done.

With support from parents who want the best education for their kids, teachers who want to learn how to better serve students and leaders who are willing to make a difference, there is nothing we can't accomplish.

Michigan Sen. Jim Runestad was first elected to the state Senate in November 2018 after serving two terms in the House. He is a 2016 graduate of CSG Midwest's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD).

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FIRST PERSON: TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST IS HOW WE CAN PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN

Wisconsin lawmaker's haunting visit to Dachau led to bill that is now law

"Holocaust education will do more than teach about the past. It will foster empathy and understanding for different people and cultures."

by Wisconsin Sen. Alberta Darling
(*Sen.Darling@legis.wisconsin.gov*)

On some trips, you bring back memories and souvenirs. When I visited Germany years ago, I brought back a lot more.

During my visit, I made a trip to the Dachau concentration camp, which is about 10 miles outside of Munich.

Dachau was the Nazis' longest-operating camp and housed more than 200,000 prisoners from March 1933 to April 1945. Thousands of Jewish and other prisoners were murdered there.

I still struggle with that visit. I remember not wanting to make eye contact with other people there. I remember thinking, "How could this happen?"

But the image that still haunts me is a picture at Dachau of a mom with a small child. The baby couldn't have been much more than 5 years old and looked at his mother with the trust any child would have.

It makes me cry to think about the mother having to be strong for her baby and knowing what would happen next. It is heartbreaking. That memory will always be with me.

IMPETUS FOR LEGISLATION: TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PAST

A few years ago, I ran into my friend and constituent, Bev Greenberg. She told me about a nationwide movement to guarantee the teaching of the Holocaust in our schools.

What she shared was shocking: Polls showed that two-thirds of American millennials surveyed could not identify Auschwitz. Twenty-two percent of millennials said they hadn't heard of the Holocaust or weren't sure whether they had heard of it — twice the percentage of U.S. adults who said the same. We can't expect kids to know better if no one is teaching them the truth about what happened during the Holocaust.

While we couldn't get every student in Wisconsin on a plane to see first-hand what I saw in Dachau, I knew we had to do something about this knowledge gap.

I began working on legislation that adds Holocaust education to the model academic standards for social studies. In addition, it guarantees that Wisconsin students learn about the Holocaust at least once during middle school and once during high school. I'm a former teacher, so I know how important repetition is to learning.

As a lawmaker, I had some initial concerns about the potential cost of this new mandate on schools. Those concerns were short-lived.

In Wisconsin, we are blessed to have the amazing Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center in Milwaukee.

It is an incredible resource, and the center agreed to provide the materials, programming and professional development necessary to implement our requirement on Holocaust education at no additional costs to schools.

Over the past few months, the center has built a comprehensive website that includes more than 140 lesson plans (with even more in development) for schools to use free of charge.

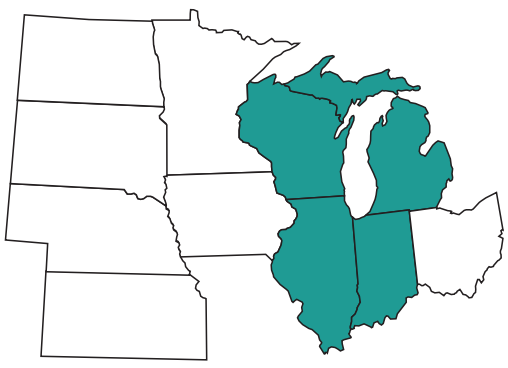
We introduced the bill (2019 SB 744) in January 2020 with bipartisan support and held two packed public hearings. Students, teachers and Holocaust survivors came to Madison to testify.

Some of their stories were incredible.

COMPELLING TESTIMONY FROM A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

My friend Rep. Jon Plumer, author of our companion bill on Holocaust education (AB 816), told the story of how his father served in World War II and helped liberate a concentration camp.

MIDWESTERN STATES THAT REQUIRE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AS PART OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM



State requirement in place

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Jon's dad never told those stories until they were sharing a beer together and his dad opened up. It was the first time that Rep. Plumer saw his father cry.

One of the most compelling speakers at our legislative hearings was my friend Eva Zaret.

Eva is a Holocaust survivor, and one of the most positive and uplifting people I have ever met. Telling her story is Eva's passion now.

She was just a child when the Nazis took her father away and shot him. (You can learn more about how Eva escaped the Holocaust and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 at the Holocaust Center of Milwaukee's website: *holocaustcentermilwaukee.org.*)

Eva is one of the few people who can tell the story of the Holocaust from a first-hand perspective. Unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors each year, and that makes this legislation more urgent.

I knew we were running out of time, but what I didn't know was that soon, everything would stop.

Shortly after the bill received unanimous support in the Wisconsin State Assembly, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and our legislative session ended early.

I wasn't sure we would get another shot. Thankfully, we did. In February of this year, I introduced the bill (SB 69) again with more than 70 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle.

Once again, we heard the moving stories of students, teachers and Holocaust survivors. Only this time, they were told and heard virtually.

The impact was the same.

INSTRUCTION WILL LEAVE A LASTING, POSITIVE IMPACT

Our bill passed unanimously in both houses and was signed into law by Gov. Tony Evers on April 29 at the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.

It truly was a group effort to pass this important bill into law. We couldn't have gotten this far without amazing people like Bev Greenberg, Eva Zaret and an unnamed woman and child who paid the ultimate price for their faith.

I'm optimistic that Holocaust education will do more than teach about the past. I believe it will foster empathy and understanding for different people and cultures. We can't let the horrors of the Holocaust be repeated.

