

**From:** [Clare Crowson \(Clare@floridapromise.org\)](mailto:Clare@floridapromise.org) <[ClareAF@meridianstrategiesllc.com](mailto:ClareAF@meridianstrategiesllc.com)>  
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## Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 2/7/11

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### NATIONAL NEWS

- 1) [Obama to reveal educator-training plan](#); Nakamura – Washington Post
- 2) [Joel Klein: The Promise of Education Technology \(It's Not Just About Lighter Backpacks\)](#); Klein – Huffington Post
- 3) [Principals, Superintendents, School Boards Critique Kline Draft](#); Klein – Education Week

### STATE NEWS

- 4) [Grading Tennessee's Teachers: Evaluations revolutionary to some, stifling to others](#); Garland – Memphis Commercial Appeal
- 5) [Local parents rally to demand more high-quality schools and teachers in Los Angeles](#); Lin – Los Angeles Daily News
- 6) [Arizona online school bills seek more accountability, money](#); Ryman – Arizona Republic
- 7) [Wisconsin Opinion: It's education, smarty](#); Wegenke – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Obama to reveal educator-training plan

Washington Post

By: David Nakamura

February 7, 2012

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/12038/1208618-84-0.stm>

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama will use the backdrop of a White House science fair today to highlight a nationwide shortage of math and science teachers and unveil a plan to invest \$100 million to help train 100,000 new educators over the next decade.

Under his proposal, Mr. Obama will ask Congress for \$80 million to support new Education Department grants for colleges that provide innovative teacher-training programs. The president also is set to announce a \$22 million commitment from private companies that will support the effort, according to White House officials.

The investment is intended to address a problem that Mr. Obama thinks could ultimately threaten the nation's global competitiveness. U.S. companies have called upon the government to help produce more highly skilled workers to keep pace with job openings in new high-tech industries.

"Growing industries in science and technology have twice as many openings as we have workers who can do the job," Mr. Obama said during his State of the Union address Jan. 24. "Think about that: openings at a time when millions of Americans are looking for work. It's inexcusable."

Mr. Obama first challenged Congress and business leaders two years ago to address the shortfall of teachers with expertise in science, technology, engineering and math -- known as STEM. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 15-year-olds in the United States placed in the bottom third and the bottom quarter for science and math literacy, respectively, among 30 developed countries.

A group of 14 foundations, universities, business interests and education groups has responded to Mr. Obama's challenge by raising the \$22 million, said Talia Milgrom-Elcott, a program officer at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which spearheaded the effort. The money will be given to more than 100 organizations that provide teacher training and have gone through an application process, she said.

Among private organizations that have pledged resources are Google, Teach for America and the University of Chicago, White House officials said.

But increasing the federal commitment could be more difficult for Mr. Obama, who will include his \$80 million request in his fiscal 2013 budget next week, administration aides said. Congress rejected a request for a similar amount last year.

"It might be an uphill push" again, said Linda Rosen, chief executive of Change the Equation, a nonprofit network of business

leaders dedicated to training teachers in math, science and technology. "A lot of it is budget constraints."

Even without Congress' support, the administration will move forward by tailoring existing programs, including its Race to the Top competition, to put more emphasis on math, science and technology, officials said.

Several experts hailed the president's focus on the teacher shortage but described it as a complicated problem that could require more than money for new training programs.

Richard Ingersoll, a University of Pennsylvania education and sociology professor, said universities in the United States produce enough graduates with teaching expertise. The real problem, he said, is retaining those teachers, who often leave for higher-paying jobs.

"Almost every president since Eisenhower has given speeches and initiatives citing a math and science teacher shortage," Mr. Ingersoll said. "But the conventional diagnosis [of a shortage] is not supported by the data."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Joel Klein: The Promise of Education Technology (It's Not Just About Lighter Backpacks)

Huffington Post

By: Joel Klein

February 3, 2012

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joel-i-klein/digital-textbooks-education-technology\\_b\\_1253009.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joel-i-klein/digital-textbooks-education-technology_b_1253009.html)

When Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski spoke at the first ever "Digital Learning Day" this Wednesday and pushed schools to get digital textbooks in students' hands within five years, it marked a vital recognition that technology can help us re-imagine teaching and learning. But during Super Bowl week it's equally important to admit that, as nifty (and lightweight) as digital textbooks may sound, when it comes to realizing the potential of education technology to lift student achievement, we're still on our own 5 yard line. The digital textbook push is a positive step and a meaningful sign of change, but it risks being an incremental move in a field that urgently needs transformative improvement.

