# CENTRAL REGION:
A REPORT IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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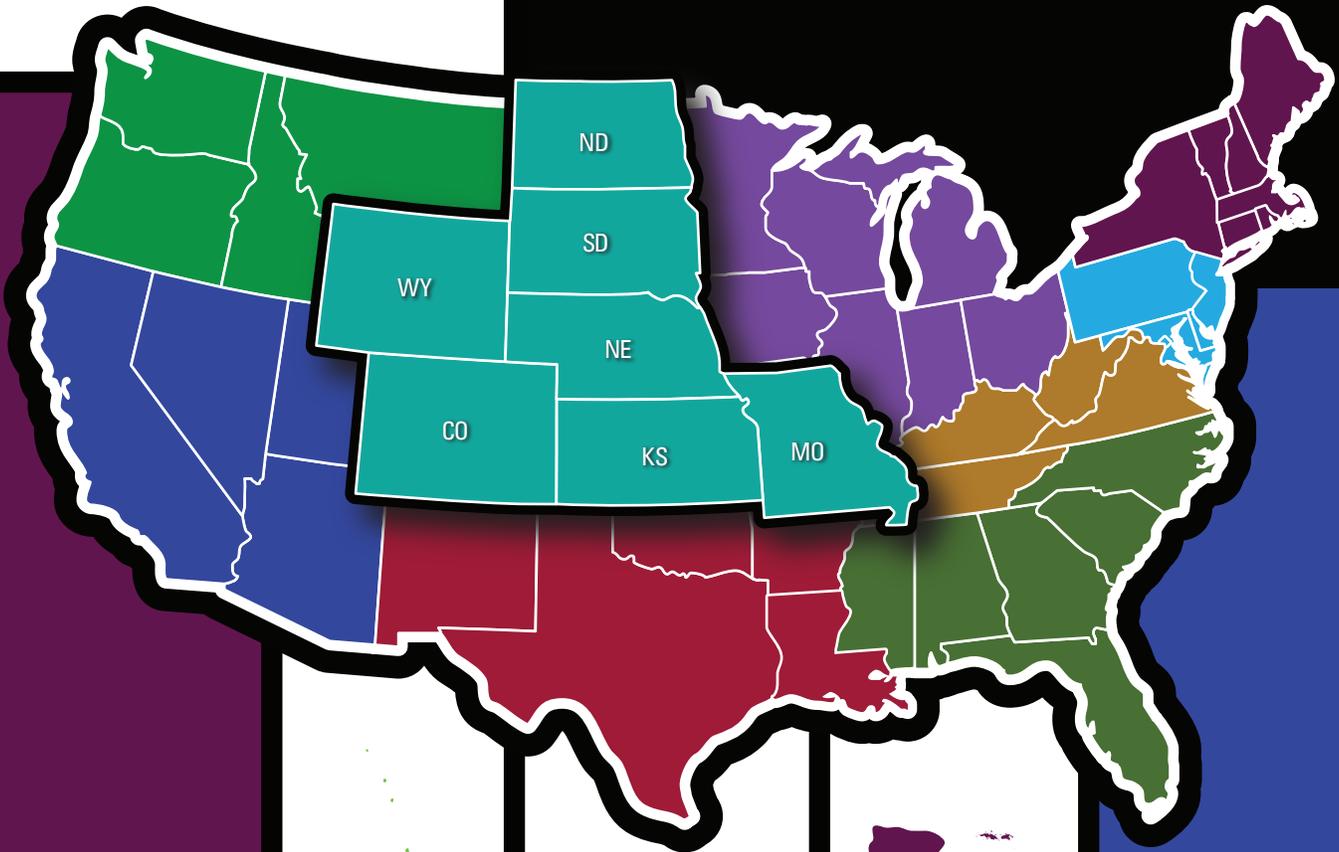
U.S. Department of Education
Regional Advisory Committee
(RAC)

July 2011

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PREFACE

This report presents the deliberations of the Central Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), one of 10 RACs established under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. sections 9601 et. seq.) to assess the educational needs of the region. The committee's report outlines the educational needs across the states of Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Committee deliberations took place May 23, 2011, through June 20, 2011.

Central RAC members represented local and state education agencies; institutions of higher education; parents; practicing educators, including principals, and administrators; state agencies, and business. Members included:

Regional Chair

- Margie Vandeven, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Quality Schools, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jefferson City, MO

RAC Members

- Jane Crothers, Denver, CO
- Vivian Delgado, Professor, Bemidji State University, Broomfield, CO
- Blake Flanders, Vice President, Workforce Development, Topeka, KS
- Norman Graham, Principal, Sturgis Elementary School, Sturgis, SD
- Richard Hasty, Superintendent/Special Education Director, Plattsmouth Community School District, Plattsmouth, NE
- Cheryl Kulas, Director (retired) of the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, Bismarck, ND
- Carmelita Lamb, Chair, Teacher Education, Turtle Mountain Community College, Belcourt, ND
- Ken Santistevan, Director of Strategic Business and Community Initiatives, Denver Public Schools, Denver, CO
- Jon Turner, Assistant Superintendent, Dallas County Schools, Buffalo, MO
- Blake West, President, Kansas NEA, Topeka, KS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the authorization of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-279; 20 USC 9605), the Central Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), with representatives from the state and local education and business communities from the states of Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, met three times between May 23, 2011 and June 20, 2011 to identify the overarching regional educational needs. Through discussion, using their own experiences, resources, and expertise, and by soliciting public input, the Central RAC identified eleven regional educational needs.

The Central region is experiencing many educational challenges. There was remarkable agreement among RAC members during discussions, and the identified needs are presented below in order of priority as determined by RAC members:

- Identify, attract, prepare, and retain highly effective teachers, staff, and administrators.
- Align pre-K through 20 education readiness to ensure all students are successful in education, life, and career.
- Better meet the needs of racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and gender-diverse (GLBT) students.
- Infuse teaching and learning with 21st Century Skills.
- Promote a safe and healthy learning environment moving towards a culture of high academic and social expectations.
- Create systems that address the needs of individual students including but not limited to gifted students and students with special needs.
- Promote active parent, student, and community involvement in education.
- Build and align capacity for change at all levels.
- Collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant, timely, and accurate information on student learning and provide quality user-friendly tools for applying the information.
- Change the perception of education to become a public priority.
- Bridge the digital divide.

There were discussions during the three RAC meetings that provided a context for identifying and prioritizing these as the 11 needs for the Central region. The greatest need for the Central region is to attract and retain highly effective teachers and administrators who ensure that students receive the most appropriate education. The challenge of ensuring a seamless and successful transition through school for all students is daunting. All students, especially those with special needs and the gifted, require increased and individual attention to ensure they achieve their potential. The impact of reduced funding, especially for professional development and support systems for special needs students and their families, has had a negative effect. RAC members acknowledged that teachers and administrators are under increasing pressure to increase expectations for teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student body and prepare the students to be productive members of society.

Central RAC members identified the importance of preparing all students to succeed in life as a need. Whether students are college-bound or in a career and technical education program, they agreed that it is important that students not only have the technical and academic knowledge to

be successful, but the requisite social, communication and collaborative skills as well. It is imperative that schools have a close relationship with parents and the business community to ensure that all work together to make this happen.

All members agreed that the lack of available technology, especially for those in rural areas and without access to the Internet, hampers a teacher's and administrator's ability to have instant communication with parents about their child's progress. In addition, the diverse methods of communication coupled with a lack of access to technology affect parents' ability to access information about available services. The RAC members mentioned the need for appropriate tools at the school level to allow teachers and administrators to have timely, easy-to-use student achievement information in a user-friendly format. This is imperative if data are to be used to inform instructional decisions.

In addition to academic needs, health and safety needs are apparent as well. The epidemic of student obesity has necessitated an updated health and nutrition curriculum. Furthermore, a safe and secure school environment is essential to maximize learning.

In addition to listing the needs, the Central RAC has made recommendations to the U. S. Department of Education on ways to address them. Those recommendations are included in this report.

This report represents the regional needs assessment of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) for the Central region, which includes Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The Central RAC members conducted outreach activities to obtain input from various constituencies on regional needs and how to address those needs, used statistical data from the Central Regional Profile (Appendix B), and deliberated during three public meetings from May 23 through June 20, 2011.

Legislative Background

There are ten Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. sections 9601 et. seq.). The RACs are governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (Public Law 92-463). Each RAC also has a charter that defines the RAC's roles and responsibilities.

Regional Background Information

There is a wealth of educational information on the Central region. The Central RAC accessed a regional profile to represent a descriptive, statistical snapshot of the Central states. They used member expertise, information from the Profile, as well as input from constituencies to identify the region's most pressing needs. The entire profile can be found in Appendix B, but excerpts are presented below that relate to the priority need areas the Central RAC identified.

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status[1]. Table 1 displays the percentage of school districts in the Central region that are located in urban, suburban and rural areas as reported in 2003-2004.

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[1] A rural area is a territory that is away from an urbanized area or urban cluster. An urban metro area is a territory that is inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city. A suburb is a territory that is outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area.

Figure 1: Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

■ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Rural

State	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Colorado	7.2	29.8	63.0
Kansas	2.6	26.6	70.8
Missouri	2.7	35.7	61.6
Nebraska	1.2	10.8	88.0
North Dakota	1.4	13.6	85.0
South Dakota	2.3	17.6	80.1
Wyoming	5.1	1.7	93.2
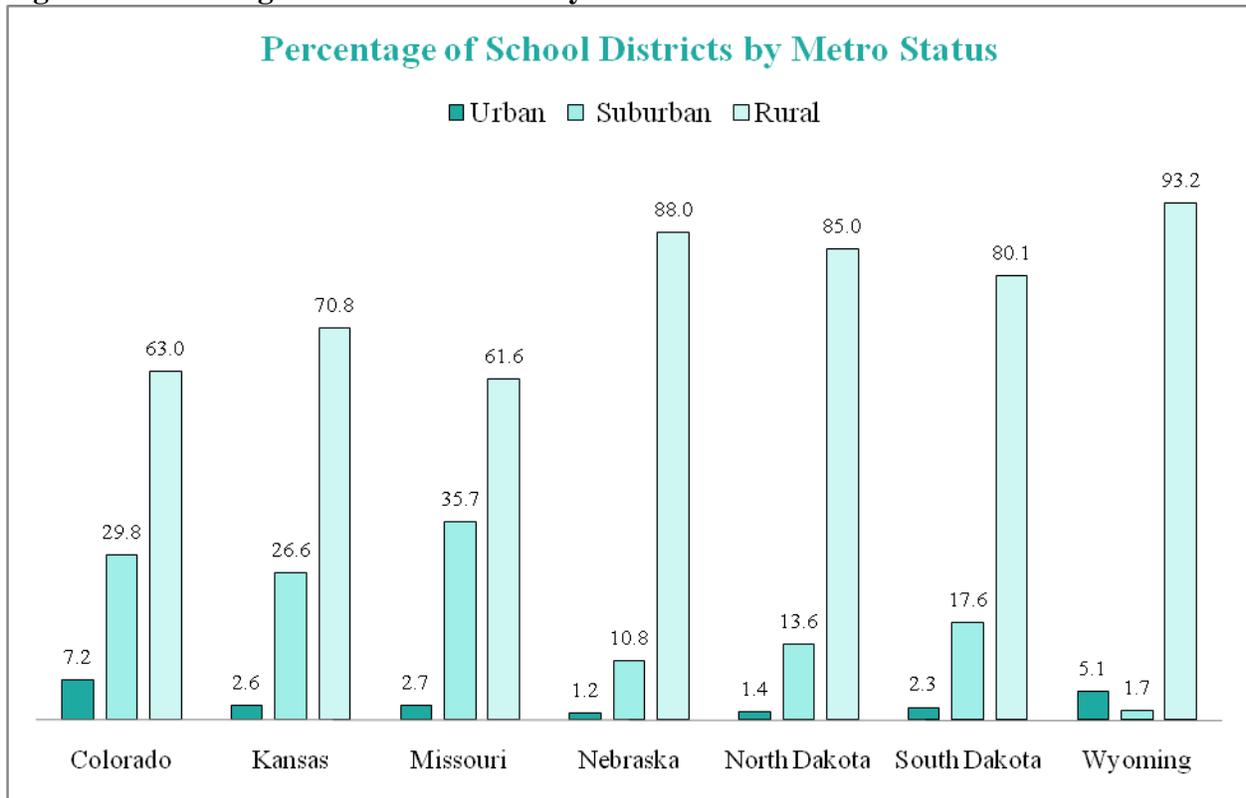
SOURCE: Common Core of Data, 2003-2004.

