

Presenter Bios

Sunny Deye

Sunny Deye is a Program Principal for the National Conference of State Legislatures. She manages NCSL's college and career readiness project and staffs the NCSL Task Force on School Dropout Prevention and Recovery, which released its recommendations in January 2011. Her recent NCSL publications include *A Path to Graduation for Every Child: State Legislative Roles and Responsibilities* and *Making a Difference: Eight State Legislative Actions to Improve America's High Schools*. Deye has been serving state legislators for the past 10 years. During her tenure at NCSL, Deye has coordinated multiple meetings for state legislators and state legislative staff on linking research and policy to prevent and reengage dropouts, improve college readiness, and ensure that students are ready for college and careers, as well as tracking and publishing reports on education legislation in all 50 states. Prior to NCSL, Deye was legislative staff in the bill drafting office of the Colorado General Assembly. She is a graduate of the University of Oregon and is completing her Master's Thesis in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Colorado - Denver.

Dane Linn

Dane Linn is the director of the Education Division at the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). As such, he oversees all education-related policy research, analysis and resource development. His fundraising efforts have grown the division substantially. Linn has advised governors across the nation, informing policy actions and shaping legislation, and has provided counsel to three presidential administrations. He has authored numerous reports on issues ranging from school finance and teacher quality to school redesign and pay for performance. In 2004, Linn spearheaded former NGA Chair Mark Warner's initiative, *Redesigning the American High School*, which focused on improving America's high schools with a five-point state action agenda and recommendations for common state data collection of high school graduation and dropout rates. In 2008, Linn and the Education Division worked with Achieve and the Council of Chief State School Officers to promote international benchmarking to make American students more globally competitive. This project set the stage for the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Linn has also led an effort to increase the importance of higher education among the nation's governors. Prior to that, Linn worked at the West Virginia Department of Education, where he ensured the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. He had previously served as a legislative liaison to the House of Delegates, and began as an elementary school teacher and principal. A graduate of Cabrini College, Linn received a master's degree from Marshall University Graduate College and received his Ph.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Representative Gregory W. Porter (Indiana)

State Representative Gregory W. Porter, an Indianapolis native, is a member of the Indiana General Assembly and ranking minority member of the Indiana House Education Committee. He has served as state representative for the citizens of Indiana House District 96 since 1992. A strong advocate for P-20 education, he has authored legislation establishing accountability and standards for all K-12 school districts in the state. He was integral to Indiana's early efforts to improve college and career readiness and reduce dropouts, including the Core 40 curriculum; the School Flex Program; the Fast Track Program; and the compulsory school age of 18. He is currently sponsoring a bill on early chronic absence. Representative Porter holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Earlham College and graduated from the Harvard University Kennedy School Executive Education Program in 2001. He is the education chair for the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and has served on several NCSL task forces including the NCSL Task Force on No Child Left Behind and the NCSL Task Force on Federal Education Policy. He is currently co-chair of the NCSL Task Force on School Dropout Prevention and Recovery.

Brenda Welburn

Brenda Lilienthal Welburn is the Executive Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Welburn is an association manager and legislative professional with more than 35 years of experience in policy development and analysis in education and human service issues. Welburn began her career in social work specializing in casework services to foster children and their natural and foster families. She later became a research analyst with the U.S. House of Representatives' Select Committee on Assassinations. She went on to become a legislative assistant to the late Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts covering a broad range of legislative issues. A graduate of Howard University with graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, Welburn possesses not only professional expertise, but a unique historical perspective on the evolution of education governance and policy development at the state and federal levels. She is an accomplished writer and has made numerous public appearances addressing issues that

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affect the nation's students, including standards, assessments and accountability; cultural diversity and its impact on education; the need for safe and supporting learning environments for all students, lay leadership in education governance, and general school reform. She serves on several boards, task forces and commissions responsible for improving the health and welfare of children.

Gene Wilhoit

Gene Wilhoit assumed his role as executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in November of 2006 having spent his entire professional career serving education at the local, state, and national levels. Wilhoit began his career as a social studies teacher in Ohio and Indiana. He served as a program director in the Indiana Department of Education, an administrator in Kanawha County West Virginia, and a special assistant in the U.S. Department of Education before assuming the position of executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), which he held 1986-1993. From 1994 to 2006, Wilhoit led two state education agencies, as director of the Arkansas Department of Education and as deputy commissioner and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education. In those positions, he shepherded finance reform, led equity initiatives, designed and implemented assessment and accountability systems, advanced nationally recognized preschool and technology programs, and reorganized state agencies to focus on service and support. Wilhoit holds a B.A. degree in history and economics from Georgetown College and a master's in teaching, political science, and economics from Indiana University, Bloomington. Wilhoit has also studied education administration at the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies. He is a member of numerous education organizations, has served on national and state commissions, and has written and spoken on a variety of education issues.