

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 2023 on policies related to education and workforce development



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The Council of State Governments | Midwestern Legislative Conference

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WITH 'SCIENCE OF READING' LAWS, STATES EYE TURNAROUND IN RECENT TRENDS

Test scores have fallen across the region; new legislative measures include investments in reading instruction — and sometimes requirements on how the subject is taught

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@cs.org)

In the Midwest, drops in students' test scores on reading are widespread and, in many states, predate the COVID-19 pandemic.

One group that has taken notice and recent action to reverse that trend: state legislators.

"Kids that don't know how to read or aren't reading at a proficient level by third grade are exponentially more likely to drop out of school," notes Indiana Rep. Jake Teshka, chief author of a new law on reading in his state.

The research is definitive on that point, he adds, and the consequences also are clear. Young people don't attain the postsecondary credentials they need for economic and career

success, and the state as a whole is left with a workforce problem.

"Jobs coming to Indiana are increasingly going to require some sort of postsecondary education," Teshka adds.

He believes a new law in Indiana can help turn around those trends in reading performance.

In Wisconsin, Rep. Joel Kitchens authored a like-minded bill in his home state, with some of the same long-term concerns about student outcomes in mind.

"When people ask me, 'What scares you the most about the future,' [it] is seeing more and more people trapped in that cycle of poverty, one generation after the other," Kitchens says.

"The only chance we have of breaking that is education. And basically, if we don't get [students] reading early, it's just not going to happen."

Laws in Indiana, Wisconsin and other states (see map on page 2) are revamping schools' reading instructional strategies and promoting (sometimes requiring) approaches that adhere to what is known as the "science of reading," or SoR.

CONTEXT OF NEW LAWS ON READING INSTRUCTION

Although not comprised of a universally recognized curriculum model, SoR is an approach to reading instruction that emphasizes phonetic learning, the sounding out of letters and words.

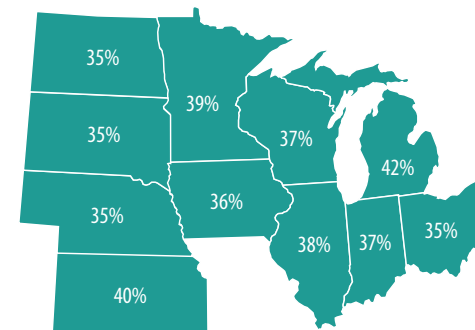
For the last few decades, a "reading war" of sorts has waged throughout academia regarding reading instruction.

Is phonics the best approach? Or do other strategies work best for students?

For example, with the "three-cueing" model, an emphasis is placed on students using context clues and analyzing syntax in order to understand written language. In practice, a teacher using this method would prompt students, or "cue" them, to ascertain the meaning of a word in a sentence by asking a series of questions: Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does it look right?

The problem with this method, according to critics, is this style of instruction simply makes students better guessers. It's more akin to the strategies used by people who have difficulty reading, they say.

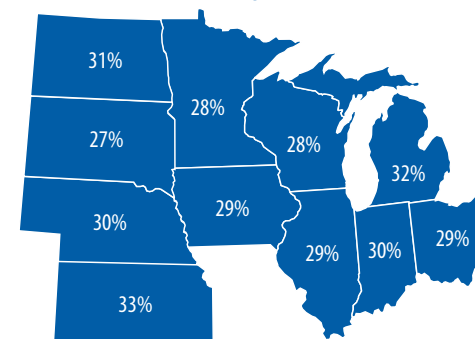
% OF FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN MIDWESTERN
STATES WITH 'BELOW BASIC' READING SCORES
(2022)*



* For the nation as a whole, 39% of fourth-grade students had "below basic" level reading scores in 2022.

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress

% OF EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN MIDWESTERN
STATES WITH 'BELOW BASIC' READING SCORES
(2022)*



* For the nation as a whole, 32% of eighth-grade students had "below basic" level reading scores.

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress



REVAMP TO READING INSTRUCTION INCLUDES FUNDING OF LITERACY COACHES, TEACHER TRAINING

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Proponents of the recently enacted state laws say SoR is more closely aligned with the tenets of cognitive science.

That’s because lessons built on phonemic awareness and phonics better connect how children auditorily learn how to speak, a primal ability of humans, to how they learn to read, a more complex and relatively modern skill.

“We have tangible physical evidence as far as the way that the brain works and the way that orthographic mapping works and the way that we commit words to memory,” Teshka says.

“And the process by which we do that is all encompassed in this body of research called ‘science of reading.’”

Teshka’s goal with this year’s HB 1558 (signed into law in May) is to make sure evidence-based instruction from that research is used in Indiana classrooms.

HOW ONE STATE’S EXPERIENCE LED TO SPREAD OF READING LAWS

The SoR movement has also gained traction in part because of recent progress in Mississippi, a state that traditionally has had among the nation’s lowest reading scores.

A turnaround has occurred in that state over the past decade, since passage of the Literacy-Based Promotion Act and the Early Learning Collaborative Act.

With those laws in place, money started going toward SoR-based professional development for all early-grade teachers and school administrators.

Mississippi schools also received new resources from the state, including literacy coaches — individuals with advanced degrees who work with teachers as well as one-on-one with students.

“[The] coaches were put through a rigorous interview process to make sure they had the right background knowledge and knew how to work with adults,” former Mississippi State Superintendent Carey Wright said during an interview earlier this year with McKinsey & Company.

“We were strategic in how we deployed these people and how we built capacity for teachers and leaders.”

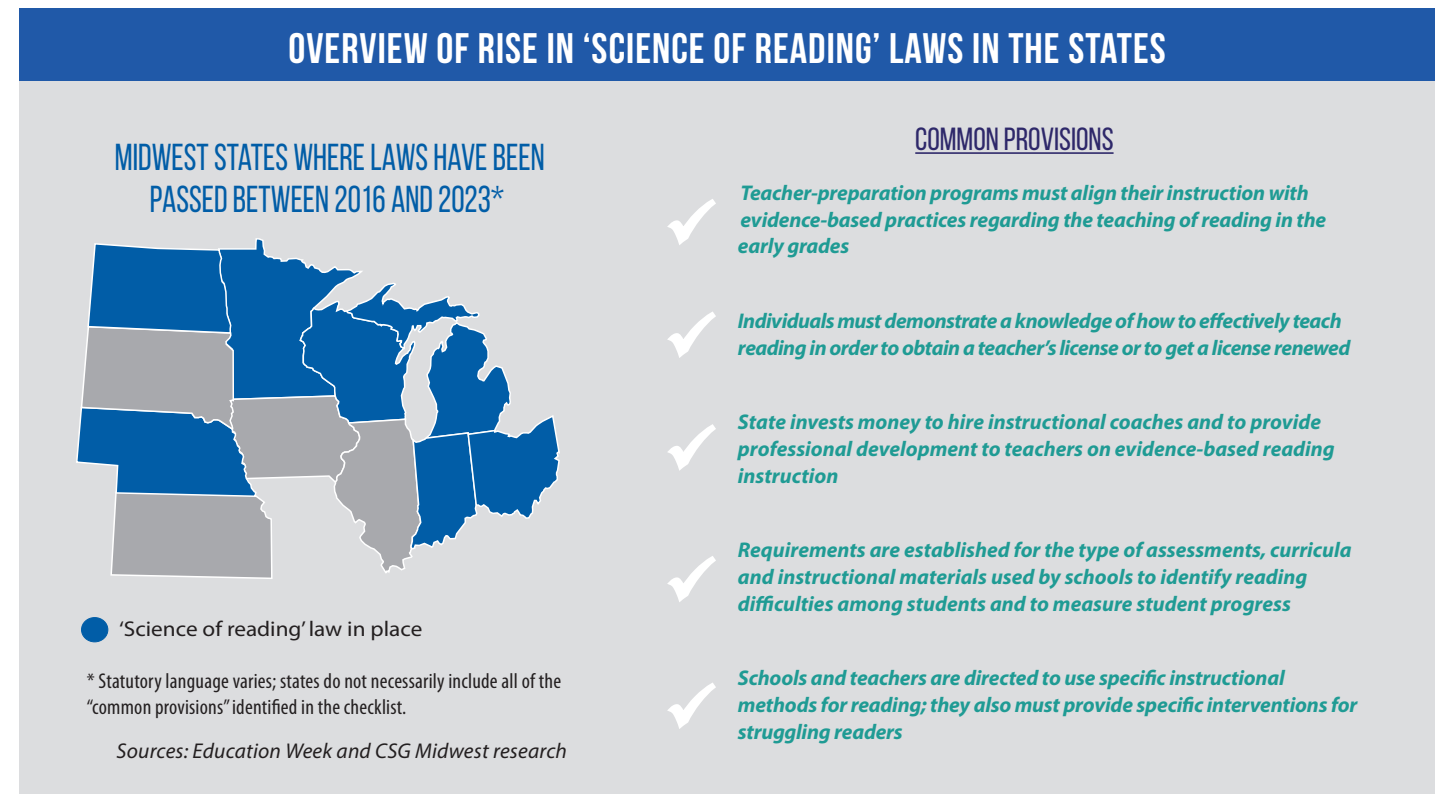
Between 2013 and 2019, average fourth-grade reading scores in Mississippi increased significantly. Additionally, 65 percent of students in this grade were reading at a basic level or higher, up from 53 percent in 2013.

These advances were also seen across multiple racial and ethnic groups.

Mississippi’s success story has given rise to new SoR laws in other states, including three in the Midwest this year alone: Indiana (HB 1558/1590), Ohio (HB 33) and Wisconsin (AB 321).

‘IF WE KNOW WHAT WORKS, WE NEED TO GO ALL IN’

These laws require classroom instruction and teacher training in SoR methods, and also generally prohibit use of the three-cueing model in the future (with exceptions for students with special needs or English language learners where this method might be



preferred and work best).