As someone who led America's largest school district for 8 years, serving over 1 million children, I believe technology can radically transform the way students learn by customizing instruction, and by helping teachers focus on each student's areas of greatest need. But the key to capturing this potential lies as much inside our own hearts and minds as it does in any hardware and software we'll deploy. That's because it's only when we change the way we think about how technology can actually change teaching and learning every day in schools that we'll finally make real strides in allowing every student to reach her potential.

The first instinct when technology is introduced to any field is to animate existing materials and automate previous activities. In the past, enticing looking technologies have led many educators to put tools in classrooms without thinking about how they could or should change teaching and learning practices rather than simply making them faster or easier. Too many early technology investments have had the feeling of a "fad" - lots of bells and whistles without enough understanding of how these tools result in new but rigorous student learning opportunities and outcomes.

Poorly designed and deployed technologies can reinforce old behaviors and practices, rather than solve for and improve them. What's even worse is when critical investments in training teachers to effectively use these new tools have often been shortchanged in districts' perennial budget squeeze. The all-too-frequent result, when things don't work as planned, has been skepticism among teachers and administrators about the power of technology to empower more effective teaching and learning.

I applaud the digital textbooks challenge but urge us not to let today's tools blind us to the bigger innovation opportunities. Technology's greatest potential is as a vehicle for students to learn more deeply and individually, unleashing them from the limitations of learning in step with 25 or more peers with different needs and strengths. How much a student learns is defined by two things: the quality of the teaching curriculum and the amount of knowledge students absorb from it. Those are the critical things, and, fortunately technology has the potential to significantly improve both instruction and engagement. It can leverage world-class experts in teaching math, for example, exposing students around the country to the best teaching. It can engage students, by using analytics to direct them to particular lessons that relate to their specific needs. The possibilities are enormous if we apply true discipline to our tools and demand that they help students learn. These tools also free teachers up to tackle students' greatest challenges.

We should be constantly improving based on what works. That's exactly what New York City is doing in a pilot program called the School of One, which was designed to move from the classroom to the individual student as the focus of instruction. Similarly, Sal Khan and his virtual Khan Academy have gained renown for a library of online instructional videos that enable children master the basics at home, freeing teachers to use precious class time to focus on problem-solving practice instead of rudimentary lectures. The common theme in these newer innovations is that they work to make the interaction between teacher and student more powerful and effective.

Bottom line: the Obama Administration's push for digital textbooks, while useful, represents initial steps on the proverbial thousand mile journey. If we commit to rigorous, analytical education technology, the payoff for student learning and for society

will be much larger. We know we're underperforming many other nations in K-12 today, and failing to develop the human potential of millions of our young people. We also know that education is one of the few sectors that has remained immune to the progress technology can bring. I'm convinced that if districts, educators, and technologists work together -- and if we make sure new technologies are never embraced for their own sake but rather for how they can demonstrably change teaching and learning, then the gains for America's civic life and economic future will be enormous.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Principals, Superintendents, School Boards Critique Kline Draft

Education Week

By: Alyson Klein

February 6, 2012

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2012/02/\\_the\\_groups\\_support\\_further.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2012/02/_the_groups_support_further.html)

Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., the chairman of the House education committee, is expected to put a formal version of his [draft bill](#) rewriting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (aka the No Child Left Behind Act) very soon. But so far, the bill has been met mostly with criticism, including from [civil rights and business groups](#) and the [National Education Association](#).

So Kline must have been pretty happy when he got this largely supportive [letter](#) from a whole bunch of groups representing practioners, including the American Association of School Administrators, the Association of Education Service Agencies, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition, the National Rural Education Association, and the National School Boards Association.

The groups support further action on the draft, but have stopped short of actually endorsing it, which is a very Washington-ish thing to do. It generally means that folks have found much to like in a particular piece of legislation, but still have some major concerns that they want to see addressed before they pledge full support.

That seems to be more or less the case this time.

The draft legislation "represents steps in the right direction" the group wrote. They're especially happy to see that Kline wants to scrap the law's signature yardstick, adequate yearly progress, get rid of the four School Improvement Grant models, and stop requiring districts to offer choice and free tutoring.