Selected Student Subgroups. Table 1 reveals data such as the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the percentage of students identified as English language learners, and the number of homeless students.

Table 1: Selected Student Subgroups

State	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch[1]	Percent of Students in ELL/LEP[1]	Percent of Students With an IEP[1]	Number of Migrant Students[2]	Number of Homeless Students[2]
Colorado	35.4	10.9	10.2	6,323	15,834
Kansas	43.0	7.2	14.0	4,284	6,700
Missouri	38.7	1.8	14.5	1,418	14,350
Nebraska	38.4	6.3	15.1	3,393	1,752
North Dakota	31.6	3.7	14.0	675	1,149
South Dakota	35.3	2.8	14.1	233	1,794
Wyoming	31.0	2.6	16.9	218	724

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009; [2]Consolidated State Performance Reports: SY2008-2009.

Socioeconomic Indicators. Table 2 contains socioeconomic indicators, such as the percentage of families below the poverty level and the number and percentage who receive free and reduced price lunches (FRPL) at school.

Table 2: Socioeconomic Indicators

State	Total Number of Families[1]	Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Families With Children Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Children With at Least One Parent With a Postsecondary Degree[2]	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch[3]
Colorado	1,203,585	8.2	12.8	51.0	35.4
Kansas	725,768	8.3	13.2	48.6	43.0
Missouri	1,531,655	9.8	15.9	43.2	38.7
Nebraska	456,297	7.9	12.9	54.2	38.4
North Dakota	168,636	7.4	11.8	65.2	31.6
South Dakota	205,091	8.8	14.1	51.0	35.3
Wyoming	136,718	6.1	10.4	43.2	31.0

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009.

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity. Table 3 contains dropout rates by race and ethnicity for the Central Region. Graduation and dropout rates do not add up to 100 percent, because they are based on different groups of students. Graduates are counted based on a single freshman class, whereas dropouts are calculated based on all students in any year.

Table 3: Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

	Dropout Rate and Number of Dropouts (#)	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White
Colorado	6.4% (15,119)	11.3% (328)	3.8% (284)	12.1% (6,895)	10.6% (1,544)	3.9% (6,068)
Kansas	2.5% (3,497)	3.9% (91)	1.5% (53)	3.9% (595)	3.6% (439)	2.1% (2,199)
Missouri	4.9% (13,931)	3.7% (47)	2.7% (122)	7.2% (569)	12.9% (6,229)	3.2% (6,964)
Nebraska	2.5% (2,244)	7.6% (106)	1.4% (22)	4.8% (444)	6.0% (395)	1.8% (1,277)
North Dakota	2.4% (754)	7.3% (195)	4.5% (13)	4.4% (21)	3.9% (20)	1.8% (505)
South Dakota	2.3% (871)	9.9% (343)	2.0% (9)	4.0% (31)	2.4% (17)	1.4% (471)
Wyoming	5.0% (1,366)	11.0% (96)	2.0% (6)	8.0% (194)	8.1% (30)	4.5% (1,040)

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2007-2008.

Educational Standards. Table 4 contains measures of educational achievement, such as high school graduation rate, AP test scores, whether the state has an exit exam and if the state finances remediation for students failing exit exams. None of the Central Region states requires high school exit exams.

Table 4: Educational Standards

State	High School Graduation Rate, SY2007-2008[1]	Advanced Placement High Test Scores (3 or Above) Per 100 Students in Grades 11 and 12 for 2009[2]	Total Number of Credits Required To Earn Standard Diploma[2]	Alternative Credential for Not Meeting All Standard Requirements[2]	Basis for Alternative Credential [2]	State Has Exit Exam[2]	State Finances Remediation for Students Failing Exit Exams[2]
Colorado	71.9	24.0					
Kansas	89.7	10.6	21.0				
Missouri	85.8	8.9	24.0				
Nebraska	89.0	8.5	200 Credit Hours				
North Dakota	86.0	5.8	22.0				
South Dakota	88.4	12.3	22.0				
Wyoming	79.0	6.9	13.0	✓	Local Option		

SOURCES: [1]EDFacts/Consolidated State Performance Report, 2008-2009; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011.

Meeting Requirements to Establish Standards. Table 5 displays whether states are meeting requirements to establish state standards in reading, mathematics and science, and whether they have agreed to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

Table 5: Meeting Requirements to Establish Standards

State	Reading[1]	Mathematics[1]	Science[1]	Agreed To Adopt Common Core Standards[2]
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kansas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	Partial	Partial	Yes	No
North Dakota	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
South Dakota	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

SOURCES: [1]Education Commission of the States NCLB database, downloaded March 2011; [2]Common Core State Standards, downloaded March 2011.

Preschool. Table 6 contains preschool enrollment data for each state in the Central region. None of the Central Region states provided readiness interventions, defined as state-provided or funded programs for children not meeting school-readiness expectations, during 2010-2011.

Table 6: Preschool

State	Preschool Enrollment (Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool)	Readiness Interventions: State Provides or Funds Programs for Children Not Meeting School-Readiness Expectations (2010-2011)
Colorado	48.2	
Kansas	45.7	
Missouri	43.4	
Nebraska	43.5	
North Dakota	34.9	
South Dakota	38.9	
Wyoming	44.8	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011.

Teaching Profession. Table 7 contains teaching profession information that shows initial licensure requirements for all prospective teachers for 2009-2010 and whether states require substantial formal coursework in subject areas taught. None of the Central Region states require new teachers to participate in state-funded induction programs.

Table 7: Teaching Profession

State	All New Teachers Are Required To Participate in a State-Funded Induction Program	State Requires Substantial Formal Coursework in Subject Area(s) Taught	Prospective Teachers Must Pass Written Tests			State Requires Clinical Experiences During Teacher Training	
			Basic Skills	Subject-Specific Knowledge	Subject-Specific Pedagogy	Student Teaching (Weeks)	Other Clinical Experiences (Hours)
Colorado				✓		13	400
Kansas		✓		✓		12	
Missouri			✓	✓		8 Semester Hours	2 Semester Hours
Nebraska		✓	✓			14	100
North Dakota		✓	✓	✓		10	
South Dakota		✓		✓		10	
Wyoming						8	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010.

Professional Development. Table 8 displays professional development criteria, such as whether the state has formal professional development standards and whether states require districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals. Colorado, Kansas, Missouri and North Dakota have professional development standards, and Missouri, Nebraska and North Dakota finance professional development for all districts. Kansas, Missouri and Wyoming require districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals.

Table 8: Professional Development

State	State Has Formal Professional Development Standards	State Finances Professional Development for All Districts	State Requires Districts To Align Professional Development With Local Priorities and Goals
Colorado	✓		
Kansas	✓		✓
Missouri	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska		✓	
North Dakota	✓	✓	
South Dakota			
Wyoming			✓

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010.

DATA COLLECTION: PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Central RAC held three public meetings; the first was a two-day, face-to-face meeting held on May 23 and 24, 2011, in Arlington, Virginia. During that meeting, Central RAC members identified 11 regional educational need areas based on the Central Profile (see Appendix B) and committee members' expertise and experience. They identified constituent groups who would be sent e-mail or personal invitations asking for feedback on the 11 prioritized needs.

The second meeting was conducted via an online webinar on June 13, 2011. The public was invited to listen and submit comments via the RAC website (www.seiservices.com/rac). At that meeting, committee members reviewed online public comments received from the RAC website

and input received from constituent groups and colleagues. Using all these information resources, the Central RAC members further refined the identified need areas.

The third meeting also was an online webinar held on June 20, 2011. Again, members of the public listened but submitted their comments via the RAC web site. During the final meeting, RAC members finalized the list of 11 prioritized needs and focused on recommended strategies and support that would be needed to address those needs.

DATA COLLECTION: OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The committee identified a means of eliciting public comments and input by sending e-mails or personal invitations to their constituent and educator groups urging them to listen to the two webinars and to go to the Central RAC website to register comments. Each Central RAC member took responsibility for contacting specific groups. A summary of the comments is included in Appendix A.

Public comments were collected on the Central RAC website between the dates of May 27, 2011 and June 26, 2011.

Table 9: Public Comments by Role and State

Role	Number
State Education Agency	5
Teacher	6
School Administrator	5
Local Educational Agency	1
Parent	2
Librarian	2
Business	1
Other	6
Total	28

State	Number
Colorado	8
Kansas	3
Missouri	6
Nebraska	2
North Dakota	6
South Dakota	3
Wyoming	0
Total	28

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

A final list of the Central Region 11 needs and recommended strategies to meet those needs is included below. The committee prioritized the needs, which are presented in priority order beginning with the one deemed most important.

Need: Identify, attract, prepare, and retain highly effective teachers, staff, and administrators. The Central RAC discussed the many challenges that new teachers face and noted that often teachers are not aware of available support. Those challenges cause beginning teachers to feel unsupported, and they often leave the profession. The retention of new teachers is vitally important; therefore, there is a need to assist and mentor new teachers in order to retain them and ensure their success, especially during the first three years of service. A clearinghouse of instructional resources is needed to help new teachers who do not have the time to search and vet timely, instructional resources themselves. Administrators, too, need strong preparation and mentoring programs. Too often, they are elevated to principal from a teaching position with

little support. Mentoring programs, in addition to a strong academic preparation program, are needed to ensure that school administrators are instructional leaders, not just school managers.

The committee also discussed ways that pre-service education and induction programs might be more rigorous with earlier in-the-classroom experiences for pre-service teachers. It was mentioned that induction programs should be considered an allowable expense and be included as a part of typical teacher education grant proposal. Discussion also focused on the need for teacher preparation programs to have a strong collaborative relationship with the districts for which they are preparing candidates, and the school districts in turn must have an expectation that they will collaborate with higher education institutions. Teacher education departments need to support and provide induction year services to schools where graduates teach. Two recent reports: *The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Practice and Field Experience* sponsored by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the *Child and Adolescent Development Research and Teacher Education: Evidence-based Pedagogy, Policy and Practice* also sponsored by NCATE and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development provide a rich background on teacher retention as does a report from the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, entitled "*Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey*."

The committee also identified the challenge of attracting and retaining teachers particularly in rural areas. Members discussed a model used in San Francisco where teacher preparation programs partnered with the district to attract teachers, identify potential teachers early (e.g., high school students), and provide them with classroom experiences during their high school years.

Recommended strategies to identify, attract, prepare, and retain highly effective teachers, staff, and administrators.
- Provide a clearinghouse of information on teaching strategies and resources for new and experienced teachers to reduce the time they spend searching for assistance.
- Offer incentives and share information about successful programs and partnerships (especially those who teach underserved populations) to attract and prepare students for teaching. Research and disseminate information to districts about successful programs to "grow" outstanding administrators and teacher leaders.
- Provide more flexibility in funding induction as an allowable expense and mandate collaboration with institutions of higher education.
- Research strong and successful teacher and administrator induction programs and urge districts to implement such programs.
- Provide pre-service and in-service training about diverse student populations with technical support and content included to address different cultural needs.
- Provide districts with research on successful programs to retain quality teachers once they are in the field.
- Provide teachers with appropriate tools and training to let them know where they are being successful and areas of needed improvement.

Need: Align pre-K through 20 education readiness to ensure all students are successful in education, life, and career.
The Central RAC members emphasized that this need refers to all children including the gifted and those with special needs. There is a lack of collaboration, alignment and communication

between pre-K through 20 levels including Head Start, elementary, vocational and post-secondary levels. The early learning and foundational skills that children need even before they start their formal schooling play an important part in their later achievement. Appropriate and timely intervention must occur for seamless transitions throughout the student's entire career.   In addition, there is a lack of alignment between community and business needs and the curriculum. This disconnect is detrimental for students exiting school who find it difficult to secure jobs and for businesses that are unable to find qualified job applicants.

