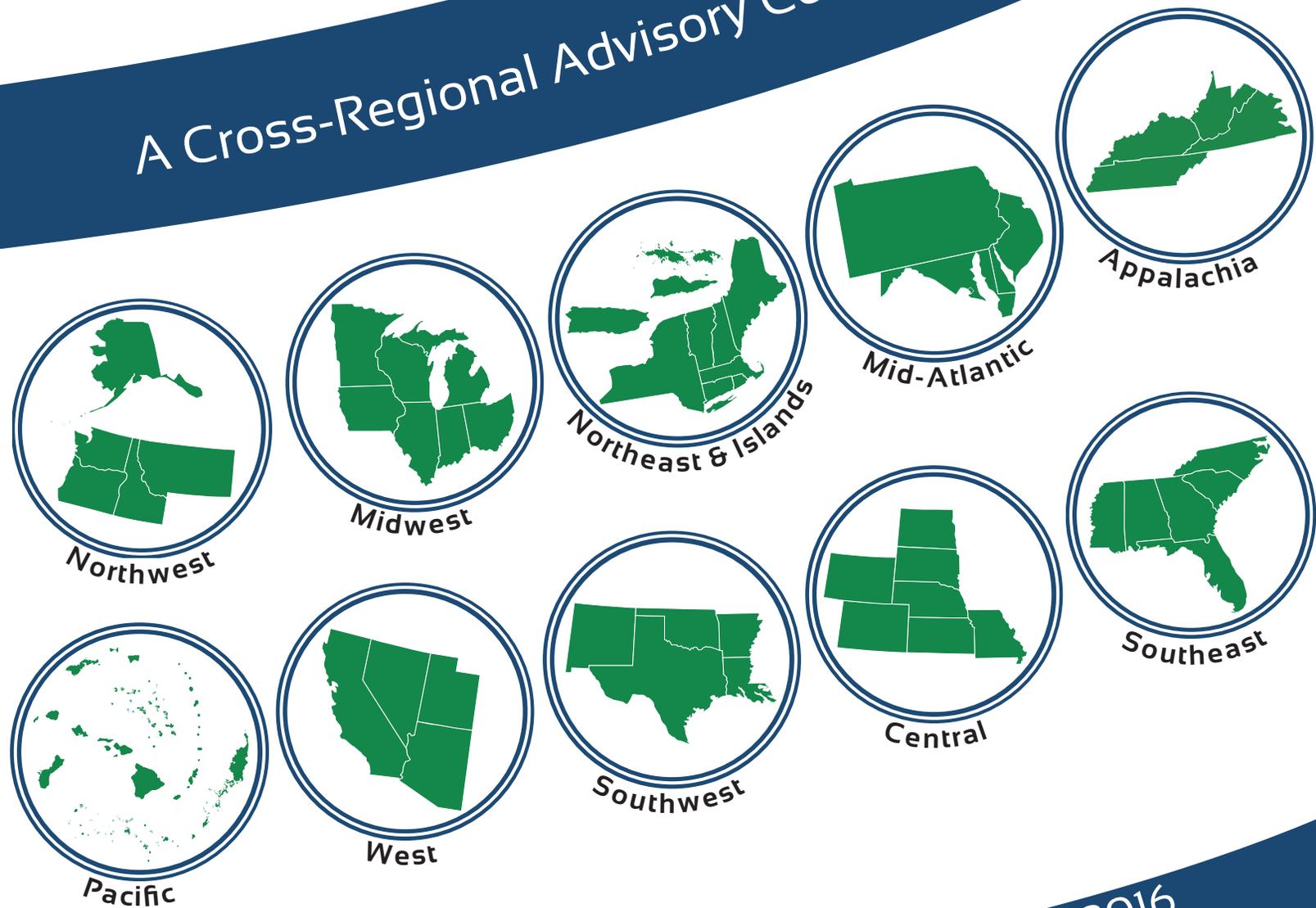


Identifying and Addressing Priority Education Needs

U.S. Department of Education

A Cross-Regional Advisory Committee Analysis



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October 11, 2016

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Submitted to

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Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. ED-ESE-15-A-0010/0001 with the U.S. Department of Education. The report represents a team effort with many individuals making important contributions, and I gratefully acknowledge their assistance. I recognize the sustained help of Kim Okahara, Program Officer; Britt Jung, Group Leader in the Office of School Support and Rural Programs; and Patrice Swann, the Contracting Officer's Representative from the U.S. Department of Education. I thank Jackson Miller, Brittany Cunningham, Rachel Holzwart, Anne Peterson, and Dominick Esposito from Insight Policy Research for their assistance collecting data, responding to requests for information, and making sure all the moving parts stayed on track. I also thank Kim Kerson and Daven Ralston for their production support. I thank all the facilitators and support personnel from Insight Policy Research, the Applied Engineering Management Corporation, and ICF International. Their work with the 10 regional committees made this report possible. Lastly I would like to thank all the individual Regional Advisory Committee members for taking the time to conduct needs assessments and provide thoughtful suggestions for how to address those needs.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Overview of the Regional Advisory Committees	1
A. Purpose	1
B. Members.....	1
Regional Advisory Committee Activities	2
A. Outreach	2
B. Meetings and Collaboration	3
C. Individual Needs Assessment Reports.....	4
Needs and Recommendations.....	5
A. Preparing Students To Be College and Career Ready	8
B. Ensuring Equity and Addressing Disproportionality	11
C. Supporting the Lowest Performing Schools and Closing Achievement Gaps.....	12
Conclusion.....	14
Appendix A.....	A-1

Tables

Table 1. Number of RAC members identifying each need as a priority.....	5
Table A-1. Number of individuals nominated, recommended, and serving on each RAC.....	A-1
Table A-2. Percentage of survey respondents rating each need area as the top priority in their region, by region	A-3
Table A-3. Percentage of survey respondents rating each need area as the top priority in their region, by stakeholder group	A-4
Table A-4. Number of RAC members identifying each need as a priority	A-5
Table A-5. Recommendations to support the need to prepare students to be college and career ready	A-5
Table A-6. Recommendations to support the need to ensure equity and address disproportionality....	A-8
Table A-7. Recommendations to support the lowest performing schools and reduce achievement gaps	A-11
Table A-8. Recommendations to help recruit, retain, and equitably distribute effective teachers and leaders.....	A-13
Table A-9. Recommendations to improve access to early childhood education.....	A-16
Table A-10. Recommendations to improve accountability and assessments	A-17
Table A-11. Recommendations to assist in implementation of Every Student Succeeds Act	A-18
Table A-12. Recommendations to promote personalized learning and innovative use of technology .	A-19

Figures

Figure 1. Distribution of responses from the public	3
Figure A-1. Priority needs identified through online survey.....	A-2

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities and results of the ten 2016 Regional Advisory Committees (RACs), established under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.). The RACs were formed to identify each region’s most critical educational needs and develop recommendations for technical assistance to meet those needs. The technical assistance provided to state education agencies (SEAs) aims to build capacity for local education agencies (LEAs or districts) and schools, especially low-performing districts and schools; improve educational outcomes for all students; close achievement gaps; and improve the quality of instruction.