But the groups also have some concerns. They want to see changes to:

- The proposal to scrap maintenance of effort, which requires districts to keep up their spending at a certain level in order to tap federal funds. This could be a big sleeper issue in the debate over ESEA reauthorization since the National Governors Association put out a [statement](#) in favor of the change.
- Language that would expand private school authority over public funds. The groups think this could open the door to vouchers.
- Language keeping funding for federal programs at this year's levels, with increases tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). That's not enough new money to keep up with rising enrollment, the groups argue.
- The bill's ideas on Title II, the section of the law that deals with teacher quality. Kline wants to see only up to 10 percent of those funds used for class size reduction. (Right now, nearly 40 of it goes to that purpose.) That might not be enough, the groups argue.
- Language that would help grow the number of charter schools. The groups worry that could water down accountability for charters.

Why do these groups matter? Well, every member of Congress has school principals, school board members, and superintendents in their home district—and many will want to hear what those folks think of any legislation to renew the ESEA.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## STATE NEWS

### Grading Tennessee's Teachers: Evaluations revolutionary to some, stifling to others

Memphis Commercial Appeal

By: Sarah Garland

February 7, 2012

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2012/feb/07/grading-our-teachers-evaluations-revolutionary/>

Washington launched a controversial teacher evaluation system two years ago that overhauled how teachers are rated and led to the firings of 7 percent of the teaching force -- more than 280 people.

The new evaluations roiled the city; 80 percent of D.C. teachers believe it was not an "effective way to evaluate the performance" of teachers, according to a 2010 survey of more than 900 teachers by the local teachers union. And the chancellor who put the evaluations in place, Michelle Rhee, is now gone, after the mayor who appointed her was voted out of office.

Nonetheless, this year the Memphis school district adopted a version of D.C.'s classroom observation method, one that reform advocates hail as revolutionary even as some critics say it stifles teacher creativity.

Like Memphis, Washington is a high-poverty, high-minority district with a track record of low student achievement. Both places launched the new evaluations as a way to identify struggling teachers and either help them get better or remove them.

Districts in the rest of Tennessee are also overhauling their teacher evaluations, after a state law passed in 2010 requiring them to do so. But Memphis is the only district to adopt the D.C. version, which is essentially a list of standards teachers must demonstrate during a classroom observation, such as promoting critical thinking among students or managing classroom behavior.

"It's really, really rigorous and comprehensive, and it was chosen by the teachers," said Kriner Cash, the Memphis City Schools superintendent. "They thought it got more at the different complex nuances of teaching."

Some observation systems on the market are prescriptive about how teachers should meet the standards -- requiring observers to monitor whether teachers require students to do a quiz at the end of a lesson, for example. Others are looser and more holistic -- judging teachers on whether they are "flexible" and "responsive" to student questions. The version adopted in Shelby County Schools, known as TEAM, would fall into the latter category.

The D.C. system lies somewhere in the middle of the two approaches, according to a study by the Aspen Institute, an advocacy group in Washington.

The Memphis and D.C. "Teaching and Learning Frameworks," as the observation systems are called, are not identical. Insight Education Group, the private company that designed the D.C. and Memphis systems, changed the wording and broadened standards that were too specific.

Some teachers and principals say the list of standards that teachers must meet is unwieldy. Originally, D.C. teachers were required to demonstrate 13 standards in one 30-minute observation. After the first year, following complaints that it was impossible to demonstrate all the standards in one lesson, the number on the list was reduced to nine.

In Memphis, evaluators look for 11 standards during 15-minute observations, although administrators say teachers shouldn't necessarily be penalized if they miss one or two, as long as evaluators see each one at some point in the year.

"An 11-point checklist," said Marni Barron, a teaching coach at a D.C. elementary school and outspoken critic of the system, "is not getting to the heart and soul of anything that's organic and creative."

The teachers in her school "do a dog-and-pony show to get through the observation," Barron added.

The evaluation system should be thought of not as a "program or curriculum, but rather, a way of thinking," according to materials published by the D.C. public schools. "The one thing I would not want anyone to think is that the framework is a prescription, because teaching is so complex," said Jason Stricker, chief operating officer of Insight Education Group.

Another issue that has cropped up in both D.C. and Memphis is how well the teacher ratings based on classroom observations match the student test-score data that make up the other half of a teacher's overall rating. For the most part, evaluators have been more forgiving than the test scores, raising concerns about the accuracy and reliability of both measures.

"We would like to see them getting closer, but we do think they're measuring different things," said Scott Thompson, director of teacher effectiveness strategy for the D.C. Public Schools. "If they were measuring exactly the same thing, we wouldn't need these different measures."

Training has also been a concern.

Like in D.C., Memphis Education Association president Keith Williams said teachers and principals here haven't spent enough time learning about the standards and how they should use them in their classroom. "We are suffering from that," he said.