These states also provide funding for new literacy coaches to help deliver evidence-based reading instruction to students.

In Indiana, the transition to SoR is scheduled to happen rather quickly.

At public and charter schools where fewer than 70 percent of students earn a passing score on a state reading evaluation, an SoR-only curriculum must be in place next school year.

A similar timeline applies to Indiana’s teacher-preparation programs, and a new literacy endorsement for teacher-candidate graduates will begin being offered in July 2025.

“It is aggressive and it’s intentionally so,” Teshka says. “If we know what works, we need to go all in.”

That’s also why he and other lawmakers ultimately rejected the idea of allowing

hybrid approaches, which incorporate elements of both SoR and three-cueing. These hybrid methods are sometimes referred to as “blended” or “balanced” literacy. (The new laws in Ohio and Wisconsin also favor SoR alone, rather than a hybrid approach.)

Over the next two years, Indiana is allocating \$40 million to train teachers on SoR, to recruit literacy and instructional coaches, and to allow teachers who graduated before 2025 to earn a new literacy endorsement (and earn differentiated pay).

This new appropriation builds on big investments in reading instruction in the state in recent years, including a multimillion-dollar Lilly Endowment grant.

PATH TO LEGISLATIVE PASSAGE IN OHIO AND WISCONSIN

Ohio legislators also were able to get a SoR measure passed this year due in part to promised funding.

That state’s new approach to reading instruction came not through stand-alone legislation, but via provisions in the two-year budget. It includes \$86 million for professional development,

\$64 million for curriculum and instructional materials, and \$18 million for literacy coaches, according to the *Ohio Capital Journal*.

Ohio schools will need to transition to SoR-only instruction by next fall, and all teachers and administrators will need to complete training in SoR instructional strategies by June 2025.

Gov. Mike DeWine has been one of the biggest proponents of this new approach to literacy instruction.

“The jury has returned, the evidence is clear, the verdict is in,” DeWine said in his State of the State address earlier this year.

Throughout the spring, he traveled the state to classrooms that were already using the SoR approach, and his office produced a video that included testimonials from teachers, administrators and students.

The path to a new reading law in Wisconsin was quite different.

In previous years, Gov. Tony Evers had vetoed legislation calling for new assessments of reading proficiency among students in the early grades.

Those past differences, Rep. Kitchens says, had resulted in an air of distrust between the legislative and executive branches.

However, bipartisan consensus built for the legislative proposal AB 321 (Kitchens was the chief sponsor) as various K-12 and university leaders voiced support for the SoR model.

“I went to DPI [the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction] at the beginning of the session, and was very surprised that all of a sudden they were kind of on board with me,” Kitchens says.

“Then, I set up an appointment to talk to the governor, and he was very supportive as well.”

Early on in the legislative process, however, bipartisan support for the measure was almost upended over a provision that would have required schools to “hold back” third-graders if they did not pass a newly designed reading assessment.

“The education community, certainly

the governor’s office, was vehemently opposed to putting in a policy like that,” Kitchens says.

“Honestly, on my part, that was never an issue. ... Very often that is not what’s in the kids’ best interest.”

The provision was taken out, and Evers signed AB 321 in July.

‘AMBITIOUS’ TIMELINES TO IMPLEMENT READING LAW

Under Wisconsin’s new law, school districts have until July 2025 to write individualized policies for how they will intervene and help students with low reading scores as they move from third grade to fourth grade.

Like Mississippi, Wisconsin will take a targeted approach in how it deploys new state-funded literacy coaches — they’ll initially be designated for 50 schools with the lowest reading scores and another 50 schools with the greatest gap between proficient and struggling readers.

Kitchens adds that language in the law will ensure that literacy coaches are spread across Wisconsin, rather than concentrated in only a few districts.

Part of his vision for AB 321 is that schools will work with and learn from each other on what reading strategies and interventions are working best.

“And I think districts will sort of grow their own coaches as well through this process,” Kitchens says.

A new council (appointed by legislative leaders and Wisconsin’s state

superintendent of public instruction) will submit recommendations later this year on a new literacy curriculum as well as the instructional materials to be used in kindergarten through third grade.

“It’s going to be a challenge,” Kitchens says about implementation of AB 321 and the law’s quick turnaround time. “I think there

will be some hiccups. It’s an ambitious calendar. I wish we had been able to pass the legislation earlier in the session so that we wouldn’t have that problem.”



Indiana Rep. Jake Teshka



Wisconsin Rep. Joel Kitchens

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RISKS AND PITFALLS OF
‘PEDAGOGICAL DOGMA’

Mark Seidenberg, a cognitive scientist, psycholinguist and professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is author of the 2017 book “Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can’t, and What Can Be Done About It.”

Although being a supporter of reading instruction that is rooted in cognitive science, Seidenberg has expressed in speeches and blog posts that support for SoR “is at risk of turning into a new pedagogical dogma.”

“We were a little bit too successful,” he says. “We convinced people of the need for change and where to look, but now we have to deal with the fact that there isn’t a lot of understanding of the research in the pipeline.”

“There aren’t any curricula out there that are based on the ‘science of reading.’ They’re just ones that are better or ‘less bad.’”

According to Seidenberg, the new laws barring three-cue strategies are a “necessary evil” that transition schools away from unscientific practices. However, he warns that much more research and work needs to be done to refine the SoR model and make it work in the classroom.

Take, for example, the five key skills outlined in Ohio’s SoR approach: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

“In terms of methods [in reading instruction] that will be really effective and do things that really change the landscape, I think that’s still going to take work.”

Mark Seidenberg, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Seidenberg says these five skills are based on a National Reading Panel report first released in 2000. “It’s focusing attention in the right area; we’re in the ballpark,” he says. “But in terms of methods that will be really effective and do things that really change the landscape, I think that’s still going to take work.”

Connecting the research from cognitive scientists with the programming in teacher-preparation courses can be a slow and complex process, one that could become much more challenging for states with quickly approaching deadlines to adopt SoR.

Although there has been a lot of emphasis on improving reading comprehension before the end of third grade, Seidenberg adds, extraneous factors mean some students may continue to struggle in later grades.

For instance, Mississippi, whose progress inspired change across the country, continues to have eighth-grade reading scores and reading levels well below national averages.

Seidenberg’s advice to legislators and

education leaders: Don’t “cast adrift” the needs of these later-grade students; they need specialized reading services and supports as well.

‘WINDOWS’ AND ‘MIRRORS’ FOR
YOUNG READERS

Seidenberg also supports reading instruction that accounts for the language and vocabulary that students are accustomed to at their homes. This strategy is one part of a comprehensive new statewide literacy plan being developed in Illinois as a result of SB 2243 (signed into law in July).

Unlike other states in the region, Illinois chose not to completely overhaul its reading curriculum or go all in on SoR.

Instead, SB 2243 instructs the Illinois State Board of Education to develop a literacy plan that “shall consider, without limitation, evidence-based research and culturally and linguistically

sustaining pedagogical approaches.” Once in place, the literacy plan will serve as the basis for new training opportunities for teachers, as well as the offering of optional microcredentials in literacy instruction starting in 2025. “What this bill does is provide an umbrella for districts to be able to evaluate what makes sense for them,”

says Rep. Laura Faver Dias, a co-sponsor of SB 2243 and a former teacher herself.

In part, the new law directs the State Board of Education to develop a literacy plan that considers the most effective methods for teaching reading to students with disabilities, to multilingual students and to bidialectal students.

“Students need windows to the world to see people that don’t live like them, that don’t

look like them,” Faver Dias says. “And then they also need to see mirrors so that they can see people who do look like them and who do live like them reflected back at them.”



Illinois Rep.
Laura Faver Dias

‘NATION’S REPORT CARD’ SHOWS DROP IN READING SCORES ACROSS MIDWEST BETWEEN 2017 AND 2022

Between 2017 and 2022, average reading scores among fourth- and eighth-graders fell in each of the 11 Midwestern states, according to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” The changes from one test year to the next were not always classified as “statistically significant” (accounting for standard sampling and measurement errors). However, a regionwide look at NAEP scores shows:

- Between 2019 and 2022, significant drops in the average scores of fourth-graders in eight Midwestern states: Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota.
- Between 2017 and 2019 (prior to learning disruptions from COVID-19), significant drops in the average scores of fourth-graders in three Midwestern states: Indiana, Kansas and Ohio.
- Between 2019 and 2022, significant drops in the average scores of eighth-graders in seven Midwestern states: Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.
- Between 2017 and 2019 (prior to learning disruptions from COVID-19), significant drops in the average scores of eighth-graders in six Midwestern states: Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota.

For fourth-graders, a NEAP score of 208 is the low end of a basic reading level, while a score of 238 or above marks reading proficiency. Eighth-grade students with scores of between 243 and 280 are considered at a basic reading level; a score of 281 and above shows proficiency.



State	Trends in average reading scores of fourth-graders					Trends in average reading scores of eighth-graders				
	Score in 2022	Score in 2019	Score in 2017	Change in score: 2022 vs. 2019	Trend before COVID-19: Score in 2019 vs. 2017	Score in 2022	Score in 2019	Score in 2017	Change in score: 2022 vs. 2019	Trend before COVID-19: Score in 2019 vs. 2017
Illinois	218	218	220	No change	Not significantly different	262	265	267	Not significantly different	Not significantly different
Indiana	217	222	226	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score	261	266	272	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score
Iowa	218	221	222	Not significantly different	Not significantly different	260	262	268	Not significantly different	Significant drop in score
Kansas	215	219	223	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score	256	263	267	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score
Michigan	212	218	218	Significant drop in score	No change in score	259	263	265	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different
Minnesota	215	222	225	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different	260	264	269	Not significantly different	Significant drop in score
Nebraska	219	222	224	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different	259	264	269	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score
North Dakota	218	221	222	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different	258	263	265	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different
Ohio	219	222	225	Significant drop in score	Significant drop in score	262	267	268	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different
South Dakota	218	222	222	Significant drop in score	No change	262	263	267	Not significantly different	Significant drop in score
Wisconsin	217	220	220	Not significantly different	No change	262	267	269	Significant drop in score	Not significantly different

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STATES, PROVINCES IN REGION HAVE NEW PLANS TO BUILD IMMIGRATION WORKFORCE

North Dakota and Minnesota are establishing and funding state-level offices, while Saskatchewan is pursuing more autonomy under Canada's 'economic immigrants' system

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

For every 100 open jobs in North Dakota, about 27 people are available to fill them.