Members of the committees were nominated by themselves or others and represented a variety of stakeholders, including the business community, LEAs and SEAs, institutions of higher education, and practicing educators. Ninety-three individuals were invited to participate in the RACs, of which 85 agreed to participate.¹ Overall, 66 of these members submitted needs assessment reports.²

Committee members met virtually three times and reached out to their respective constituencies between July 19, 2016, and August 26, 2016. The members collaborated, communicated, and shared resources using Communities360^o, an interactive online platform hosted within the larger GRADS360^o system housed within the secure U.S. Department of Education environment.

Members reviewed a regional profile containing educational statistics and other relevant data to inform their individual assessments of the challenges facing their region. They conducted a needs assessment using an online survey, interviews, focus groups, and environmental scans. Members solicited feedback from more than 80,000 stakeholders and received direct feedback from 13,187 individuals. The majority of the feedback (92 percent) came through the online survey. Members reviewed responses in their regions and identified up to five priority need areas. For each need area, the members suggested at least one strategy for Comprehensive Centers to provide technical assistance or support to SEAs.

While the needs and recommendations varied by region, preparing students for college and careers was the highest priority across all ten regions. Many regions emphasized needs around career and workforce readiness. Others emphasized reducing the need for remediation in college, and improving the academic rigor for all students. Members described the need for librarians³ to teach research and critical thinking skills, for counselors to support students in exploring career paths or college applications, and for more opportunities for high school students to be exposed to workplace settings and college level courses. To prepare students for college and careers, members made the following recommendations:

- ▶ define college and career readiness standards and identify measures;
- ▶ facilitate partnerships between SEAs and higher education to expand dual enrollment opportunities;
- ▶ form alliances between education and industry;
- ▶ facilitate communities of practice among educators who work with rural and first generation college students;

¹ Over the course of the project, six members would not have been able to participate fully so declined to participate.

² Sixty-four individual reports were received because two pairs of respondents submitted joint reports. Thirteen members did not submit individual needs assessments reports.

³ Members received comments from 1,758 librarians through the online survey used to solicit public comments.

- ▶ create exemplar practice guides for integrating critical thinking and problem solving in instruction, establishing dual enrollment or dual credit programs, and counseling students; and
- ▶ share and disseminate results of longitudinal studies.

The two other highest priority needs were (1) ensuring equity, including issues of disproportionality, and (2) supporting the lowest performing schools. Similar to preparing students for college and careers, the meaning behind ensuring equity differed by member, stakeholder, and region. In some instances, members highlighted the need for an equitable distribution of effective teachers. In others, members discussed equitable access to services such as early childhood education, special education, or advanced instruction (gifted or college level courses). Members suggested that lack of equity could lead to lower performance and achievement gaps.

Recommendations for ensuring equity included:

- ▶ facilitate partnerships between SEAs, LEAs, and public libraries;
- ▶ facilitate partnerships between SEAs and higher education to support minority teacher candidates;
- ▶ identify schools or districts with equity gaps and pair them with others who have successfully closed gaps; and
- ▶ create a repository for sharing strategies (e.g., retaining high quality administrators, improving family engagement, improving school culture and climate).

RAC member recommendations for addressing priority needs:

- Engaging stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes
- Facilitating cross-group collaboration and partnerships
- Creating or compiling resources, tools, and best practice guides
- Disseminating evidence-based research
- Developing training

Many RAC members and education stakeholders noted the needs are not independent. There is considerable overlap between implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act, ensuring equity, and improving assessments and accountability systems. Likewise, an inequitable distribution of effective teachers is a potential cause or contributing factor to achievement gaps. The equitable distribution of effective teachers is an integral component of ensuring equity. While promoting community and stakeholder engagement was not identified as a high priority need, it was often discussed as a recommendation for addressing needs.

Overview of the Regional Advisory Committees

To address the priorities for the upcoming Comprehensive Centers⁵ competition, the Department of Education asked 10 RACs to assess the educational needs within their regions, seeking input from chief executive officers of States, chief State school officers, educators, and parents about how the needs could be effectively addressed, and to submit the needs assessments to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. This report provides a summary of the reports submitted by the 10 individual RACs. For specific recommendations from each region, see appendix A.

A. Purpose

Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107–279) directs the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to establish not less than 20 Comprehensive Centers to support dissemination, technical assistance, and professional development efforts. The technical assistance is intended to help states administer and implement programs under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (P.L. 114–95); use scientifically valid teaching methods and assessment tools in core academic subjects, English language acquisition, and education technology; and facilitate communication among education experts, school officials, teachers, parents, and librarians. The technical assistance should focus on the following topic areas:

- ▶ improving academic achievement in core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts;
- ▶ closing achievement gaps and encouraging and sustaining school improvement; and
- ▶ developing teacher and school leader in-service and preservice training models that illustrate best practices in the use of technology in different content areas.

The 10 RACs are authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.).

B. Members

Members of the committees were nominated by themselves or others and represented a variety of stakeholders, including the business community, LEAs and SEAs, institutions of higher education, and practicing educators. The Department of Education attempted to keep the membership of each regional committee balanced, with representation from each state and different stakeholder groups.⁴ Ninety-three individuals were invited to participate in the RACs, of which 85 agreed to participate. Through the course of the work, six members dropped out because of changes in their jobs or other extenuating circumstances. The size of each committee ranged from a low of 3 in the Pacific region to a high of 14 in the Northwest region. See appendix A for a count of members by region.

⁴ In some instances, there were not enough nominated or qualified individuals to ensure diverse composition of members in each region.

Regional Advisory Committee Activities

A. Outreach

A main priority of each RAC was to solicit input from numerous constituencies, including teachers, principals, SEA and LEA administrators, governors, institutions of higher education/community colleges, postsecondary technical programs, school boards, parents, education professional organizations, teachers unions, local government, youth organizations, community-based organizations, chambers of commerce, and business leaders.

