

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The State Scholars Initiative started 2008 with one major project just finished and another in the works. State Scholars is about to ship the just-wrapped SSI DVD, which we've been working on over the last year. *Do the Math* is designed to help businesspeople present the case for a rigorous course of study to 8th graders in a lively, informative way (see the story below for details).

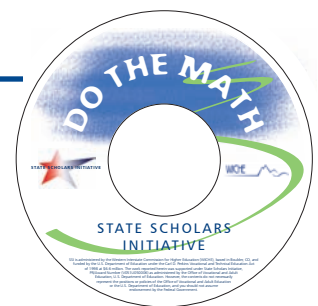


Terese Rainwater

On the horizon is the SSI National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance, an invitational meeting slated for this April 28-29 in Boston. The goal of the summit is to convene national business and education leaders to brainstorm ways to improve high school rigor and relevance (for information on the meeting, see the back page). Both the summit and the *Do the Math* DVD are designed to continue the critical conversation about *why* a rigorous education is so important today. But they are also vital attempts to investigate *how* we can best convince students that this is so.

Do the Math: The SSI DVD

More and more of our students are multimodal learners: they absorb information in many ways, and the traditional classroom presentation is just one of them. In recognition of this sea change, and to help our SSI business presenters be as effective as possible when they visit 8th grade classrooms, SSI has made a new DVD, *Do the Math*.



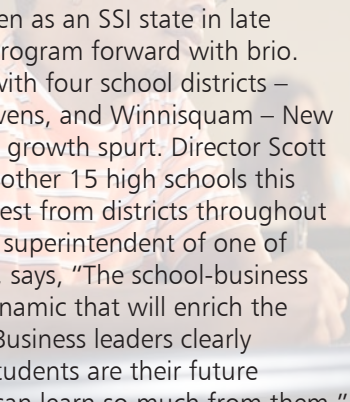
For the DVD, created with Boulder, Colorado-based People Productions (which did a large chunk of the work pro bono), we interviewed a wide and eclectic range of professionals: a Nobel Prize-winning physicist (Leon Lederman, SSI Advisory Board member), a TV sports reporter, an MIT robot-inventor, a fashion designer, an award-winning composer, a Princeton sociologist – the first in her family to go to college – and others. We asked them to tell students in real-life terms why a rigorous course of study that includes healthy doses of math, science, social studies, English, and foreign language is so important today – and so critical to their work. We also interviewed high school students in several SSI states, asking them to reflect on their dreams for the future – and how a rigorous course of study like SSI's could help them achieve those dreams.

In just 17 minutes *Do the Math* makes a vivid, riveting, and compelling case for taking a rigorous high school curriculum. The DVD will be mailed to all SSI state partnerships this month. The video is streamed on our website at www.wiche.edu/statescholars/dvd/.

SSI STATE ROUND-UP

We invited SSI states to update us on their progress and projects. Here are reports from four states: New Hampshire, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wyoming.

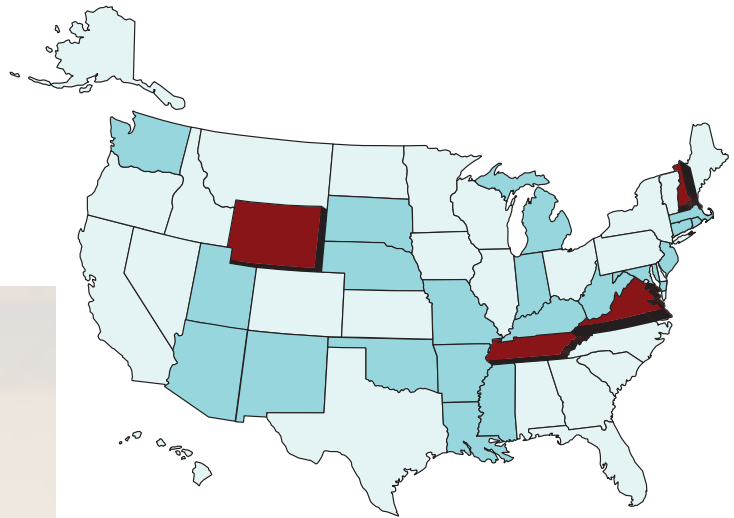
NEW HAMPSHIRE



New Hampshire was chosen as an SSI state in late 2006 and has moved its program forward with brio. After launching last year with four school districts – Kingswood, Newport, Stevens, and Winnisquam – New Hampshire Scholars is in a growth spurt. Director Scott Power plans on adding another 15 high schools this spring to satisfy high interest from districts throughout the state. Marge Chiafery, superintendent of one of those districts, Merrimack, says, “The school-business partnership is a unique dynamic that will enrich the learning of our students. Business leaders clearly understand that today’s students are their future employees. Our students can learn so much from them.”