No other state had a worker shortage as severe as North Dakota's, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's analysis of October data on the nation's labor force.

The legislative response to this persistent workforce challenge has included a lengthy set of initiatives to build North Dakota's homegrown talent pool and attract workers from other states.

This year, lawmakers added another tool — funding for a new Office of Legal Immigration.

"While we have done good work to promote policies that build up our own pipelines here with North Dakotans and put [individuals] into open positions, our workforce

"A state office [creates] a focus of expertise that a small, local business could use."

North Dakota Sen. Tim Mathern

crisis also doesn't have time to wait just for those solutions to come to fruition," North Dakota Rep. Zachary Ista said earlier this year on the House floor, pushing for a bill to create the office.

That measure, SB 2142, became law in April.

One month later, legislators in neighboring Minnesota were making permanent an Office of New Americans within that state's Department of Employment and Economic Development.

These two new state-funded offices in the Midwest go by different names and have been given somewhat different statutory missions.

However, they share at least one common goal: help address the workforce needs of the state and its employers.

Across the border in Canada, meanwhile, a shortage of workers in provinces such as Saskatchewan is causing leaders there to seek more autonomy over immigration policy.

STATE WILL HELP BUSINESSES FIND, RETAIN 'FOREIGN LABOR'

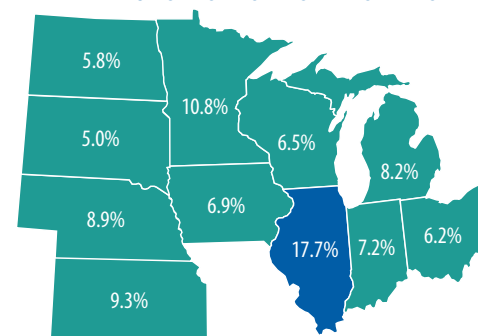
North Dakota's new Office of Legal Immigration is embedded within the state's Department of Commerce and staffed by two full-time employees (with funding for contract work as well).

Before this kind of designated team was in place, inquiries from businesses about how to obtain immigrant workers or how to navigate federal rules were handled by department staff in an ad hoc fashion.

"It's a little bit of a phone tree that gets started," Katie Ralston Howe, the department's workforce director, said in a legislative committee hearing prior to passage of SB 2142. "It's not helpful to businesses, and it's not helpful to us either."

Although the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services does have field offices to answer these questions, Sen. Tim Mathern says local employers don't always find the assistance they need — not to mention that the closest office is in Minneapolis.

THE MIDWEST'S IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE: % OF STATE'S TOTAL CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE THAT IS MADE UP OF FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS*



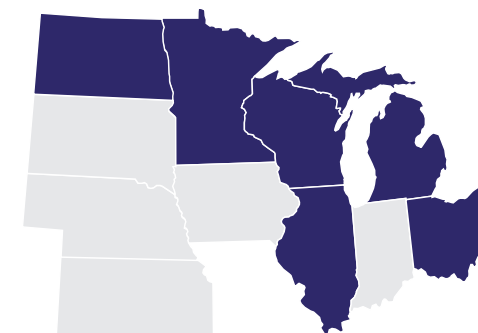
● Above share for U.S.: 17.1% of nation's workforce was foreign born in 2021

● Below share for U.S.: 17.1% of nation's workforce was foreign born in 2021

* The term "immigrants," or "foreign born," refers to people residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, certain legal nonimmigrants, individuals admitted under refugee or asylee status, and people illegally residing in the United States. The percentages for North Dakota and South Dakota are based on pooled U.S. data from 2017 to 2021.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (using data from the American Community Survey)

MEMBER OR PARTICIPATING STATES IN OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS STATE NETWORK*



● Member or participating state

* The American Immigration Council supports this network to provide a forum for state leaders on issues related to immigrant and refugee integration into the workforce and economy.



STATES, PROVINCES PLAY VARYING ROLES IN IMMIGRATION POLICY

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“We have some very large employers who are very astute about [hiring immigrant labor],” explains Mathern, author of SB 2142. “They hire attorneys, they hire other people to work the federal process.

“But small employers do not have that ability. A state office [creates] a focus of expertise that a small, local business could use.”

The initial concept for this office was to address workforce needs in the health care sector. In an effort to get the bill passed, however, the scope of the measure was expanded to include all industry sectors, thus helping secure support from other business groups.

The final version of SB 2142 calls for the new Office of Legal Immigration “to implement a statewide strategy to support businesses in recruiting and retaining foreign labor.” The office is also tasked with helping communities in North Dakota develop immigration integration plans.

Over the next two years, the state will appropriate \$485,000 to fund the work of the office and track its progress. By 2025, the legislature wants a fee-based structure in place to help fund the office.

Mathern stresses his motivation for creating such an office was also humanitarian-based, wanting to make it easier for people fleeing oppression and violence to be able to settle in North Dakota for the long term.

“We don’t just want a worker; we want the family, we want their children, we want their descendants,” he says.

MINNESOTA ESTABLISHES OFFICE OF NEW AMERICANS

Until legislative action this year, Minnesota’s Office of New Americans (ONA) was only a temporary entity, but as part of this year’s SF 3035, legislators established the office in statute and provided state funding.

“Immigration, in my mind, should be very boring. ... It should be, ‘What are the demographic needs and workforce needs?’” says Minnesota Rep. Sandra Feist, who also works as an immigration attorney.

“Nonetheless, it’s a very emotional, polarizing topic. Advancing bills that are explicitly about an immigration-related issue can be politically challenging.”

Early in the year, she introduced a stand-alone bill (HF 330) to make the ONA permanent; that measure ultimately got rolled into the omnibus SF 3035.

Under the new law, the office will create a strategy “to foster and promote immigrant and refugee inclusion in Minnesota so as to improve economic mobility, enhance civic participation, and improve receiving communities’ openness to immigrants and refugees.”

According to American Community Survey data, immigrants made up 8.5 percent of Minnesota’s population and 10.8 percent of its workforce in 2021. After Illinois, these are the highest percentages in the Midwest.

Feist describes the workforce-related purpose of the ONA as creating

a network among stakeholders to address issues relating to, for example, professional licensure, language barriers, and improving access to economic development grants.

Minnesota’s ONA also will continue collaborating with on-the-ground partners such as the Neighborhood Development Center, a Twin Cities-based operation whose services include entrepreneur training and business incubators, and “ethnic councils” that provide supports for specific demographic groups.

“What I see [the ONA] doing is taking a lot of efforts that are going on at the city level, at the ethnic council level, at the charitable level, and bringing all of those threads together and creating a systematic way forward,” Feist says.

SASKATCHEWAN SEEKS MORE CONTROL OF PROCESS

North of the U.S.-Canada border, provincial leaders are seeking greater autonomy over management of parts of that country’s immigrant system, a change being sought to help them address workforce challenges.

In terms of skilled-worker immigration, there currently are two pathways to obtain permanent resident status in Canada beyond the federal Express Entry route.

One of them is the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), under which provinces are allotted a certain number of immigrants they can nominate for visas in a single year. In this system, applicants earn points based on their language abilities, previous job experiences, postsecondary education, available finances and other factors.

Qualified nominees with high enough scores are then eligible to have their names selected in draws throughout the year.

Another point of entry is immigrating through Québec, which has a system separate from the PNP and sole responsibility for the selection of “economic immigrants” (those who aren’t refugees or sponsored by a family) destined to that province.

In July 2022, a group of immigration-related ministers from Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan sent a letter to Canada’s Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship seeking changes to the current system.

“Provinces best know the needs of their local economies,” the letter said, noting the challenge of addressing “unprecedented labour shortages.”

“We need the flexibility to respond to the rapidly evolving needs of specific areas and communities, with a flexible system that we can adapt to changing economic and humanitarian needs.”

In Saskatchewan, the province’s proposed Immigration Accord, modeled in part after Québec’s existing system, calls for an agreement with

the Government of Canada that would allow for a greater number of immigrant nominees. That number

would be based on the province’s population as a percentage of the whole country, and allow Saskatchewan to exceed this total by 5 percent “for demographic reasons.”

Also under the proposed accord, Saskatchewan would gain sole authority over the selection of economic immigrants to the province, while still recognizing Canada’s authority to

determine foreign admission standards and maintaining a shared commitment to reuniting families and promoting multiculturalism.

Saskatchewan leaders said earlier this year that they were continuing to negotiate with the Canadian government over the proposed accord.

They also hailed the federal government’s decision to increase Saskatchewan’s allotment of immigrant nominees via the current PNP. That number will reach 8,500 by 2025, an increase of 42 percent from three years earlier.

“Saskatchewan is seeing record-high population growth numbers, and immigration to the province has played a significant role in that,” Saskatchewan Immigration and Career Training Minister Jeremy Harrison said in March.

More recently, the CBC reported that the province was launching a pilot program that will reserve 10 percent of its PNP nominations for applicants from eight specific countries.

Immigrants from these countries are most likely to retain permanent residency and stay in Saskatchewan over the long term, provincial officials said. Critics argue it will diminish the chances of entry for individuals from non-select countries and harkens back to a restrictive, pre-1967 approach to immigration.