In both cities, teachers have said they wished they'd had a yearlong trial run of the new evaluation system before their jobs were put on the line. (A teacher can now lose tenure after two years of ineffective ratings, and eventually be fired.) In Memphis, the timeframe for the new evaluations has been even "more compressed" than in D.C., said Stricker, in part because of the passage of the new state law.

Administrators say a culture shift in schools may be painful, but that it is urgent and necessary to lift the two cities from among the worst-performing districts in the nation. And Cash has emphasized that in Memphis, firing teachers is not the aim.

"There will be a percentage of 10 to 15 percent that we'll have to counsel out after making all of the efforts we're going to make to help teachers improve," he said. "But this is not about a massive turnover of human capital. That's not sustainable and it's not efficient and there are no replacements."

*About this project*

*This story, the third in a three-part series examining the new teacher evaluation systems being used in Memphis and Shelby County, is a collaboration between The Commercial Appeal and The Hechinger Report. Hechinger is a nonprofit, nonpartisan education news service based at Teachers College, Columbia University.*

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Local parents rally to demand more high-quality schools and teachers in Los Angeles

Los Angeles Daily News

By: C.J. Lin

February 4, 2012

[http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci\\_19895525](http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_19895525)

Calling on elected officials to stop budget cuts that threaten public education, thousands of Los Angeles parents and educators rallied behind a single message Saturday: Students first. | [See photo gallery.](#)

Local officials urged parents to demand more high-quality schools across the city, better facilities, better teachers, and equal funding for all public schools.

"Without dedicated moms and dads, we will never turn around our public school system," said Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. "We can win this battle.

"We can give our children the quality, world-class education they need and they deserve."

The rally, held at Exposition Park just off the University of Southern California campus, comes as recent state budgets dropped funding for public education down to a historic low in 2011.

California ranked 46th out of 50 states in per pupil spending, according to a report by the California Budget Project.

Participants hoped the gathering would send a strong message to lawmakers to make education a priority.

"Hopefully this will be a catalyst to them seeking more creative ways to cut the budget without making such deep cuts into education," said Jacqueline Elliot, CEO and co-founder of Partnerships to Uplift Communities Schools, which operates seven charters in the San Fernando Valley.

More than 10,000 students are on waiting lists to get into the 261 charter schools in L.A. County, according to Families That Can, a statewide organization of charter school parents.

At the same time, only 56 percent of students are graduating on time from high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, which with more than 1,000 schools is the second-largest district in the U.S., after New York.

"Far too many of our children are not getting the high-quality education they deserve,"

"We need more schools we can believe in."

The number of charter schools have more than doubled in the last six years as parents seek alternatives to traditional public schools. LAUSD has 210 charters, with 30 new sites opening in the 2011-12 school year.

Cindy Ruedas, whose son attended Community Charter High School in Lake View Terrace - the first charter that opened in the San Fernando Valley in 1994 - called the school a lifesaver for her family.

Her son hadn't been doing well at his previous school, and teachers took him under their wing once he transferred, Ruedas said.

"It was very comforting to know that someone was looking out for my son, not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well," said Ruedas, whose daughter currently attends the school. "I want every family in L.A. to have what my family has had."

Opportunities like the one Ruedas had are too limited, according to Ravare.

"There are great public schools in Los Angeles, but there are simply not enough," Ravare said. "Even our most successful public schools face major challenges, everything from funding to facilities."

LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy, who took office eight months ago, has called for a \$270-a-year parcel tax on the November ballot to help close a deficit of \$543 million for the new school year.

At least two-thirds of voters need to approve the tax, something that Deasy acknowledged would be a huge challenge.

"It's going to be tricky," Deasy said. "But what will be lost will be catastrophic."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Arizona online school bills seek more accountability, money

Arizona Republic

By: Anne Ryman

February 6, 2012

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/politics/articles/2012/01/30/20120130arizona-online-school-bills-accountability.html>

Arizona's rapid growth of K-12 [online schools](#) is spurring new proposals to both toughen accountability and promote additional growth by giving online schools more state money.

The proposals in the Legislature are being greeted with skepticism by some experts and school officials who think the accountability measures would be superficial and wouldn't lead to improved online courses. Proponents say the bills would provide a strong financial incentive to schools to increase quality and would give parents more information about student performance in online courses.

Arizona's online schools get state funding, and students are able to attend for free.

