Rethinking the senior year

State policies add rigor and choice for students; goals include ensuring postsecondary success and reducing cost of college

by Katelyn Tye (ktye@csg.org)

The problem of too little academic rigor and diminished student focus in the final year of high school is so common that it has a familiar name — the "senior slide."

But North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll has a much different vision for the 12th grade. He believes students, teachers, school administrators and state lawmakers should all look for ways to "leverage" the senior year and make it a springboard for success in college or the workforce.

For some students, that might mean taking more Advanced Placement courses and earning college credit for them. For others, it could require "catching up" to peers and getting better prepared for college through extra work in core subjects such as math and English. Still others might use the senior year to earn industry-recognized certification in a career field of interest to them.

But for all young people, it would mean a senior year that is more demanding and a school curriculum that offers more opportunities.

"After we [North Dakota] put in our system of rigor and rewards with more, and tougher, required courses, we saw a remarkable 14 percent increase in the number of high-performing students," says Flakoll, who is also a higher-education administrator.

"When we challenge students, they respond positively."

And there is a lot at stake for these high school seniors. More and more jobs are requiring some form of postsecondary education, and the cost of this education is rising. According to The Institute of College Access & Success, well over half of college graduates in the Midwest had student debt in 2011, and on average, each owed more than $25,000.

A more rigorous senior year not only eases the transition for students out of high school (to college or a career); it also can shorten their time to college graduation, reduce their tuition expenses, and get them into the workforce more quickly — by allowing them to earn college credit while in high school and/or by eliminating the need for remedial college coursework.

"I want to see 20 percent of [high school] seniors have one semester’s worth of college credit under their belt by the time they leave," Flakoll says, “and it certainly can be done.”

That goal of increasing student access to college courses and credit is part of his home state’s new Leveraging the Senior Year program.

For students who have mastered their high school coursework, more AP classes and dual enrollment programs are now being made available. (Dual enrollment allows high school students to enroll in college courses.) Along with increasing the number of instructors who are trained to teach AP classes, more state funding is being used to cover students’ online AP course expenses and to offset the cost of AP exams.

Students who take advantage of these new opportunities can graduate from college in 2-3 years, with debt 

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CITATION
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"Leveraging the Senior Year": MLC Chair’s Initiative of Sen. Tim Flakoll

As part of his work as 2015 chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference, North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll sought to raise awareness about the importance of strengthening students’ final year in state K-12 education systems.

His MLC chair’s initiative was titled “Leveraging the Senior Year.” (North Dakota has recently launched its own program with the same name.)

In support of this initiative, an ongoing series of articles appeared in Stateline Midwest over the past year. Those articles examined state efforts to expand access to Advanced Placement and dual-enrollment courses and to improve student transitions from high school to college or the workforce. They are available at www.csgmidwest.org.

A policy session on "leveraging the senior year" was also held at this year’s MLC Annual Meeting. The MLC is a nonprofit association of all legislators from the 11-state Midwest. Legislators from four Canadian provinces are affiliate members.
State programs aim to prevent premature births as part of strategy to cut infant mortality

Three years ago, wanting to know the story behind the troubling data about infant mortality in Ohio, Sen. Shannon Jones decided to take a tour of her home state.

Along with a colleague, Sen. Charleta Tavares, Jones organized visits to local hospitals and met with health care practitioners and social service providers.

Why were infant mortality rates so high in Ohio (almost the nation's highest at the time)? Why was there such a huge disparity in the rates between black and white infants? What could be done to fix the problem?

Legislators didn’t come back from the statewide tour with any easy answers or magical fixes, but they did return with a resolve to do more to address the problem.

“'It’s very complicated,' Jones now says about infant mortality. ‘The more I learn about it, the more I realize how hard it is to get your arms around.’

‘You’re dealing with a lot of social determinants of health. You think of things like education, transportation and housing, and these are very much related to health outcomes, but not necessarily health care.’

Jones is now helping lead a Commission on Infant Mortality, which began meeting this fall. A primary goal of the group (formed as the result of SB 276, which passed in 2014) is to develop policies that reduce preterm births — the leading cause of infant death.

According to the March of Dimes, about 1 in 10 babies are born prematurely in the United States (defined as the birth of an infant before 37 weeks of pregnancy).

The health impacts of preterm births can be devastating, from death to long-term neurological disability. And the costs to a state’s Medicaid system can be enormous.

In Ohio, healthy full-term babies generally cost the Medicaid system $5,000 per delivery. The cost of a pre-term baby averages $50,000 per delivery. The average cost of caring for preterm babies in their first year of life is $32,000 — almost 10 times the average medical expense for full-term babies.

Not all preterm births can be prevented (the causes are numerous and complex), but addressing risk factors such as smoking, lack of prenatal care, and stress can help reduce the rate at which they happen.

Separate studies from Illinois and Minnesota (both the result of bills passed by the state legislatures) lay out some of the policy alternatives. In Illinois, for example, the Department of Public Health recommended:

- improving data collection on preterm births in order to make more-informed decisions about intervention and prevention strategies;
- providing high-risk, Medicaid-eligible pregnant women with intensive prenatal care management;
- working with hospitals to eliminate elective, early-term deliveries; and
- bringing more resources to communities with high rates of “adverse pregnancies” — for example, providing pregnant women in these areas with the chance to meet in small groups and learn about healthy behaviors.

In Ohio, Jones believes a mix of new state strategies can lower the state’s rates of preterm births and infant mortality. But an initial step will be to identify the programs already in place and analyze their effectiveness.

“The challenge will then be to bring some of our evidence-based practices to scale,” she says.

One of those is the use of progesterone — a hormone that can prevent some women from delivering early. In Ohio, a statewide Progestosterone Project is under way to improve screening of pregnant women and increase use of the hormone among those at risk for preterm birth.

More policy alternatives for Ohio will come when the legislative commission completes its work.