Research indicates social promotion is ineffective; therefore programs and strategies must ensure success for those students who do not master grade level skills before moving to the next level. A smooth and seamless transition between each school level is important whether it be career track or college preparatory and needs to include transitions from elementary to middle school, from middle school to high school, and beyond. The "Ready by 21 Initiative" sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is based on collaboration among various organizations and thus may be a starting point for research. There was consensus that community colleges should also be included in the equation.

Recommended strategies to align pre-K through 20 education readiness to ensure all students are successful in education, life, and career.
- Research programs that successfully transition students from one level to another.
- Provide a clearinghouse of successful, research-based transition programs and ideas.
- Gather resources and share information about successful post-secondary programs such as career and college-ready programs.
- Define competencies needed to meet college and career readiness standards.
- Provide support for and ideas about successful early-learning programs for pre-K students to ensure their future success in school.
- Provide research on and develop indicators of student readiness for kindergarten.
- Gather information for districts on successful programs and strategies to ensure students have mastered necessary prerequisite skills before moving to the next level.

Need: Better meet the needs of racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and gender-diverse (LGBT) students.
It is important that teachers, administrators, staff and students gain greater awareness of embedded attitudes and beliefs around cultural stereotypes. A more culturally diverse faculty would assist in the promotion of dialogue and help reduce barriers. Global diversity in early learning and preschool programs is important. The importance of a curriculum that addresses diversity issues and encourages dialogue and understanding cannot be overstated. The educational system needs to be accessible and responsive to all students including those from diverse backgrounds.

"Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools" (Singleton and Linton, 2006) includes suggested resources for training school staff, students and the community. Opportunities to capitalize on the gifts and talents that multicultural students and teachers bring to the classroom should be encouraged. The amount of family participation and community involvement in schools is one indicator of the success of an inclusive and accepting school culture. Information on the effects of these programs on school culture and the integration of diverse populations is important.

Recommended strategies to better meet the needs of racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and gender-diverse (LGBT) students.
- Develop a database of successful programs and training (including contact information for those who have used the programs) for districts and individuals to address the needs of diverse populations.
- Provide information on the effects of diversity programs on school culture and the successful integration of these diverse populations, etc.
- Gather and share information on curricula and learning programs that successfully address diversity issues in the early learning years.
- Identify programs that promote dialogue and understanding between and among all members of the school community.
- Develop rosters of teachers from diverse backgrounds who may be willing to relocate to another district to provide authentic exposure to diverse populations.

Need: Infuse teaching and learning with 21st Century Skills.
The committee discussed the importance of preparing all students to be successful in the future. To help make transition years more effective for students, teachers should infuse lessons with opportunities to use the 21st Century Skills of collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Partnership for 21st Century Skills has the "Route 21 Database" of lessons and skills for teachers to use in the classroom. Professional development is one of the first programs to be eliminated in reduced-spending years; yet, professional development for teachers to implement this model effectively is very important. In discussing this need, members discussed that some students leave school without important job-related skills. Partnerships with businesses and discussions with business leaders could provide opportunities for students to use learned skills in the real world to prepare them for the world of work while at the same time meeting the needs of the business community.

Recommended strategies to infuse teaching and learning with 21st Century Skills.
- Identify a valid means of measuring the attainment and impact of 21st Century Skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity) on students.
- Assist teachers in developing lessons and activities that infuse 21st Century Skills into their planning and teaching strategies.
- Conduct research and disseminate to school districts assessments that measure student use of 21st Century Skills.
- Provide information on successful partnerships between schools and the business community, whereby students use their knowledge of 21st Century Skills to enhance learning and build confidence while contributing positively to the business.

Need: Promote a safe and healthy learning environment moving towards a culture of high academic and social expectations.
In the recent years, school curricula have focused predominately on academic achievement to attain high test scores. Curriculum that focuses on knowledge and use of comprehensive physical, behavioral, social, and mental health behaviors has not been emphasized. Health curricula are outdated; contemporary issues such as good nutrition, physical education and the prevention of student obesity should be taught and included in the curriculum.

In her book, "Closing the Achievement Gap: A Vision for Changing Beliefs and Practices", Belinda Williams (2003) describes a set of strategies for how to set high expectations and recognize the diverse gifts students from high poverty and of various ethnicities bring to their school populations.

Many students are not actively engaged in the educational program, and alternative education strategies which promote student engagement in learning should be identified and implemented. To further connect students to the community, schools should provide more opportunities for civic engagement and service for teachers, administrators, staff, and students. Given the current tense social climate of many school communities, all schools should have a written crisis prevention and response program in place, and all staff should be familiar with it.

Recommended strategies to promote a safe and healthy learning environment moving towards a culture of high academic and social expectations.
- Develop a repertoire of curricula which addresses the age-appropriate physical, behavioral, social and mental health behaviors for districts and schools.
- Provide a clearinghouse of sample school and district-based crisis plans including prevention, preparation, and appropriate responses.
- Develop and provide to states and districts strategies and programs that promote student engagement in learning.
- Research evidence-based programs that provide opportunities for teachers, administrators, staff, and students to become more engaged in the community.
- Suggest ways and share ideas to expand before and after school programs that assist students with social skill development.
- Develop examples of successful public/private partnerships that help students develop and use social skills in real-world settings.
- Design public service announcements for each state to highlight the importance of a safe learning environment.
- Create a sample health curriculum for states and districts to use that promotes a healthy lifestyle, including good nutrition, physical education and obesity prevention.
- Develop an age-appropriate description of what a healthy lifestyle is for students.

Need: Create systems that address the needs of individual students including but not limited to gifted students and students with special needs.
To be highly effective, teachers and building administrators need a greater understanding of their individual students' instructional and developmental needs at all levels. Many individual students often get *lost* in our schools; thus education should be more personalized. One size does not fit all. Teachers need the skills to teach to *all* students and a means of re-teaching unlearned skills to students in a different way. Strategies to teach to different students' learning needs should be readily available to all teachers, including a clearinghouse of successful and research-based programs. Some districts are using "Response to Intervention (RTI)", a method of academic intervention used to provide early effective assistance to children who are having difficulty learning. Teachers need to understand and embrace the positive implications for students if effective instructional initiatives are implemented with fidelity.

Recommended strategies to create systems that address the needs of individual students including but not limited to gifted students and students with special needs.
- Create a clearinghouse of research-based and successful instructional strategy tools designed to reach individual student developmental and/or learning needs.
- Provide designated funding for professional development for teachers and administrators on evidence-based systems that include differentiated instructional strategies.
- Provide flexibility to schools and districts to effectively implement *no-one-size-fits-all* strategies.

Need: Promote active family, student, and community involvement in education.
The importance of family involvement in child's education must be emphasized. Many families are reluctant or unable to be actively engaged in their children's education as some communities are separated by long distances that make it difficult for families to attend school meetings. For working parents who have more than one job, little extra time, a language barrier, or reluctance to become active in their child's education, it is difficult to dedicate the needed time and attention to assist their child.

School and the information disseminated by the schools can be overwhelming and intimidating to some families. They often don't know what the report card or achievement scores mean and are uncertain about how to support their child's learning experiences. There was agreement that teachers need to be skilled in interpreting the achievement information in a simple, relevant, easy-to-understand way. Also, schools need models of how to create and distribute information about individual students to parents, and schools need ideas to more fully engage parents in their children's education. "Who Cares? Improving Public Schools through Relationships and Customer Service" (Middleton and Petitt, 2007) is a great resource for building positive community relationships.

Recommended strategies to promote active parent, student, and community involvement in education.
- Provide schools with models of user-friendly achievement information for parents that display and interpret their child's achievement and other data in a meaningful and easy-to-use format.
- Develop a list of programs and resources for schools to engage the community and foster positive relationships.
- Create state level public service announcements for different demographic groups that indicate ways schools are meeting the challenge to engage the school community.
- Research and disseminate successful programs that schools can use in their communities to encourage family involvement in their child's education and ways businesses can support that involvement, such as by offering time off from work for families to volunteer in their child's classroom, attend parent conferences, etc.
- Create flexibility across federal funding sources so that schools can work across departments and blend resources to involve the whole community in supporting the child and the parents.

Need: Build and align capacity for change at all levels.
There is a need for leadership to create systemic change at all levels of a district. Many people think the American education system is broken*,* as our students are falling behind the achievement of students in other countries. "Silos" between district organization levels should be eliminated to allow collaboration to foster innovation and change. An openness and capacity for change across all support systems (local, regional and state) is a starting point. A deeper understanding of the systemic change process by leaders in schools, districts, and states is vital in this process to address problem solving and provide resources and support. Inclusive participation at all levels that includes all stakeholders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of proposed changes is required for systemic change to be sustained. To that end, the local, state and federal governments need to encourage flexibility among schools and districts. Building improvement cannot work in isolation of the district.

Recommended strategies to build and align capacity for change at all levels.
- Gather and disseminate information about strategies, including case studies of successful initiatives, to facilitate systemic change at every level.
- Incentivize districts and SEAs working creatively together to solve issues, i.e., providing resources, pooling funds, etc. instead of doing the same things the same way.
- Encourage educational leaders to embrace needed change and provide them with the tools to facilitate and implement purposeful and productive change.

Need: Collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant, timely, and accurate information on student learning and provide quality user-friendly tools for applying the information.
There is a plethora of information on student learning available to teachers, school administrators, districts, states and the federal government. Much of this information is not as useful as it could be because the data are often difficult to dissect, understand, and use to inform instruction. In addition, data often arrive too late for teachers to use to make instructional decisions.

Schools and teachers need the right tools to manipulate the information in a timely fashion and make it meaningful and usable. The committee agreed that professional development on the use of advanced tools is imperative. Sufficient time and assistance for teachers to use the information to inform instruction is important. The committee recommended a designated position in each school to compile useful student information to inform instructional practices. Additionally, appropriate safeguards at all levels are needed to ensure information is provided to those who need to know and understand appropriate use and interpretation of information.

Recommended Strategies to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant, timely, and accurate information on student learning and provide quality user-friendly tools for applying the information.
- Develop and/or provide information about better, easy-to-use and locally accessible software to manage and monitor student progress information to ensure academic standards are being met.
- Ensure achievement information is received in a timely fashion to make it more useful.
- Provide districts with user-friendly tools to disaggregate information.
- Ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to make certain information is used appropriately and interpreted accurately.

- Provide teachers with the ability to access information locally and in a timely manner to make it more useful.
- Provide resources to local schools to allow teachers and administrators to compile *at-a-glance* documents for teachers who do not have the time to sift through large quantities of information.
- Provide resources to local schools to support advanced assessment systems.

Need: Change the perception of education to become a public priority.

The public perception of and support for education is eroding, which often results in decreased funding, less family parental involvement, and a disconnect between a community's needs and the needs of the educational system. Schools and districts would benefit by marketing their schools and should rely on the use of technology in this endeavor. When marketing education to the public, there is more impact if the economic and community implications are highlighted, including unemployment figures, how more years in school translates into higher skills and salaries, and other arguments about why education is a wise investment. Also, any message should include the value of the arts, and teaching and learning the 21st Century Skills (referenced earlier) and their impact on the quality of life individually and in the community.

Recommended strategies to change the perception of education to become a public priority.

- Provide schools and districts with successful strategies to positively market their schools and education.
- Incentivize partnerships with local businesses to support education through in-kind donations, monetary support, volunteers for tutors or reading buddies, etc.
- Gather suggestions about how to use social media to promote schools and share with districts and schools.
- Encourage local stakeholders to participate in the production of a region-specific public service announcement (PSA) to give a positive voice to education.
- Create education PSAs using spokespersons such as President Obama and Secretary Duncan to promote the value of education for students and for the community. Consider including examples using the 21st Century Skills and elevating the teaching profession.
- Produce PSAs for different states to insure the subject resonates with the citizens in each area.

Need: Bridge the digital divide.

The amount of technology in schools has increased substantially over the last decade. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that there is equitable access and use across grade levels, schools, and homes, including appropriate technology tools and connectivity. Inequity in access to technology, connectivity to the Internet, computers, and software is apparent. The effect is that some students and their families have ready access to information while others do not, thus fostering the continuation of the digital divide. The use of technology to communicate with stakeholders can be efficient and effective if everyone has access.