It's unclear which of the bills, if any, have a good chance of passing. But the momentum to encourage growth of online schools while adjusting their regulation is strong, driven by [technology](#), potential cost-savings, student demand and lobbying by school operators, including national for-profit chains.

One bill proposed in the state Senate would allow online providers to earn more state funding if students finish courses and demonstrate on state-approved tests that they have mastered the content.

That and a House bill also could make it easier for district-school students to take more online courses from the district or an outside school. One provision would require districts to accept credits from all other state-approved online courses.

A third bill would require online schools to supervise final exams, which some educators believe would help deter cheating. The state requires only that statewide assessments, such as the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards test, be given in person.

The proposed changes follow a six-part investigative series on online education in *The Arizona Republic*, published in December. The series revealed that Arizona's online K-12 programs have relatively lax oversight and limited disclosure of key information and there are few or no requirements for how schools monitor their tests or train their teachers. The risks of cheating in the largest online schools are high, and questions about quality and lack of rigor plague the system.

Despite such problems and a critical state audit in 2007, the state Legislature in 2009 removed caps on the number of online schools allowed to operate.

Since then, the number of district and charter online schools has jumped from 14 to 66 schools. Nearly 36,000 students took one or more online classes in the 2010-11 school year.

The most detailed proposal for changes comes from Sen. Rich Crandall, R-Mesa, who is chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

Senate Bill 1259 would create a separate funding option from that of the current Arizona Online Instruction Program.

Online programs now get slightly less money than brick-and-mortar schools, receiving 95 percent of the per-student funding for full-time students and 85 percent for part-time ones. Schools get paid based on the hours students spend doing their work and are paid the same whether a student scores an A or a D in the class.

Crandall's bill would let online schools choose to be part of a new funding structure in which they could get 100 percent of what brick-and-mortar schools receive for students in seventh through 12th grades. But students would have to meet certain requirements for completing and mastering courses.

"We want to move toward mastery, not just passing," Crandall said.

Starting in fiscal 2016, if those online schools have more than three courses with a passage rate of less than 70 percent and a completion rate of less than 60 percent, they would be ineligible for additional funding, the bill says.

The way the legislation is written, the 66 charter and district schools that are now part of the Arizona Online Instruction Program could continue receiving funding the way they do now at the 95 and 85 percent levels. Or they could decide to be part of the new funding structure with more accountability requirements.

New providers also could enter the market as long as their courses met state learning standards and were approved by the Arizona Department of Education.

The bill also would require the state Department of Education to provide parents with more information, as well as to keep a list of the state-approved online courses and their test results. Public schools would be required to accept academic credits of students who satisfactorily complete online courses on the state's list. Some district schools now set limits on the courses they will accept from online schools.

After reading the bill, one education expert criticized it as too soft, saying it appeared to have "symbolic" accountability provisions added to help get it through the Legislature. The bill seems designed to benefit for-profit online schools because of the potential for additional funding, said Gene Glass, an education professor at the University of Colorado-Boulder and an emeritus professor at Arizona State University who has studied online schools.

Glass is especially troubled that the legislation would allow students to take "external assessments" approved by the state to prove they have mastered courses. The legislation doesn't define who would develop the tests.

The bill does say students could demonstrate mastery by passing standardized tests that correlate to an online course, such as the AIMS math or reading test or parts of college-entrance and Advanced Placement exams. Unspecified "external assessments" also would be allowed.

"In reality, he who designs the test -- number of questions, testing time, difficulty of the items -- can make the pass rate come out to be anything they wish," Glass said.

Crandall said the idea behind the legislation is to provide some accountability but also to create incentives. Online programs won't be able to develop their own tests to prove their students are mastering the courses, he said. He described the bill as a "loose framework" and "not yet ready for prime time." He said it will be amended before being heard in the Senate Education Committee next Monday.

"There's a whole bunch more coming," he said.

Another piece of legislation, Senate Bill 1463, sponsored by Sen. David Schapira, D-Tempe, would require final exams to be given in person and monitored by a representative of the [online school](#).

Some district online programs require supervised, or proctored, finals, but some of the state's largest online schools -- Primavera Online High School and Middle School, Arizona Connections Academy, Arizona Virtual Academy and Pinnacle Online High School -- do not require in-person supervising of final exams.

"We want to make sure there are some checks and balances to make sure the student is taking the test without notes and textbooks and Google," said Schapira, who is on the Senate Education Committee.

Pinnacle's founder and CEO Michael Matwick said that requiring proctored exams could create a challenge for students who live in rural areas because their parents would have to drive them to exam sites. Some students might not enroll in online classes as a result.