NEW LAW ACCELERATES CREDENTIALING PROCESS

Saskatchewan, meanwhile, also has been changing some of its own, province-specific policies.

A workforce development bill passed last year by the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly (Bill 81) includes provisions to simplify and accelerate the credentialing process for skilled workers relocating to Saskatchewan from other provinces or countries.

By reducing barriers that prevent new arrivals from working in their profession, Government of Saskatchewan officials told CSG Midwest, the province can help “maximize the benefits of immigration.”

Part of the province’s new efforts include creation of a Labour Mobility and Fair Registration Practices Office, which officials say “will provide navigation and financial support to newcomers looking to work in regulated occupations.”

Additionally, the office will work with professional regulatory bodies “to speed up and streamline foreign qualification recognition pathways.”



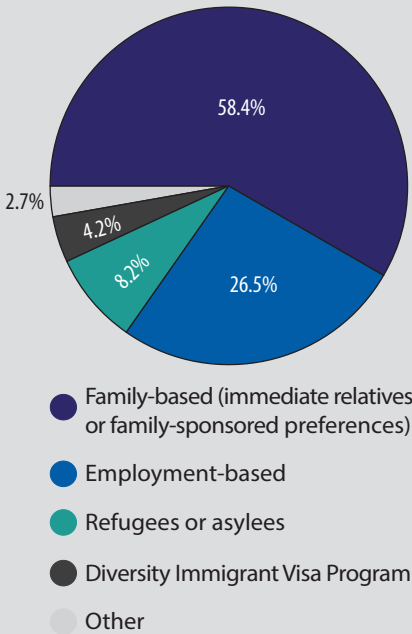
North Dakota Sen. Tim Mathern



Minnesota Rep. Sandra Feist

# OF INDIVIDUALS OBTAINING PERMANENT RESIDENT STATUS IN THE MIDWEST, BY STATE WHERE RESIDENT RESIDES*			
State	Total # in FY 2022	% change: FY 2022 vs. FY 2016	% change: FY 2021 vs. FY 2016
Illinois	34,551	-20.0%	-39.3%
Indiana	8,681	-12.7%	-27.4%
Iowa	4,737	-10.6%	-34.9%
Kansas	4,449	-22.1%	-40.5%
Michigan	16,881	-25.2%	-38.3%
Minnesota	9,762	-37.4%	-43.8%
Nebraska	3,755	-33.6%	-48.4%
North Dakota	1,164	-27.0%	-37.6%
Ohio	18,057	+4.7%	-30.8%
South Dakota	683	-44.4%	-44.6%
Wisconsin	6,109	-14.1%	-29.3%
United States	1,018,349	-14.0%	-37.5%
* Permanent resident status means an individual has been granted the right to live permanently in the United States. In 2021, in most Midwestern states, the two leading countries of birth for individuals obtaining this status were Mexico and India (not always in that order). There were a few exceptions: for example, the Philippines followed by India for North Dakota; and India followed by China for Ohio.			
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security			

HOW INDIVIDUALS OBTAINED PERMANENT RESIDENT STATUS IN THE U.S.: ADMISSION TYPE (2022)



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

# OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS ALLOCATED TO PROVINCES THROUGH GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S PROVINCIAL NOMINEE PROGRAM*				
Province	Year			
	2022	2023	2024	2025
Alberta	6,500	9,750	10,140	10,849
Manitoba	6,325	9,500	n/a	n/a
Ontario	9,750	16,500	17,000**	18,361
Saskatchewan	6,000	7,250	8,000	8,500
* Saskatchewan is a member of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference. Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are affiliate members.				
** Numbers are tentative.				
Source: CSG Midwest research				



PROFILE: INDIANA SENATE MINORITY LEADER GREG TAYLOR

Become ‘comfortable with being uncomfortable’: Lessons from a legislator who’s always served in the minority party caucus, and is now leading one

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

Greg Taylor’s connection with state government began long before he ran for office.

Shortly after graduating from law school in 1996, he moved to Indianapolis to work for the then-Indiana Department of Commerce (now the Indiana Economic Development Corporation).

“I was responsible for helping bring jobs to the citizens of the state of Indiana through economic development incentives,” Taylor says. “Through that relationship, I met a lot of legislators; one of them happened to be the senator that I [would succeed], Sen. Glenn Howard.”

Howard regularly called on Taylor for support with legal analysis. But in 2006, Howard became ill, and his wife convinced a reluctant Taylor to pursue the seat.

Ever since joining the Senate in 2009, Taylor has served in the minority party, a Democrat in a state where Republicans have long had full control of the Indiana legislature and governor’s office.

“I’ve learned how to become comfortable with being uncomfortable,” he says.

In part, that means asking tough questions and demanding answers from the majority party, even when he might be one of the few dissenting voices in the room, or the only one.

“What keeps me going is making sure that I represent those people who typically don’t have a voice in this body,” Taylor adds.

But he also has found ways of partnering with Republican colleagues — for example, working on a law to expand newborn screenings in order to detect three rare genetic diseases, and strengthening Indiana’s oversight of pharmacy benefit managers.

“People believe when you serve in a minority position in the legislature that it’s just frustration all the time,” Taylor says. “I’ve figured out a way, somehow, to make sure that some of our Democratic legislation is heard.”

Taylor was selected leader of the Senate Democrats in November 2020, becoming the first Black lawmaker in Indiana history to head a legislative caucus. In an interview with CSG Midwest, Taylor shared his perspective on leadership and his determination to advance his caucus’s policy goals. Here are excerpts.

Q How would you describe your leadership style?

A It’s more of a cooperative leadership style because, as far as me as a legislator, I just enjoy working and helping people. I also tend to try to be as fluid as I can, because I think sometimes



BIO-SKETCH: INDIANA SEN. GREG TAYLOR

- ✓ selected Senate minority leader in 2020, becoming the first Black legislator to lead a party caucus in Indiana history
- ✓ first elected to the Indiana Senate in 2008
- ✓ is a business and government attorney who also once worked in the Indiana Department of Commerce
- ✓ lives in the state capital of Indianapolis with his wife, Danielle; and their three children

“What keeps me going is making sure that I represent those people who typically don’t have a voice in this body.”

we get stuck in these traditional kinds of ways that we do business.

Q How about the work you do, leader to leader, with Republican colleagues?

A I’ve gone to the leadership of the supermajority, and they’ve been really, I think, accommodating to some of our members. This year, we had 14 Senate Democratic bills receive hearings and advance out of the Senate, and many of those have already received House hearings and progressed as well. It’s just all around a good relationship that has existed before [between Senate and House leaders], but now is coming to the forefront.

Q Indiana has been in the middle of some of the contentious social issues we’re seeing across the country. What kind of impact has this had in the legislature?

A There’s a phrase I use called “steady plodding.” You have to be cognizant of the fact that we don’t all represent the same group of constituents. But from my perspective, we also have to look at it from the society as a whole. Far too much of this partisan stuff that we deal with is based on, ‘My district feels differently than yours.’ I would assume that not everybody in a district is monolithic in their thoughts.

Q Your caucus prioritized education and health care this budget-setting year. What specific changes have you pursued in these areas?

A The elimination of what we call the “textbook tax” here in Indiana was something our caucus has been talking about for years, and it was put forth this session in the governor’s budget proposal. Thankfully, we were able to get that language successfully included in HB 1001. Unfortunately, those textbook fees are not fully covered in the House-proposed budget, instead passing the costs off to schools. My caucus will be pushing for an actual elimination of the full cost of book fees for Hoosiers and schools in the Senate budget.

We’re also still in the midst of trying to get proportionality when it comes to the allocation of new dollars for education. We’ve always been very proud about the fact that we spend over 60 percent of our budget on K-12 education. Unfortunately, this year, we’re going to see our voucher system get an increase of approximately 30 percent in funding while total base student funding for traditional public schools, where 90 percent of students are educated, receive a 3.3 percent increase in FY 2024 and even less in FY 2025.

We’re advocating to fully fund recommendations of the Public Health Commission. Right now, we rank dismally compared to the rest of the country when it comes to public health, and we feel like we’ve got some momentum moving for an increase in the funding for public health [from approximately \$7.5 million to \$240 million]. Then, from what we put under our health initiative, we want to eliminate the “pink tax” — taxes on menstrual products that we see as a tax on women.

Q In the area of criminal justice, you are the co-author of a bipartisan bill this year [SB 136] to establish a database with the names of

people who are prohibited from carrying firearms. Why is this needed?

A We knew that when we passed our permitless-carry law [in 2022], law enforcement officers would not have the information readily available to determine whether or not a person was eligible [to carry a firearm]. Now that we have that permitless-carry law in place, it’s only smart for us to be able to allow law enforcement officers to have these tools readily accessible.

It’s going to be used with discretion, so there’s some guardrails we need to put on it, but it’s definitely something that we need from a public safety standpoint.

Q On another measure, you have been vocal in your opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment eliminating access to bail to individuals deemed a “substantial risk to the public.” What are your concerns about a change like this?

A Bail was created to allow people to access freedom before they were convicted of a crime, and was available for everyone except those suspected of murder or treason. What we do with SJR 1 is say, it doesn’t matter if you are charged with misdemeanor battery or murder, the court or the prosecutor can determine that you’re a threat to society, the public at large, and deny you bail.

Bail shouldn’t be a way to discriminate against poor people and people of color. To know that we already have these disparities that exist, and then to further restrict bail, is just exacerbating that issue.



PROFILE: OHIO SENATOR BILL REINEKE, INCOMING CHAIR OF THE MLC

While adapting to constituents' changing needs, state and regional legislative leader hasn't forgotten the workforce issues that initially propelled him to office

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csq.org)

Seek new state resources and options for communities to address the health and safety concerns that arise when their local landfills become a destination for out-of-state trash.