Sen. Alberta Darling was first elected to the Wisconsin Assembly in 1990 and has been a member of the state Senate since 1992. Sen. Darling is a 1995 graduate of CSG Midwest's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development.

This memorial sculpture by Holocaust survivor Nandor Glid (erected in 1968) is seen by visitors to the site of the Dachau concentration camp. Wisconsin Sen. Albert Darling's visit to the site inspired her to sponsor legislation ensuring that the Holocaust is taught to the state's K-12 students.

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FIRST PERSON: OHIO EMERGES AS NATIONAL LEADER ON PREVENTING HAZING AND ITS TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES

Collin's Law mixes stiffer penalties with comprehensive anti-hazing campus plan

by Ohio Sen. Stephanie Kunze
(*Stephanie.Kunze@ohiosenate.gov*)

"Three years ago my family was awoken in the middle of the night to find two police officers and a chaplain who were there to tell us that our beautiful 18-year-old son, Collin, was found dead at 45 Mill Street in Athens, Ohio.

"We knew the address immediately. We knew it was the address of Collin's fraternity house. That's all we knew.

"In the months to follow, we began to learn more about the details that led to Collin's death, and we learned that for the last weeks of Collin's life, Collin had endured extreme, tortuous hazing.

"He was beaten, he was belted, he was water boarded, and he was forced drugs and alcohol. Since that most horrific night, our family, both individually and collectively, has experienced the most painful type of heartbreak imaginable, because of hazing."

~ Kathleen Wiant

Collin's mother, Kathleen Wiant, and the Wiant family are my constituents.

I was introduced to them shortly after the death of Collin, and worked with them over the past three years to create legislation that would increase penalties for hazing, enhance education of the dangers of it, and bring more transparency to instances that take place on our college campuses in Ohio.

I am inspired by the strength and determination that Kathleen showed during the time we worked together on this issue. That included her impactful testimony to our General Assembly.

"We don't want another family to go through the pain and loss our family has experienced. ... No family should ever have to go through what our family has gone through."

Sadly, the family of Stone Foltz, a sophomore at Bowling Green State University who passed away from hazing in March, experienced that pain.

We heard from the Foltz family as well, along with the powerful words of Tyler Perino, a young man who survived a hazing incident.

From their stories came our mission: stop hazing on college campuses and prevent other families from losing loved ones.

Together with my colleague, Sen. Theresa Gavarone, we worked with a wide range of stakeholders on crafting and refining a bill called "Collin's Law." Along the way, we heard and learned from prosecutors, police, university leaders, the North American Interfraternity Council (representing 58 national fraternities), and the National Panhellenic Conference (representing 26 national sororities).

The end result: SB 126, legislation that was signed into law earlier this year and that has the potential to make Ohio a national leader in anti-hazing reform.

ENDING THE HAZING CULTURE

Collin's Law contains a more strict set of criminal penalties that will help to curb hazing culture by deterring individuals and organizations.

Under SB 126, an instance of hazing resulting in serious physical harm is now a third-degree felony, and the criminal penalty for recklessly participating in or permitting hazing is now a second-degree misdemeanor.

In addition, we now have new reporting requirements for school administrators and employees, faculty members and others. For them, the failure to report a hazing incident is a fourth-degree or a first-degree misdemeanor (a more serious charge occurs if the hazing incident caused serious physical harm).

We also have directed our chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education to develop a statewide plan for preventing hazing.

This plan will have two critical components.

One is new guidelines for anti-hazing education and training on our college campuses — for students, school administrators and faculty, as well as organizations recognized by, or operating under the sanction of, an institution.

Two, the chancellor will develop a model anti-hazing policy and distribute it to all institutions of higher education in Ohio.

In turn, each of these institutions must have its own anti-hazing policy in place. (Use of the chancellor's model policy is one option.) All student organizations will receive the policy, which will be posted on a university's website. These schools also will provide students with an online or in-person educational program on hazing.

Taken together, our new statewide plan emphasizes the importance of hazing-prevention education, intervention strategies, accountability for violations, and public acknowledgment when incidents occur.

Our goal with this legislation was not only to enhance penalties, but to push for a change in campus culture. Increased consequences for hazing show how serious we as a state will take hazing. The education pieces in Collin's Law help our colleges and universities recognize the signs and dangers of hazing.

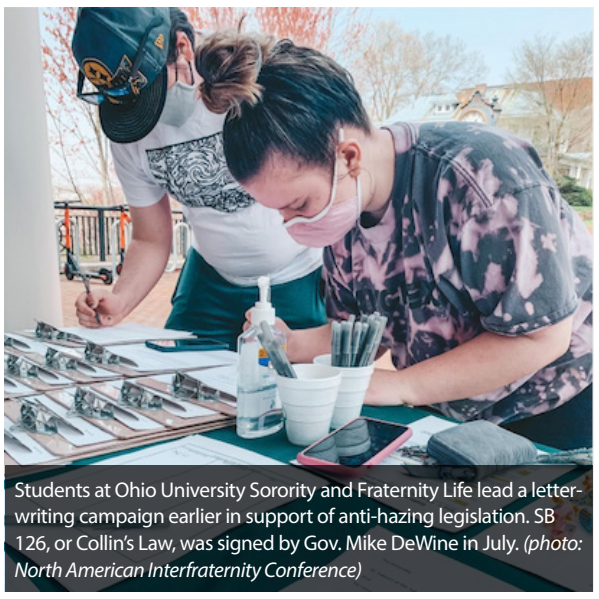
Parents and students deserve and need access to information on the behaviors of organizations sanctioned for hazing.