This digital cultural divide, especially between students and adults, as well as between ethnic and cultural groups is challenging. The lack of access to information has a detrimental effect on students' ability to complete assignments, research colleges and scholarships, and locate educational opportunities and services for themselves and their families. There is a critical need

for the acquisition of additional tools for teachers to assess students' progress and to inform teaching and learning in a timely manner.

Recommended strategies to bridge the digital divide.
- Commit funds, invest in, and bring broadband and wireless infrastructure to homes and schools in rural areas.
- Create a database of successful ideas for communicating with parents, students and the public using technology.
- Create a database of federal and private grants available to assist schools and students in accessing technology and providing the necessary tools to use it productively for communication and learning.

CONCLUSION

The Central RAC, sharing their own experiences and expertise, was thoughtful and deliberate as they identified a long list of educational needs in their region. In addition, input through the Central RAC website provided the public with opportunities to share their views. Each of those needs focused on the kinds of support necessary to ensure every student is successful in school. Whether it is highly effective teachers and administrators, increased parent involvement, maintaining programs to meet individual student needs, safe learning environments, or support for teachers and administrators in terms of professional development and easy-to-use software for dissecting achievement information in a very user-friendly format, the Central RAC identified meaningful and necessary needs for their region.

It is hoped that the U.S. Department of Education will use this information to assist State Education Agencies, and thus schools and districts in the Central region, to find the means and provide resources to support teachers and administrators to better meet the needs of their students, their parents, and members of the school community. The goal has always been to ensure that every child has the needed skills to become a successful, contributing and productive member of the community.

APPENDIX A

Public Comments

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Role	State	User Comments
Other		The U. S. Department of Education should consider increasing funding for ESEA as budget and needs for the last two reauthorizations had been underestimated; the Comprehensive Centers are vital, and it is important to begin with capacity- building at the state and tribal level before moving into schools; there should be a focus on facilitating the use of research-based knowledge through knowledge-sharing, management and application; the issue of equity has to be at the core of any need; and technology should be used to deliver assistance and facilitate the knowledge utilization process.
School Administrator	CO	Diversity has many meanings depending on the individual. I'd like to see GLBT defined in such a way that it is not overlooked or that diversity becomes ignored because of GLBT inclusion. Gender discrimination is real, but is difficult to prove. Diversity curriculum needs to be developed, but again GLBT inclusion is still up for discussion if there is not going to be a more inclusive 'race' curriculum of contributions made by 'traditional' diverse groups.
Parent	NE	Critical educational needs: Emphasis on the whole child. How needs would best be addressed: Support teachers and schools while holding them to high expectations- not unrealistic expectations like No Child Left Behind. Educational challenges: Overcoming the negatives of No Child Left Behind while retaining the positives. Keeping good teachers Getting community, Board of Education, and all teachers to be dedicated to continuous improvement and constant reflection on teaching. Educational solutions: Hire teachers- not coaches. Coaches should not have to teach in the school system. 4 day week for students, 5 day for teachers. 5th day for professional development and reviewing student data. Standards for early learners: Yes. Teacher professional development improved? This can be improved by ensuring that everyone values professional development and provides the time and monitoring needed to get teachers continually improve their teaching. Recruit best principals: Required that principals have been master teachers.
State Education Agency	KS	I listened to both the Central Region discussions and enjoyed the conversations. I noticed that Career and Technical Education was not mentioned (the career clusters were mentioned once). May I encourage the U.S. Department of Education look at Career and Technical Education across the Nation and the Career Cluster Initiative as one method of addressing the needs of the discussion? Career and Technical Education, along with the career cluster

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		initiative is built upon teaching academic knowledge and technical skills through occupational fields. The twenty-first century skills are embedded within the courses that have been developed. Historically, the teaching of academic knowledge along with technical skills has had limited recognition by the academic field. The U.S. Department of Education could change that. The U.S. Department of Education could support the recognition of CTE within States and local schools by including the acronym "CTE" when discussing and listing examples of academic areas (i.e. math, science, art, music, CTE) as well as encourage academic and CTE professionals work together to address the concerns discussed through the webinars. Career and Technical Education is an avenue that has shown success in addressing the issues of career readiness, connection to business and encouragement of family interaction through the career and technical student organizations that involve parents, businesses and communities. Please contact me if additional information is needed. Thank you for your consideration of my suggestion. [name deleted]
Other	CO	Retain and attract highly qualified teachers. Incentives needed for teachers to continue professional development such as National Board Certification. Pre-service education requirements should include training on gifted and talented and high potential students. Need specific language to protect GLBT teachers. Better meet the needs of racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and gender-diverse (GLBT) population students. Increased training for teachers and administration on the needs of diverse populations and cultural proficiency trainings. Increased focus on the needs of GLBT populations (gender neutral locker and restrooms), literature that reflects all students cultural, religious, and gender diversity. Protect and support gender diverse teachers so that they are able to feel safe and supported and ultimately be role models for our gender diverse students. Promote a safe and healthy learning environment moving towards a culture of high academic and social expectations NCLB has created a focus on closing the achievement gap and raising scores of lowest performing students. A rising tide lifts all ships. Joseph Renzulli's model focuses on raising the bar for all students. We need to look at teaching methods and strategies that raise achievement for all and encourage creativity and critical thinking for all students. We need a strength based system that honors high potential student's need for challenging, real world curriculum. Create systems that address the needs of individual students. RtI systems that include gifted and talented learners.

Role	State	User Comments
Teacher	KS	I am involved with gifted student services and feel that the original intent of the mandate to provide appropriate educational opportunities for gifted students has lost much of its original effectiveness as we have sought solutions to the problems encountered on our way. I feel strongly that there are many better ways to go about doing what we intend to do, but lack of understanding of what needs to be done and what research has shown us can be done, has greatly reduced the efficacy of programs and services. We need a coordinated effort which is directed by those who have spent the last thirty years or so studying the needs of gifted students and who have a clear view to what could be done to direct efforts that will revitalize American schools. Currently, we are still struggling under the burden of trying to find ways to make it possible for all students to learn in American schools. I believe that when we focus on and commit to changing institutions to meet the needs of the brightest and most capable students, we will find that there are more bright and capable students than anyone had imagined.
Other	CO	Please do not continue leaving gifted children behind. You should also include sexual orientation as a diverse population as these students are routinely bullied, unsafe, and at risk not because there is something wrong with them, but because others choose to make the school environment unsafe for them. As a country, we could do much more to ensure that their talents aren't lost.
Other	CO	The performance of students from the United States on assessments continues to fall behind students of other nations. The focus on grade level standards and achieving proficiency has meant the educational needs of the nation' brightest students have not been addressed. Gifted students sit day after day in classroom practicing skills they have already mastered. These students need opportunities to stretch and grow each day. Without this daily challenge, their motivation to achieve in school diminishes and they become underachievers. Education must provide opportunities for gifted students to continue to grow and make continuous progress in school. Of great concern is the increasing excellence gap between high ability minority and economically disadvantaged students when compared to their more advantaged peers. Emphasizing the importance of identifying gifted students from cultural and linguistic diverse backgrounds and students from poverty and providing the early interventions is essential for these students to develop their full potential. Gifted students from these special populations need culturally responsive classrooms with teachers who can build relationships and at the same time hold high expectations. Teachers are required who have the training in gifted education to provide challenging curriculum and differentiated instruction necessary to address the individual needs of underserved

Role	State	
Comment continued from previous page		gifted populations. It is essential for professional learning communities to include gifted education specialists who can guide the implementation of RtI for gifted students. Classroom teachers have little if any exposure or training in the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted students in their preservice education programs. Only those teachers who pursue a masters degree in gifted education have the training necessary to develop intervention plans for gifted students. There is a need to embed gifted education in undergraduate teacher education courses so teachers are prepared to address the needs of the gifted students in their classroom. In addition, gifted education specialists are necessary at the district level to ensure the education system is capable of addressing the individual needs of all students including gifted students from diverse backgrounds. Thank you for this opportunity to share comments. [name deleted]
Librarian	SD	Dear Central Regional Advisory Committee Members: While the eleven educational needs for the Central Region as identified in the minutes of your May 23, 2011 are a worthy list, I would urge you to add certified school librarians and fully funded libraries as an urgent need in our region. Research has shown a positive correlation between student achievement and school libraries with certified staff. Please consider changing the eleven listed needs to also include school libraries with certified school librarians. Thank you [name deleted]
State Education Agency	SD	Dear Central Regional Advisory Committee: We concur with the eleven educational needs for the Central Region as identified in the minutes of your May 23, 2011 meeting. However, the need for certified school librarians and fully funded school libraries is also an urgent need in our region. The growing demands for success as a member of our global society require that students be prepared for life-long learning. They need to be able to ask questions, locate sources, evaluate information, and think creatively to solve problems, all of which require a high level of multiple literacies and ethical choice. School libraries and school librarians are co-learners and co-teachers in guiding students to meet these demands and be college and career ready. As collaborative partners in education, school librarians are directed by standards and guidelines which reflect the best 21st century practices. Research results from across the nation show that effective school libraries have a program, a place, and a professional who collaborates with and supports all content areas in delivering instruction. Students with access to effective libraries staffed with highly qualified school librarians achieve at a higher level. The past success of the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in our region also supports this evidence. The essential role of the school library and school librarian directly align to the four key

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		education assurances outlined in the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Rigorous standards, Effective educators, Measurable data, and School improvement. Please consider amending the eleven educational needs to include school libraries and school librarians. [names deleted] http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslissues/positionstatements/esea.cfm School Libraries Work! Scholastic Publishing www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf Standards for the 21st-Century Learner, AASL www.ala.org/aasl/standards
Librarian	SD	The eleven educational needs for the Central Region as identified in the minutes of your May 23, 2011 meeting are a worthy list. However, I would urge you to add certified school librarians and fully funded school libraries as an urgent need in our region. Research has shown a direct link between student achievement and school libraries with certified staff. Please consider changing the eleven listed needs to also include school libraries with certified school librarians. [name deleted]
School Administrator	MO	The states need more flexibility concerning standards set forth by NCLB. Most, even at the federal level know that the current standards are too stringent and unrealistic.
Teacher	NE	Our number one problem is student attendance. Parents are not held accountable by their local, county or state judicial system. The federal government only gets involved when a federally related crime needs to be investigated. Witnesses are very reluctant to come forward due to high crime rate because out of fear they would be the next victim. We are a public school within tribal land. Our second problem is that teachers are leaving our school because they are afraid that our students' scores will not meet the state requirements. They then will be asked to leave or get fired. Which leads us into my third concern: Teachers are asking for additional training to meet the standards but is turned down due to lack of money. The state of Neb. will lose teachers from national recognized schools such as ours.
State Education Agency	KS	I work with career and technical education programs within Kansas which address issues that relate to the topics during today's RAC meeting. The career cluster model (www.careerclusters.org)that has been adopted for career and technical education directly tackles the issue of early teacher profession experiences. The career cluster pathway built for Kansas from the Education and Training career cluster and related competencies includes multiple courses that students can enroll in that move them from an introduction to the field of education to learning technical skills and applying them in local classrooms. Courses include basic human growth and development,

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		classroom management basics and teaching methodologies for the K-12 classroom. Another career cluster pathway Kansas has developed addresses the early development of children birth through age 5 through the earliest teacher (parent education for the future parent) as well as early child education professionals. Both pathways (as well as twenty-nine others in Kansas) require advisory committees made up of parents, community leaders and business representatives which promote involvement in the education of the students. In addition, the Family and Consumer Sciences field relates to the education of youth to prepare them for education, career and life decisions and the balance of all three. The skill set promoted through coursework supports the development of a healthy individual to not only prepare them for independent life but to create a successful workforce. Issues such as addressing physical health and wellness from a preventative view (including obesity prevention), balancing personal and work life, grasping financial issues with strong consumer and financial knowledge and developing healthy relationships are all included within the Family and Consumer Sciences classroom, which has direct impact on their ability to be focused on their worklife. Family and Consumer Sciences also provides skill development to promote a workforce with a healthy self, a requirement of those who select the field of social work, counseling and therapy. The career and technical student organization related to this field promotes and expects the application of the 21st century skills in authentic experiences within and outside the traditional classroom. CTSO involvement includes parent and community involvement. Career and technical education (CTE), Family and Consumer Sciences and related student organizations can be found in a majority of the schools across the nation, however these opportunities are being eliminated due to NCLB and funding issues, some States in larger numbers than others. May I be so bold as to suggest RAC review career and technical education and role it has in meeting the needs of today's students, introducing students to the education field directly and the role Family and Consumer Sciences can have in today's schools to encourage the retainment of these programs? I am interested in providing research and related information that could provide helpful to you and your work. [name deleted]