Passenger Rail

Rail congestion in Chicago hub a major drag on U.S. economy, Amtrak panel finds

An estimated 25 percent of all of the nation’s rail traffic goes through Chicago, where 56 Amtrak trains originate or terminate every day and where six of the nation’s seven largest railroads converge.

But the Midwest’s largest city isn’t just a hub of rail transportation; it’s also known as a major “chokepoint”: a source of gridlock, poor on-time performance and dispatching problems.

In October, Amtrak’s Chicago Gateway Blue Ribbon Panel released its recommendations for loosening the Chicago “chokepoint,” which poses a larger economic vulnerability to the U.S. economy than any other major rail hub. (A panel-commissioned study estimated that up to $799 billion in annual gross domestic product depends on freight rail service through Chicago.)

The panel’s suggested fix would have significant implications for passenger rail service in the Midwest. For example, it proposes development of a route dedicated to trains that take passengers between Chicago, Indiana, Michigan and other points east.

This new route would free up freight service while allowing for 110 mph passenger-rail service between Chicago and Detroit.

Other recommendations call for the completion of projects already identified in the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program, or CREATE. Those projects range from constructing new overpasses and underpasses to upgrading tracks, grade crossings, switches and signal systems and integrating dispatch systems.

They all have the goal of improving rail efficiency and on-time performance.

Right now, CREATE projects must compete for federal dollars through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, program. In 2015, $500 million in TIGER grants were available for surface-transportation projects. But CREATE’s $56 million application for two priority projects was not chosen.

Two other recommendations from the Amtrak panel were included in legislation recently passed by the U.S. Congress. One provision reforms the Federal Railroad Administration’s revolving loan and loan-guarantee program.

Under the program, the FRA can issue up to $35 billion in loans to railroads and governmental entities for freight and passenger rail investments. However, this loan program has been underutilized. The new federal law expands and streamlines the loan program.

A second provision streamlines the environmental-review process for rail projects (similar to changes recently made for federal highway and transit projects).

Brief written by Laura Kliever, director of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, which was formed by an interstate compact agreement and now includes nine member states. Laura can be reached at lkliever@csg.org. Tim Hoefner, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation’s Office of Rail, serves as the chair of MIPRC; more information is available at www.miprc.org.

Issue Briefs cover topics of interest to the various groups and policy committees of CSG Midwest, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission and Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Committee.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

As aging farmers retire, state programs offer military veterans chance at careers in agriculture

American farmers are aging, fast. According to the 2012 U.S. Department of Agriculture census, the average age is now 58, up from 50 in 1982 and now nearing the average retirement age in this country (it is 62, a recent Gallup poll found).

But there might be a younger group that could at least be part of the nation’s next generation of farmers — military veterans, particularly those seeking new career opportunities as they return from service overseas.

Connecting these veterans to careers as farmers or to jobs in agriculture is the goal of various new programs popping up across the Midwest.

In Nebraska, a university-led initiative known as “Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots” is matching veterans with farmers or ranchers who want transition or succession plans in place for their operations.

In Michigan, under a residential training program known as Vets to Ag, individuals are paid as they get trained and work in various agricultural business settings — from landscape management to food processing. Those who successfully complete the training receive a certificate from Michigan State University. (The program is primarily for homeless veterans.)

Minnesota legislators, meanwhile, recently appropriated money ($175,000 over each of the next two years) for a pilot program that will offer veterans four to eight weeks of training in careers related to agriculture and food production, processing and distribution.

And in states such as Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, farmers who are also veterans are able to take part in a certification and branding program known as “Homegrown by Heroes.”

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is partnering with the Farmer Veteran Coalition to offer targeted training for beginning farmers. Four workshops have been held so far in Iowa and Michigan. They teach participants how to improve business planning, access capital, and manage risks associated with small farm operations.

The USDA also gives preference to veterans in several of its grant and loan programs, and agricultural producers receive incentives for selling or leasing land to veterans (via the Conservation Reserve and Transition Incentives programs).

In Iowa, which has more farms than any other state in the Midwest (88,637), a public-private partnership was launched by the Legislature one year ago (SF 303) to help veterans find jobs in agriculture or other careers.

Under the law, state Sen. Mary Jo Wilhelm says, Iowa cities and counties develop their own incentive and welcome packages, including commitments from area businesses to hire veterans. Twenty counties and five cities have been designated as “Home Base” communities as of late 2015.

Great Lakes

Michigan’s new water-quality plan for Lake Erie adds focus on algae-generating invasive mussels

Under a new plan to reduce harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie, the state of Michigan is putting a greater emphasis on the fight against two of the freshwater system’s most destructive invasive species.

The Department of Environmental Quality released its multipronged strategy in November. The plan mostly focuses on policies that better control the amount of phosphorus entering Lake Erie: for example, stricter permitting requirements for municipal wastewater systems and preventing nutrient runoff from agricultural operations.

“My fear is that we’re going to control phosphorus, but then not see a difference in harmful algal blooms, which is really the ultimate goal,” says Bill Creal, chief of the DEQ’s water resources division.

That is why the DEQ’s strategy also targets zebra and quagga mussels — invasive species first discovered in the Great Lakes in the late 1980s (brought here via the ballast water of ocean-going ships). These mussels, Creal says, have changed the Lake Erie ecosystem and contributed to the rise in harmful algal blooms.

Michigan plans to map out how densely populated these mussels are in the lake and to explore the efficacy of a new biocide that targets them.

In 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved the use of Zequanox in open waters. The same year, the Michigan DEQ launched a pilot study in which this biocide was applied in a part of Lake Erie.

The state will build on last year’s study, Creal says, while waiting on a new formulation of Zequanox that could make it more effective in controlling the population of zebra and quagga mussels.

These invasive species, along with climate change, have contributed to the rise of harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie, a 2014 report from the International Joint Commission concluded. But that same study urges Great Lakes policymakers to make reductions in phosphorus runoff their top priority.

