

Honor States Grant Program
Phase One State Progress Report
May 2006

ARKANSAS

Through a competitive bidding process, Arkansas awarded a \$200,000 contract to a state-based communications firm with experience building coalitions and public will for the Smart Core curriculum (a college-ready curriculum required for high school graduation). Arkansas' current communications campaign is designed to build public support for the adoption of new state-wide college and work-ready standards. The strategy incorporates a high school reform Web site, a series of local/regional forums, partnerships with key constituent groups, print materials, and media outreach. In addition, Arkansas' work on an electronic transcript system is ahead of schedule allowing for a Fall 2006 online launch. Implementing this legislation has a strong foundation for the state's efforts to link its K-12 and higher education databases. The state has fulfilled its commitment to the National Education Data Partnership including submitting to Standard & Poors (S&P) disaggregated assessment data and signed letters that give S&P access to state ACT and College Board data. Finally, Arkansas plans to report the NGA recommended 4-year cohort high school graduation rate in October 2006, a significant step in the national push for the use of a consistent, comparable graduation rate across states.

NGA Contact: Bridget Curran, bcurran@nga.org

DELAWARE

Demonstrating commitment to international education and the state's participation in a global society, Delaware has signed memoranda of understanding with China and Spain that will allow for education exchanges such as materials sharing, reciprocal teacher agreements and field study. In April the state completed thirteen focus groups on proposed high school graduation requirements with a variety of stakeholders. The final report on these focus group findings will be released in May. School staff from the six schools in the Individual Learning Plans (ILP) pilot will participate in ILP administration training this month. The first public school in Delaware received approval for its International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Admission to the school's 11th and 12th grade program is through successful completion of the pre-IB or middle school program. The state seeks to expand the IB program to a second site as part of its NGA High School redesign activities. Delaware also submitted a grant proposal for an Advanced Placement Incentive Program grant to the U.S. Department of Education.

NGA Contact: Ilene Berman, iberman@nga.org

INDIANA

Indiana has stimulated its communities to consider proposals for effective science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) high school models. Those communities and schools responding have begun to form into networks clustering around various models, for example, student-centered technology-enabled models (New Tech High) and early college models. The state has raised additional \$1 million from a philanthropic source to support planning grants for communities and districts committing to such high school redesigns. A request for interest in participation in a statewide STEM K-12 learning center has been circulated by a collaboration of higher education, business and other interests seeking to deepen the support for STEM models and learning across the state. Additionally, in 2006 the Indiana legislature passed bills that refer development of a long-term assessment plan to the state board (to include a means for assessing student preparation for post-secondary study and work); address dropout prevention; and enhance

early college and dual credit/enrollment opportunities. This latter piece of legislation includes terms for college credit transfer, provisions for higher education institutions and high schools to agree on such programs specific to economic development and quality of life strategies for the school's community, and provision for low-income high school students to take college courses free-of-charge. The state has fulfilled its commitment to the National Education Data Partnership including submitting to Standard & Poors (S&P) disaggregated assessment data and signed letters that give S&P access to state ACT and College Board data. Finally, following and slightly modifying a legislative mandate from five years ago, the state is on track to report the NGA recommended 4-year cohort high school graduation rate in Fall 2006, a significant step in the national push for the use of a consistent, comparable graduation rate across states.

NGA Contact: David Wakelyn, dwakelyn@nga.org

LOUISIANA

Louisiana's High School Redesign Commission has delayed presenting its recommendations to the governor and legislature until June 2006. A subcommittee of the Commission is meeting to develop and recommend 10-year benchmarks for high school graduation and college readiness rates that are consistent with benchmarks described in the Honor States proposal. The Louisiana team graduates from the first cohort of the ADP alignment institute in mid-May. The college and work-ready standards developed through participation in this institute will be integrated into the Commission's next phase of recommendations. Louisiana's Department of Education has initiated a review of high school curriculum to identify the extent to which these college and work-ready standards are embedded in the state's curriculum frameworks. Louisiana's e-portal is on-track for a summer unveiling; the Southern Governors Association is providing assistance to make the portal more accessible for the student populations it is trying to reach to encourage staying in school and taking rigorous classes. Finally, the state is on track to report the NGA recommended 4-year cohort high school graduation rate in Spring 2006, a significant step in the national push for the use of a consistent, comparable graduation rate across states.

NGA Contact: Torrey Shawe, tshawe@nga.org

MAINE

Kicking off the Maine Readiness Campaign, 1,800 packets of information were mailed to schools across the state asking them to apply to be one of 50 Maine Readiness schools. Selected schools will be provided funds to engage local communities around the need to increase student readiness for college, career, and citizenship. Three forums are being held to get student feedback regarding the barriers students confront in getting the skills they need for future success. In addition, the revised Maine Learning Results are posted on the state web site for public comment. Collected feedback will inform the draft to be sent to the legislature in January 2007. The Secondary Education Policy Task Force was convened for the second time on May 8th to discuss state assessment and curriculum options. Finally, a Summer Literacy Institute has been developed for Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers and ten CTE centers have received grants to address literacy and academic integration.

NGA Contact: Torrey Shawe, tshawe@nga.org

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts will soon report a four-year longitudinal graduation rate based on actual student records and employing recommendations of a cross-departmental graduation rate definition and implementation task force. Preliminary results will be released this summer, and the actual rate will be set mid-winter. The P-16 data system, starting with data for the last three high school graduating classes, will be in place in July 2006. The state is also developing a high school definition of a Curriculum for College and Work Readiness for both academic courses and content, based on input from K-12 as well as higher education and business representatives.