Serve as the lead sponsor of a new law that requires additional layers of input from local government officials on the placement of wind and solar energy projects.

Today, Ohio Sen. Bill Reineke counts these policy changes as among his biggest legislative accomplishments and priorities. Nearly a decade ago, when he first ran for office, neither of these issues would have made his to-do list.

They rose to the top because of an outlook on legislating that defines his work in the Capitol: Draw inspiration from the people you serve.

"I really enjoy representing my constituents," says Reineke, who represents a district in north-central Ohio. "Rural America's got some unique issues, and I feel there are some local issues that we've been able to address, mostly [involving] rural farmlands and how we grow in our small cities."

That focus on growth is partly what led Reineke to run for office in the first place.

He had been involved in his county's Chamber of Commerce and the local Rotary Club, as well as other local economic development groups — all while serving as a business partner in Reineke Family Dealerships, a three-generation business that has expanded to employ more than 400 people.

At the time, Reineke did not think enough was being done at the state level to help his community, and its businesses and workers, prosper. And there was one area of particular concern: the readiness of young people for success in the workforce.

Since joining the Ohio General Assembly, after his first election win as a write-in candidate in 2014, workforce development has driven Reineke's legislative agenda.

"Complacency is no longer acceptable," he says. "We have to adapt. We're teaching our kids they have to learn technology because things are changing so quickly."

Reineke served three terms in the Ohio House before winning a state Senate seat in 2020. Along the way, he also has been an active member of The Council of State Governments and its bipartisan, binational Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC).

He joined the MLC's officer team a year ago and will be the group's chair in 2024.

Whether it be policy discussions on water quality, education or energy,



BIO-SKETCH: OHIO SEN. BILL REINEKE

- ✓ was first elected to the Ohio House in 2014 and the Senate in 2020
- ✓ serves as chair of the Senate Energy & Public Utilities Committee, as vice chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, and as a member of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board
- ✓ is a business partner at Reineke Family Dealerships
- ✓ is a graduate of Morehead State University
- ✓ lives in Tiffin; has two adult daughters
- ✓ is a 2016 graduate of CSG Midwest's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD)
- ✓ will serve as chair of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference in 2024

"Complacency is no longer acceptable. We have to adapt. We're teaching our kids they have to learn technology because things are changing so quickly."

Reineke has enjoyed hearing the perspectives offered by lawmakers from across the region, on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border.

"I'm more cognizant of how useful it can be working together with the other 10 states and four provinces [of the MLC]," Reineke says.

Part of his job as MLC chair in 2024 will be to host his legislative colleagues and friends from the region; they will be coming to Columbus on July 21-24 for the MLC's 78th Annual Meeting.

In an interview with CSG Midwest, Reineke discussed his views on leadership, his legislative priorities, and his plans as MLC chair. Here are excerpts.

Q How would you describe your leadership style?

A My personal style is more of a consensus builder. I like to listen. Basically, the projects that I've been involved in [as a legislator] are projects that are the result of constituents coming to me with an issue — most recently dealing with land use and solar and wind projects [SB 52, signed into law last year] and currently the landfill issue [SB 119]. If these were issues you told me eight years ago that I'd be involved in, I'd say, "I'm not sure that's right."

Q What will be the topic of your MLC Chair's Initiative?

A My focus will be on workforce. I have a passion for that because I've lived that world. What's really frustrated me, being involved in politics, is understanding how our kids are falling through the cracks. And if we could provide a better education system for them and better internships and training and workforce development in the education system, we would be much better off. So I will focus on that issue: helping students find their purpose.

Q During a session at this year's MLC meeting, you referenced SB 1, much of which was incorporated into Ohio's new budget. Can you summarize your goals with this law?

A I was surprised to see the high remediation numbers in Ohio, roughly one out of four kids. I say these students are "falling through the cracks" because they are graduating from high school and needing remediation in math and English. At the same time, career-tech education has not been emphasized. It's kind of down at the bottom of the stack and it's stigmatized. ... We're not going to do this anymore because we need the skills and jobs [associated with career and technical education], and our employers are demanding them. ...

With SB 1, we are combining our education and workforce departments together, making our Department of

Education the Department of Education and Workforce.

The idea is that we if have more interactions between education leaders and groups like our governor's task force on workforce, and if we can restructure our Department of Education, we will better understand the in-demand jobs in our state and have a training structure to provide for that.

Q Columbus is hosting Midwest legislators next year for the MLC Annual Meeting; what can they expect to see and learn?

A I'm really excited to have everybody come to Columbus because it's centrally located throughout the state. We are the home of eight U.S. presidents. I think if you look at the history connection that we have, it's just remarkable. I represent President Hayes' and President Harding's homes and libraries in my Senate district, so I've paid particular attention to the presidents and the effect they've had on Ohio.

Also, there is all the innovation that's happening in Ohio — with Intel moving here with its most advanced semiconductor manufacturing facilities in the world, with Ford and GM manufacturing their batteries here, and Honda expanding their testing track program. There's just so much innovation happening, and we'll be excited to showcase it.

PROFILE: INDIANA SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE TODD HUSTON



Protect the institution, prioritize policy over politics: Top leader uses those principles in guiding the chamber and a supermajority legislative caucus

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@cs.org)

Now three years into the job, Speaker Todd Huston still keeps in mind two pieces of advice that his predecessor gave him as the two planned for a transition in leadership at the Indiana House.

Number one: “Your first job as speaker of the House is to protect the institution.”

“You have the responsibility to make sure that the institution is sound and respected,” Huston says about what he learned from Speaker Brian Bosma, who held the position longer than any other person in state history.

Number two: “Good policy makes for good politics.”

“Do the right thing and the politics will shake itself out,” Huston says, “and I just try to remind myself of that all the time.”

You don’t always “get it right” as a legislator or leader, he adds, but adhering to those two principles helps keep your state, the legislature and your caucus going in the right direction.

It also allows Huston to stay true to what led him to seek state elective office in the first place — “to do things that have an impact for my district and for the state for years and decades to come.”

He joined the House in 2012, and by that time, Huston already had made a mark as a leader on education policy, serving on his local school board and, at the behest of then-Gov. Mitch Daniels, on the State Board of Education and Indiana Education Roundtable.

The chance to become speaker arose in late 2019, and it also came with a unique learning opportunity.

Bosma had announced he would retire at the end of the 2020 session, and House Republicans unanimously chose Huston as “speaker elect.” It was the first time the caucus had ever created such a position, and allowed Huston to learn directly under Bosma’s tutelage.

That session of transition now “seems like a lifetime ago,” says Huston, but it’s one he’ll always be thankful for.

In a recent interview with CSG Midwest, Huston reflected on his views of legislative leadership and effectiveness, recent new laws in Indiana on education policy and more. Here are excerpts.

Q You’ve talked about what you learned from your predecessor. What other lessons have you taken away from your many years in public service?

A You have to work with people. You have to work to get the number of votes you need. You can have a great idea, but if you can’t get people



BIO-SKETCH: INDIANA SPEAKER TODD HUSTON

- ✓ became speaker in 2020; first elected to the Indiana House in 2012
- ✓ previously served on his local school board and as a member of the Indiana State Board of Education and the Indiana Education Roundtable
- ✓ was a senior vice president at The College Board
- ✓ has a bachelor’s degree in political science from Indiana University
- ✓ lives in Fishers, Ind.; he and his wife, Denise, have two adult children
- ✓ is a 2016 graduate of CSG Midwest’s BILLD leadership program

“You’ve got to know your topic. You can’t ‘cheat’ by thinking that since you’re in a position of leadership, people are just going to follow blindly.”

to support that idea, it’s not going to go anywhere. ... I also tell new members, “You’re going to learn a lot. A lot of it’s going to be through experience. And the only thing that compensates for that lack of experience is just hard work.”

Q How do you seek consensus or support within your own caucus, as well as among legislative leaders from both parties and the entire House?

A That all begins with building relationships within our caucus and within the body. People need to know that you’re going to listen to them and you’re going to respect them. It doesn’t mean you’re always going to agree with them. ...

The other thing is you’ve got to know your topic. You can’t “cheat” by thinking that since you’re in a position of leadership, people are just going to follow blindly. Whether you’re a bill author or speaker of the House, they want to follow you because they think you know the topic, and you know that it’s the right thing for their district and our state. That’s critical.

I’ve always had a very open and honest relationship with all our members, I love the leadership of the House Democrats; they’re terrific people. And the same thing with the leadership in both Senate caucuses.

Q You’ve long been a leader on education policy, and this session, eligibility for Indiana’s school voucher

program was expanded — now for families with incomes up to 400 percent of the federal poverty rate. Why did you and your House colleagues strongly advocate for this, even as some members of your own party in the Senate had pushed back against the proposal?

A Our caucus has always just believed that the money should follow the child. The students and the families should determine the best place for that child to go to school. ... We fund students, not systems, in the state of Indiana. ... I remind people that through all the school-choice expansions we’ve had in Indiana over the last decade, the Senate has always been a partner in that, and they were again this year.

Q Indiana has a long history of offering school vouchers/choice, but private-school attendance has been dropping. Do you believe the expansion could change this trend?

A I don’t know if it will or it won’t. I guess what I would say is I’m not really worried about that trend; I’m just worried about getting kids in the schools that best fits their needs.

The private schools will have to compete for kids and make a value proposition to parents that that’s the best place for their kid to go to school. And if the schools do it, good for them. If they don’t, that’s their problem.

For us, we just felt like this is about money following students to the schools

that best fit their needs, no matter whether that is a traditional public school, a charter school or a private school.

Q You also have been heavily involved with the legislature’s expanded investment in the Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative, or READI. Can you describe the overall objectives of this program?