In 2014, the city of Toledo’s supply of drinking water was temporarily shut off due to a harmful algal bloom. That incident helped lead to the signing of a collaborative agreement between Michigan, Ohio and Ontario to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering Western Lake Erie by 40 percent over the next 10 years.

Michigan’s main source of phosphorus loadings into Lake Erie has been the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, via discharges into the Detroit River. However, because of a more stringent state discharge permit and the installation of new technologies, Detroit Water and Sewerage has greatly reduced the amount of phosphorus being released into the Great Lakes basin in recent years.

As part of Michigan’s plan for further reducing phosphorus loads, Creal says, the DEQ will tighten permit limits for Wayne County’s wastewater discharges. There are not yet specifics on how to better control agricultural runoff. Instead, the DEQ plan calls for new water monitoring in the Maumee River basin (located in a rural part of Michigan) and to work with Ohio and Ontario on a multi-jurisdictional strategy for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution.

Brief written by Tim Anderson, who can be reached at tanderson@csg.org. CSG Midwest provides staffing services to the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, a nonpartisan group of lawmakers from eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. The caucus chair is Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason. More information on the caucus is available at www.greatlakeslegislators.org.
F
our state legislatures in the Midwest made
major moves on transportation policy this
year, adopting increases in motor fuel taxes
that in some cases had been left unchanged for
more than a decade.

This decision to boost funding for roads and bridges was one of the region’s more notable legislative trends from the past year.

Several factors, transportation experts say, caused 2015 to be a breakthrough year for transportation measures — lower gas prices, growing shortfalls in state transportation funds, gubernatorial and legislative leadership, and the support of key business groups.

In this region, the tax hikes on gasoline and diesel fuel have already taken full effect in Iowa and South Dakota. Nebraska’s four-year phase-in plan begins in January, while in Michigan, the state’s new transportation plan won’t be fully implemented until 2021.

**Michigan taps mix of sources, including general fund**

In recent years, various alternative funding mechanisms have been proposed for states to increase road funding and to reduce their reliance on a per-gallon gasoline tax. (As cars become more fuel-efficient and people drive less, this tax brings in less revenue.) Ideas have included use of a general sales tax, a wholesale sales tax on gasoline or a charge based on vehicle miles traveled.

But at least in 2015, the Midwest’s state legislatures largely stuck to traditional revenue sources: raising the excise tax on motor fuels and increasing registration fees.

One exception, though, was Michigan. Once fully implemented, the state’s recently enacted transportation plan will bring in an additional $1.2 billion for road and bridge projects, and about half of that new money will come from the state’s general fund.

Under the legislative package signed into law, general-fund dollars will begin to be used for transportation projects starting in fiscal year 2019, at $150 million a year and then gradually increasing to $600 million by 2021.

The Legislature also increased vehicle registration fees by 20 percent (from $100 to $120, starting in 2017) and created an annual surcharge on hybrid and electric vehicles (ranging from $30 to $200).

Two years from now, Michigan’s tax on all motor fuels will be raised to 26.3 cents per gallon. Then, in 2022, that tax rate will be adjusted annually based on changes in inflation. According to the Urban Institute’s Tax Policy Center, only two other U.S. states were indexing gas tax rates as of 2014 (Florida and Maryland).

In contrast to Michigan’s multi-year implementation of a new transportation funding plan, Iowa’s SF 257 took effect even before this year’s Legislature adjourned. As a result, motorists are already paying an additional 10 cents per gallon in taxes at the pump (the tax rate was raised to 31 cents for gasoline and 22.5 cents for diesel). This change is estimated to bring in an additional $215 million every year for city, county and state roads.

Prior to this year, Iowa’s gas tax had last been changed in 1989.

South Dakota hadn’t adjusted its per-gallon tax rate since 1999, and because of language in its state Constitution, a two-thirds vote was needed for any increase in the gas tax.

Near the end of the 2015 session, though, enough legislators backed legislation (SB 1) to increase the per-gallon tax on motor fuels by 6 cents (it became effective earlier this year) and to increase vehicle license-plate fees by 20 percent. The Legislature also increased the excise tax on vehicle purchases, from 3 percent to 4 percent.

**Nebraska legislators override veto to increase funding for roads**

In Michigan, Iowa and South Dakota, all three governors supported these increases in gas taxes. But that was not the case in Nebraska, where the Legislature had to override a gubernatorial veto.

Supporters of LB 610 mustered just enough votes to get it enacted into law. As a result, the state will gradually increase motor fuel tax rates over the next four years — one-half cent per gallon annually for state roads and one cent annually for city and county roads. The tax rates begin to increase at the start of 2016.

Nebraska’s per-gallon tax will eventually increase from 10.3 cents to 16.3 cents per gallon. In addition, the state levies a wholesale sales tax on gasoline (currently 13.5 cents per gallon).

There was also a big breakthrough in 2015 in federal transportation policy. In December, President Obama signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, a five-year, $305 billion bill paid for with a combination of gas tax revenue and $70 billion in effects from other areas of the federal budget. The federal gas tax is 18.4 cents per gallon; it was last raised in 1993.

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**State's rate of prisoners, people on probation or parole per 100,000 adult residents (2014)**

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*Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

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**Legislative year also marked by changes in state justice policy**

In this region, the Legislature turned its attention to how the state handles youths in its juvenile justice system. With the passage of SB 73, South Dakota will be committing fewer young people to detention facilities and diverting more of them to community-based programs. By 2020, the number of youths in the state’s residential facilities is expected to drop by 50 percent.

Similarly, Illinois is seeking to “right-size” its juvenile justice system. Under one bill passed this year (SB 1360), minors can no longer be committed to detention facilities for misdemeanor offenses. And under a second, new law (HB 3718), young people charged with certain felony offenses will not be automatically prosecuted in adult criminal court. This year’s reforms in Nebraska, meanwhile, deal with the problem of overcrowding in prisons and try to avert the need to build new ones.