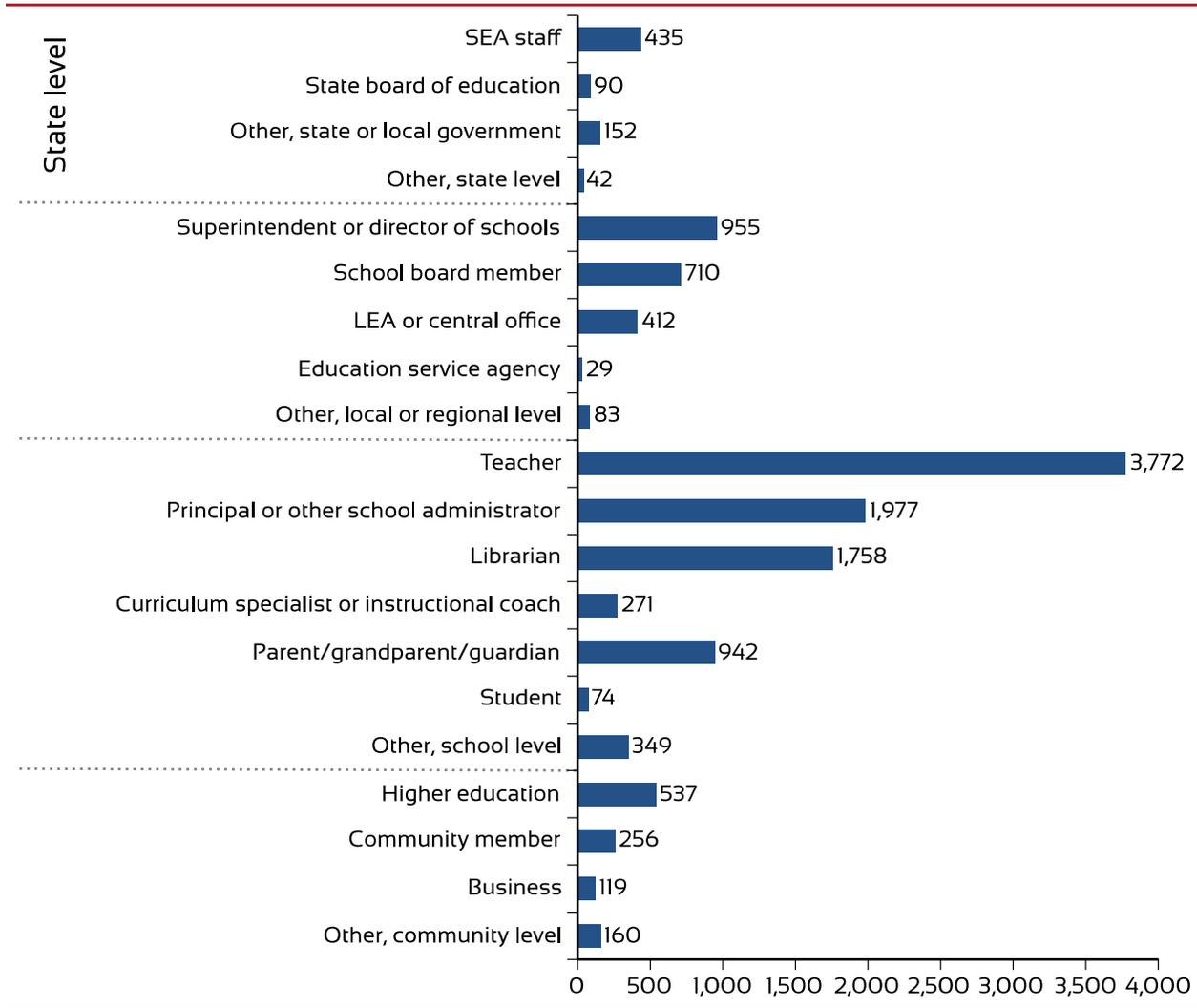
Each RAC developed an outreach plan and was provided access to an online survey and other tools for collecting stakeholder feedback. To assist their efforts, RAC members had access to Communities360^o, an interactive online platform where they could collaborate, communicate, and share resources. RAC members received briefs, PowerPoint presentations, and other RAC-related materials that described the purpose of the Comprehensive Centers program and how technical assistance builds the capacity of SEAs and LEAs. RAC members conducted needs sensing and data collection between July 19, 2016, and August 26, 2016. Data collection methods included disseminating an online survey link (via email and posting on social media and public websites), telephone and face-to-face interviews, and focus groups. The online survey asked respondents to identify their state and affiliation and allowed them to identify needs and make recommendations through open-ended responses.

RAC members used note-taking sheets to record all their outreach. Specifically, they recorded the number of people they communicated with, the stakeholder group that each person was a member of, and the educational needs identified as priority areas.

Members solicited feedback from more than 80,000 stakeholders. Overall, members received feedback from 13,187 individuals. Most of the feedback (92 percent) came through the online survey.

The responses from stakeholders followed the pattern expected from the overall population (figure 1). The greatest response was from teachers (28 percent), principals or school administrators (14 percent), superintendents (7 percent), school board members (6 percent), and then SEA staff members (3 percent).

Figure 1. Distribution of responses from the public



B. Meetings and Collaboration

Each RAC met virtually three times between July 19, 2016, and August 26, 2016, to discuss progress on collecting feedback from a broad range of stakeholders about the educational needs of the regions and recommendations for technical assistance to address the identified needs. Although individual committee members participated in a maximum of three meetings, some RACs held multiple sessions of each meeting to accommodate disparate schedules. In addition to the virtual meetings (typically conference calls or webinars), RAC members collaborated using Communities360^o, an interactive online platform that enabled groups to access and share resources and communicate with other RAC members and their regional facilitator(s). Communities360^o is hosted within the larger GRADS360^o system housed within the secure U.S. Department of Education environment.

Each RAC followed the same structure for their virtual meetings, with individual facilitators customizing resources and discussion points. During the first meeting, committee members reviewed the obligations of participating on a RAC; discussed the technical assistance objectives of the Comprehensive Centers; and developed plans for collecting information. Plans included the dissemination of an online needs-

sensing survey to a wide range of stakeholders representing all states and territories in their regions, and other forms of outreach such as interviews or focus groups. Committee members focused their second meetings on reviewing preliminary results from the needs-sensing survey, identifying underrepresented stakeholder groups in the most current data, and amending data collection plans to target underrepresented groups. During the third meeting, committee members discussed the data collected to date, shared some of the identified needs and recommendations, and created plans for analyzing the full set of survey data. Members also discussed how to write their individual needs assessment reports.