A I’ll take one step back and just note that it’s one of the key areas of my legislative career where I was just wrong initially. In 2015, the Regional Cities Initiative was put into place, and I was not a super big supporter of that and just wasn’t sure that the bang was worth the dollars. I then traveled the state and went to the areas that received [initiative funding] and heard and saw the impact that it had. It’s about building quality of life, connecting communities together, building partnerships. I realized, “Hey, I don’t think I was right in my opinion on that program.” ...

We then had an opportunity in 2021 to make an investment in READI, which shares those same goals. It’s about quality of place, it’s about creating connections between communities — things that will have long-term impacts that maybe a community or a region couldn’t have done without a little state assistance.

We were able to fund \$500 million in each of the last two budgets. And I continue to hear nothing but positive things [about] the impacts. ... The best part is it’s created a tremendous amount of cooperation and really positive activity to bring people together to solve community and regional issues.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

States use different models to govern K-12 systems, and these structures are subject to change based, in part, on the will of legislatures

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

Schools across the region and nation are still reeling, to some degree, from the disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic had on students’ education.

On the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, average student test scores in fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading fell in every Midwestern state — with one exception — compared to results from three years earlier. (Illinois’ fourth-grade math and reading scores were constant with 2019 averages.)

This decline in academic performance, combined with a mix of contentious issues and changing priorities in K-12 education, has led some lawmakers to take a closer look at how school systems are governed and policies are made.

PROPOSED OVERHAUL IN OHIO

In the Midwest, several different education governance models are used.

Wisconsin and North Dakota have independently elected state superintendents, a position enshrined in each state’s constitution. Indiana also had an elected state superintendent until 2021, when a legislative change (HB 1005 of 2019) made the top school official a governor-appointed rather than elected position.

Governors also have considerable control of state-level education leadership in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota. In those states, the governors appoint members of the state boards of education and/or the chief state school officer (see maps).

Ohio has a hybrid model of sorts, a 19-member State Board of Education with 11 members chosen by voters and eight appointed by the governor.

This board is constitutionally required to exist, but Ohio Sen. Bill Reineke believes many of its powers and responsibilities should be moved to the governor’s office.

For years, he has advocated for a cabinet-level administrator that would have jurisdiction over key policy areas, such as K-12 standards and assessments, school district report cards, teacher evaluation systems, and the distribution of state aid.

The State Board of Education would retain authority over certain administrative duties.

Last year, Reineke sought this kind of overhaul in governance with SB 178. At the time, Ohio had been without a full-time state superintendent for over a year, and Reineke and others felt a lack of leadership had contributed to lower test scores and an increased need for academic remediation.

He says the proposal is partly about

improving accountability, by making the top school chief part of the governor’s cabinet, but also about modernizing the mission of Ohio’s K-12 education system.

The proposed cabinet-level position would oversee a “Department of Education and Workforce.” Along with adding “workforce” to the department’s

title, Reineke envisions creating a new division focused entirely on career and technical education.

“Currently we have 700-plus employees at the Ohio Department of Education,” he says.

“When I started this quest five years ago, there were three [staffers] in career tech. Today, we’re all the way up to 37, and I just feel like we should have

a larger percentage of people really focusing in on these programs.”

SB 178 passed the Senate in December 2022. Language from this legislation was ultimately included in a larger (and contentious) House bill (HB 151) that did not pass.

‘SING OUT OF SAME HYMNAL’

Paolo DeMaria, president and CEO of the National Association of State Boards of Education and a former Ohio state superintendent, says debates over education governance structures can sometimes be a manifestation of something else.

When SB 178 was debated on the Senate floor, for example, some proponents of the bill cited frustrations with unfunded state mandates and how a school-choice scholarship program was being carried out as justification for a new governance structure.

Twenty-five years ago, a high-profile debate over education policy in Minnesota led lawmakers to end their state’s structure and replace it with one unique in the Midwest — a governor-appointed, cabinet-level education commissioner, with no state board of education. Minnesota’s elimination of the governor-appointed board marked the first time any U.S. state had made such a move.

At the time, *Education Week* notes, one catalyst for this change was negative reaction to a board-approved policy known as the “diversity rule,” which required Minnesota districts to develop plans to address student achievement gaps along racial and ethnic lines.

Rep. Gene Pelowski — who voted for the bill at the time — says K-12 education policymaking in Minnesota today is dominated by the Legislature and the governor. He worries about the level of “meddling” that now comes from St. Paul.

“A one-size-fits-all [approach] on what is going to be done in the

classroom has probably done more harm to education than anything else, coupled with statewide testing,” he believes.

Regardless of the governance model, DeMaria notes, legislatures have significant authority over education practices.

“The fundamental question is, Are there certain governance models that are better than others? And the answer to that is ‘no.’”

Instead, he says, the emphasis should be placed on an effective sharing of responsibilities and goals.

“When I go to a state and I see the board, and the superintendent, and the governor, and the legislature all singing out of the same hymnal and working collaboratively on a common agenda, that’s where you actually [move forward],” says DeMaria, who cites Mississippi’s successful efforts over the past decade to improve literacy scores as an example.

CONTROVERSY IN NEBRASKA

Three Midwestern states — Kansas, Michigan and Nebraska — have all members of their respective state boards of education publicly elected. During the 2022 elections in Nebraska, there was heightened interest in these races.

That’s in large part because of a controversy which arose one year prior, when the Nebraska State Board of Education released draft

proposals for state health education standards. The first draft was met with heavy criticism due to the inclusion of learning goals centered around gender identity and descriptions of sexual acts starting in elementary grades. The second draft made significant changes, but the board ultimately voted to postpone implementation indefinitely.

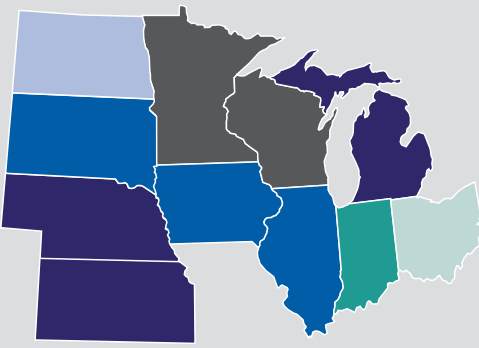
A significant legislative and political fallout ensued.

During Nebraska’s 2022 legislative session, an unsuccessful proposal (LB 768) sought to prevent the State Board of Education from adopting standards unrelated to reading, writing, math, science or social studies.

Meanwhile, a coalition of people opposing the 2021 sex education standards were able to transform a Facebook group into a political action committee that backed several candidates for the Nebraska State Board of Education. Most of those candidates won their election in November, resulting in a major change in the makeup of the board.

Derek Cantù serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education and Workforce Development Committee.

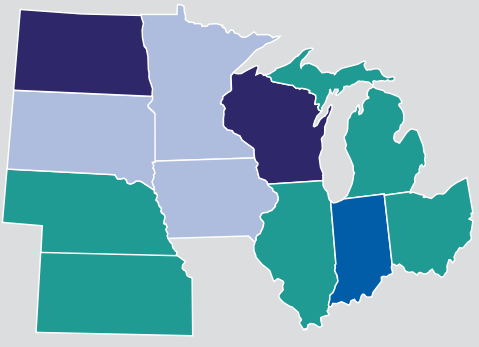
OVERVIEW OF STATE BOARDS OF K-12 EDUCATION IN THE MIDWEST



- All board members are appointed by the governor, with state Senate consent/confirmation
- All board members are appointed by the governor from a list submitted by various education groups
- Eight members are appointed by the governor, two are appointed by legislative leaders
- Eleven members are appointed by the governor with Senate consent, eight are elected by voters
- All board members are elected by voters
- State does not have a board of education

Sources: Education Commission of the States, Ballotpedia and CSG Midwest research

HOW TOP/CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS ARE CHOSEN IN MIDWEST



- Appointed by the governor
- Appointed by the governor, with state Senate consent/confirmation
- Appointed by the board of education
- Elected by voters

Sources: Education Commission of the States, Ballotpedia and CSG Midwest research



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Public funds for private-school enrollment? The question is getting a lot of attention this year in state capitols, and Iowa has a far-reaching new law

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

After years of failed attempts, Iowa lawmakers this session were successful in passing one of the most expansive education savings account (ESA) programs in the nation.

In contrast to previous session proposals — which based eligibility on family income levels, special-needs status, and attendance at a public school in need of “comprehensive support” — Iowa’s HF 68 provides universal eligibility.

Once the law is fully phased in, any Iowa family will have access to an ESA to pay for private-school tuition costs, as well as other education-related expenses (see graphic on this page).

According to EdChoice, of the 10 other states that provide ESAs (including Indiana, which supports qualified students with special needs), Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Utah and West Virginia are the only other states that currently or will soon provide for universal eligibility.

Additionally, the value of Iowa’s new ESAs will be equal to the per-pupil rate used for public schools — a higher amount compared to measures from previous sessions.

What made the difference this year?

Iowa House Speaker Pro Tem John Wills, who served as the floor manager of HF 68, points to events from the year prior. In 2022, Gov. Kim Reynolds extended legislative session by a month to try and get an ESA bill to her desk. When that didn’t happen, she publicly endorsed primary opponents of members of her own party who didn’t support the proposal.

“Out of eight people who weren’t school-choice folks,” Wills explains, “seven of them lost their election.”

With the support of newly elected proponents, as well as the creation of a five-member House Education Reform Committee (which included Wills as a member and Speaker Pat Grassley as chair), the 2023 proposal was introduced and signed into law within the session’s first two weeks.

CONSEQUENCES OF CHOICE?

Legislative momentum for these types of measures has accelerated in recent years, partially due to the impacts of pandemic-related school closures along with a national spotlight on K-12 instruction.

“Parents [saw] what was going on, and they weren’t always happy with what they were seeing,” Wills says.