Under LB 605, more people convicted of low-level offenses will be put on probation rather than sent to prison. The new law also calls for evidence-based practices to be used in parole supervision and for most people released from prison to receive some kind of community supervision. By 2020, LB 605 is projected to reduce Nebraska’s prison population by 1,000 people.

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**In 2015, legislatures in 4 Midwest states boosted funding for roads**

**Hikes in fuel tax adopted in Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska and South Dakota**

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**Capital Clauses: Review of Year in Midwest’s Legislatures**
Forgotten pioneer: How an Iowa teacher broke down a gender barrier

by Mike McCabe (mmccabe@csg.org)

In the fall of 1869 — 51 years before women won the right to vote in national elections — the all-male voters of Mitchell County, Iowa, elected a woman, Julia C. Addington, to serve as the county’s superintendent of schools.

Upon her victory, which followed a spirited and locally divisive campaign, Addington became the first woman in Iowa — and perhaps the entire nation — to be elected to any public office.

And though the significance of her victory was noted almost immediately by national leaders of the women’s suffrage movement, it was little remembered and almost lost to history until a local historian resurrected the story almost 140 years later.

Ironically, given the growing attention commanded by women’s-rights advocates in the late 19th century, the trailblazer who broke the male monopoly on elected public offices was not a crusader in the women’s movement. And there’s little evidence to suggest that she was an advocate for women’s suffrage. By all accounts, Julia Addington was first and foremost an educator who had devoted her professional career to teaching.

Unprecedented, dead-heat election

At the time of Addington’s election, the towns of Osage and Mitchell were locked in a protracted battle to determine which would become the permanent county seat. (Osage ultimately prevailed.)

This contentious debate spilled over into the general elections of 1869 and produced a split among local Republicans, who ultimately ran competing slates of candidates allied with each of the rival communities.

The Osage faction captured the official party endorsement, while a splinter group of Mitchell backers “bolted” from the party. That group’s candidate for county superintendent was Julia Addington. A successful teacher and, by this time, a Mitchell County landowner, she recently had been appointed to serve out the incomplete term of the previously elected superintendent.

The 1869 race for county superintendent was a dead heat, with Addington and her opponent, Milton Browne, each garnering 633 votes. According to writer Cheryl Mullenhbach, who rescued Addington’s story from obscurity with an account published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in 2007, Browne initially offered to break the tie by simply yielding the office to Addington. But Addington declined Browne’s gesture and did not claim her historic victory until weeks later when cast to determine the winner.

In the weeks that followed, newspapers across Iowa heralded the unprecedented election, and before the year was out, Addington’s victory was twice noted in The Revolution, the New York-based voice of the women’s suffrage movement.

Before assuming her duties, Addington appealed to Iowa’s state superintendent of public instruction for written confirmation of her right to hold the office.

Her request was relayed to Iowa’s attorney general, Henry O’Connor, who promptly issued an opinion as unprecedented as the election itself. In it, he concluded that Addington was entitled to serve and that there were no constitutional or statutory barriers in Iowa preventing women from holding elective office.

As county superintendent, Addington oversaw an increase in district schools — over 40 were added in the two years that Addington served, 17 new schools were built in Mitchell County, and the state’s first elected female office holder proved to be a strong advocate for better teacher pay and training.

Only poor health prevented her from seeking a second term in 1871, and four years later, she died at age 46. ❌

Previous articles from CSG Midwest’s First in the Midwest series are available at www.csgmidwest.org.

Q U E S T I O N  O F  T H E  M O N T H

QUESTION: Do state legislative committees in the Midwest allow for remote testimony by video conferencing or other means?

Most legislatures do not have firm rules in place, and nearly all committee witnesses still make their statements in person, according to a recent CSG Midwest survey of the region’s legislative service agencies. However, most states in the Midwest do provide remote testimony as an option in certain situations — especially those in which an invited committee guest faces travel-related obstacles.

This year, in two states outside the region, Colorado and Washington, pilot programs tested the feasibility of expanding opportunities for all citizens (not just invited witnesses) to testify before legislative committees. By signing up in advance and then traveling to a designated remote location, residents could speak at select legislative hearings without having to travel to the state capitol.

In Colorado, two colleges — located on opposite sides of the state and a long distance from Denver — were chosen as remote sites. The pilot project was the result of legislation passed in 2014 (HB 1303).

In the Midwest, the Nebraska Legislature has the most explicit written policy on videoconferencing, adopted in 2013, this policy requires the consent of the legislative committee chair as well as the sponsor of the bill, resolution or interim study. The committee chair must also receive a request for remote testimony at least two weeks prior to the hearing date. This extended notice is required because Nebraska’s Capitol building only has two hearing rooms with videoconferencing capabilities.

Remote testimony becomes part of the official record if submitted (in PDF format) no later than a day after the hearing.

In their responses to the CSG Midwest survey, three states — Illinois, Kansas and North Dakota — reported that they do not take remote testimony in legislative committees. In other states, videoconferencing is only used sparingly. Here is a summary of the responses to the survey:

- **Remote testimony has been used in **Indiana **for out-of-state witnesses invited by a committee chair.**

- **In Michigan,** videoconferencing has been used when a committee is discussing legislation with major implications for far-off areas of the state. Committee staff determines a remote location to use and then works with the Legislature’s technology staff.

- Iowa: interim committees sometimes travel to several sites around the state to take testimony, but no systematic procedures are in place to provide for remote testimony. On occasion, the state’s nonpartisan legislative service agency has been asked to collect comments received online.

- In **Minnesota,** legislative committees can take remote testimony, but in practice, they rarely do. Likewise, remote testimony in **Ohio** is permitted but infrequent, with the decision on whether to take such testimony left to the committee chair.

- South Dakota reports instances of committees taking testimony not only by videoconference, but by telephone as well.

- In **Wisconsin,** remote testimony is not widely used and is usually only arranged upon invitations by the committee.