A third bill introduced by Rep. Heather Carter, R-Cave Creek, seeks to lessen the financial infighting between school districts and online charter schools. When students enroll in more than one school during the year, the schools have to share per-student funding. That can cause some schools to come up short financially if the student attends one school in person full time but also takes online summer-school classes. Some school districts have started rejecting credits from online schools outside their districts because of concerns over quality and to hang on to their full share of student funding.

Carter's bill, House Bill 2260, would give the schools an incentive, allowing them to share up to 125 percent of the per-student funding rather than 100 percent.

The Arizona School Boards Association hasn't taken a position on the bills yet, but its lobbyist, Janice Palmer, said the group supports bringing more accountability to online courses and making sure students are learning. The shared funding has also been an issue between school districts and online schools, she said.

Justin Bathon, an education professor at the University of Kentucky who has researched online schools, said the legislative proposals have both good and bad points. He likes the idea of tying funding to outcomes.

"It obviously puts the focus on mastering the content, which is what we've really focused on over the last decade and said, 'That's what school is about,' " he said.

The mastering concept relies heavily on testing, he said, which will be very complex to put into practice. Subjects such as English and math are already covered by state assessments, but other subjects such as art and physical education, which aren't covered in state tests, will be more difficult.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## Wisconsin Opinion: It's education, smarty

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

By: Rolf Wegenke

February 6, 2012

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/its-education-smarty-2243bdo-138817129.html>

Before I became president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, I worked in economic development in the administrations of five Wisconsin governors, both Democrats and Republicans. Over those years, leaders in both parties called for "jobs, jobs, jobs."

Some economists rate Wisconsin's personal income growth levels in 48th place. Now, in an election year and in a time of recession and jobless recovery, the critical question is what can the state do to promote job creation? The Journal Sentinel Editorial Board has rightly made jobs and job creation its sole agenda item for 2012.

There is a direct link between the level of educational attainment (percentage of the population with a postsecondary degree) in a state and the growth of personal income in that state. Because of that link, there is also a clear and certain pathway to economic growth and job creation.

The Wisconsin Technology Council has called upon the state to add 150,000 degree-holders to bring Wisconsin to the national average. Competitive Wisconsin Inc., a coalition of corporate and union leadership, not wishing our state to be average, urged Wisconsin to add 170,000 baccalaureate degree-holders to bring this state up to the level of our neighbor, Minnesota.

Comparing Minnesota to Wisconsin shows that education fuels economic growth. Wisconsin ranks 26th in the country in the percentage of its population with a college degree and 26th in per-capita income. Minnesota ranks 11th in the percentage of its population with a college degree and 11th in per-capita income. See the pattern?

"Be Bold: The Wisconsin Prosperity Strategy" by John Torinus, Tom Hefty and Tom Still concluded that Wisconsin should raise "the percentage of four-year degree holders in the state to a level that puts Wisconsin in the top tier of states, based on the number of working adults who have at least a baccalaureate degree (and) . . . provide adequate amounts of need-based financial aid for students."

A 2009 research brief by the Rand Corp. found that highly educated people earn more, pay more in taxes and draw less from social service programs (welfare, unemployment, housing subsidies, food stamps and Medicaid). Increasing educational attainment is not only a catalyst for economic growth but helps the state balance its books.

"Smoke stack chasing" (moving businesses across state lines) has been discredited as an economic development strategy in favor of encouraging expansions and start-ups. Even so, "growing our own" knowledge workers is something this state's postsecondary institutions know how to do and do well. We can do it, but we must focus on growth and on financial aid to Wisconsin's students as the principal means for promoting growth. Another Wisconsin/Minnesota comparison: Wisconsin ranks 30th of the 50 states in per-capita grant aid provided to in-state students, while Minnesota is in 13th place.

An Ohio study found that offering financial incentives to low-income students resulted in higher persistence, higher academic performance and students taking more credits. A Pell Institute study of low-income, first-generation students found that unmet financial need is a major problem for this group.

As a result, they work more and borrow more with negative consequences in terms of their college completion. The National Bureau of Economic Research confirms "that the rate of degree attainment responds to incentives in financial aid."

Wisconsin knows what the issue is: jobs, jobs, job. The solution: increase educational attainment. How to achieve it: student financial aid. When to address it: now. If we wait for better times, we will have created a "lost generation," and the better times will never come.

*Rolf Wegenke is president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, representing 21 private, nonprofit institutions of higher learning and their 60,000 students.*

[\(Back to top\)](#)