Outside of the committee meetings, committee members solicited input from numerous stakeholder groups. The online needs-sensing survey was the primary data collection tool for each region, but committee members supplemented the survey data using other outreach strategies, including interviews, focus groups, and reviews of extant data and information on the region. Regional facilitators advised RAC members on methods for analyzing and summarizing the data. Most regions analyzed the data by stakeholder group, but a few either analyzed it by state or assigned each committee member a random sample of data to analyze across stakeholder groups and states within their regions.

C. Individual Needs Assessment Reports

After reviewing all the regional data, survey results, and notes from other outreach, RAC members identified three to five priority needs across their region. They provided justification for why each was a priority education need (often citing the data sources they used, personal assessments or experiences, or research literature). Members made recommendations for ways Comprehensive Centers could provide assistance to support these needs. Often, the needs and recommendations provided by the public referred to specific local issues that are outside the scope of Comprehensive Centers. When specific needs at the classroom or school level were identified, RAC members were asked to think about how SEAs could address the needs and make suggestions for how Comprehensive Centers could support or build SEA capacity. Overall, RAC members submitted a total of 64 needs assessment reports. Thirteen members did not submit individual needs assessment reports. States not represented in the individual needs assessment reports⁵ were Arizona and Louisiana.

⁵ Although the RAC members from Arizona and Louisiana were not able to submit individual needs assessment reports, stakeholders in both states participated in needs-sensing activities. As a result, their needs were considered by the RAC members who submitted reports for this region.

Needs and Recommendations

Members of the RACs and the stakeholders they reached out to overwhelmingly identified preparing students to be college and career ready as a top priority (see ranking of needs by region and stakeholder group in appendix A). The second and third priority need areas were typically ensuring equity and supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps.

Table 1. Number of RAC members identifying each need as a priority

Need Area	Number of RAC members identifying the need as a priority
Preparing students to be college and career ready	49
Ensuring equity, including issues of disproportionality	37
Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps	34
Developing and ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders	28
Improving access to early childhood education	18
Improving assessment and accountability systems	13
Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act	13
Developing strategies for promoting personalized learning	12
Improving instructional leadership	7
Promoting community and stakeholder engagement	5
Maximizing federal funding streams and creating organizational efficiencies	3

Many RAC members and education stakeholders noted the needs are not independent. There is considerable overlap between implementing ESSA, ensuring equity, and improving assessments and accountability systems. Likewise, many participants mentioned an inequitable distribution of effective teachers as a potential cause or contributing factor to achievement gaps. The equitable distribution of effective teachers is an integral component of ensuring equity.

Using personalized learning strategies and innovative technology was also offered as a suggestion for improving equity, reducing achievement gaps, and preparing students to be college and career ready.

Although promoting community and stakeholder engagement did not rise to the top of the list of needs, it was mentioned as a strategy for addressing the educational needs. Members recommended engaging stakeholders and providing an opportunity for diverse voices to share their experiences and best practices to address college readiness and use of assessments, improve equity, close achievement gaps, and use technology in instruction.

Committee members provided suggestions and recommendations for support to address each of the priority needs. These fell into five broad categories:

Engage stakeholders from different groups in the SEAs' decision-making processes

Decision-making processes include defining terms, setting priorities, setting standards, and identifying measures of success. RAC members emphasized the need to include teachers, administrators, and others who work “on the ground” in policy conversations, noting a disconnect between policies and

practice. By convening different stakeholder groups, Comprehensive Centers can help ensure all voices are heard and policy informs practice. Topic areas mentioned throughout the regional reports included:

- ▶ defining college readiness;
- ▶ defining career and work readiness;
- ▶ setting achievement benchmarks;
- ▶ defining equity and developing indicators for achieving equity;
- ▶ creating alternative pathways into teaching;
- ▶ defining teacher effectiveness;
- ▶ defining kindergarten readiness;
- ▶ developing accountability plans; and
- ▶ developing strategies for community engagement.

Facilitate cross-group collaboration to strengthen partnerships

While the first recommendation focuses on the engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making process, the second focuses on fostering collaboration among groups during implementation of policies, practices, or procedures. Comprehensive Centers have a unique ability to create regional networks or partnerships, including SEAs, LEAs, national or regional education stakeholders, and higher education. Members of the networks can share resources and support one another to achieve common goals. Specific partnerships mentioned by members include the following:

- ▶ partnerships between SEAs or LEAs and postsecondary institutions;
- ▶ partnerships across SEAs or LEAs to distribute costs or share resources;
- ▶ partnerships between SEAs and offices within the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., Office for Civil Rights, Office of Innovation and Improvement) or other federal agencies (e.g., Department of Labor, Department of Commerce);
- ▶ partnerships between SEAs or LEAs and local or national education stakeholders, such as American Association of School Librarians, Rural School and Community Trust, National Science Teachers Association, National Council on Teachers of Mathematics, and other professional organizations; and
- ▶ partnerships between SEAs or LEAs and private and nonprofit organizations to assist with training and development of diverse stakeholders in the education arena. Create opportunities where board of education members, teachers, administrators, and community leaders all receive the same training from leaders in the field, such as national school board groups, national teacher groups, and national community/parent groups.

Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides

Using Comprehensive Center staff to curate the resources or link to existing resources (such as the What Works Clearinghouse practice guides) would help LEAs and SEAs share best practices. Resources can be compiled in a traditional way (physically keeping a library or providing a website with a list of links) or through a community of practice where educators share their resources or comment on how they used

or adapted particular strategies and resources. Topic areas mentioned throughout the regional reports as needing resources on best practices included:

- ▶ increasing high school graduation;
- ▶ helping rural first-generation college students navigate the college application and financial aid process;
- ▶ delivering personalized learning;
- ▶ building connections between schools and postsecondary institutions; and
- ▶ using technology-based approaches for addressing opportunity and funding gaps (particularly in rural areas).

Disseminate evidence-based research and guides

Throughout the needs assessment process, many stakeholders expressed needs for existing resources. While the third recommendation focuses on compiling resources and practice guides, this recommendation focuses on dissemination and sharing these resources with the intended audiences. Comprehensive Centers have a unique opportunity to disseminate information and improve access to existing resources. Stakeholders who are implementing new initiatives need evaluation support and help understanding what strategies are working, and for which students. Other efforts require summaries of existing research, or meta-analyses. Topics of interest include:

- ▶ barriers to postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion;
- ▶ teacher recruitment, retention, and quality;
- ▶ teacher incentive pay;
- ▶ ideal resource allocation/distribution; and
- ▶ interventions to close achievement gaps.