Role	State	User Comments
State Education Agency	ND	I have spent the last 15 years working with business and industry regarding standardized management system development. Although a school isn't a manufacturing process, but most manufacturing processes aren't what academics think they are. I think we could learn a lot from some of the systems thinking, process-based systems thinking that some of our most progressive business organizations now apply. Toyoda the founder of Toyota had one phrase that seems to apply best to education - "no defect forward." A lot could be learned from the cross pollenation of advanced organizational practices now employed by the best business organizations and apply those to schools.
State Education Agency	ND	Questions and Comments: I would like to see more attention paid to competencies for teachers. We now seem to be focused on effective (before it qualified). I have no argument with the goal, but a step seems to be missing. Competency - application of knowledge - where the competency is defined and is measureable should be a part of teacher programs. My observation, experience and research points to a lack of a tangible and complete system of management for each school. The management system I speak of is not to be prescriptive, but one of structure. At present, schools as management systems are analogous to cities - no one planned them, they are a result of years of adding, modifying, correcting, etc. The system is resistant to change because it is a system of chaos. That is meant as no disrespect; chaos is a type of system, but it is changed and 'controlled' in a much different manner than other types of management systems. I would suggest that a process-based system would work quite well with schools, especially now that schools wish to incorporate measures of all types. A process-based system is a system that not only can deal with measures of performance, but can make it possible to have response to measures. At present schools measure many things, but most often too late to do anything about the process of learning in real time; almost all change is forced to the design phase. Consequently, we don't correct the learning of students, but we do get a proliferation of new designs of the way something is to be taught.

Role	State	User Comments
Other	MO	My comments come from the perspective of a parent and school counselor. I think our current testing and assessment systems are not nearly refined enough to be of much value. The students who score in the highest levels of state assessment tests get a false sense of achievement. Generally, the state assessment tests do not challenge gifted and talented students. These students should take different assessments that challenge them. The students who score the lowest on state assessments tests are given a false sense of failure. These students require assessments that are more aligned with their ability. It is not educationally ethical to require students with very low IQs to suffer through exercises that tell us what we already know. That these students require remedial work and assistance in learning daily living skills. We also need to take advantage of statistical sampling methods in evaluating schools. There is no need to test an entire student population to evaluate the performance of a school. Simple sampling methods could be used to test a representative portion of the students and we would have enough data to evaluate the performance of a school. This would save huge amounts of time and money. We need to carefully consider and implement ways to help students select career paths that match student interest and skills sets at appropriate developmental stages. We need to find ways to reward excellent teachers who are willing to take on the most challenging work. I have worked in an urban charter school for the past six years. Every year, many of our most talented teachers, those who win awards, leave for higher paying, less demanding positions, in wealthier school districts. Thank-you for your consideration.
School Administrator	ND	I am [position deleted] [at a] state-sponsored virtual school in North Dakota. When I have a bit more time, I will share what may be a unique perspective based on my recent background and what I have found in ND.
Teacher	NE	As I read through the summary minutes of the Central Regional Advisory Committee, I noticed school teachers (PreK-12) are not included on your list of those to be issued invitations to the upcoming webinars. Was this an oversight or was it your hope that the state teacher associations would contact the teachers? [name deleted]

Role	State	User Comments
Other	ND	These comments are submitted from the perspective of a parent center. I am also a parent. These are the educational needs I see in our area: 1) Providing students with assistive technology is not an indicator. 2) Parent involvement and parent satisfaction are not the same. As a PIRC we measure parent satisfaction. Under IDEA we only measure involvement. Why two standards? 3) Inclusion effectively ends at the middle school level in many communities. A comprehensive initiative on how to access the general education curriculum for students with DD at the middle and high school level is needed. 4) Our state is ramping up for RSI. I hope that helps. 5) My daughter just graduated. We could have done more if we had just talked and worked together on the plan instead of just trying to fit her needs into the state alternate standards which frankly speaking aren't all that functional.
School Administrator	CO	I believe there is a need to include the needs of gifted students in future discussions about policies and related considerations. Gifted and talented students are routinely left out of the conversations. Programming for them is minimal in most public school settings, if it exists at all. People still don't understand about the value of acceleration for many of these advanced learners (see _Genius Denied_ at http://www.geniusdenied.com/ for a scholarly look at this programming strategy) even though it is one of the most researched of educational strategies. Gifted students are routinely left behind in discussions of diverse students. Cognitive diversity is almost never a part of the discussion. As a child of the Sputnik schools, I can attest to the amazing national goals that can be achieved in short order when the nation supports the growth of its best and most promising minds in tackling national challenges. We DID beat the Russians in the space race as a result of the nation's prioritization of what we now call STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Our challenges today are no less pressing and will require no less of a national prioritization if we are to achieve success as we face those challenges.
School Administrator	SD	In my school we have a tremendous discrepancy between the "haves and have nots". There is a tremendous gap between students and their socio economic status. It is challenging to meet all of our students needs because it is such a melting pot of various types of kids. My comment is that I do believe it is important to come up with programs to help those students and their families who don't have stability (either emotionally or financially) in the home environment. With recent cuts such as fewer guidance counselors and losing school based social workers I see school's creating a larger gap rather than shrinking the gap between students with money and without money.

Role	State	User Comments
Parent	MO	Below is a letter that I recently submitted to our local television station after finding out that our teachers were losing the opportunity to use their best judgment within their own classroom. In this particular case, I'm speaking of our district removing the Letter People from the Kindergarten Classrooms. This historical learning tool not only teaches our children literacy but more importantly, to love learning. We are blessed with some of the best teachers I've ever crossed paths with and they're not being allowed to do what they do best. It's sad, disheartening and insulting to say the least. And, I'm afraid we're going to lose some of the best teachers out there because of it. You've mentioned that you're looking for feedback and though I'm proud to give mine, I feel that the best resource is our teachers, first and foremost. Thank you for your time and consideration with my letter and our family's fight for our school. My children attend [school deleted]. I am in constant awe of the learning and love that radiate from the classrooms of this school. To say this school is filled with students, faculty and staff is an understatement; they are no less than a family. And, as a mom, sending my boys, twice over now, from the comfort and security of home to the unfamiliar and intimidating environment of the Kindergarten classroom, a family atmosphere is greatly appreciated. Recently, I nominated one of our wonderful Kindergarten teachers for your [name deleted] segment for simply being the loving and nurturing teacher that she is. Though she wasn't selected, I still felt rewarded for the fact that she was our teacher and amongst her were not just one or two, but several others who shared her passion and were a vital part of the [name deleted] Elementary family. However, I recently became aware of an incident at our school that makes me feel compelled to share the story. I strongly believe that this act alone qualifies each and every one of our faculty and staff involved as the epitome of the [name deleted]. Whether they carry the award of said nomination or not, I am confident that our children are reaping the rewards! The Letter People, for years, have been a familiar and loved stepping stone for literacy within the Kindergarten classrooms all over the United States. For many of us, just the thought of the Letter People brings back fond memories. For some, this was a fun twist on learning; but for others, it was more than simple fun. Though smiles and laughter remained a common denominator, the animated play on learning was an essential factor to whether or not some students grasped and retained the letters of the alphabet. Over the years, some of the names would change to maintain a sense of political correctness. However, the essence of the Letter People curriculum remained the same. The end result was not only evidence of learning that challenged the standards but genuine love for the Letter People. Many of us can share those memories with our children because they too have fallen in love with

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		learning because of the Letter People. My children are no different. [identifying information deleted] However, next year, there will be no Letter Day Parade or no Letter People at all for that matter. The Letter People were not what made our school but the story behind their removal is. After hearing that the Letter People were removed, I was saddened. When I told my children, they were confused and could only ask Why? Unfortunately, I didn't have an answer. All I knew was that they had been removed from the loving arms of the Kindergarten classrooms and placed in black trash bags never to return. Initially, I was told that our school district had removed them throughout. After further investigation, I found that to be true not only in our district but others as well. However, the interesting twist with our school is that the district mandated their removal not this year, but seven years ago! Yes, I said seven years! So, how have these loved and valued tools of learning survived in this little elementary school? The answer is simple. Our Kindergarten teachers, along with the full support of our faculty and staff felt that the Letter People were an essential part of learning. Despite what the district had mandated, they felt strongly that they knew our children and their learning needs best. I can only assume that statistics were the drive behind the Letter People leaving our classrooms. However, I can say with pride and confidence that a love for our children and a sincere concern for their learning was what kept them in our classrooms for the last seven years. Over those seven years, the Letter People have been inflated, deflated, carried home and hidden, only to reveal themselves again and again each year to the eager hearts and minds of the [school deleted] Kindergarteners. That is, until next year. Whether you choose to share our story or not; whether the district decides to listen to our teachers or not; whether the Letter People return to the Kindergarten classrooms or not; the fact remains, the absolute best of the [name deleted] can be found at [name deleted] Elementary! If anything, I would like to express my sincere thanks to each and every one of our teachers and staff for going above and beyond for our children. Your passion is inspiring; your talent is incomparable; and your place, both in our school and in our family's hearts is a nothing less than a blessing! Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. This school is a diamond in the rough. Unfortunately, mandates, regulations and statistics are outruling the common sense, valued knowledge and heart of its faculty and staff. Where does that leave our children? [name deleted]

Role	State	User Comments
Other	CO, MO	Greetings, I am a remote professor of higher education for [Missouri college name deleted], [city deleted] but I live in Colorado. I have also lived in Wyoming and South Dakota so I have personal experience since 1990 in all of these regions. My specialty area is Instructional Design and Technology within the context of the teacher education program. I have also been a director of a media center in South Dakota. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. One of the biggest core issues I have seen in all of these regions is the fact that literacy levels are falling dramatically! My students range in age from early 20's to 50+ and I see this with all of them. The older students are somewhat better but the younger ones show reading comprehension, spelling, grammar, capitalization, and general literacy skills that are sub-par even for elementary school! Why are literacy skills for our current elementary students so poor? Because the teachers we have been putting in the classrooms for the last 20+ years (that I know of personally) do not have the skills to identify and correct errors! We need to DO SOMETHING! I hope you consider these issues in relation to the already identified 11 topics. Without literacy, both verbal and visual, the other solutions will not be effective. Thank you for your attention. [name deleted]
Teacher	MO	The FED should close its Dept. of Education. Let the State and local Boards of Education work out their own programs without Federal assistance. [name deleted]
Teacher	MO	For junior high students, our state MSIP regulations require 900 "aggregate" minutes of instruction in our four core subjects- science, math, English language arts, and social studies. Cash-strapped and resource poor rural districts are reducing their numbers of teaching staff and dramatically reducing instructional time in social studies. In my building, students once received 25% of the aggregate minutes for each core subject. Because of staff reductions, next year, only 6% of our aggregate minutes will be dedicated to social studies instruction! That's with us having 225 minutes OVER the aggregate minimum. Worse, social studies instruction appears moribund in elementary grades. We need to close MSIP's "aggregate minutes" loophole for it is quickly becoming a noose for social studies instruction. I'm regularly told that social studies isn't tested. However, as adults, our civic skills are tested daily. Our common heritage binds us to each other and our common success. Please require a certain percentage of aggregate minutes for all core subjects in junior high. Perhaps no less than 20% of the aggregate for each core subject. [name deleted]

Role	State	User Comments
Teacher	MO	The two things that we need most is preschool education and LOWER CLASS SIZES in the lower elementary. In a district of 600 in our elementary we are serving 40 preschool kids. We have about 100 - 120 kindergarteners coming in and only 40 will be prepared. THE EARLY YEARS ARE THE MOST VITAL!!!!!!! WE HAVE TO DO MORE TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE YOUNG!