Article written by Irene Grossman (igrossman@csg.org), CSG Midwest assistant director. Question of the Month highlights an inquiry sent to the CSG Midwest Information Help Line: csgm@csg.org or 630.925.1922.
States expanding opportunity for students to earn college credit while in high school

In August, Illinois lawmakers approved a measure (HB 342B) requiring all public colleges and universities in the state to award course credit to students with Advanced Placement exam scores of 3 or higher. According to the College Board, the not-for-profit association of educational institutions that administers the AP program, six other Midwestern states also have this policy in place: Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

As a result of legislation passed in 2014 (HB 1213), Indiana’s education and business leaders have proposed revisions to the state’s current diploma system. This change would allow with a more rigorous high school curriculum and place a greater emphasis on college and career readiness. Under this new diploma system, students would choose from one of three high school graduation paths: Workforce Ready, College & Career Ready, and Indiana Honors. If adopted, the changes would take effect with the class of 2022.

Under a bill passed by the Iowa Legislature in 2008 (HF 2679), all school districts in the state must offer AP courses in one of three ways: on-site at the high school, through a partnership with another district, or by using the Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy first established in 2001, this academy (run by the University of Iowa) now offers 13 AP courses; a total of 355 students were enrolled during the 2014-2015 school year.

Under a bill passed by the Kansas Legislature in 2012 (SB 155), high school students receive free college tuition for taking approved courses in career and technical education. These courses are offered by technical and community colleges. Local school districts receive a transportation reimbursement for student travel to college campus and incentive payments for students who graduate from high school with an industry-recognized credential in high-needs occupations. For the 2014-2015 school year, 77,204 college credit hours were generated through Kansas’ Excel in CTE Initiative.

In the state’s most recent education budget, Michigan legislators deepened their commitment to dual enrollment, which gives students the chance to earn college credits while in high school. HB 4115 includes $10 million for career and technical education and early-middle college programs. These programs allow students to get a high school diploma while taking part in apprenticeship programs or earning an associate’s degree, technical certification or up to 60 transferable college credits. Schools also can receive dual-enrollment incentive payments.

Thirty years ago, Minnesota became the first U.S. state to provide funding for high school juniors and seniors to take college-level courses. The number of students taking these courses has doubled over the past 10 years, and one program in particular has proven in popularity: College in the Schools. This concurrent enrollment program allows students to take college-level classes at their own high schools. This year, legislatures appropriated an additional $4 million a year to expand College in the Schools.

In 2015, the North Dakota Legislative Assembly passed bills to support the state’s new Leveraging the Senior Year program, a two-tiered strategy to make sure all students grow academically during their final year in high school. Lawmakers increased funding to expand student access to Advanced Placement courses and to support programs that provide extra instructional help for seniors who are not on track academically to take credit-bearing courses during their first year of college.

One of College Credit Plus program, established by the Legislature in 2014 (HB 437), began this school year. The law requires each of the state’s public schools to partner with at least one college. Through this partnership, the high school must provide students with a “model course pathway” in which they can earn either 15 or 30 hours of college credit. The program is free to participating high school students who take courses via a public college.

In 2014, the South Dakota Legislature passed a bill (SB 182) extending eligibility for dual enrollment to ninth-graders. (Under dual enrollment, students earn high school and college credit simultaneously. That same year, legislators provided the necessary state funding to make dual credit courses available at a reduced rate for high school juniors and seniors ($50 per credit hour). During the first year of the Dual Credit High School Program, 39 school districts in South Dakota had at least one quarter of their juniors and seniors complete courses.

This year, the Wisconsin Legislature established a new grant program to help students with disabilities transition out of high school. Local school districts will be rewarded for each student with an individualized education program (IEP) who is competitively employed or taking part in a postsecondary or training program within one year of graduation. The new grant program is part of the state’s Better Bottom Line initiative.
Defining college and career readiness

What exactly is “college and career readiness”? Indiana’s definition reads like this: “An individual has the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed in postsecondary education and economically viable career opportunities.”

With that definition in mind, when Indiana education leaders set new academic standards for English, language arts and mathematics in 2014, they had a clear goal — ensure that high school students are ready to go directly into the workplace or college without the need for remediation.

A similar objective is behind a proposal to change Indiana’s high school diploma requirements. Right now, Indiana offers students the option of earning one of four different diploma types: General, Core 40, Core 40 with Academic Honors or Core 40 with Technical Honors. A more rigorous, three-tier system is now under consideration:

Workforce Ready, College & Career Ready, and Indiana Honors.

Workforce Ready would replace the state’s existing “general” diploma option, while College & Career Ready and Indiana Honors would supplant the state’s Core 40 and Core 40 with Honors diplomas.

Students pursuing a Workforce Ready diploma would have to earn 40 academic credits and do one of the following: obtain an industry-recognized certification, complete a project-based capstone/work-based learning experience, or earn three college credits. The other diploma options would increase the number of required credit hours, establish a more rigorous math program, and introduce two new mandatory courses: one on personal financial responsibility and another on college and career preparation.

By revising Indiana’s diploma system, policy makers hope to better ensure that a high school education aligns with the needs of postsecondary institutions and employers.

Michigan lawmakers had the same idea in 2006 when they passed a new set of rigorous statewide graduation requirements known as the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Before this curriculum was enacted, the only high school graduation requirement was a semester of civics. Under the new standards, students are required to earn credits by demonstrating proficiency in core subjects.

These standards reflect Michigan’s definition of career and college readiness: “Student preparation that is adequate to allow a student to pass first-year technical training and first-year college courses in core areas without remediation.”

Part of that preparation is ensuring that students are being challenged — not “sliding” — during their senior year.
Kansas Senator Jeff King

Since joining the Legislature in 2007, native of southeast Kansas has emerged as leader on tax, pension and economic growth policies

by Laura Kliewer (lkliewer@csgrg.org)

A college student, Kansas native Jeff King spent close to a decade away from home, living on the East Coast and in England while successfully earning multiple degrees.