Universities will now be required to have a website where parents and students can access this information so they can make educated, informed decisions about what organizations to join, or not join.

Had this provision been in effect when Collin was pledging a fraternity, his family would have been able to see that his fraternity had previously sent a pledge to the emergency room. The cause was a pledging activity that led to a gash in his head requiring eight staples.

Working on this law has been a challenging and emotional experience, both as a legislator and as a mother of college-aged children myself.

The bravery and courage of the Wiant, Foltz and Perino families has been inspiring. They are truly the heroes in ensuring that their stories are seen and heard to effect change.



Students at Ohio University Sorority and Fraternity Life lead a letter-writing campaign earlier in support of anti-hazing legislation. SB 126, or Collin's Law, was signed by Gov. Mike DeWine in July. *(photo: North American Interfraternity Conference)*

HOW OHIO'S RECENTLY ENACTED COLLIN'S LAW DEFINES HAZING AND PUNISHES THE BEHAVIOR

DEFINITION

"Coercing another, including the victim, to do any act of initiation into any student or other organization or any act to continue or reinstate membership in or affiliation with any student or other organization that causes or creates a substantial risk of causing mental or physical harm to any person, including coercing another to consume alcohol or a drug of abuse."

PUNISHMENT

- third-degree felony for hazing (including coerced consumption of alcohol or drugs) that results in serious physical harm
- second-degree misdemeanor for recklessly participating in, or permitting, hazing
- second- or fourth-degree misdemeanor for failing to report hazing

One of the things that I am most grateful for is the fact that more than 25,000 students from universities across Ohio voiced their support for Collin's Law. I believe this is the generation that will end the barbaric practice of hazing, and deliver on my hope that no other family will be awoken to that knock at the door.

Stephanie Kunze is currently serving her second term in the Ohio Senate and previously was a member of the state House of Representatives.

One of the things that I am most grateful for is the fact that more than 25,000 students from universities across Ohio voiced their support for Collin's Law

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Illinois revamps college-level developmental education with goal of improving completion rates

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

This past summer, following the killing of George Floyd, legislators across the country began asking questions about racial justice and disparities in their own states.

Among them was Illinois Rep. Carol Ammons, and one of her questions, along with other leaders in her state's Legislative Black Caucus, was this: "Is this just a police issue?"

"Our answer was no," she says.

Their legislative response was to develop a sweeping policy agenda built on four pillars: criminal justice reform, economic equity and opportunity, health care and education.

Much of the work on that last pillar fell to Ammons, last year's chair of the House Higher Education Committee. Her efforts culminated in January with the passage of HB 2170. The measure seeks changes at all levels of the education system, with an overarching goal of advancing racial equity.

Illinois Rep. Carol Ammons

On the higher-education side, one piece of that bill illustrates the kind of systematic reforms being sought. It has to do with how the state's community colleges deliver developmental education to students, and how these institutions choose who takes part in this coursework.

Developmental education is remedial instruction in subjects such as English and math, often traditionally taken before students can move on to college-level, credit-bearing courses.

State-level reforms in this policy area became "a centerpiece," Ammons says, in part because of what legislators learned in committee testimony over the summer. In Illinois, almost half of high school graduates enrolled full-time in a community college are placed in developmental education. Among minority students, this rate is even higher — nearly 71 out of every 100 Black students, for example, and among this group, only six of 100 go on to graduate.

"The traditional developmental-education courses cost students time, money and financial aid, but they don't count toward college credit," Ammons says. "It becomes a barrier."

HB 2170 seeks to change that.

First, community colleges must look beyond standardized test scores and college-placement tests when determining who gets placed in remedial education. For example, a graduating high school student who has a high grade-point average or who has successfully completed college-level or transitional classes must be placed in credit-bearing courses.

Second, HB 2170 uproots the traditional developmental-education approach, calling for it to be replaced with an "evidence-based model that maximizes a student's likelihood of completing an introductory college-level course within his or her first two semesters."

One likely result: community colleges' adoption of a "co-requisite model," under which students are placed directly into college-level coursework with concurrent instructional supports.

"What we've seen with the traditional model is that 18 percent of Black students in math and 29 percent in English completed a gateway course with a C or better in three years," says Emily Goldman, senior policy manager for the Partnership for College Completion.

"With the co-requisite model, it's 69 percent and 64 percent."

Illinois isn't alone in seeking these kinds of policy changes. More states around the country are recognizing the traditional model as an obstacle to postsecondary completion, says Nikki Edgecombe, a senior research scholar at the Community College Research Center.

The loss of time and money (including the possible exhaustion of financial aid) while taking remedial courses are factors, she notes, but so is the impact on a student's academic outlook.

"It can be demotivating for a student, 'I applied to college, they let me in, and now they won't let me take college classes,'" Edgecombe says.

"Getting students into and through their gateway courses is important to generating academic momentum."

PREVALENCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION IN U.S. COLLEGES

59.8% | ***% OF STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO TOOK ONE OR MORE REMEDIAL COURSES***

40.9% | ***% OF ALL POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS WHO TOOK ONE OR MORE REMEDIAL COURSES***

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (based on study released last year of ninth-graders in 2009 who started postsecondary careers in 2013-14)

Tim Anderson serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education Committee.

EDUCATION

With assist from private donors, South Dakota funds, launches endowment for needs-based scholarships

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

As longtime state Sen. Lee Schoenbeck describes it, South Dakota needed to find a way of "filling the cup" for his home state's lower-income high school graduates as they looked at college options.