APPENDIX B

Central Regional Profile

CENTRAL REGION EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

Prepared by:

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SCHOOL AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Tables 1 through 5 and Figure 1 all contain school and student demographics, such as the number of schools; percentage of school districts by metro status; percentage of public school students by racial characteristics; selected student subgroups, such as the number of students in English Language Learners (ELL) programs and the number of migrant students; linguistic indicators, such as the percentage of children whose parents speak English fluently; and socioeconomic indicators, such as the percentage of households below the poverty level and percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL). Data for the Central Region states of **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri**, **Nebraska**, **North Dakota**, **South Dakota** and **Wyoming** are found below.

Number of Schools. Table 1 displays the number of public school students and schools, private schools and charter schools collected in the Central Region. During the School Year (SY) 2008-2009, **Missouri** had the largest number (917,871) of public school students and public schools (2,423), and **Wyoming** had the smallest number of students (87,161) and schools (360). **Colorado** had 415 private schools during SY2007-2008, while **North Dakota** had 50. **Nebraska**, **North Dakota** and **South Dakota** had no charter schools.

Table 1: Number of Schools

State	Public School Students, SY2008-2009[1]	Public Schools, SY2008-2009[1]	Private Schools, SY2007-2008[2]	Charter Schools Collected, 2011[3]
Colorado	818,443	1,779	415	178
Kansas	471,060	1,428	246	35
Missouri	917,871	2,423	690	51
Nebraska	292,590	1,122	223	0
North Dakota	94,728	525	50	0
South Dakota	126,764	721	80	0
Wyoming	87,161	360	38	4

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, 2008-2009; [2]U.S. Department of Education, Private School Universe Study, 2007-2008; [3]Center for Education Reform (www.edreform.com), 2011

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status. Figure 1 displays the percentage of school districts by metro status. A suburb is defined as a territory that is outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size. A rural area is a territory that is away from an urbanized area or urban cluster. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size. Finally, an urban area is a territory that is inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size[1]. A majority of school districts were located in rural areas across all the Central Region states, with 93.2 percent of school districts in **Wyoming**, and 88 percent of school districts in **Nebraska** located in these areas. In **North Dakota**, 1.4 percent of school districts were located in urban areas, and in **South Dakota**, 2.3 percent were in the same. In **Missouri**, 35.7 percent of school districts were located in suburban areas, and in **Colorado**, 29.8 percent were located in suburban areas.

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[1] NCES's urban-centric locale categories, released in 2006: http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/page2.asp. Last accessed on May 5, 2011.

Figure 1: Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

■ Urban   ■ Suburban   □ Rural

State	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Colorado	7.2	29.8	63.0
Kansas	2.6	26.6	70.8
Missouri	2.7	35.7	61.6
Nebraska	1.2	10.8	88.0
North Dakota	1.4	13.6	85.0
South Dakota	2.3	17.6	80.1
Wyoming	5.1	1.7	93.2
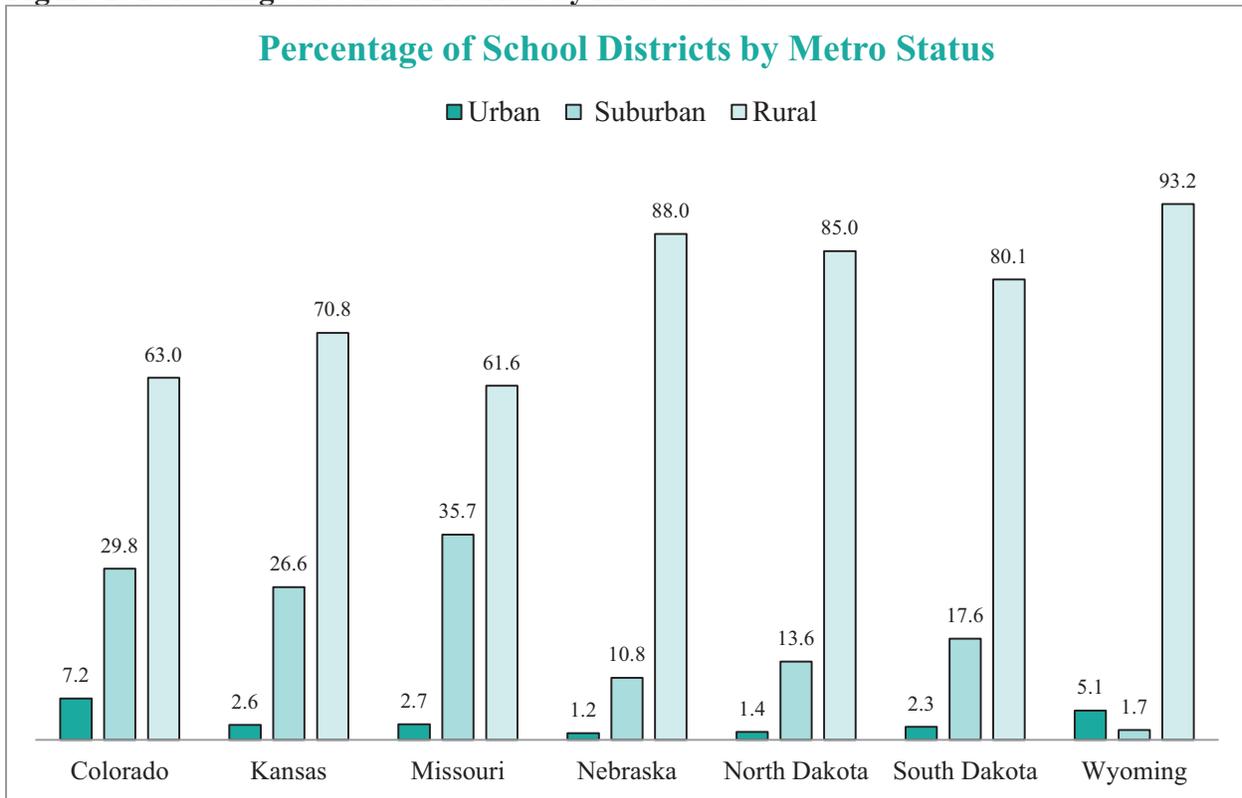
SOURCE: Common Core of Data, 2003-2004

Percentage of Public School Students by Racial Characteristics. Table 2 contains the percentage of public school students by racial characteristics. **South Dakota** had the largest percentage (12.2 percent) of American Indian/Alaska Native students and **Missouri** had the smallest (0.4 percent). Asian/Pacific Islander students composed 3.6 percent of public school students in **Colorado**, while 17.8 percent of public school students in **Missouri** were black. **North Dakota** had the smallest percentage (2.2 percent) of Hispanic students and **Colorado** had the largest (28.4 percent). In **North Dakota**, 85.3 percent of public school students were white, and in **Nebraska**, 74.6 percent were the same. None of the states offered students the option of selecting "two or more races" while identifying their race.

Table 2: Percentage of Public School Students by Racial Characteristics

State	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic	Two or More Races
Colorado	1.2	3.6	6.0	28.4	60.9	Not Applicable
Kansas	1.6	2.8	8.8	14.0	72.8	Not Applicable
Missouri	0.4	1.9	17.8	3.9	76.0	Not Applicable
Nebraska	1.7	2.1	8.1	13.5	74.6	Not Applicable
North Dakota	9.2	1.1	2.2	2.2	85.3	Not Applicable
South Dakota	12.2	1.3	2.5	2.7	81.3	Not Applicable
Wyoming	3.5	1.1	1.6	10.4	83.3	Not Applicable

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

Selected Student Subgroups. Table 3 contains selected student subgroups, such as the percentage of students receiving FRPL, percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and number of homeless students. The percentage of students who received FRPL was greatest (43 percent) in **Kansas** and lowest (31 percent) in **Wyoming**. The percentage of students who identified as ELL was 10.9 percent in **Colorado** and 1.8 percent in **Missouri**. In **Wyoming**, 16.9 percent of students had an IEP and **Colorado** had 10.2 percent. **Colorado** had the greatest numbers of migrant (6,323) and homeless (15,834) students.

Table 3: Selected Student Subgroups

State	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch[1]	Percent of Students in ELL/LEP[1]	Percent of Students With an IEP[1]	Number of Migrant Students[2]	Number of Homeless Students[2]
Colorado	35.4	10.9	10.2	6,323	15,834
Kansas	43.0	7.2	14.0	4,284	6,700
Missouri	38.7	1.8	14.5	1,418	14,350
Nebraska	38.4	6.3	15.1	3,393	1,752
North Dakota	31.6	3.7	14.0	675	1,149
South Dakota	35.3	2.8	14.1	233	1,794
Wyoming	31.0	2.6	16.9	218	724

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009; [2]Consolidated State Performance Reports: SY2008-2009

Linguistic Indicators. Table 4 contains linguistic indicators, such as the percentage of children whose parents speak English fluently, the percentage of the population aged 5 through 17 that speaks a language other than English at home and the percentage of public school students identifying as ELL. In **Colorado**, 9.8 percent of the population was foreign born, and 16.6 percent of people speak a language other than English. In **North Dakota**, 98.9 percent of children had parents who speak English fluently, while in **Kansas** it was 90.4 percent. The percentage of the population aged 5 through 17 that speaks a language other than English at home was 25 percent in **Nebraska** and 21.6 percent in **Missouri**. In **Colorado**, 10.9 percent of public school students were ELL, and 1.8 percent in **Missouri** were the same.

Table 4: Linguistic Indicators

State	Percent of Population: Foreign Born[1]	Percent of People Aged 5 and Over Who Speak Language Other Than English[1]	Percent of Children Whose Parents Are Fluent English-Speakers[2]	Percent of Population Aged 5-17: Speak Language Other Than English at Home[1]	Percent of Public School Students in ELL/LEP[3]
Colorado	9.8	16.6	85.0	20.7	10.9
Kansas	6.0	9.9	90.4	22.4	7.2
Missouri	3.5	5.7	95.7	21.6	1.8
Nebraska	5.6	9.2	89.3	25.0	6.3
North Dakota	2.3	5.4	98.9	17.4	3.7
South Dakota	2.2	6.4	95.9	20.6	2.8
Wyoming	2.8	6.4	96.9	18.6	2.6

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

Socioeconomic Indicators. Table 5 contains socioeconomic indicators, such as the percentage of families below the poverty level, percentage of children with at least one parent with a postsecondary degree and percentage of students receiving FRPL. **Missouri** had the largest number of families (1,531,655) and the highest percentage of families below the poverty level (9.8 percent). In **Wyoming**, 10.4 percent of families with children were below the poverty level, and in **Missouri**, this percentage was 15.9 percent. **North Dakota** had the largest percentage of children with at least one parent with a postsecondary degree (65.2 percent) and **Wyoming** and **Missouri** had the smallest (43.2 percent). In **Kansas**, 43.0 percent of students were eligible for FRPL.

Table 5: Socioeconomic Indicators

State	Total Number of Families[1]	Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Families With Children Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Children With at Least One Parent With a Postsecondary Degree[2]	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch[3]
Colorado	1,203,585	8.2	12.8	51.0	35.4
Kansas	725,768	8.3	13.2	48.6	43.0
Missouri	1,531,655	9.8	15.9	43.2	38.7
Nebraska	456,297	7.9	12.9	54.2	38.4
North Dakota	168,636	7.4	11.8	65.2	31.6
South Dakota	205,091	8.8	14.1	51.0	35.3
Wyoming	136,718	6.1	10.4	43.2	31.0

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

INDICATORS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Tables 6 through 10 and Figures 2 and 3 contain student achievement data, such as number of schools that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); percentage of 4th grade students considered proficient on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading tests; measures of education, such as high school graduation rates and Advanced Placement (AP) test scores; dropout rate by race and ethnicity; establishment of common standards in reading, mathematics and science; and percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool.

Adequate Yearly Progress. Table 6 shows AYP data for the Central Region. In **Missouri**, 1,378 (62.6 percent) schools failed to make AYP during SY2008-2009. **Wyoming** had the smallest number of failing schools (95), while **Nebraska** had the smallest percentage (11.7 percent) of schools that failed to make AYP during that year.