First came a bachelor’s degree in international relations and economics from Brown University, then a master’s in agricultural economics from Cambridge University, and finally a law degree from Yale.

“More degrees than I should probably care to admit,” he now jokes.

But throughout his travels, King always knew he would return to southeast Kansas, which his family has called home for six generations.

“The ability to bring two children into the world in that place, and to give something back to a community that gave so much to me, that’s an opportunity few people have,” he says.

Upon his return home, King worked for the Kansas attorney general, served as a law clerk in the U.S. Court of Appeals, and ultimately entered private practice in his hometown of Independence. In 2005, he defended the state (and its Legislature) in a historic school-finance case before the Kansas Supreme Court.

One year later, he was running for a seat in the Kansas House.

King had always wanted to pursue some kind of role in public service, but wasn’t sure how — until legislators at the time passed a tax plan that he says led to double-digit increases in local property taxes.

“The main part of my original legislative campaign was to provide real tax remedy,” he recalls. “Not just for some, but broad, across-the-board tax relief that could lower the rates for all taxpayers.”

Nearly 10 years later, King now serves as vice president of the Senate and has emerged as a leading voice on state and local economic growth policies.

He also is the co-founder of Project 17, a 17-county coalition in southeast Kansas working to develop a regional economic identity and plan.

“I think of the old adage that my grandfather always said: ‘If your hometown doesn’t get a new business, but the town next door does, that helps all of us,’” King says about Project 17’s vision.

That is not always an easy outlook for community leaders to embrace, though, after decades of competing with each other for jobs and industry. But King, the son of two local public school teachers, views part of his job as a legislator to be an educator about Kansas’ new economic realities.

During a recent interview with CSG Midwest, King reflected on his legislative career, leadership role and priorities for the 2016 session. Here are excerpts.

Q: Why are you so proud of your most important accomplishments?
A: We are living on the East Coast and in England while successfully earning multiple degrees. KSAT

Q: What have you enjoyed most about serving in the Legislature, and what do you view as some of your most important accomplishments?
A: I’ve really enjoyed being able to learn about the people I serve, and to help them achieve their dreams and help protect them from their fears.

Personally, I am most proud of the work we did to help save our state’s pension system. We had a pension system that was well on the road to insolvency, and now we have one that is well on the road to recovery. One-tenth of the population of our state depends on the health of that pension system. My parents, my brother and my sister depend on the health of that pension system. And being able to sit at the dinner table at my family reunion and tell my family members and my constituents that their pensions are safe and protected, that speaks of work well done.

Q: What are some of the big issues and policy priorities for you in the legislative year ahead?
A: We’ve had very tight budgets for a number of years. We undertook the most aggressive tax-cutting policy in the nation over the last five years. Much of that policy was very good, and I am very supportive of it. I think we made a mistake in exempting all of our LLCs, S-corporations and sole proprietorships from any state income tax. That’s been a hole in our tax code that has cost us about $300 million a year, and we are seeing that we can’t afford it. So we want to continue the discussion about having the lowest tax rate in the region — and we should and we are going to do that — but to do it in a fair and equitable manner.

Secondly, on a personal level, I had the joy of watching my children be born in my hometown. But the hospital they were born in, the hospital I was born in, was closed two weeks ago. We are now the largest community in the state without a hospital. We can acknowledge that Obamacare has let down rural America and, at the same time, realize that saying “no” to every new alternative is not an option. I am advocating for an Indiana model of Medicaid expansion in Kansas — emphasize private insurance, emphasize work and emphasize personal contributions, but make sure that we are covering the people that deserve it and that need it.

And third, over the next year and a half, we are writing a new school finance formula. There is a court case on school finance pending as well (not one that I am involved with this time except for being in the Legislature). The outcome of that case will have enormous implications.
A plan to fight sexual assault
Under proposed new law, Michigan’s sex-education curriculum would be revised to include instruction on ‘affirmative consent’

by Michigan Sen. Curtis Hertel Jr. (senchertel@senate.mi.gov)

I want to ensure that when we send our kids to college, we’re worried about the quality of their education, not whether they’ll become a victim of sexual assault.

The last thing anyone wants to worry about when they go to college is whether they’ll be sexually assaulted.

But the reality is that college campuses can be dangerous for young people — particularly young women.

According to a poll conducted by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation, one in five college women and 5 percent of college men have experienced some form of sexual assault. And it’s less than comforting to know that many more incidents go unreported.

This is horrifying.

In Michigan, a number of universities are under federal scrutiny because of the way they’ve handled reports of sexual assault. According to the Associated Students of Michigan State University, there were 9,866 reports of sexual assault or relationship violence in the past year alone, and that’s just at MSU.

As a father of four, I want to ensure that when we send our kids to college, we’re only worried about the quality of their education — not whether they’ll become a victim of sexual assault. We must do better.

Lack of education compounds problem

Unfortunately, we can partially attribute the sexual assault epidemic to a lack of comprehensive sexual education in this country.

That same Washington Post/Kaiser poll found that 46 percent of college students said it’s unclear whether sexual assault occurs if both people have not given clear consent. If almost half of all college students don’t understand what constitutes sexual assault, it’s clear we’re not giving young people the tools they need.

Last September, California recognized this dilemma and became the first state in the nation to pass “yes means yes” legislation. Under this law, colleges receiving state funding must create a sexual assault policy that provides treatment options and resources to victims. It also requires students to seek (and receive) “affirmative consent” — the concept by which both parties consciously and voluntarily agree they want to engage in sexual activity — before engaging in any sort of sexual encounter.

California’s law redefines the standard of consent in college disciplinary proceedings. This is important because they rely on a lesser burden of proof than criminal courts.

The problem with “no means no” is that it creates ambiguity. Victims are often made to account for what they were wearing, whether or not they were drinking, and how hard they tried to fight back — all of which are irrelevant to the assault at hand. Sexual assault is wrong, no matter what.