In other districts business leaders are already creating strong relationships with students. At Winnisquam Regional High School (WRHS) in Tilton, business partners sponsor monthly activities, providing incentives for those in the program and creating a “club” that promotes the initiative to other students. Last November, businesses sponsored a pizza Q & A session for New Hampshire Scholars participants and prospects. In December, business partners offered a breakfast and career event for New Hampshire Scholars participants: students were able to conduct informational interviews with business leaders working in their fields of interest. “Our business community has shown tremendous interest in this project,” says Gary Steinbach, school-to-work director and New Hampshire Scholars coordinator at WRHS. “We encourage the community to get involved at whatever level they are comfortable with. For our students, hearing it from local business professionals really hits home. New Hampshire Scholars has given students in our school a reason to take classes they would not normally have challenged themselves with.”

In addition, through the New England Board of Higher Education, New Hampshire Scholars has been active in the College Ready New England campaign, working with a group of New Hampshire higher education professionals to help students and parents more easily access the state’s college-readiness programs.



TENNESSEE

In December aluminum manufacturer Alcoa announced that the Alcoa Foundation was awarding a \$150,000 grant to the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce to support the Tennessee Scholars Initiative. “We’re pleased that Alcoa Foundation is able to help the Tennessee Scholars program continue and expand its positive work with Tennessee students,” says Brett McBrayer, smelting manager for Alcoa’s Tennessee operations and a member of the Tennessee Chamber. “The success of this program will help ensure that businesses throughout Tennessee have a viable workforce well into the future. “Alcoa, which funds the Alcoa Foundation, employs over 2,500 people in Tennessee.



The Scholars program was implemented in Tennessee in 2003. The program is currently available in 46 counties, with over 60 percent of Tennessee’s school districts and 25,000 students participating. In addition to Alcoa, sponsors include Bridgestone Americas Holdings, City Net Links, Dollar General, Eastman Chemical, FedEx, Blue Bell Foundation (Vanity Fair), Memorial Foundation of Middle Tennessee, Minuteman Press, Sander Marketing Group, the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ted Welch, and Wal-Mart.

The state has solid college-aid offerings for successful Scholars. Ten postsecondary institutions – including state colleges and community colleges, as well as Tennessee Technology Centers – currently provide scholarships for Tennessee Scholars. “Programs like the Tennessee Scholars Initiative and Teach Tennessee that bring career professionals into the classroom as teachers or mentors provide real inspiration to students to set their goals a little higher,” says Governor Phil Bredesen. “The business community is an essential partner in our work to improve our schools and prepare our young people for the jobs of the future.” The goal is to implement the program throughout the state by 2012.

VIRGINIA

Virginia has been a very active SSI state since 2006: there are now Commonwealth Scholars programs in 11 districts, and a pilot program is slated to be launched in Dickenson County. The Dickenson County School System was recently awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission Flex E Grant to implement a pilot Commonwealth Scholars Program for 8th graders. The Flex E Grant Program, designed to help rural communities jumpstart their local economies, provides grants to help address technical assistance, leadership, and civic capacity needs. In November, the Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce featured Commonwealth Scholars at their annual banquet, which was attended by more than 300 business and community leaders.

WYOMING

Wyoming, one of SSI's "youngest" states, has made impressive progress on several fronts. The Wyoming State Scholars Initiative had its formal kick-off last September at the capitol rotunda in Cheyenne, launching the program in three districts: Fremont 25, Natrona 1, and Niobrara 1. "Becoming a Wyoming Scholar will provide further opportunities for our young people to access higher education or get a better start on a fulfilling career," State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jim McBride told those in attendance. "This program really throws the door open for more college aid and more career options."