Both he and Reynolds also have emphasized the value of students’ enrollment in school being based not on ZIP code, but on a choice made by their family.

“Public schools are the foundation of our education system, and for most families they will continue to be the option of choice,” Reynolds said in signing HF 68.

“But they aren’t the only choice.” Questions about the impact on public schools have been central to Iowa’s multi-year debate over ESAs. One particular concern has been the potential implications in rural areas if students leave for private institutions.

“I don’t expect that, all of a sudden, we’re going to hear this massive sucking sound out the front door of our rural schools,” Wills says.

As of the 2022-’23 school year, certified nonpublic schools were operating in 57 of Iowa’s 99 counties.

Under HF 68, public schools will receive categorical funding to offset student transfers to private institutions (around \$1,200 per pupil).

Still, according to an analysis by the Iowa Legislative Services Agency, there will be an estimated net decrease of around \$46 million for public schools by the fourth year of the law’s implementation (a 1.2 percent decrease compared to estimates without the ESA law in place). That analysis relies in part on an estimate of how many students will use ESAs and transfer.

DISCRIMINATION CONCERNS

Opponents of such measures have also questioned whether state dollars should go to nonpublic and parochial schools that can legally deny a student admission due to a disability status or an LGBTQ+ identification.

Nebraska Sen. Megan Hunt’s response this year was to introduce LB 487. It would bar public funds from going to schools that discriminate based on a young person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability or special education status.

“We cannot allow this trend of just gesturing to the idea of religious freedom to grant automatic exemption from law,” Hunt says.

Entering this year, Nebraska did not have any school-choice programs in statute, according to EdChoice.

However, this year’s LB 753 (a bill advancing toward passage as of mid-March)

would create a new tax-credit scholarship program. Individuals who donate to nonprofit, scholarship-granting organizations would get a tax credit from the state. These organizations, in turn, provide scholarships for students to attend private school.

Tax-credit scholarship programs differ from ESAs in that the funds do not come directly from state coffers.

Still, Hunt questions the constitutionality in her state. She says a mix of constitutional

language, existing statutory definitions and state legal precedent over the meaning of terms such as “tax expenditure” and “to appropriate” support her claim that such scholarships should be considered “public funds” — funds that cannot go to private schools in Nebraska.

In Michigan this year, legislators passed a bill expanding the state’s existing civil rights laws to provide protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

As part of SB 4, signed by the governor in March, all educational institutions are prevented from denying services or admission based on these protected classes.

“Religion is already protected from discrimination ... but adherents of a religion are required to follow neutral, generally applicable laws,” Michigan Senate President Pro Tem Jeremy Moss, the sponsor of SB 4, says. “If a good or service is available on an open market, there should be no allowance to discriminate.”



Michigan Sen. Jeremy Moss

INDIANA’S ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Indiana has strongly embraced school choice for many years. Still, the presence of financial-aid opportunities in this state has not necessarily resulted in big boosts in private school enrollment.

According to a 2021 Ball State University report, between 2007 and 2020, private school attendance in Indiana dropped from 69,708 (6.3 percent of total state K-12 enrollment) to 55,348 (5.1 percent of the total).

Although the introduction of a voucher program in 2011 led to an initial increase in private enrollment, peaking at 80,523 (7.3 percent) in 2015, there has been a continual decline in each ensuing year.

One explanation for the drop could be that Indiana, like every Midwestern state except Illinois, allows for inter-district transfers to other public schools.

“The ability to send your child to another local public school proved so popular in Indiana that it led to the real financial stress, if not death, of a lot of local private schools,” explains Ball State economics professor Michael Hicks, a co-author of the study.

He adds that the absence of local property tax revenue and busing services for private schools also has contributed to lower enrollment numbers.

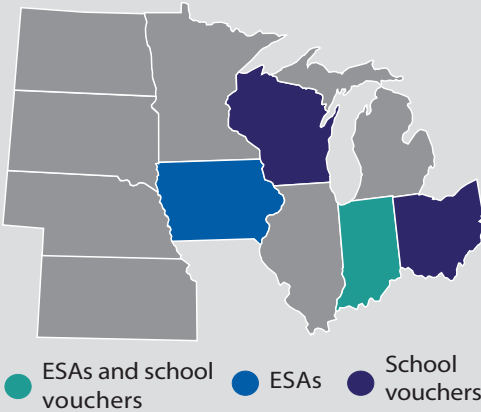
Derek Cantù serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education and Workforce Development Committee.

EXPENSES COVERED UNDER IOWA’S EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT LAW

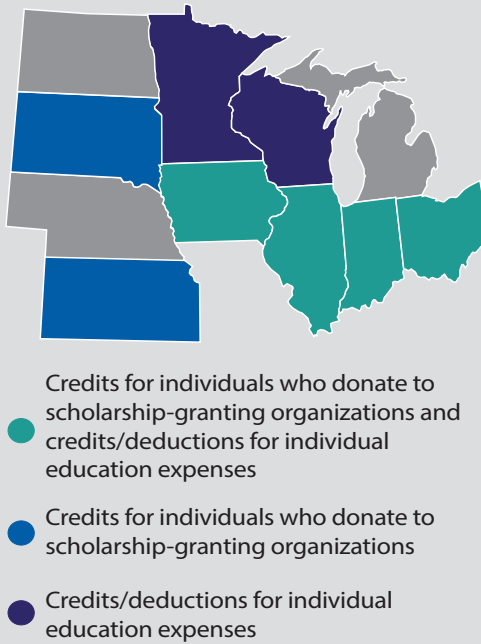
- ✓ TUITION FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS, ONLINE SCHOOLS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
- ✓ TEXTBOOK AND SOFTWARE FEES
- ✓ EDUCATION THERAPY (INCLUDING TUTORING AND COGNITIVE SKILLS TRAINING)
- ✓ MATERIALS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
- ✓ FEES FOR STANDARDIZED AND AP TESTS

STATE SUPPORT FOR STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS (AS OF MARCH 15, 2023)*

Education savings accounts and school vouchers



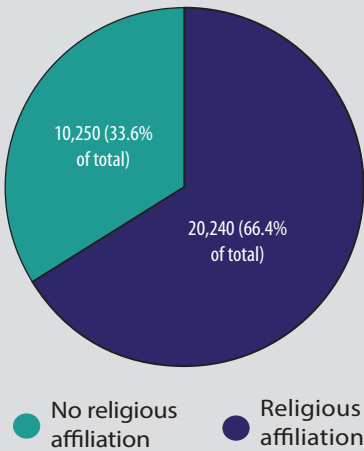
Tax credits



* As of March 15, bills to expand or introduce one or more of these types of proposals had been introduced in most Midwestern states. Only Iowa’s ESA bill had been signed into law.

Sources: EdChoice

AS OF FALL 2019, THE U.S. HAD MORE THAN 30,000 PRIVATE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, MOST RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Indiana's new career scholarship accounts will provide high school students with up to \$5,000 to pursue work-based learning, credentials

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

Flexible academic tracks. Early exposure to the workforce. Financial support for students pursuing work-based learning opportunities. Transitional learning programs that extend beyond secondary education.

Rep. Bob Behning has seen how those education models work in other countries (the Swiss vocational model, for instance).

Among his goals with the recently signed HB 1002: Use lessons learned from those systems to reinvent the high school experience for students in his home state of Indiana, in a way that makes learning more impactful and gets them career-ready.

"A lot of kids see little value, and are finding less and less relevancy, in high school," says Behning, a chief sponsor of the legislation.

"A bill like HB 1002 changes the paradigm. It provides the academics [that students] need, but embeds it in a work-based learning experience."

NEW CAREER SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS FOR STUDENTS

Central to Indiana's reinvention plan is the creation of new career scholarship accounts, or CSAs.

With the new law in place, participating students will be allotted up to \$5,000 each for the costs associated with career education — for example, enrollment in a youth apprenticeship program, career coaching services, community college coursework, certification examinations, and transportation to and from job-training locations.

A total of \$15 million will go to CSAs over the next two fiscal years.

Students who choose an apprenticeship track will be paid by their employer. The amount of time a student spends off campus in a CSA-funded program will vary.

"If you look at what we would consider a traditional youth apprenticeship, you're probably looking at starting in your junior year where you may spend one to two days [a week] at an employer," Behning explains.

"By the time you're a senior, you could spend two to three [days], and by the time you're the equivalent of what would be a freshman in college,

it could be up to three to four days."

To accommodate these students' unique school schedules, the state Board of Education will establish a new path for a high school diploma that aligns with a work-based learning model.

Another key component of HB 1002: ensuring that younger K-12 students are aware of and prepared for the new training opportunities.

By the end of this year, state education leaders will develop new standards for a "career awareness course" that introduces students to the CSA program. The course also will show students which industry sectors are in high demand, identify the education and workforce training prerequisites needed to enter various fields, and offer individualized career-plan counseling.

Schools will be required to offer this career awareness course to ninth-graders by 2030.

GOAL: MORE STUDENTS EARN A WORKFORCE CREDENTIAL

In order to qualify as a CSA program, the work-based experience must culminate in a student earning a credential — for example, an associate degree or an industry-recognized certificate.

For each student who successfully earns a credential, a \$500 grant will be awarded to his or her school as well as the CSA-participating entity (a business or career-and-technical education center, for example).

"Today, the credential really is your currency in the labor market," says Jason Bearce, vice president of education and workforce development for the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and a proponent of HB 1002.

"Employers do a lot of training. A fair amount of it doesn't result in any kind of recognized certificate or industry credential that would be recognized outside of that place of business. We think that's a missed opportunity [for workers]."

Bearce also says an increase in credential attainment can have broader, positive economic effects.

"At one time, competing for a business expansion or relocation was primarily about, What's the tax incentive package? What's the regulatory environment? What's the cost of doing business?" Bearce says.