Develop or identify training and professional development

Comprehensive centers also have a unique opportunity to provide professional development or training via webinar. Using webinars or experts on a broad topic of interest is a low-cost way to help SEAs address needs. Members identified the following topic areas for training or professional development:

- ▶ cultural challenges;
- ▶ meeting individual students' need;
- ▶ technology use;
- ▶ effective instruction;
- ▶ curriculum;
- ▶ assessment; and
- ▶ teacher mentoring.

The top three priority need areas and specific information on how these recommendations apply to each of the needs are described below. Specific recommendations by region are available in appendix A. Note there is overlap and synergy among the recommendations suggested under each technical

assistance category. For example, cross-group collaborations and partnerships could form communities of practice where members share evidence-based practices. Comprehensive Centers could create awareness and disseminate research-based strategies or tools through communities of practice.

A. Preparing Students To Be College and Career Ready

College and career readiness ranked high as a priority need area in the needs assessment survey and in individual responses from RAC members. The adoption of Common Core State Standards and state-level equivalents, as well as the passage of ESSA has brought increased attention to the need to ensure all students are prepared for the demands of college and careers.

RAC members emphasized that high school graduates need both hard and soft skills to either enter the workforce or attend college. This includes the acquisition of less tangible characteristics such as perseverance, communication, teamwork, and leadership in addition to the traditional English, math, and science taught in schools.

RAC members provided recommendations for how Comprehensive Centers can support this priority area. Below are a few examples of recommended support for preparing students to be college and career ready under each of the five broad technical assistance strategies.

Engage stakeholders from different groups in the SEAs' decision-making processes

RAC members said they saw a need for an overarching discussion on what the phrase “college and career readiness” means to different stakeholders such as educators, parents, and individuals from business and industry. RAC members, key stakeholders, and the public called for a general discussion to define college readiness and career readiness. In addition to the voices of parents, teachers, administrators, business, and higher education, RAC members emphasized the need to involve professional organizations that have been out front on the standards in conversations. As part of defining terms and measures, Comprehensive Centers could facilitate focus group discussions with public education, higher education, and industry to identify various perceptions of what college and career readiness looks like. To help facilitate these discussions, the Comprehensive Centers could provide information on existing definitions of college and career readiness and their measures from other states.

Facilitate cross-group collaboration to strengthen partnerships

Once definitions of college and career readiness are agreed upon, education stakeholders need assistance implementing programs and strategies to improve college and career readiness. In contrast to the recommendation to convene stakeholders, which may occur infrequently in a school year, this recommendation is about building networks and partnerships over time. RAC members across regions frequently suggested the following ideas:

- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could facilitate or support partnerships between schools and colleges to expand opportunities for dual enrollment. In addition to providing students opportunities to experience college-level courses in high school, partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions could lead to aligning K–12 curriculum with postsecondary expectations. One outcome or goal of the partnerships among SEAs, LEAs, and higher education could be the creation of a central repository for dual enrollment contacts and course offerings.

Another goal of these partnerships would be to reduce the amount of remedial or developmental instruction needed in postsecondary institutions.

- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could also help SEAs facilitate partnerships among districts. By taking a broader view and identifying districts or teachers who have successfully implemented college and career readiness initiatives, Comprehensive Centers can help SEAs match schools, districts, or instructors with mentors.
- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could assist States and districts in forming alliances with industry partners. Partnerships among school leaders, the business community, and industry leaders could lead to new work-based learning opportunities for students.
- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could facilitate collaboration among SEAs and other agencies to monitor and track students in their efforts to prepare for jobs out of high school. For example, SEAs could collaborate with the Department of Labor to identify in-demand occupations in the region. Comprehensive Centers could also help SEAs ensure programs and certifications within the high school curriculum qualify students for these jobs.

Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides

RAC members also requested a mechanism to identify and showcase best and promising practices from around the country. Some regions requested resources and best practices that highlight specific contexts, such as rural or particular student populations. Three specific areas where educators requested best practice guides or exemplars were integrating critical thinking in instruction, college and career counseling, and establishing dual enrollment or dual credit programs (including CTE courses). RAC members across regions frequently suggested the following ideas:

- ▶ Many regions requested guidance documents for expectations in implementing Common Core or other standards. For example, one member suggested that the Comprehensive Centers produce and disseminate guidance on academic behavior. Being college and career ready in the 21st century requires greater emphasis on higher level thinking and problem solving, which must be in the service of content area knowledge. This paradigm shift will require a specific list of academic behaviors that should be demonstrated in each of the content areas. Schools need clear guidelines and examples of behaviors of both educators and students in the classroom. Providing assessment tools such as observational checklists and rubrics will help evaluators, educators, and students focus clearly on the skills and behaviors necessary for college and career success. A member noted an example of this kind of strategy already exists in the Standards for Mathematical Practice contained in the Common Core. Providing additional guidance to SEAs to assist districts in explicitly instructing and assessing content area practices would be immeasurably helpful in reshaping the paradigm and helping to ensure students are actually college and career ready.
- ▶ Several regions noted the important role of high school guidance counselors and teachers in preparing students for college and careers. To better support students, they need examples of best practices advising students, helping students navigate college and trade school admission standards, working with first-generation college students and their families, and applying for financial aid. A resource guide that provides examples of what rural and urban schools, districts, and states are doing would help address this need area. Educators and guidance counselors need resources and practice guides to understand the changing needs of industry and to link learning experiences to postsecondary opportunities.

- ▶ Lastly, RAC members requested resource guides for developing or expanding dual enrollment programs. Compiling resources and practice guides is one way of supporting growth of these programs. Practices related to using technology (online courses) to expand offerings, recruiting secondary teachers to become college adjuncts, tracking student performance, and even forming partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions (a strategy mentioned above) are of interest.

Where resources are scarce, or practice guides do not yet exist, Comprehensive Centers can help identify other professional development or training opportunities.

Create awareness of evidence-based research and guides

Closely related to compiling resources and practice guides is disseminating that information. Many resources have been developed, but educators are not always aware of them, or they find the resources difficult to access and use. The outcomes and usefulness of cross-group collaborations and partnerships would be most beneficial if work is shared broadly. Strategies for creating awareness include using communities of practice, social media (Pinterest, Twitter, Reddit), and other online communities. Other low-cost ways of disseminating information broadly include online interactive compilations and webinars. Specifically, for college and career readiness, members requested summaries of longitudinal studies of programs intended to improve college and career readiness. SEA, LEA, and school staff need greater access to evaluations of programs and practices.