"Things like grants, other scholarships, loans and work studies don't always get there," he says, "and other states were filling it when we weren't."

"That's caused us to lose a lot of our blue-collar kids."

This turned out to be the ideal year to seek a policy remedy.

With passage of SB 171, legislators agreed to put $50 million toward a $200 million endowment for a needs-based Freedom Scholarship. The other $150 million is coming from private donors.

"Usually we have $5 million to $15 million to spend in special appropriations," explains Schoenbeck, president pro tempore of the South Dakota Senate. "The idea that we had $50 million, and it was legislator-initiated, was unique."

> "Our belief is if they stay for three years, we've got them for a lifetime."
>
> *South Dakota Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck*

In South Dakota, a special appropriation is the spending of one-time money and requires approval by super-majorities in both legislative chambers.

According to Schoenbeck, this year's special appropriation of $50 million marks a record for South Dakota and reflects the state's strong fiscal standing, the result of factors such as an influx of federal dollars and economic growth (the state's GDP grew by 9.9 percent between the final two quarters of 2020, highest rate in the nation).

Under SB 171, investment income for the Freedom Scholarship will go to students via the state's colleges and universities, both private and public. To participate, these postsecondary schools must have a nonprofit entity to receive and award scholarship funds. An existing foundation will make investment decisions for the endowment, and a five-member, governor-appointed board will oversee the scholarship program.

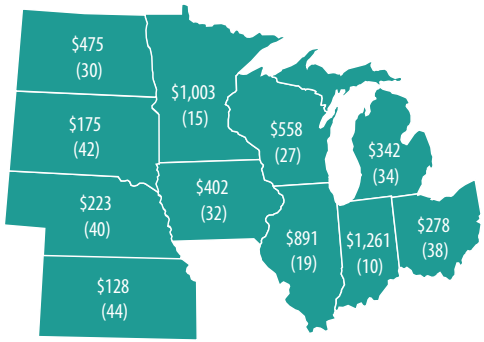
Students must be residents of the state, maintain a grade-point average of 2.5 and graduate within five years. They also must agree to live and work in South Dakota for three years after their graduation; if they don't fulfill this pledge, the scholarship turns into an interest-bearing loan.

"Our belief is if they stay for three years, we've got them for a lifetime," Schoenbeck says.

The same three-year work/live stipulation is part of an existing Build Scholarship, which supports residents and nonresidents who are attending South Dakota's technical colleges and seeking degrees in high-demand fields such as agriculture, automotive, health care and information technology.

In the 2018-'19 academic year, U.S. states awarded about $14.1 billion in state-funded student financial aid: about 64 percent of it in the form of needs-based grant aid, 23 percent in merit-based aid and 13 percent in nongrant aid, according to the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.

STATE GRANT DOLLARS PER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT DURING 2018-'19 ACADEMIC YEAR (U.S. RANK)*



* The per dollar amount is the total amount of state's grant dollars for undergraduates compared to the state's full-time-equivalent enrollment of undergraduates.

Source: National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs

As part of its 50-state survey, the association also looked at differences in the breadth of state-funded award programs. For example, how much is a state awarding in grants compared to the state's full-time-equivalent enrollment of undergraduates? In the Midwest, the amount was as high as $1,261 in Indiana and as low as $128 in Kansas (see map).

Tim Anderson serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference's Education Committee.

EDUCATION

Several states have decided to expand school-choice programs in 2021, including three in the Midwest

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

By the start of June, 13 U.S. states had enacted various types of laws on educational choice in 2021, creating a total of five new programs and expanding 13 existing ones.

"That is atypical; it's a number much larger than what we're used to seeing," says Mike McShane, who tracks this state-level activity as director of national research for EdChoice, the nonprofit organization that advocates for such laws.

Three of those states were in the Midwest:

- Iowa's expansion of a tax credit program for individuals who donate to organizations that raise money for students to attend private schools,
- Kansas' increase in student eligibility for an existing scholarship program, and
- Indiana's new budget that includes a mix of new initiatives and enlargement of an existing voucher program.

Why did this surge in legislative activity occur?

McShane believes it's at least partially due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has included conflicts over school policies in areas such as in-person vs. remote vs. hybrid learning and masks vs. no masks, as well as the experience of discovering new ways of getting education delivered. (For example, a surprising number of parents say they liked the hybrid model, McShane says, and there was a spike in homeschooling and "micro-schooling.")

And he sees interest in school-choice policies only growing as families, schools and states adjust to the post-pandemic world of K-12 education.

"Some kids are going to need remediation, some are going to need acceleration," McShane says. "Some are going to need to refocus on the social aspects of school, some on the academic aspects.

"So there's not going to be one solution because the experiences were so different. We're going to see so many families wanting different things."

This year in Kansas, one version of a bill to create new education savings accounts for families to attend private schools would have included eligibility for any student who lacked an in-person learning option at his or her local public school.

No ESAs were established in Kansas this year. However, as part of a broader agreement between the Republican-led Legislature and Democrat Gov. Laura Kelly (HB 2134), the state altered its Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program, which dates back to 2014.

Kansas Rep. Kristey Williams

Previously, the program was only open to low-income students attending one of the state's 100 lowest-performing schools. Now, all low-income students will be eligible, a change that Kansas Rep. Kristey Williams says will greatly expand eligibility and participation.

During the 2020-'21 school year, 632 Kansas students were awarded scholarships totaling close to $2 million. They attended one of 39 qualified private schools. The total amount of tax credits was $2.47 million; the leading scholarship-granting organization is the Catholic Education Foundation.