Table 6: Adequate Yearly Progress

State	Number and Percentage of Schools That Failed To Make AYP in SY2008-2009
Colorado	750 (43.9%)
Kansas	170 (12.2%)
Missouri	1,378 (62.6%)
Nebraska	114 (11.7%)
North Dakota	118 (25.2%)
South Dakota	139 (20.7%)
Wyoming	95 (27.4%)

SOURCE: ED Data Express, State Snapshots, SY2008-2009

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test. Figure 2 displays results of the most recently administered NAEP 4th grade math test for the Central Region. Performance among white students was strongest in **Colorado** and **Kansas**, with 57 percent and 55 percent, respectively, of white 4th graders achieving proficiency on the test. Black students performed best in **Colorado**, with 23 percent demonstrating proficiency. Among Hispanic students, 37 percent were proficient in **Missouri,** and 27 percent were proficient in **South Dakota**. Black and Hispanic students in **North Dakota** and black students in **Wyoming** did not constitute a large enough sample for data to be available.

Figure 2: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test: Percentage Proficient or Above
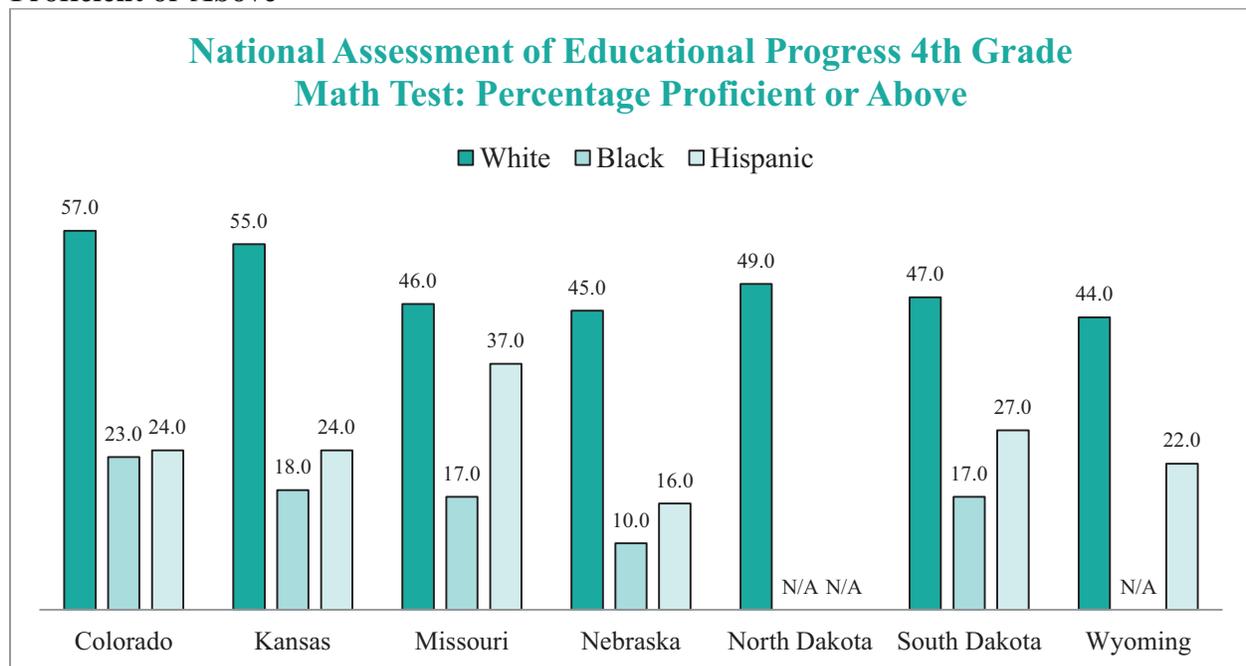
SOURCE: NAEP State Profiles, 2009

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test. Figure 3 contains the results of the most recently administered NAEP 4th grade reading test for the Central Region. In **Colorado**, 51 percent of white 4th graders were proficient in reading, and in **Kansas**, **Missouri** and **Nebraska**, 40 percent were proficient. Performance for black students was strongest in

Colorado, with 27 percent achieving proficiency in reading. Among Hispanic students, 29 percent were proficient in **South Dakota**, and 26 percent were proficient in **Missouri**. Black and Hispanic students in **North Dakota**, and black students in **South Dakota** and **Wyoming** did not constitute a large enough sample for data to be available.

Figure 3: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test: Percentage Proficient or Above
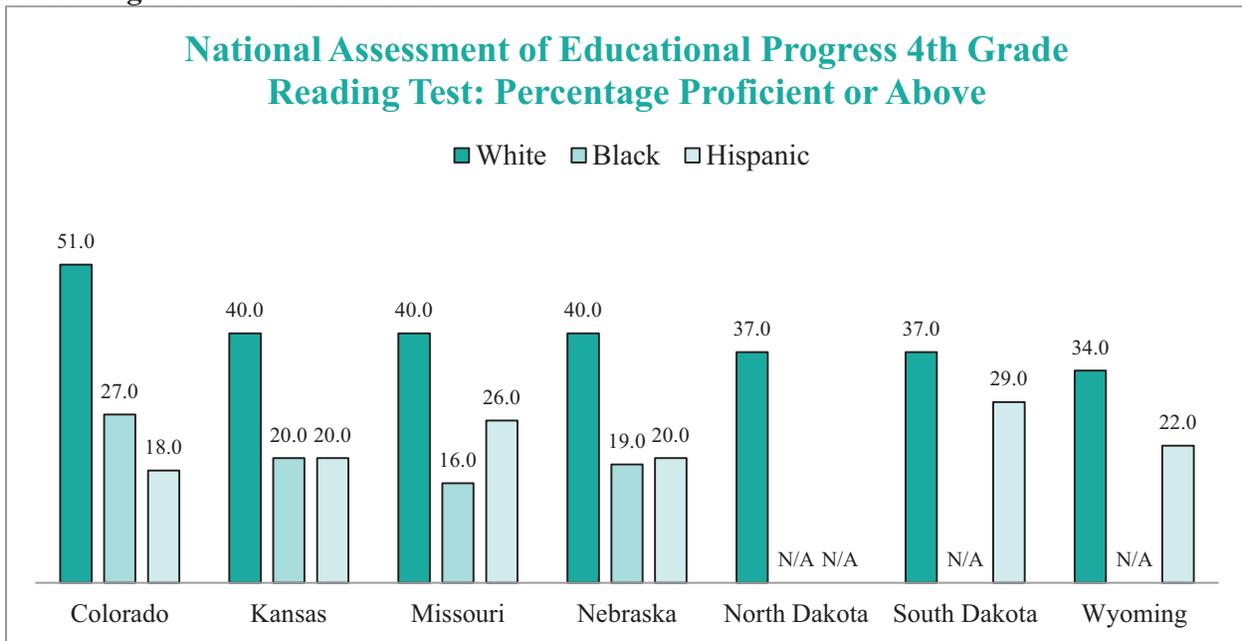
SOURCE: NAEP State Profiles, 2009

Educational Standards. Table 7 contains measures of educational achievement, such as high school graduation rate, AP test scores, whether the state has an exit exam and if the state finances remediation for students failing exit exams. In **Kansas**, the high school graduation rate for SY2007-2008 was 89.7 percent, and in **Colorado** it was 71.9 percent. Among 11th and 12th graders who took AP tests, 24 percent scored a 3 or above in **Colorado**, and 6.9 percent scored a 3 or above in **Wyoming**. **Wyoming** offered alternative credentials to students not meeting standard requirements for graduation. Neither of the Central Region states required high school exit exams.

Table 7: Educational Standards

State	High School Graduation Rate, SY2007-2008[1]	Advanced Placement High Test Scores (3 or Above) Per 100 Students in Grades 11 and 12 for 2009[2]	Total Number of Credits Required To Earn Standard Diploma[2]	Alternative Credential for Not Meeting All Standard Requirements[2]	Basis for Alternative Credential [2]	State Has Exit Exam[2]	State Finances Remediation for Students Failing Exit Exams[2]
Colorado	71.9	24.0					
Kansas	89.7	10.6	21.0				
Missouri	85.8	8.9	24.0				
Nebraska	89.0	8.5	200 Credit Hours				
North Dakota	86.0	5.8	22.0				
South Dakota	88.4	12.3	22.0				
Wyoming	79.0	6.9	13.0	✓	Local Option		

SOURCES: [1]EDFacts/Consolidated State Performance Report, 2008-2009; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity. Table 8 contains dropout rates by race and ethnicity for the Central Region. During SY2007-2008, the dropout rate in **Colorado** was 6.4 percent and in **South Dakota** it was 2.3 percent. Among American Indian/Alaska Native students, the dropout rate was 11.3 percent in **Colorado** and 3.7 percent in **Missouri**. Asian/Pacific Islander students had the lowest dropout rates, with 1.4 percent dropping out in **Nebraska** and 1.5 percent dropping out in **Kansas**. The dropout rate for Hispanic students was 12.1 percent in **Colorado**, with 6,895 students dropping out. Black students in **South Dakota** had a dropout rate of 2.4 percent and in **Missouri** it was 12.9 percent. The dropout rate for white students was 1.4 percent in **South Dakota** and 4.5 percent in **Wyoming**. Graduation and dropout rates do not add up to 100 percent, because they are based on different groups of students. Graduates are counted based on a single freshman class, whereas dropouts are calculated based on all students in any year.

Table 8: Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

	Dropout Rate and Number of Dropouts (#)	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White
Colorado	6.4% (15,119)	11.3% (328)	3.8% (284)	12.1% (6,895)	10.6% (1,544)	3.9% (6,068)
Kansas	2.5% (3,497)	3.9% (91)	1.5% (53)	3.9% (595)	3.6% (439)	2.1% (2,199)
Missouri	4.9% (13,931)	3.7% (47)	2.7% (122)	7.2% (569)	12.9% (6,229)	3.2% (6,964)
Nebraska	2.5% (2,244)	7.6% (106)	1.4% (22)	4.8% (444)	6.0% (395)	1.8% (1,277)
North Dakota	2.4% (754)	7.3% (195)	4.5% (13)	4.4% (21)	3.9% (20)	1.8% (505)
South Dakota	2.3% (871)	9.9% (343)	2.0% (9)	4.0% (31)	2.4% (17)	1.4% (471)
Wyoming	5.0% (1,366)	11.0% (96)	2.0% (6)	8.0% (194)	8.1% (30)	4.5% (1,040)

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2007-2008

Meeting Requirements to Establish Standards. Table 9 displays whether states are meeting requirements to establish state standards in reading, mathematics and science, and whether they have agreed to adopt common core standards. **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **South Dakota** and **Wyoming** are all meeting requirements to establish state standards and have agreed to adopt common core standards. **Missouri** has partially established requirements to meet standards in mathematics, and **Nebraska** has partially established requirements to meet standards in reading and mathematics. **Nebraska** and **North Dakota** have not agreed to adopt common core standards.

Table 9: Meeting Requirements To Establish Standards

State	Reading¹	Mathematics¹	Science¹	Agreed To Adopt Common Core Standards²
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kansas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Missouri	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes
Nebraska	Partial	Partial	Yes	No
North Dakota	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
South Dakota	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

SOURCES: ¹Education Commission of the States NCLB database, downloaded March 2011; ²Common Core State Standards, downloaded March 2011

Preschool. Table 10 contains preschool enrollment data. Preschool enrollment (i.e., the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool) was highest in **Colorado** (48.2 percent) and lowest in **North Dakota** (34.9 percent). None of the Central Region states provided readiness interventions, defined as state-provided or funded programs for children not meeting school-readiness expectations, during 2010-2011.

Table 10: Preschool

State	Preschool Enrollment (Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool)	Readiness Interventions: State Provides or Funds Programs for Children Not Meeting School-Readiness Expectations (2010-2011)
Colorado	48.2	
Kansas	45.7	
Missouri	43.4	
Nebraska	43.5	
North Dakota	34.9	
South Dakota	38.9	
Wyoming	44.8	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011

TEACHER PREPARATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Tables 11 through 16 display teacher preparation, qualification and certification data such as number of teachers; average teacher salaries; percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers; licensure requirements for prospective teachers; and teacher performance, incentive and professional development criteria for **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri**, **Nebraska**, **North Dakota**, **South Dakota** and **Wyoming**.