Develop or identify training and professional development

RAC members recommended the following topics for training and professional development:

- ▶ implementing college and career ready standards;
- ▶ obtaining and using online or digital resources to enhance instruction and learning;
- ▶ expansion of careers;
- ▶ connecting academic work to career opportunities and the real world;
- ▶ approaches to dealing with generational and situational poverty; and
- ▶ improving academic instruction.

Committee members suggested Comprehensive Centers assist state departments of education in the development of training programs or modules that teachers can access 24/7. This training could be customized for different grades/subjects. Such an approach would greatly enhance availability of training to teachers, regardless of the size or remoteness of their district.

Professional development could occur in a forum, either in person or online, to enable educators from across the respective regions to draw upon one another's experiences. Topics for forums could include use of formative assessment, the engagement of students in developmentally appropriate practices, the differentiation of instruction, and culturally responsive instructional/disciplinary/family engagement practices. These topics are not specific to college and career readiness, but each can contribute to the knowledge base.

B. Ensuring Equity and Addressing Disproportionality

The importance of having equal access to high-quality education was a resounding theme across all regions. Many RAC members noted recent demographic changes with respect to socioeconomic status (SES)—an increase in low SES students, an increase in ethnic/racial or language minority students, and students with disabilities or special needs. Many educators do not feel equipped to deal with the pressures that correlate with supporting diverse student needs. Other priority need areas, such as closing achievement gaps or preparing students for college and careers, will only be possible once all students have equitable access to educational opportunities and resources. When describing the need to ensure equity, RAC members discussed the “opportunity gap,” “enrichment gap,” “achievement gap,” and “inequitable distribution of teachers.”

Below are a few examples of support for ensuring equity and addressing disproportionality under three of the five broad technical assistance strategies mentioned by RAC members, including facilitating cross-group collaboration or partnerships, compiling and disseminating best practices, and developing training.

Facilitate cross-group collaboration to strengthen partnerships

RAC members and other education stakeholders emphasized the need for Comprehensive Centers to connect expert practitioners with one another, bring together thought leaders to build a collaborative coalition, and facilitate authentic dialog among disparate parties. From their regional views, Comprehensive Centers can review and evaluate best practices in the field, document promising practices and connect practitioners with needs to others who have experience addressing those needs. RAC members across regions frequently suggested the following ideas:

- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could facilitate partnerships among SEAs, LEAs, and public libraries. The libraries could be used to help students to access high-quality education. Libraries and other public sites could be used to increase family engagement and train districts in ways that close gaps and ensure equity.
- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could work with the Office for Civil Rights to identify ways to create equitable student opportunities and carry out the intentions of No Child Left Behind and ESSA.
- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could assist SEAs in partnership with higher education institutions to support minority teacher candidates. These partnerships could also focus on recruiting teachers that reflect the populations they will serve. RAC members noted these small actions could have larger effects.

Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides

RAC members made several recommendations for types of resources and guides that could help educators ensure equity in services, including the following:

- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could assist SEAs in defining and identifying schools and districts with equity gaps.
- ▶ Once identified, Comprehensive Centers could provide those schools and districts with needed examples of practices that have resulted in closing or reducing equity gaps. Schools and districts need evidence-based resources on teaching methodologies for diverse student populations to

achieve better outcomes. In particular, SEAs and LEAs need resources or guidance on ways to handle discipline proactively. RAC members recommended establishing a bank of online resources for positive behavior interventions, including online resources to track and monitor student behavior.

- ▶ Comprehensive Centers could create a repository for sharing strategies for retaining high-quality administrators and teachers and improving family engagement and school culture and climate.

All those issues are tied to equity and achievement.

C. Supporting the Lowest Performing Schools and Closing Achievement Gaps

The lowest performing schools do not always have achievement gaps, and schools with achievement gaps are not always low performing. Nevertheless, RAC members and education stakeholders identified a need to improve academic rigor and the academic performance of all students. RAC members often linked this need area with a need to improve recruitment and retention of effective teachers. In fact, recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a strategy to both improve low-performing schools and to close achievement gaps.

Another need area linked with supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps is implementing ESSA. Members noted that achievement gaps do not just happen in middle or high school. Improving access to high-quality early childhood education and increasing family involvement when students are young could improve achievement and prevent achievement gaps. While the specific needs vary by state and region, the broad strategies RAC members suggested for improving performance and closing achievement gaps revolved around sharing best practices and providing professional development. One mechanism for sharing best practices and providing professional development is through cross-group collaboration or partnerships.

Below are a few examples for supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps under three of the five broad technical assistance strategies, including facilitating cross-group collaboration or partnerships, compiling and disseminating best practices, and developing training.

Facilitate cross-group collaboration to strengthen partnerships

RAC members suggested Comprehensive Centers assist states in developing a plan for communication and collaboration among local school districts. Specifically, Comprehensive Centers could help states develop a community of practice for districts, rather than a competitive or isolated grouping of school districts. The Comprehensive Centers could capture what has been accomplished in states and regions that have successfully supported lower performing schools and improved performance to identify ways that local school districts could best support one another. The information could be shared with the community of practice through webinars or other media.

Similarly, RAC members suggested the Comprehensive Centers could provide opportunities for face-to-face regional collaboration supported through state-funded conferences as another way for higher performing schools to share best practices with lower performing schools.

In order to assess teacher preparation programs that produce teachers whose students have consistently high achievement and few achievement gaps among student groups includes RAC members suggested strengthening partnerships between SEAs and institutions of higher education. If any aspects

of the teacher preparation program can be identified as contributing to teachers' success, the Comprehensive Centers could share those practices with other programs in the network.

Create, compile, and disseminate resources, tools, and best practice guides

States and districts would benefit from assistance identifying successful intervention models to close the achievement gap, particularly any that have shown long-term effects. The Comprehensive Centers could use their networks to identify state models of school improvement and capture the demographic and enrollment patterns where they were used.

Another strategy for improving performance and closing achievement gaps is use of blended or personalized learning. The Comprehensive Centers could provide templates or guides on developing plans to use blended and personalized learning to help close the achievement gap. Additional practice guides on leveraging technology to improve performance could be developed and kept in a central repository for states, districts, and schools to access.

RAC members also recommended producing practice guides on transitions from early education to elementary school. Guides should include information on how to support collaboration with community leaders to educate all stakeholders regarding the interrelated connections between home and school and early life experiences and later development in all children. They should also provide information on infant and child mental health so teachers working with children with diverse abilities and circumstances (high risk) can engage families in the process. The need for these resources/guides may be especially great in rural school districts and lower income schools where access to services may be more limited.