Massachusetts has been chosen as one of eight new states to participate in the State Scholars Initiative (SSI). The SSI is a national business/education partnership effort working to increase the number of students who take a rigorous curriculum in high school. Massachusetts will receive \$300,000 over an 18 month period to implement SSI and plans to work with five pilot high school sites. Through the NGA grant program, the Massachusetts Department of Education has expanded and strengthened partnerships for high school redesign by working with postsecondary institutions, business and community leaders, and organizations such as the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, the Rennie Center, the Center for Collaborative Education, and Jobs for the Future.

NGA Contact: Ilene Berman, iberman@nga.org

MICHIGAN

In April 2006, Governor Jennifer Granholm signed into law rigorous high school graduation requirements, which include 4 credits of math and English, 3 credits each of science and social studies, 1 credit of physical education/health, 1 credit of the arts and two years of a foreign language. The State Board approved new high school content expectations for English Language Arts and Mathematics at its April 11, 2006 meeting. Work on the science and social studies content expectations continues to progress ahead of schedule. The NGA Leadership Team has created a set of recommendations for how to remove physical and financial barriers that inhibit early college opportunities. Michigan worked with the NGA Center, College Board, City University of New York, Jobs for the Future, and others to develop a set of recommendations on AP & IB expansion, and dual enrollment. The State Superintendent will present the recommendations at the State Board's June meeting.

NGA Contact: David Wakelyn, dwakelyn@nga.org

MINNESOTA

As a follow-up to Governor Pawlenty's Minnesota Roundtable meeting on science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce needs, recommendations from leaders across business, government, nonprofits, and education were reported to the Minnesota Department of Education about ways to improve the P-16 STEM pipeline and Minnesota's competitiveness in the fast-changing global economy. The Citizens' League and the Minnesota Science Museum are now meeting with the Department to discuss additional statewide STEM initiatives. Consultant expertise was brought on board this month to fully implement a statewide communications campaign about the importance of high school rigor, early career planning, and a minimum P-14 level of education. In its efforts to expand access to and participation in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), the Department of Education hosted 13 regional meetings to inform counselors and principals about the program and test fee reimbursements available. The Commissioner and Director of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education are monitoring CLEP policy development and expansion of CLEP test sites. Use of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-II's), a replacement for the less rigorous Basic Skills Test, is on target. These new higher level tests are aligned with new state standards and were implemented in spring 2006 for reading (grades 3-8 and 10) and math (grades 3-8 and 11). The state has fulfilled its commitment to the National Education Data Partnership including submitting to Standard & Poors (S&P) disaggregated assessment data and signed letters that give S&P access to state ACT and College Board data. This year's process to involve a broad group of stakeholders in developing a final planning document for the state's new higher education accountability system is due for completion in June. This report is being authored by Dennis Jones of the National Center for High Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Finally, a two-day retreat for all grant-funded Lighthouse schools focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) was held in April to develop implementation plans for action research, using a high school

redesign framework for improved student motivation and achievement. Surveys of student engagement will provide baseline student information for all plans.

NGA Contact: Torrey Shawe, tshawe@nga.org

RHODE ISLAND

With Governor Carcieri's leadership, the Rhode Island's P-16 Council continues to provide critical leadership of the state's Honor States high school initiative. At the Council's April meeting, members voted to report publicly the 4-year cohort NGA graduation rate beginning with the class of 2008. Rhode Island's Office of Higher Education and the Department of Labor and Training are initiating a pilot project to link employment and wage record information to post secondary students and graduates, an effort supported by the grant and instigated by NGA's National Education Data Summit in December 2005. The state has partnered with Jobs for the Future (JFF) to evaluate dual enrollment options in Rhode Island and provide recommendations for enhancement and expansion. JFF is scheduled to share its final report at the June P-16 Council meeting. Legislative and budgetary proposals for 2007 are likely outcomes. Physics First pilot schools have selected their curriculum and are on-schedule for summer professional development. Finally, the Rhode Island Senate approved the addition of a third year of science for high school graduation, continuing the state's significant efforts in the area of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and improving student readiness for post-secondary studies and work. Action is pending in the House. The state has fulfilled its commitment to the National Education Data Partnership including submitting to Standard & Poors (S&P) disaggregated assessment data and signed letters that give S&P access to state ACT and College Board data.

NGA Contact: Dane Linn, dlinn@nga.org

VIRGINIA

The state has fulfilled its commitment to the National Education Data Partnership including submitting to Standard & Poors (S&P) disaggregated assessment data and signed letters that give S&P access to state ACT and College Board data. Virginia continues to provide significant support to the 30 honor schools that were selected based on their higher-than-average ninth-grade retention rates. In June, the final group of honor school principal mentors will receive Breaking Ranks II training from the Virginia chapter of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. In addition, teachers in 15 of the 30 schools will receive training this May to support students with the FIRST Robotics Competition; teachers from the other 15 honor schools will receive the training next year. Finally, the state was recently awarded a State Scholars grant to support a pilot program implementing a rigorous course of study in 11 school divisions in Virginia. Students completing the course of study, the requirements of which fall between the requirements for the state's standard diploma and its advanced studies diploma, will be named Commonwealth Scholars.

NGA Contact: Bridget Curran, bcurran@nga.org