Today, though, site selection often hinges on this question: "Who has a critical mass of highly skilled human capital?"

A highly credentialed workforce helps make the case.

CONCERNS ABOUT POTENTIAL FOR 'NEW PATRONAGE'

How will the state locate and secure work-based learning and training opportunities for potentially thousands of students?

HB 1002 outlines a role for "intermediaries."

"[They are] the facilitator that brings the employer and the student together," Behning explains.

"It can be a not-for-profit, it could be a for-profit, but it would be the group that's in the middle that's [an] aggregator of potential opportunities for kids."

The state's new budget includes \$5 million for "intermediary capacity building" over the next fiscal year.

"We are giving some seed money to intermediaries," Behning says. "Long term, the goal would be that they would be funded as a fee to employers for embedding an apprentice in your business."

Opponents of HB 1002, such as Rep. Ed DeLaney, believe the administrative burden of operating the CSA program and funding of intermediaries will be exceedingly expensive.

And since qualified CSA programs must include a credential component, DeLaney says this new strategy will undercut the value of existing career-and-technical courses being offered in schools and could lead to decreases in school funding.

Additionally, although participating CSA employers must undergo a rigorous process to demonstrate the high value of their on-the-job training or apprenticeship offering, DeLaney is concerned the new law could lead to an unequal playing field that favors partisan alliances.

"I think it will benefit those businesses that are most adept at getting government grants," DeLaney says. "To some extent, this does run the risk of being what I call the 'new patronage.'"

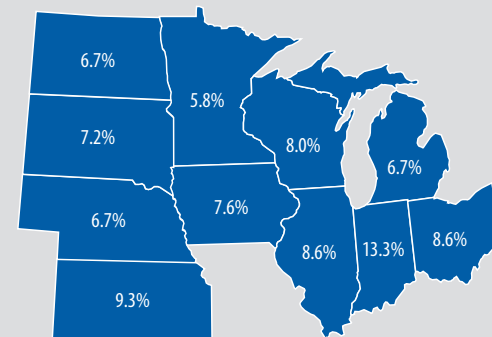
During legislative debate over the measure, opponents and even some proponents of HB 1002 said a better plan of action would have been to begin

the CSA program as a smaller, more targeted pilot initiative, or to phase in the new model with a small cohort of established intermediaries and employer partners.

Behning, who believes the need for comprehensive work-based learning for students is too imperative to wait for a pilot study, anticipates "a fairly slow uptake [to the CSA program] just because it's a new concept rolling out."

Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig and Wisconsin Rep. Joel Kitchens serve as co-chairs of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education & Workforce Committee. Minnesota Sen. Heather Gustafson is the vice chair. Derek Cantù serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the committee.

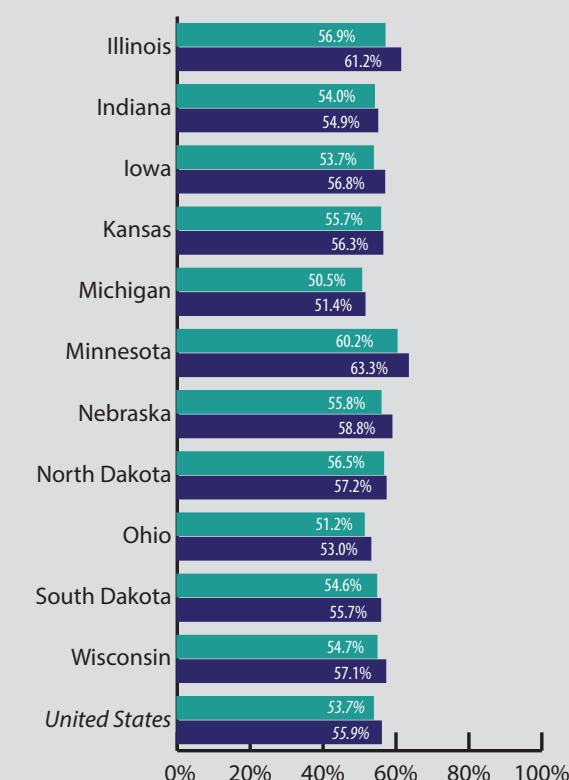
% OF 25- TO- 64-YEAR-OLDS WHO DO NOT HAVE A POSTSECONDARY DEGREE, BUT WHO HAVE EARNED A CERTIFICATE OR INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CREDENTIALS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL (2021)*



* The U.S. rate is 8.0%.

Source: Lumina Foundation

% OF TOTAL WORKING-AGE POPULATION WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE OR OTHER CREDENTIALS BEYOND A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA (2021)



25- to 64-year-olds

25- to 34-year-olds

Source: Lumina Foundation

HOW TO PREPARE FUTURE SKILLED WORKERS: IDEAS FROM INDIANA GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE CABINET RELATED TO STATE'S SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY SYSTEMS

- ✓ ACCOMMODATE WORK-BASED LEARNING WITH CHANGES IN DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS
- ✓ INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACCESS TO 'CREDENTIALS OF VALUE'
- ✓ PROVIDE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS FOR COMPLETION OF THESE CREDENTIALS
- ✓ INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY STEM CURRICULUM AND OPPORTUNITIES; STRENGTHEN STEM EDUCATOR PIPELINE
- ✓ AWARD STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE 'FIRST YEAR' IN COLLEGE WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL (VIA COMPLETION OF DUAL CREDIT COURSES OR CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS) WITH A 'SECOND YEAR' COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP
- ✓ ENSURE AVAILABILITY OF STACKABLE CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS TO EARN SHORT-TERM CERTIFICATIONS WHILE PURSUING A POSTSECONDARY DEGREE



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In Michigan, a public-private partnership takes a sector-specific approach to building a skilled workforce

In many economic sectors and parts of the country, the United States does not have enough workers to fill open positions (see map for Midwest).

One strategy being pursued in Michigan to build talent pipelines in high-demand areas: a unique public-private partnership known as Sector Strategies Employer-Led Collaboratives, a brainchild of the state's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO).

"[We] leverage the power of multiple employers within an industry coming together to say, 'This is what I need in a person. These are the skills. These are the competencies. This is the education, the credentials that I need them to have,'" Deb Lyzenga, an LEO division administrator, said during a July session of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting.

"Then we start bringing in our educators, our workforce system, our labor partners."

Michigan now has more than 60 formally identified employer-led collaboratives, in sectors such as energy, health care, mobility, infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, information technology and hospitality. The state provides grants and technical assistance.

Working together, business leaders

from the same economic sector identify common in-demand, unfilled positions; pinpoint barriers to hiring; evaluate recruitment strategies; and establish agreed-upon outcome metrics to track the collaborative's progress. They also develop employee training plans that can be implemented throughout the sector and in educational institutions.

Once a collaborative has met, articulated its goals and executed a plan, the department helps evaluate progress.

"We go back to the employers and we say, 'How did that work? Did you hire the people that you wanted to? Are they up to speed in their job as fast as you expected them to be? Tell us what the gaps are,'" Lyzenga said.

"As a workforce system, it's systemic change. We're starting to talk the same language."

Earlier this year, the state awarded \$4.6 million in grants to develop new collaboratives and maintain existing ones.

During the session, organized by the MLC Education and Workforce Development Committee, lawmakers heard from individuals directly involved with the employer-led collaboratives.

Deborah Majeski, manager of DTE Energy's Center of Excellence Workforce Development, has been part of an energy-focused collaborative since 2016.

"We have well over 5,000 different job roles that we offer," Majeski explained. "Michigan's energy [sector] accounts for more than 116,000 energy-related careers, with the demand [projected to grow by] 7.5 percent between 2020 and 2030."

From this collaborative, myriad training programs have been

integrated into secondary and postsecondary schools; for example, a college-credit-awarding program known as the Energy Industry Fundamentals Course will be offered this fall at six Michigan high schools and seven community colleges.

It prepares students to enter 15 job roles in the energy sector — roles that are available to individuals of varying educational attainment levels.

At Henry Ford College, 40-foot telephone poles have been built on campus for prospective electrical line workers as part of the Power and Trade Pathways Program, through which students can pursue an associate degree or certificates in various energy-related skilled trades.

A newer collaborative is focused on electrical vehicle manufacturing. The initial focus of this "EV Jobs Academy" has been to collect workforce data and share results with industry leaders.

"Our labor-market intelligence really informs our regional training strategies, [our] curriculum development," Michele Economou Ureste, executive director of the Workforce Intelligence Network for Southeast Michigan, said.

Once top occupation sectors and related skills are identified, she added, the EV Jobs Academy will work with Michigan colleges and universities to develop new learning and training opportunities on a shared online platform.

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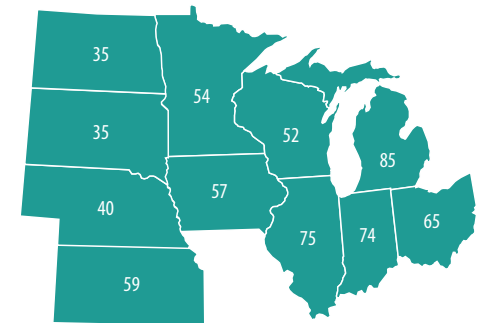


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OF AVAILABLE WORKERS FOR EVERY 100 OPEN JOBS (JUNE 2023)



Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce "Worker Shortage Index"

At the same time, it is collaborating with other industry groups to secure grants from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and to develop new apprenticeship opportunities for prospective workers in the EV manufacturing field.

Article written by Derek Cantù, who serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education and Workforce Development Committee. He can be reached at dcantu@csq.org.



Michele Economou Ureste, Deborah Majeski and Deb Lyzenga share their insights with legislators on the Michigan Sector Strategies Employer-Led Collaborative (photo: Patrick Yockey)