Develop or identify training and professional development

Some of the resources and practice guides described above may be self-explanatory and easy to use. Others may require training or explanation. RAC members recommended Comprehensive Centers provide professional development and training opportunities through sharing and disseminating research practices, making resources available to school personnel, and providing instruction in using assessment data and diagnostic tools.

Specifically, members suggested providing lists of hands-on professional learning that guides teachers in developing a concrete understanding of the standards, deconstructs the standards to ensure all teachers have a common understanding, and identifies learning targets to help students master the standards. Other topics for professional development and training that could help reduce achievement gaps include the following:

- ▶ culturally responsive teaching;
- ▶ school turnaround models;
- ▶ personalized learning;
- ▶ differentiated instruction; and
- ▶ instructional management, using formative assessments.

Conclusion

The Comprehensive Centers have the opportunity to support SEAs as they implement the Every Student Succeeds Act. Many of the priority needs identified by the RAC members and members of the public are interconnected. Comprehensive Centers can facilitate conversations and communities of practice around nearly all the priority need areas. The educators and stakeholders who participated in the RACs' needs assessments called for having a voice and helping educators share their best or promising practices.

The most often mentioned need was for high school graduates to have both hard and soft skills to either enter the workforce or attend college. To help SEAs address this need, members suggested Comprehensive Centers could:

- ▶ define college and career readiness standards and identify measures;
- ▶ facilitate partnerships between SEAs and higher education to expand dual enrollment opportunities;
- ▶ help form alliances between education and industry;
- ▶ facilitate communities of practice among educators who work with rural and first generation college students; and
- ▶ create practice guides for integrating critical thinking and problem solving in instruction, establishing dual enrollment or dual credit programs, and counseling students.

Members also identified ensuring equity and addressing issues of disproportionality as a priority need. They made several recommendations including:

- ▶ help states create equity guidelines;
- ▶ provide technical assistance to states in creating and revising accountability plans to include measures other than academic achievement;
- ▶ provide opportunities for states to share best practices (potentially through a curated promising practices database);
- ▶ help states develop and use digital learning platforms so more students have access to courses and other resources; and
- ▶ create rubrics and monitoring plans to evaluate innovative supports and interventions.

To support the lowest performing schools and reduce achievement gaps, members recommended that Comprehensive Centers:

- ▶ convene stakeholders to develop strategies for increasing community involvement;
- ▶ develop and support communities of practice where districts or states with higher performing schools can share best practices with districts and states with lower performing schools;
- ▶ provide technical assistance on implementing data-driven, evidence-based practices that have been successful in low-performing schools; and
- ▶ provide training on recruiting and retaining effective educators in high-needs schools.

Appendix A

Table A-1. Number of individuals nominated, recommended, and serving on each RAC

Region	Nominated	Recommended by U.S. Department of Education	Declined	Dropped	Accepted, Served
Appalachia	5	5	0	0	5
Central	21	11	1	1	9
Mid-Atlantic	14	9	2	1	6
Midwest	15	7	1	0	6
Northeast and Islands	19	12	0	0	12
Northwest	17	16	1	1	14
Pacific	4	4	1	0	3
Southeast	31	12	1	0	11
Southwest	12	9	1	1	7
West	17	8	0	2	6
Total	155	93	8	6	79

Figure A-1. Priority needs identified through online survey



** The “Other” category allowed respondents to write in other education priority needs in their region. Write-in responses included: all needs, academic rigor, preparing students for the world after school (teaching life skills), back to basics, student motivation and love of learning, more local control, retaining, training, and supporting quality teachers, and supporting student nonacademic needs (mental, health, socioemotional, hunger).

* This category also includes respondents who wrote in funding or resources as a priority need area.

Table A-2. Percentage of survey respondents rating each need area as the top priority in their region, by region

Need Area	Region										
	All	AP	CE	MA	MW	NEI	NW	PAC	SE	SW	WE
Preparing students to be college and career ready	26	26	29	25	27	21	20	38	32	27	23
Ensuring equity, including issues of disproportionality	11	9	8	15	15	8	16	7	8	9	15
Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps	11	11	8	12	8	11	11	11	14	13	10
Improving assessment and accountability systems	6	8	7	8	7	5	4	6	6	8	4
Developing strategies for promoting personalized learning	6	5	8	4	5	8	7	2	5	5	3
Other (funding/resources, academic rigor, life skills, etc.)	6	5	4	6	7	5	6	4	6	6	5
Improving access to early childhood education	6	8	8	4	4	4	8	5	6	6	4
Developing and ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders	5	5	6	3	5	6	7	5	4	5	7
Ensuring innovative and effective uses of technology and digital learning	5	5	2	7	4	7	2	1	5	4	4
Implementing ESSA	4	4	4	4	2	9	3	6	3	5	3
Maximizing federal funding streams and creating organizational efficiencies	4	3	3	3	4	7	3	1	2	2	5
Improving instructional leadership	4	4	4	3	4	5	3	7	3	3	3
Promoting community and stakeholder engagement	3	3	4	2	3	3	4	5	3	4	3

Note: AP = Appalachia Region; CE = Central Region; MA = Mid-Atlantic Region; NEI = Northeast and Islands Region; NW = Northwest Region; PAC = Pacific Region; SE = Southeast Region; SW = Southwest Region; WE = West Region. Cells are shaded dark grey for the highest priority, medium grey for the second highest, and light grey for the third highest.

Table A-3. Percentage of survey respondents rating each need area as the top priority in their region, by stakeholder group

Need Area	Stakeholder Group Level					
	All	State	Local	School	Classroom Teacher	Community
Preparing students to be college and career ready	26	23	26	27	27	22
Ensuring equity, including issues of disproportionality	11	9	14	11	9	15
Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps	11	14	10	11	12	8
Improving assessment and accountability systems	6	6	9	7	8	10
Developing strategies for promoting personalized learning	6	6	6	6	8	4
Other (funding/resources, academic rigor, life skills, etc.)	6	5	4	6	7	6
Improving access to early childhood education	6	8	6	5	5	9
Developing and ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders	5	8	6	5	3	9
Ensuring innovative and effective uses of technology and digital learning	5	2	3	5	5	3
Implementing ESSA	4	6	4	5	3	3
Maximizing federal funding streams and creating organizational efficiencies	4	3	4	3	4	4
Improving instructional leadership	4	5	5	4	3	4
Promoting community and stakeholder engagement	3	2	3	3	4	4

Note: Cells are shaded dark grey for the highest priority, medium grey for the second highest, and light grey for the third highest.