In the months since, the state has been busy. The program's sponsoring organization, the Wyoming P-16 Education Council, received Wyoming Department of Education/National Governors Association grant funds of approximately \$34,000. The state added two new districts – Big Horn 3 and Laramie 2 – and also launched its business-education outreach efforts, mailing brochures to a wide range of businesses, from golf pros to saddlemakers. The program is currently working to schedule business professionals for training sessions and middle school presentations for all five of its participating school districts. In addition, school counselors are making lists of school-specific mentoring ideas for business volunteers (one communications class, for instance, wants to hear from a horse whisperer). An internship/apprenticeship program based at Laramie County Community College (and funded by the state of Wyoming through the Department of Workforce Services and the Wyoming Workforce Development Council) will give preferred status to Wyoming Scholars. The program places students in internships and jobs for which they may receive credit hours. Career counselors in SSI districts and SSI personnel were given passwords enabling them to search various databases for the student positions.

SSI at FFA Career Show

In October SSI staffers Christian Martinez and Michelle Médal set up a State Scholars booth at the Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Agriculture Career Show in Indianapolis, the first time SSI has been featured at a career event. The show drew close to 50,000 FFA student members, teachers, and counselors from across the country.

Martinez and Médal explained SSI's goals to students, guidance counselors, and parents who visited the booth, drawn by an eye-catching display highlighting the SSI Core Course of Study. The display, created by SSI graphic designer, Candy Allen, also featured quotes from students who've graduated as Scholars and examples of SSI medals. Visitors were told about the value of taking a more rigorous course of study in high school, as well as the financial benefits that may be available to State Scholars who qualify for Academic Competitiveness Grants. A sample "career cluster" worksheet showed students how the SSI Core Course of Study aligns with required courses for those intending to major in agricultural sciences in college.

Stopping by the booth were students, parents and counselors from almost every state and territory, including Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Students seemed motivated to learn more about the program, asking lots of questions before walking away with the Scholars "Do the Math" postcards. Parents were especially interested in the financial benefits that may be available to their children, while many counselors said they intended to return home and talk to someone about how to get the program into their schools.





State Scholars Initiative National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance

SSI will hold the invitational National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance in Boston on April 29-30, 2008. The summit, to be held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers, will draw on national business and education leaders to serve as thinkers and speakers and to develop strategies for the improvement of high school rigor and relevance. Speakers will include Nobel Prize-winning physicist Leon Lederman (an SSI Advisory Board member); Troy Justesen, assistant secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education; Charles Kolb, president of the Committee for Economic Development; and other notable figures from education, business, and government.

The goals of the summit are two: first, to examine the role and effectiveness of the business community in driving national education reform conversations; and second, to discuss policy reform efforts to increase academic rigor and to improve academic relevance in high school. For those not in attendance, a detailed follow-up report will be published (and available on the SSI Web site) in June.

For more information about the summit, visit www.wiche.edu/statescholars/summit or contact Michelle Médal at mmedal@wiche.edu or 303.541.0224.

State Scholars Initiative
NATIONAL SUMMIT
on Academic Rigor and Relevance



STATE SCHOLARS: PARTICIPATING STATES AND CONTACTS

- ★ **ARIZONA**
www.azacademicscholars.org
- ★ **ARKANSAS**
www.arkansasscholars.org
- ★ **CONNECTICUT**
www.ctscholars.org/intro.htm
- ★ **INDIANA**
www.indianacore40scholars.org
- ★ **KENTUCKY**
www.kyscholars.com
- ★ **LOUISIANA**
www.louisianascholars.org
- ★ **MARYLAND**
www.mbrt.org/scholars
- ★ **MASSACHUSETTS**
www.mastatescholars.org
- ★ **MICHIGAN**
www.michiganscholars.org
- ★ **MISSISSIPPI**
www.mississippischolars.org
- ★ **MISSOURI**
www.showmescholars.com
- ★ **NEBRASKA**
www.thinknebraska.org
- ★ **NEW HAMPSHIRE**
www.nhscholars.org
- ★ **NEW JERSEY**
www.wiche.edu/statescholars
- ★ **NEW MEXICO**
www.nmscholars.org
- ★ **OKLAHOMA**
www.obecinfo.com/scholars.php
- ★ **RHODE ISLAND**
www.edpartnership.org/?id=1074
- ★ **SOUTH DAKOTA**
www.doe.sd.gov/statescholars/index.asp
- ★ **TENNESSEE**
www.tennesseescholars.org
- ★ **UTAH**
www.utahscholars.org/
- ★ **VIRGINIA**
www.vacareereducationfoundation.org
- ★ **WASHINGTON**
www.partnership4learning.org
- ★ **WEST VIRGINIA**
www.educationalalliance.org/StateScholars/StateScholars.asp
- ★ **WYOMING**
www.wyomingscholars.com

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