"There are many different reasons a parent would opt for this so their child can succeed," Williams says. "Some kids need a little Jesus. Some need away from friends or the neighborhood, or don't want to be distracted by peers. Some need more structure or just a different environment."

This year's expansion in Kansas came as part of an agreement to fully fund public schools.

In Indiana, already a state with one of the most expansive school-choice laws in the country, lawmakers significantly increased eligibility for the existing Choice Scholarship Program as part of its new two-year budget (HB 1001). As a result, students living in households with incomes of up to 300 percent of eligibility can qualify; the cap had been 150 percent.

Additionally, the amount of scholarship money to attend a private school will be equal to 90 percent of the per-pupil funding level that is provided to the student's public school. (Previously, the amount varied depending on the family's income level; it was usually less than 90 percent.)

Lastly, the Indiana General Assembly

established new education savings accounts for the families of students with disabilities. Money from the accounts can be used to pay for specific therapies or classes or to attend private schools; it will come from a portion of the state dollars that go to the student's local public school.

"Indiana has been much more of a story of slow growth [on school choice]," McShane says about its long legislative history of incremental increases in programs and eligibility.

"It had a small number of kids participate at first, and then more and more and more. They've had the opportunity to measure it and see how it's going, and make sure people are benefiting."

South Dakota Sen. Jim Bolin and Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig serve as co-chairs of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education Committee. Tim Anderson is CSG Midwest's staff liaison to the committee.

EDUCATION

'Short-term' or 'generational' impact? Critical choices ahead in mitigating learning loss from past school year

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

A look back at the last school year is a reminder of the educational imperatives that lie ahead for states and their school districts.

Tiffany Sanderson, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education, put the stakes this way to lawmakers who attended a July session of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting:

Effectively re-engage students who were chronically absent or who fell behind academically due to a year of instructional disruptions and alterations, and you've contained the problem to a "short-term educational impact."

Fail to do so? Then it becomes a "generational impact."

Sanderson was one of two expert presenters at this session organized by the MLC Education Committee. She and the second speaker, Phillip Lovell, focused on the impacts of COVID-19 and related policies on student achievement.

"There are now even greater gaps in learning, especially among our historically underserved students," said Lovell, associate executive director of the Alliance for Excellent Education.

Nationwide analyses comparing academic gains during two different school years — the pandemic year of 2020-'21 vs. the non-pandemic year of 2018-'19 — show that minority and low-income students were hit the hardest.

"Students who were more likely to be in remote learning … were less likely to have access to the technology they needed [for remote learning]," Lovell said.

"It was a bad combination."

In South Dakota, during a typical year,

South Dakota Sen. Jim Bolin presides over this year's MLC Education Committee meeting. He serves as co-chair of the committee along with Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig. *(photo: Johnny Sundby)*

about 3 percent of students miss 30 or more days of school. That rate of chronic absenteeism more than doubled in 2020-'21, Sanderson said. These higher rates tended to be in schools providing virtual rather than in-person learning. More than half of the state's chronically absent students were Native American and 80 percent were low-income.

Lovell singled out three post-pandemic challenges for all states to address. One is helping students catch up from lost learning opportunities over the past year. Options include developing summer learning and enrichment activities, extending the school day and year, and investing more in tutoring and evidence-based interventions.

He also emphasized the importance of closing digital divides that leave students without access to high-speed home internet.

Lastly, he said, new policies are needed to improve postsecondary readiness. Currently, only about 37 percent of graduating high school students are prepared for college-level math and reading; 70 percent of beginning students at two-year colleges require remedial coursework.

According to Lovell, states can improve these numbers in part by strengthening the rigor of K-12 curricula and expanding access to college-credit courses.

He singled out a competency-based education model in Georgia known as "Move on When Ready," a requirement in Indiana that high schools offer two advanced-placement and two dual-enrollment courses, and a new law in California that incentivizes schools to develop high-quality career and technical education courses.

$123 BILLION OPPORTUNITY

One huge new opportunity for states: the American Rescue Plan Act, which sets aside $123 billion for states and school districts to spend on education between now and 2026.

"There are often strings attached to money that comes from Washington," Lovell said. "These [dollars] have as few strings as possible attached to them."

In South Dakota, the money will go to three priority areas, Sanderson said.

One is improving the recruitment and retention of educators. The second is better addressing the social-emotional needs of young people, an area that Sanderson said was the "highest need expressed" during recent listening sessions held across the state. Lastly, South Dakota will explore new ways of delivering instruction, with less emphasis on seat-time requirements in favor of a personalized, competency-based model.

"Help students accelerate when they're ready to do so," she explained, "and have more time and attention given where they might be at risk or in need of additional supports."

To advance the competency-based model, South Dakota is investing in new teacher training and expanding the availability of digital-learning options.

STUDENTS' ACADEMIC GROWTH DURING 2020-'21 SCHOOL YEAR COMPARED TO GROWTH IN 2018-'19 — AS MEASURED BY CHANGES IN MEDIAN SCORES ON THE MAP TEST (MEASURE OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS)

Grade and subject	Low-poverty schools	High-poverty schools
Third-grade reading	-3*	-11*
Eighth-grade reading	-2*	-6*
Third-grade math	-6*	-17*
Eighth-grade math	-8*	-8*

* Figures represent the difference in percentile points. Student learning gained during the pandemic school year, 2020-'21. But that growth in achievement lagged compared to increases during a typical school year (2018-'19 school year). The decline in student growth was steeper in high-poverty schools.