Number of Teachers and Teacher Salaries. Table 11 contains the number of teachers and average and relative teacher salaries, as well as teacher pay-parity for 2008. **Missouri** had the largest number (67,737) of teachers and **Wyoming** had the smallest number (7,000). The average teacher salary for SY2008-2009 was $48,487 in **Colorado** and $35,070 in **South Dakota**. Pay-parity (i.e., teacher earnings as a percentage of salaries in comparable occupations) was 102.6 percent in **North Dakota**, and 79.2 percent in **Colorado**.

Table 11: Number of Teachers and Teacher Salaries

State	Number of Teachers[1]	Average Teacher Salary, SY2008-2009[2]	Pay Parity (Teacher Earnings as a Percentage of Salaries in Comparable Occupations, 2008)[3]
Colorado	48,692	$48,487	79.2
Kansas	35,883	$46,401	91.1
Missouri	67,737	$44,249	82.4
Nebraska	22,057	$44,957	86.2
North Dakota	8,181	$41,654	102.6
South Dakota	9,244	$35,070	80.9
Wyoming	7,000	$54,602	100.0

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009; [2]NEA's Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010 Report; [3]EPE Research Center, 2010

Teacher Quality Indicators. Table 12 contains teacher quality indicators, such as the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers and the number of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certified teachers as a percentage of all teachers. In **North Dakota**, 100 percent of classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, and in **Kansas**, 93.7 percent were taught by the same. In **Wyoming**, 4.5 percent of teachers were NBPTS certified, while in **Nebraska** and **North Dakota** this percentage was 0.4 percent. According to the U.S. Department of Education, teachers considered as highly qualified must have a bachelor's degree, full state certification or licensure and must prove that they know each subject they teach.[2]

Table 12: Teacher Quality Indicators

State	Percent of Core Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers[1]	National Board-Certified Teachers as a Percent of All Teachers[2]
Colorado	98.5	1.1
Kansas	93.7	1.0
Missouri	89.8	1.0
Nebraska	98.8	0.4
North Dakota	100.0	0.4
South Dakota	98.3	0.8
Wyoming	97.3	4.5

SOURCES: [1]Consolidated State Performance Reports: SY2008-2009; [2]National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, April 2011

Teaching Profession. Table 13 contains teaching profession data that show initial licensure requirements for all prospective teachers for 2009-2010 and whether states require substantial formal coursework in subject areas taught. None of the Central Region states required new teachers to participate in state-funded induction programs, although **Kansas**, **Nebraska**, **North Dakota** and **South Dakota** required substantial formal coursework in subject areas taught. Prospective teachers had to pass written tests in subject-specific knowledge in **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri**, **North Dakota** and **South Dakota**. **Nebraska** required 14 weeks of student teaching and 100 hours of other clinical experience during teacher training, and **Colorado** required 13 weeks and 400 hours of the same.

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[2] U.S. Department of Education: http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html. Last accessed on May 5, 2011.

Table 13: Teaching Profession

State	All New Teachers Are Required To Participate in a State-Funded Induction Program	State Requires Substantial Formal Coursework in Subject Area(s) Taught	Prospective Teachers Must Pass Written Tests			State Requires Clinical Experiences During Teacher Training	
			Basic Skills	Subject-Specific Knowledge	Subject-Specific Pedagogy	Student Teaching (Weeks)	Other Clinical Experiences (Hours)
Colorado				✓		13	400
Kansas	✓			✓		12	
Missouri			✓	✓		8 Semester Hours	2 Semester Hours
Nebraska	✓		✓			14	100
North Dakota	✓		✓	✓		10	
South Dakota	✓			✓		10	
Wyoming						8	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

Evaluation of Teacher Performance. Table 14 displays evaluation of teacher performance criteria, such as whether states require teacher performance to be formally evaluated, teacher evaluation is tied to student achievement and states require all evaluators to receive formal training. **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri**, **Nebraska**, **North Dakota** and **Wyoming** required teacher performance to be formally evaluated, and in **North Dakota** and **Wyoming**, this evaluation occurred on an annual basis. Only **Colorado** required all evaluators to receive formal training.

Table 14: Evaluation of Teacher Performance

State	State Requires All Teachers' Performance To Be Formally Evaluated	Teacher Evaluation Is Tied to Student Achievement	Teacher Evaluation Occurs on an Annual Basis	State Requires All Evaluators To Receive Formal Training
Colorado	✓			✓
Kansas	✓			
Missouri	✓			
Nebraska	✓			
North Dakota	✓		✓	
South Dakota				
Wyoming	✓		✓	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010 (SY2009-2010)

Teacher Performance Incentives. Table 15 shows teacher performance incentives, such as whether the state provides financial incentives for teachers to earn NBPTS certification and states provide incentives to teachers who work in targeted hard-to-staff assignments. **Kansas**, **North Dakota** and **Wyoming** provided financial incentives for teachers to earn NBPTS certification, and **Colorado**, **Nebraska** and **South Dakota** provided incentives to teachers who work in hard-to-staff assignments in targeted schools. **Colorado** provided incentives for NBPTS-certified teachers to work in targeted schools and **South Dakota** provided incentives to principals who work in such schools.

Table 15: Teacher Performance Incentives

State	Has Pay-for-Performance Program or Pilot Program Rewarding Teachers for Raising Student Achievement	Formally Recognizes Differentiated Roles for Teachers	Provides Incentives or Rewards To Teachers for Taking on Differentiated Roles	Provides Financial Incentives for Teachers To Earn National Board Certification	Provides Incentives to Teachers Who Work in Targeted Hard-To-Staff Assignments		Provides Incentives for National Board-Certified Teachers To Work in Targeted Schools	Provides Incentives to Principals Who Work in Targeted Schools
					Targeted Schools	Hard-To-Staff Teaching-Assignment Areas		
Colorado					✓		✓	
Kansas				✓				
Missouri								
Nebraska					✓	✓		
North Dakota				✓				
South Dakota					✓			✓
Wyoming				✓		✓		

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

Professional Development. Table 16 displays professional development criteria, such as whether the state has formal professional development standards, and whether states require districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals. **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri** and **North Dakota** had professional development standards, and **Missouri**, **Nebraska** and **North Dakota** financed professional development for all districts. **Kansas**, **Missouri** and **Wyoming** required districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals.

Table 16: Professional Development

State	State Has Formal Professional Development Standards	State Finances Professional Development for All Districts	State Requires Districts To Align Professional Development With Local Priorities and Goals
Colorado	✓		
Kansas	✓		✓
Missouri	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska		✓	
North Dakota	✓	✓	
South Dakota			
Wyoming			✓

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

SELECTED FUNDING RESOURCES AND STUDENT EXPENDITURES

Tables 17 through 19 contain selected funding resources and student expenditure data such as adjusted spending per student and source of funding; school finance measures such as the wealth-neutrality score and McLoone Index; and U.S. Department of Education grant funding by state for the Central Region.

Adjusted Spending Per Student and Source of Funding. Table 17 contains adjusted spending per student and source of funding for the Central Region states. Per-pupil expenditures (PPE) during 2008 were highest ($17,114) in **Wyoming** and lowest ($9,541) in **Colorado**. The percentage of students in districts with PPE at or above the U.S. average was 100 percent in

Wyoming and 10.3 percent in **South Dakota**. The spending index (i.e., per-pupil spending levels weighted by the degree to which districts meet or approach the national average for expenditures) was 100 in **Wyoming** and 78.6 in **South Dakota**. **Kansas** spent 4.1 percent of its taxable resources on education, and **North Dakota** spent 2.9 percent of the same during 2008.

Table 17: Adjusted Spending Per Student and Source of Funding

State	Per-Pupil Expenditures, Adjusted for Regional Cost Differences (2008)	Percent of Students in Districts With Per-Pupil Expenditures at or Above U.S. Average (2008)	Spending Index (2008)[1]	Percent of Total Taxable Resources Spent on Education (2008)
Colorado	$9,541	20.6	86.9	3.0
Kansas	$11,680	41.9	91.5	4.1
Missouri	$10,538	15.7	85.5	3.8
Nebraska	$12,491	20.3	84.7	3.6
North Dakota	$11,629	15.6	85.4	2.9
South Dakota	$11,221	10.3	78.6	2.8
Wyoming	$17,114	100.0	100.0	4.2

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011; [1]Per-pupil spending levels weighted by the degree to which districts meet or approach the national average for expenditures (cost and student need adjusted)

School Finance. Table 18 contains school finance measures, such as the Wealth-Neutrality Scores, the McLoone Index, the Coefficient of Variation and the Restricted Range. During 2008, the wealth-neutrality score (i.e., the relationship between district funding and local property wealth) was lowest (-0.162) in **Nebraska**, indicating proportionally higher funding for poor districts in that state. The McLoone Index (i.e., actual spending as a percentage of the amount needed to bring all students to the median level) was 93.6 percent in **Colorado** and 89.4 percent in **Kansas**. The Coefficient of Variation (i.e., the amount of disparity in spending across districts) was lowest (0.153) in **Wyoming**, indicating greater equity between spending across districts in that state. Finally, the Restricted Range (i.e., the difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles of spending) was lowest ($3,706) in **Kansas** and highest ($6,298) in **Colorado**.

Table 18: School Finance

State	Wealth-Neutrality Score (2008)[1]	McLoone Index (2008)[2]	Coefficient of Variation (2008)[3]	Restricted Range (2008)[4]
Colorado	0.110	93.6	0.223	$6,298
Kansas	-0.018	89.4	0.157	$3,706
Missouri	0.113	90.0	0.169	$4,447
Nebraska	-0.162	92.9	0.194	$4,386
North Dakota	0.064	91.0	0.228	$3,876
South Dakota	0.003	90.4	0.188	$4,372
Wyoming	0.001	91.4	0.153	$4,666

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011; [1]Relationship between district funding and local property wealth (negative value indicates higher funding for poorer districts); [2]Actual spending as percentage of amount needed to bring all students to median level; [3]Amount of disparity in spending across districts (lower value indicates greater equity); [4]Difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles

U.S. Department of Education Funding by Grant. Table 19 contains U.S. Department of Education funding by grant such as Special Education grants, Title I grants, Rural and Low Income Schools grants, School Improvement grants, and Safe and Supportive School grants for the Central Region states of **Colorado**, **Kansas**, **Missouri**, **Nebraska**, **North Dakota**, **South Dakota** and **Wyoming**.

Table 19: U.S. Department of Education Funding by Grant

State	Language Acquisition State Grants[1]	State Agency Grant-Migrant[1]	Special Education Grants[1]	ESEA Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies[1]	Improving Teacher Quality Grants[1]	Education Technology Grants[1]	Rural and Low Income Schools Grant[1]	Small Rural School Achievement Grant[1]	Race to the Top Grant[2]	Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grants[3]	School Improvement Grant[1]	Safe and Supportive School Grants[4]
Colorado	$10,346,532	$7,350,234	$144,091,119	$135,391,517	$32,975,388	$2,517,979	$337,658	$2,075,519	$0	$21,653,636	$4,994,143	$0
Kansas	$3,580,355	$11,837,751	$101,560,911	$95,359,153	$22,705,842	$1,778,946	$197,384	$3,734,922	$0	$16,807,030	$3,748,211	$2,422,880
Missouri	$4,153,455	$1,558,112	$215,886,084	$225,205,374	$50,977,867	$4,184,427	$3,423,969	$5,156,337	$0	$8,967,685	$7,958,332	$0
Nebraska	$2,845,645	$5,242,894	$70,965,998	$60,245,901	$14,263,975	$1,294,335	$70,965	$4,273,124	$0	$3,468,335	$2,307,390	$0
North Dakota	$516,551	$226,940	$25,724,171	$33,741,932	$13,987,032	$1,294,335	$40,117	$581,623	$0	$6,723,090	$1,169,896	$0
South Dakota	$520,987	$836,526	$30,644,180	$41,538,597	$13,987,032	$1,294,335	$143,070	$877,045	$0	$0	$1,462,826	$0
Wyoming	$500,000	$223,247	$26,020,818	$31,515,777	$13,987,032	$1,294,335	$0	$11,554	$0	$0	$1,110,155	$0

SOURCES: [1]U.S. Department of Education , FY2008 budget; [2]Ed.gov Race to the Top Fund; [3]U.S. Department of Education, Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program, 2006-2009; [4]Ed.gov Safe and Supportive School Grants

APPENDIX C

List of Resources

APPENDIX C: LIST OF RESOURCES

Resources

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