California’s legislation, and other measures like it, can reduce the practice of victim blaming and re-center the public conversation on appropriate communication. What happens when young people, especially young men, are conditioned to expect that a “no” might eventually lead to a “yes” if they try hard enough?

By changing the conversation to “sex without a resounding yes is wrong” from “sex when someone fights back is wrong”, we can help our young people understand what constitutes sexual assault.

We can show them that when you don’t really want to say “yes,” you shouldn’t.

Right now, Michigan is one of 14 states considering some form of legislation dealing with affirmative consent. My bill, SB 512, would require teaching affirmative consent in Michigan schools where sexual education is available. It also clarifies:

• that silence and lack of resistance do not constitute consent;
• that consent can be rescinded at any point during the sexual encounter, and
• that the existence of a relationship between two people doesn’t imply consent.

We can’t legislate sex. But we can provide our young people with an educational framework that helps them develop healthy habits and relationships.

We can help our students live in an environment that encourages enthusiastic consent and discourages pressure and aggressive sexual expectation.

By teaching our kids about boundaries and consequences, we can take one giant step forward in the fight against the epidemic of sexual assault.

Sen. Curtis Hertel Jr., a Democrat from East Lansing, was first elected to the Michigan Senate in 2014.

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 630.925.1092 or tanderson@csg.org.
Energy was at the top of the agenda of two recent study trips organized by CSG Midwest for legislators and other state officials. In November, an 11-person delegation visited Berlin and Dusseldorf as guests of the German government. Less than a month later, a different group of legislators traveled to Canada for a visit to a first-in-the-world power plant that captures and stores carbon dioxide emissions.

Germany’s transition to renewables

The purpose of the Germany trip was to learn about the country’s ongoing energy transition (known as the Energiewende) — namely, the shift from a reliance on fossil fuels and nuclear energy to a strategy built around renewables and efficiency. The CSG Midwest delegation included officials from six different states:

- Illinois — Rep. Robyn Gabel and Tim Mapes, chief of staff to Speaker of the House Michael Madigan;
- Indiana — Rep. Matt Pearce;
- Iowa — Reps. Mary Ann Hanusa and Chris Hall;
- Ohio — Sens. Troy Balderson and Lou Gentile; and

For several days, this bipartisan group met with key policy leaders in Germany and heard presentations from energy researchers. The delegation also visited an energy self-sufficient village outside of Berlin and toured some small-scale wind energy and biogas facilities.

Germany has established several goals under its transition plan — for example, to have 45 percent of its electricity come from renewable sources by 2020. It also wants to increase electricity generation from CHP plants (combined heat and power), or cogeneration.

Carbon capture and storage in Canada

In the fall of 2014, a much-anticipated power plant opened in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. SaskPower’s Boundary Dam Power Station is home to the world’s first and largest commercial-scale carbon capture and storage project.

Members of the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Midwest-Canada Relations Committee traveled to this plant in December. (CSG Midwest provides staff support to the MLC and its various policy committees.)

As part of their visit, legislators also toured a carbon-capture test facility and learned about the Aquistore Project, the goal of which is to demonstrate that CO₂ can be safely stored deep underground.

Saskatchewan gets much of its electricity from coal. Similarly, in the 11-state Midwest, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin get more than 60 percent of their electricity from coal-fired plants.

Sources of electricity generation in Canada, Germany and United States (2014)

Recent Under the Dome training held in region’s state capitals

- Budget policy – Illinois
- Entrepreneurship policy – Nebraska
- Ethics training – Indiana
- Medicaid expansion – South Dakota
- Legislative civility – South Dakota and Ohio
- Great Lakes/water policy – Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio
- Health policy, wellness and the Affordable Care Act – Wisconsin

Recent study trips provide international perspective on energy policy, innovation

Training on variety of topics offered in state capitals

With legislative sessions set to begin in state capitols across the region, CSG Midwest is once again ready to deliver customized, in-state training through its Under the Dome initiative.

A cost-free membership service, Under the Dome programming can range from sessions on public policy to workshops on professional development.

It is available to the 11 states and four Canadian provinces of the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

Those states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota. The provinces are Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. (Staff support for the MLC is provided by the Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments.)

This past year, Under the Dome workshops were held in Ohio (Great Lakes policy) and Wisconsin (separate events on Great Lakes policy and on health policy, wellness and the Affordable Care Act).

Under the Dome is offered to Midwestern states and their legislatures on a first-come, first-served basis. Programming is typically held in the state capitol, and the event must have the support of the leaders of each legislative caucus.

For more information on Under the Dome, please contact Mike McCabe, CSG Midwest director, at mmccabe@csg.org or visit www.csgmidwest.org.

The Council of State Governments was founded in 1933 as a national, nonpartisan organization to assist and advance state government. The headquarters office, in Lexington, Ky., is responsible for a variety of national programs and services, including research, reference publications, innovations transfer, suggested state legislation and interstate consulting services. The Midwestern Office supports several groups of state officials, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, an association of all legislators in 11 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan are MLC affiliate members.
### Overview of MLC services for legislators

The goal of the MLC is to foster collaboration, information sharing and leadership development among the region's state and provincial legislators.

It has five standing, interstate policy committees of legislators; produces the monthly newsletter Stateline Midwest; provides research assistance; offers in-state policy training; and overseas an annual leadership-training program (BILLD) for newer lawmakers.

For more information, please visit www.csgmidwest.org.

### Wisconsin Rep. Joan Ballweg to lead Midwestern Legislative Conference

As the new chair, she will oversee work of 11-state, nonpartisan group

A 10-year veteran of the Wisconsin State Assembly will lead the Midwestern Legislative Conference in 2016. Rep. Joan Ballweg has a long history with the MLC. She is a 2007 graduate of its Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) and joined the MLC's leadership team in 2014.

In Wisconsin, she serves as co-chair of the Legislative Council and has been an important leader on issues ranging from economic development to early-childhood policy.

Much of her work as MLC chair will be leading planning efforts for the group’s 71st Annual Meeting. The event will be held July 17-20 in Milwaukee. The annual gathering of state legislators typically attracts 500 people or more from across the Midwest.