Source: NWEA Center for School and Student Progress

Tim Anderson is CSG Midwest's staff liaison to the MLC Education Committee.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hit hard by pandemic, many women, minority and non-degreed workers still face labor-market challenges

by Laura Tomaka *(ltomaka@csg.org)*

The pandemic-related dip in jobs and economic output often has been referred to as the "she-cession" because of its disproportionate, adverse impact on female workers.

Economist Michael Horrigan told legislators in July that federal data on employment tell a slightly more nuanced story.

It's a "less-than-B.A. recession," he said, "with significant impacts on women and minorities."

Likewise, many groups of workers without postsecondary degrees or credentials continue to struggle even as the U.S. economy grows.

"Those with less than a [bachelor's degree] have had an especially difficult time regaining employment since April 2020," Horrigan, president of the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, said during a session organized by the Midwestern Legislative Conference Economic Development Committee.

During the first few months of the pandemic (February to April 2020), overall employment declined by 22.2 million jobs. This drop was highly concentrated in lower-wage sectors and establishments — 64 percent of the nation's total.

"Ten industries alone accounted for over half of those employment declines," said Horrigan, noting huge losses in jobs related to hospitality, entertainment, travel, retail and child care.

Women have had a higher rate of job loss relative to their employment status, and in particular, minority women have been at a greater risk of labor market-related displacement and disruption. For example, as of February 2020, minority women represented less than 12 percent of employment; they accounted for nearly 21 percent of the people who lost jobs between February and April 2020.

"This is a really important lesson in terms of who got hurt by the pandemic," Horrigan said.

Bouncing back for many displaced workers has not been easy.

As of June 2021, more than 42 percent of the nation's population of jobless workers were "long-term unemployed." This means they had been out of work and searching for a job for 27 weeks or longer.

"The labor market is changing in terms of skill requirements, automation," Horrigan said. "These [long-term unemployed] are the folks who are going to have the hardest, long-term problems in the labor market."

Minorities make up a disproportionate share of the nation's long-term unemployed: 23.9 percent and 17.1 percent for minority males and females, respectively, as of May.

Horrigan suggested that policymakers also pay close attention to trends in the "near unemployed": individuals who have been laid off, either temporarily or permanently, but are not yet searching for work.

This group is considered out of the labor force and not counted as unemployed.

"[Some] are coming back in," he said, "or we hope they are coming back in."

As of June 2021, nearly 7 million individuals who were out of the labor force reported that they wanted a job now. But they cited various factors — child care, family responsibilities, transportation, etc. — for not seeking work.

Among this group of the "hidden" or "near" unemployed, there is a disproportionate share of females without a college degree as well as minority females.

It is unknown how many of these workers will remain out of the labor force or for how long, Horrigan said. He urged legislators to focus on strategies that help bring them back to the workplace.

RATIO OF EMPLOYMENT TO TOTAL POPULATION AMONG PEOPLE WITHOUT A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

	February 2020	May 2021
White, non-Hispanic males	60.1%	57.7%
Minority males	62.7%	60.2%
White, non-Hispanic females	47.4%	44.8%
Minority females	51.1%	46.4%

Source: W.E. Upjohn Institute (using data from the U.S. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Wisconsin Rep. Robert Wittke, pictured here at the MLC Annual Meeting, is one of three officers of the MLC Economic Development Committee. He is a co-chair along with Illinois Sen. Linda Holmes. The vice chair is Indiana Rep. Ethan Manning. *(photo: Johnny Sundby)*

Laura Tomaka is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the MLC Economic Development Committee.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Legislators explore promise of career and technical education, as well as funding options for states

by Carolyn Orr *(carolyn@strawridgefarm.us)*

During the 2018-'19 school year, more than 750,000 students in the Midwest chose an academic path that they hoped would also start them on a successful career journey.

One of the most popular tracts chosen by these career and technical education (CTE) students: agriculture, an industry that is critical to many of the region's communities and that provides a diverse mix of job opportunities.

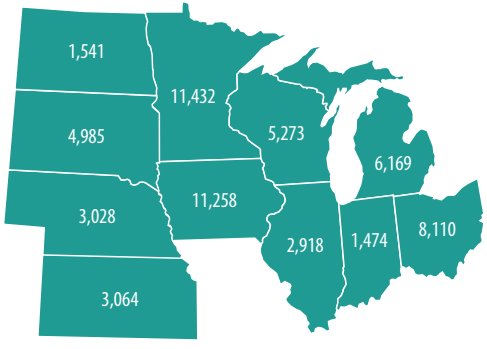
"CTE programs are reflective of local communities' industries and needs, from corn and hogs in rural Iowa to food production in the Twin Cities of Minnesota to fisheries in northern Wisconsin," Laura Hasselquist, an assistant professor of agricultural education at South Dakota State University, said during a July session of the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

Along with agriculture, the other four most popular CTE career tracts in the Midwest are health care, business, human services, arts and information technology.

Local, state and federal funds are used to support this education model, which is for all ages but is perhaps most often associated as an alternative for high school students.

According to Hasselquist, graduation rates are higher, and dropout rates lower, among these students.

OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURE-FOCUSED CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS (2018-'19)



Source: U.S. Department of Education

"Part of the reason [why] is that CTE provides students with the opportunity to apply lessons learned in other classes to real-world settings," she said. "This reinforces the academic lessons and makes them stick."

The funding of CTE can be just as varied as the programs themselves.

According to a 2014 U.S. Department of Education study, some states fund local programs out of general state-aid formulas, but there is no specific earmark for CTE. Other states have student- or cost-based formulas that set aside funds for CTE programming.

A third model is to dedicate money for area-wide CTE centers that support students in multiple school districts.

