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Contact: Teri Battaglieri
Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice
248-444-7071

Great Lakes Center, University Scholars Announce New Project to Scrutinize Education Research from Think Tanks

“Think Twice Response Project” Will Monitor Michigan, Regional, National Think Tanks

EAST LANSING, Mich. — The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice and distinguished university scholars today announced a new project to review research reports and studies on public education issues released by regional and national think tanks in Michigan and other states.

The Think Twice Response Project, sponsored by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice in East Lansing, Michigan, and a team of researchers from major universities across the nation will analyze education-related research produced by think tanks in Great Lakes states and nationwide.

“Far too often think tanks generate reports and studies that they try to pass off to the news media and policymakers as ‘quality academic research,’ when in fact they are often primarily opinion papers,” said Teri Battaglieri, director of the Great Lakes Center, an independent nonprofit coalition dedicated to supporting and disseminating sound academic research on education issues. “The Think Twice team of university scholars will examine think tank research and reports on important public education issues and provide reviews of them in a timely fashion.”

Specifically, Think Twice will monitor the research of think tanks that relates to public education issues and policies in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Think tanks located in the Great Lakes states will be watched, including the Buckeye Institute, Ohio; Center of the American Experiment, Minnesota; Heartland Institute, Chicago; Wisconsin Policy Research Institute; and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Michigan. National think tanks also will be monitored, including the CATO Institute, Manhattan Institute, Heritage Foundation, and others. The goal is to identify and explain the aspects of reports released by think tanks that are of good quality and poor quality, so that policymakers can make the best possible use of the reports’ research and ideas.

“Independent researchers at major universities across the country will examine whether the think tank studies are academically sound — whether the methodologies, primary research, secondary research, conclusions and recommendations meet the basic requirements of academic scholarship,” said Iris Salters, president of the Michigan Education Association. “Think Twice will try to ensure that decisions made about public school reform in Michigan and other states are based on empirically sound research.”

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Salters continued: “Decisions that can affect the future of every Michigan public school student should be based on information supported by facts and science.”

Battaglieri said think tanks often get away with publishing bad research because only rarely are they subjected to the same peer review processes in place for university-based researchers.

“Much of the work published by private think tanks simply fails to meet the quality and standards of university scholarship,” she said. “Up to now, no organization has served as a watchdog to review think tank research on public education issues and policies. Think Twice will recognize research that is valid and sound and expose research that is not.”

The Think Twice Response Project is a joint effort of the Education Policy Studies Lab at Arizona State University and the Education and Public Interest Center at the University of Colorado. It is funded by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice. Researchers at these institutions and other top universities across the country will provide the reviews.

In addition to the Think Twice Response Project, the Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice will continue to ask recognized university scholars to conduct and release research that examines important public education issues and policies. The Center’s mission is to improve the quality of public education for children by publishing and widely distributing high quality, empirically sound research. Founded by the Michigan Education Association, the Great Lakes Center is now also supported by the Illinois Education Association, the Indian State Teachers Association, Education Minnesota, the Ohio Education Association, and the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

For more about the Think Twice Response Project and the Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice, please visit www.greatlakescenter.org.

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