Ballweg also plans to make early-childhood development the focus of her MLC chair’s initiative.

The other three MLC officers in 2016 will be Iowa Sen. Janet Petersen, Ohio Sen. Cliff Hite and North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll, who served as chair in 2015. (A rotation of MLC officers occurs every year.)

In addition to these four officers, the MLC is governed by a bipartisan Executive Committee made up of legislators from each of the Midwest’s 11 states and four Canadian provinces. The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments provides staff support to the MLC.

### About the Midwestern Legislative Conference

- nonpartisan professional association of all legislators from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin
- led by Executive Committee and four-member leadership team made of legislators from the Midwest
- has four affiliate member provinces: Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan
- receives staff support from the Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments

### CSG Henry Toll Fellowship Program

- August 26-31, 2016
- Lexington, Kentucky

Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org) 800.800.1910

www.csg.org/LeadershipCenter/TollFellows.aspx

### Upcoming Midwestern Legislative Conference and the Council of State Governments Events

**Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Meeting**

July 15-16, 2016

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Contact: Lisa Janairo (jjanairo@csg.org) 920.458.5910

www.greatlakeslegislators.org

**71st Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Legislative Conference**

July 17-20, 2016

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Contact: Gail Meyer (gmeyer@csg.org) 630.925.1922

www.csgmidwest.org

**22nd Annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD)**

August 12-16, 2016

Madison, Wisconsin

Contact: Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org) 630.925.1922

www.csgmidwest.org

**andes Conference and the Council of State Governments Events**

### CSG Midwest staff traveling to capitols in early 2016

Over the next few months, CSG Midwest staff will travel to state capitols across the region to meet with legislators.

The purpose of these visits is to learn how the Council of State Governments can best meet the needs of its constituents. CSG provides staff support for several interstate groups of state elected officials, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference (see article above).

For every state in the Midwest, CSG has a staff person dedicated as the point person for providing assistance (research or otherwise) to legislators and legislative staff. These staff members also organize the office’s annual visits to state capitols. Please contact them to learn the exact dates of the upcoming CSG Midwest visits.

- Illinois: Katelyn Tye, ktye@csg.org
- Indiana: Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csf.org
- Iowa: Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csf.org
- Kansas: Laura Kliewer, lkliewer@csg.org
- Michigan: Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- Minnesota: Katelyn Tye, ktye@csg.org
- Nebraska: Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- North Dakota: Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- Ohio: Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- South Dakota: Cindy Andrews, canshrew@csg.org
- Wisconsin: Katelyn Tye, ktye@csg.org
Minnesota providing ‘safe harbor’ to sexually exploited youths

During the first year of a statewide system to help sexually exploited children, 163 youths in Minnesota received services and support. The state’s Safe Harbor program is the result of laws passed in 2011 and 2014. With these measures in place, Minnesota is taking a different view of youths (those under the age of 18) who engage in prostitution — they are seen as victims, rather than as criminals.

Eight Safe Harbor navigators have been established to coordinate regional services for sexually exploited children. These navigators help ensure that these youths are identified, receive trauma-informed services and are housed safely.

The findings on how many children received services under Safe Harbor were part of a comprehensive evaluation of the program. In that study, researchers also recommend expanding the age limit (to help sexually exploited adults), developing more services and housing safely.

In its 2014 analysis of laws to prevent human trafficking (including victim-assistance programs), the Polaris Project rates seven states from the Midwest in the top tier: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.

States moving ahead with new tax-savings tool for disabled

As the result of legislative action across the Midwest in 2015, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families may soon have a new tax-free savings tool. According to the National Down Syndrome Society, nine states in this region have passed laws allowing for the establishment of ABLE accounts: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

ABLE stands for Achieving a Better Life Experience. Late in 2014, federal lawmakers amended U.S. tax code to allow for tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. These ABLE programs, though, must be implemented at the state level (similar to 529 college savings plans).

Once in place, these accounts can cover qualified expenses such as education, housing and transportation. They will allow disabled individuals to accumulate assets without losing access to Medicaid or Social Security benefits. To qualify, an Individual must have been diagnosed with a qualified disability prior to age 26. The annual contribution limit to an ABLE account is $14,000.

5 Midwest states now using metal detectors at entrances to capitols

Ohio has joined the list of Midwest states that require visitors to walk through a metal detector before entering the capitol building. The state’s new security rules, which took effect this fall, also ban backpacks. Gov. John Kasich had called for the use of metal detectors soon after taking office in 2011, cleveland.com reports.

Over the past decade and a half, states such as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Kansas have installed detectors. Illinois’ policy took effect in 2004, after an unarmed security guard was shot and killed just inside the Capitol entrance.

In November, Nebraska legislators reviewed a proposal from state Attorney General Doug Peterson to add detectors at the state Capitol building. The proposal, Peterson wrote to lawmakers, is a recognition of the “times in which we live.” According to omaha.com, current security measures in Nebraska include the use of uniformed troopers, security guards, cameras, panic alarms and a computer alert system.

Proposal seeks $8,000 raise for teachers in South Dakota

The state with the lowest average teacher pay in the nation has a new plan to boost yearly salaries by $8,000.

South Dakota’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Teachers and Students released its final recommendations in November. Led by legislators, the task force included participation by teachers, school administrators, and state fiscal and education leaders.

According to the National Education Association, the average U.S. teacher salary in 2013 was $56,000. The average teacher salary in South Dakota is $40,000.

The relatively low wage paid to South Dakota teachers is contributing to teacher shortages and turnover in the state, the task force says. To boost average pay to $48,000 a year, the Legislature and governor would need to find an additional $75 million in state funding. If existing state funds are not enough to reach this target, the task force recommends increasing the sales tax.

During the 2012-13 school year, teacher salaries were higher than the national average in four Midwest states: Michigan (11th in the nation), Illinois (13th), Ohio (16th) and Minnesota (17th).