Mark Pogliano, principal and CTE director of the Jackson Career Center in Michigan, discussed with legislators how these varying funding methods are used in his home state.

While all of the CTE programs rely on state and federal funding, he said, 33 of Michigan's school districts have a portion of their property taxes dedicated to vocational education.

The Jackson Area Career Center, for example, oversees a program that receives $12 million a year from the local millage tax. This region of the state has one central career center that serves 12 local districts and offers a centralized CTE program.

In other parts of the state, school districts work together but do not have a centralized CTE center. Instead, participating schools house specific CTE programs. A third option is for individual schools and districts to have stand-alone CTE programs of their own.

Regardless of the model, Pogliano said, state support is critical. He encouraged legislators to work toward implementing sustainable funding models that encourage growth in CTE programs.

Minnesota Rep. Paul Anderson addresses fellow Midwestern legislators as Illinois Rep. Norine Hammond looks on. Anderson and Hammond are co-chairs of the MLC Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee meeting. The committee's co-vice chairs are Saskatchewan MLA Steven Bonk and Kansas Sen. Marci Francisco. *(photo: Johnny Sundby)*

This July session was organized by three MLC committees: Agriculture & Natural Resources, Economic Development and Education.

Carolyn Orr is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the MLC Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

EDUCATION

In Nebraska, new law has researchers studying potential link between air quality and student performance

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

Six years ago, the largest gas leak in U.S. history occurred in California.

The incident, as it turned out, resulted in the chance for a natural experiment of sorts — to see whether better air quality in schools leads to improved student achievement. That's because as a precautionary health measure, high-performing air filters were installed in all school buildings within a five-mile radius of the leak.

An economics professor on the other side of the country, Michael Gilraine from New York University, studied the effects by comparing the academic gains of students in those schools vs. peers in schools without the filters. (Regarding the gas leak, the filters ended up being only a precaution; natural gas was not detected inside any of the nearby schools.)

Gilraine's findings and conclusions, released in 2020, were striking: The math and reading scores of students in those nearby schools increased as a result of the air-filter installations, with the gains equivalent to cutting class sizes by one-third.

Eliot Bostar, a new state senator from Nebraska, saw the results and immediately wanted to know more.

"I got in touch with Dr. Gilraine and asked him, what do you think would be a good next step?" Bostar says. "The message I got from him, as well as other researchers, scientists and academics working in this field, was that we need more research."

Nebraska Sen. Eliot Bostar

That is now occurring in Nebraska as the result of this year's LB 630, a bill Bostar sponsored that passed with near-unanimous legislative approval.

The two-year study, estimated to cost about a half-million dollars, is being run by the Nebraska Department of Education with help from University of Nebraska researchers.

It involves 300 classrooms of third- to eighth-grade students in 50 different Nebraska schools. Half of the classrooms will be equipped with commercial air filters to remove common pollutants and particulate matter, half will not.

Researchers will compare the academic and behavioral performance of these two groups of students, and then report its findings to the Legislature.

"Even if the results demonstrate an effect of just half of what the Gilraine study produced, it would still be one of the most cost-effective endeavors we could pursue to improve academic outcomes in our school," Bostar says.

In his study, Gilraine estimated the cost of the filters to be $1,000 per year, per classroom.

AIR QUALITY AND COVID-19

Nebraska's new research comes at a time when more attention is being paid to indoor air quality in schools, particularly as it relates to preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases.

One priority of the American Rescue Plan Act, for instance, is to improve ventilation in schools and colleges, with new federal funding available to upgrade heating, cooling and ventilation systems and to purchase new air filtration units.

"For us in Nebraska, as we study the academic impact of reducing indoor air contamination and pollution, it will have the added benefit of allowing us to examine whether or not these

filtration systems have an impact on [reducing] disease transmission," Bostar says.

"That is very much how the experiment has been designed."

Another potential benefit of improved air quality is reducing the number of days missed by students.

Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism, and poor indoor air quality has been linked to severe attacks and allergic reactions.

South Dakota Sen. Jim Bolin and Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig serve as co-chairs of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education Committee. Tim Anderson is the CSG Midwest staff liaison to the committee.

EDUCATION

'Earn and learn': State support for youth apprenticeships is growing; Wisconsin already is a national leader

by Tim Anderson *(tanderson@csg.org)*

Last school year, more than 5,000 Wisconsin high school juniors and seniors earned $28.7 million while they learned on the job — all while securing academic credits for high school graduation and often getting a jump-start on a postsecondary program.

They did so by participating in the state's nationally recognized youth apprenticeship program.

In his home district, Rep. Loren Oldenburg has seen young people take advantage of this "earn and learn" opportunity by working in the mechanics shop of a local auto dealer or by getting early, hands-on experience in careers such as agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality and banking.

"Here in our rural areas, we can get our young adults into the workforce sooner, and in career areas that they might like," he says. "And that can be the difference in them staying here."

Wisconsin is ahead of most states on youth apprenticeship. Its program dates back 30 years, with state policy and grants providing the foundation for coalitions of school districts, labor organizations and industry groups to work on locally run initiatives.

The idea is catching on in other states.

In a recent web event of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference, lawmakers learned how states such as Iowa and Michigan are making a greater commitment to youth apprenticeship.

In Iowa, it began as a pilot project in one high school in 2018, and has since expanded to 60 schools covering 19 different occupational areas. The Legislature is now appropriating nearly $4 million to help start or maintain local youth apprenticeships, and it also passed a bill in 2021 (HB 847) giving school districts greater funding flexibility to share the costs of employing work-based learning coordinators.

Michigan, long a policy leader on registered apprenticeships for adults, is now making similar opportunities available to 16- to 24-year-olds. As part of a federal grant, Michigan has secured $5 million to build what it is calling a "youth apprenticeship readiness network" of schools, employers, and labor and business organizations.

Together, these groups will create more than 1,000 new youth apprenticeships. The state wants at least 124 of the participants to be youths with disabilities.

These young Michigan apprentices will earn industry-recognized credentials in sectors that need more skilled workers and that offer pathways to high-wage careers. (Examples include advanced manufacturing, construction, energy, health care and information technology.)

In Wisconsin, state-level support comes first and foremost from a $6 million grant program overseen by the Department of Workforce Development.

Legislators have developed a list of 16 career clusters that must be offered to students, and state statute also sets performance targets for grant recipients: for example, at least 60 percent of the students should be offered a job at the place where they received two years of on-the-job training.

WEB SESSION ON YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

In November, the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education Committee held a virtual session for state lawmakers on youth apprenticeships. A recording is available at *csgmidwest.org*. The MLC Economic Development Committee co-hosted this event.

Since joining the Legislature, Oldenburg has prioritized an expansion of youth apprenticeship, and he says two recent legislative actions will help. First, Wisconsin raised the reimbursement rate for local programs from $900 to $1,100 per apprentice. Second, the recently enacted AB 220 (sponsored by Oldenburg) requires schools with a youth apprenticeship program to provide information about it to parents and students.

South Dakota Sen. Jim Bolin and Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig serve as co-chairs of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee. Tim Anderson is CSG Midwest's staff liaison to the committee.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION | Do Midwestern states have laws banning schools' use of physical restraints, and if so, did such laws include a phase-in period?

Earlier this year, **Illinois** became one of the latest states to update its laws on how and when schools can physically restrain students and place them in seclusion.

HB 219 bars school workers from locking children alone in seclusion spaces and limits the use of isolated timeout and restraints to situations in which there is "imminent danger of physical harm." These new restrictions will be phased in over the next three years as school staff across the state receive training in areas such as crisis intervention and positive behavioral supports.

As initially passed by the House, HB 219 also allowed for a two-year phase-in of a ban on prone restraint, in which a student is held face down on the floor. However, subsequent legislative negotiations banned the use of prone restraint after this school year, and it only can be used this year if the school staff member has been properly trained and if prior restraint is allowed in the student's behavioral intervention plan.

In the Midwest, seven states (including Illinois; see map) have bans on the use of prone restraint. At least three of these states also allowed for some kind of phase-in before the prohibition took effect: one year in **Kansas** and **Michigan**, for example, and one month in **Iowa**.

Prior to this year, Illinois had existing statutory language and regulations that limited the use of seclusion and restraint.

However, in late 2019, a collaborative investigation between ProPublica and the *Chicago Tribune* found that seclusion rooms and physical restraint were being used in Illinois schools far more often than reported to the federal government, and for reasons not allowed under state law.

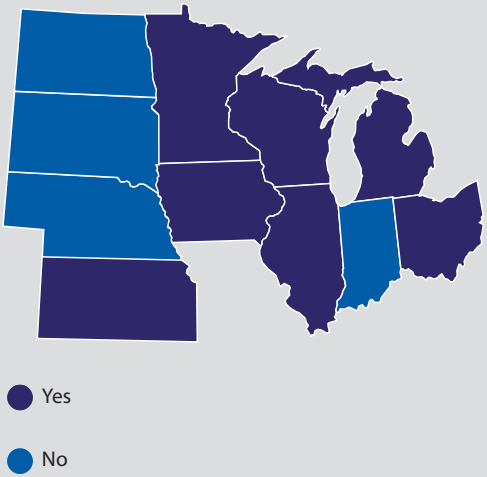
Investigators found that of 35,000 documented incidents in 100 school districts from fall 2017 through December 2018, one-third of seclusions and one-fourth of restraints did not list safety as the reason for the actions taken. There were also major issues with the schools' self-reporting. One school district reported only four seclusion incidents to the U.S. Department of Education in 2015-'16, but district records showed 848 isolated timeouts during the following year and a half.

In some schools, investigators found, isolated seclusion (sometimes combined with prone restraint) became the go-to punishment — for offenses as minor as pushing a book off a desk.

That investigation led the Illinois State Board of Education to institute an immediate ban on seclusion and floor restraints. At the time, 19 U.S. states prohibited seclusion of children in locked rooms and four prohibited seclusions of any kind.

Illinois' ban on seclusion was lifted shortly thereafter, but much stricter rules on when isolated timeouts could be used remained and state oversight was increased. Then, in April 2020, the State Board of Education lifted the ban on prone restraints after some schools complained that they did not have enough time to transition to other methods.

DOES STATE BAN USE OF PRONE RESTRAINTS BY SCHOOLS?



Sources: "How Safe is the Schoolhouse? An Analysis of State Seclusion and Restraint Laws and Policies" (2019) and CSG Midwest research

The General Assembly then intervened this year with the passage of HB 219.

In 2020, **Wisconsin** legislators passed a measure explicitly banning the use of prone restraints on all students. SB 527 also created new rules on training, data collection and parental notification of incidents involving seclusion and physical restraint.

Question of the Month response by Mitch Arvidson (*marvidson@csg.org*), program manager for CSG Midwest, which provides individualized research assistance to legislators, legislative staff and other government officials. This section highlights a research question received by CSG Midwest. Inquiries can be sent to *csgm@csg.org*.

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