Table A-4. Number of RAC members identifying each need as a priority

Need Area	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5
Preparing students to be college and career ready	37	6	6	0	0
Ensuring equity, including issues of disproportionality	4	16	9	4	4
Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps	4	16	9	1	4
Developing and ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders	7	9	6	4	2
Improving access to early childhood education	4	4	2	5	3
Improving assessment and accountability systems	2	4	3	3	1
Implementing ESSA	2	2	7	2	0
Developing strategies for promoting personalized learning	2	1	7	2	0
Improving instructional leadership	1	1	2	1	2
Promoting community and stakeholder engagement	0	3	1	1	0
Maximizing federal funding streams and creating organizational efficiencies	0	1	2	0	0

Table A-5. Recommendations to support the need to prepare students to be college and career ready

Region	Recommendation for preparing students to be college and career ready
Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes	
Appalachia	Identify benchmarks to support college and career readiness at each grade level
Central	Guide SEAs through a process to develop a common definition of college and career readiness
Central	Work with SEAs to implement new standards, new assessments, and new systems of accountability
Northeast and Islands	Provide a common set of standards, assessments, and definitions of college readiness and for career readiness
Pacific	Provide guidance on strategies for establishing clear college and career readiness benchmarks and criteria for each state, territory, and nation in the region
Southwest	Support vocational training for non-college-bound students
Southwest	Provide technical assistance in refining policies and best practices that will support success for all
Southwest	Provide support for identifying the knowledge and skills necessary to compete globally and examine the data to drive next steps
West	Develop and disseminate a common definition of college and career readiness
Facilitate cross-group collaboration and partnerships	
Appalachia	Facilitate conversations with public education and higher education to identify perceptions of college and career readiness to align a seamless pre-K–12 to higher education student experience

Region	Recommendation for preparing students to be college and career ready
Appalachia	Assist states in drafting communication plans or facilitate communication between states and policymakers to inform legislators on the importance of restoring funding to programs across districts to maintain student access to technology
Appalachia	Facilitate partnerships between K–12 schools and local colleges, universities, and technology centers. For example, aid states in developing partnerships between colleges and technology centers around Advanced Placement credit, dual enrollment credit, and career pathways
Central	Provide monitoring systems to identify high-demand careers and program development
Mid-Atlantic	Coach states and districts on working with the business community to establish career and technical education pathways
Mid-Atlantic	Facilitate collaborative sessions among SEAs and institutions of higher education to discuss strategies for improving college readiness
Mid-Atlantic	Support states in working with the business community to prepare students for the workplace environment
Midwest	Promote a broader and more comprehensive vision and collaborative pursuit toward readiness, working with SEAs to create a common dialogue for differentiated career readiness and life readiness needs; promote opportunities for SEAs to participate in schools-to-industry sharing and schools-to-outside agency sharing to inform what is needed for students to be college and career ready
Midwest	Comprehensive centers can organize or support outreach campaigns to support SEA communication with parents, agencies, industries, and extended communities to achieve the broader vision of college and career readiness
Northeast and Islands	Develop partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions to enable or expand dual enrollment opportunities
Northeast and Islands	Develop partnerships between SEAs and teacher preparation programs to discuss preparing all teachers to help students become college or career ready
Northwest	Coordinate or otherwise facilitate a convening of education stakeholders across the Northwest region to develop strategies for increasing community involvement in education and building a strong education culture
Pacific	Help SEAs create networking opportunities between secondary and postsecondary institutions in the region that will expand the course options for high school students
Pacific	Assist with the creation of partnerships between K–12 schools and local colleges and universities to align standards, particularly around preparing students for first-year college courses
Pacific	Promote coordination and partnerships (e.g., the Long Beach model) to establish a shared vision and goals of college readiness among systems
Southeast	Support coordination and collaboration across early childhood, K–12, higher education, and workforce government agencies and organizations in preparing students for college and careers
Southwest	Work to help SEAs bridge the gaps between themselves, community colleges, and 4-year colleges/universities to help K–12 schools better prepare students for academic success in postsecondary instruction
Southwest	Host forums, both in person and online, to allow educators from across the respective regions to draw upon one another’s experiences
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify resources and effective best practices around the use of technology in the classroom to keep students up to date and build strong technology literacy; this would be resources SEAs can use as they work with local school districts
Appalachia	Identify resources states can use to design GED completion and job assistance programs for high school dropouts

Region	Recommendation for preparing students to be college and career ready
Appalachia	Establish an online database or portal identifying financial aid opportunities educators across the region can use to help with advising college bound students who need assistance in financing a college education
Mid-Atlantic	Identify best practices for integrating career and technical learning into the classroom
Midwest	Identify and showcase best and promising practices from around the country, and provide technical assistance information and training about those practices
Midwest	Document and disseminate best practices to support student attainment of skills such as perseverance, communication, teamwork, and leadership and how to embed other less tangible 21st century skills into limited instructional time
Midwest	Compile and disseminate resources on integrating technology into teaching and competency-based education
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs to create job banks/career preparation centers to engage and connect industry, community members, educators, students, and parents
Southeast	Develop evidence-based approaches to addressing gaps, and support states in developing formative and summative evaluation tools that measure students' progress toward college and career readiness
Southeast	Develop resources such as exemplar curricula and models of alternative pathways and dual enrollment programs
Southwest	Provide resources, information, and data (preferably online and easily accessible) such as curriculum and resources for teachers to use in their classrooms
West	Provide examples of effective models of implementing the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards
West	Promote and support the implementation of career pathways, including better measurement and quality control
<i>Disseminate evidence-based research and guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify the research-based components of a viable and effective college- and career-ready state, regional, and local environment
Appalachia	Disseminate information on planning for college, making college affordable, and other practice guides developed through the content centers, RELs, and other federally funded sources
Central	Disseminate research-based, proven, effective practices and opportunities
Central	Support SEAs' efforts to disseminate guidance to high school guidance counselors and teachers about preparing students for college and careers
Midwest	Conduct longitudinal studies similar to the Department of Education's Early Childhood studies on high school graduates
Northwest	Help SEAs to identify and disseminate effective strategies, resources, and policy exemplars for increasing graduation rates and promoting college/work readiness; using technology-based approaches to address opportunity and funding gaps; addressing challenges endemic to first-generation college-going students, and/or students from rural and remote contexts; increasing local community involvement in the education process to improve student outcomes; defining college/work readiness using multiple measures; developing accountability systems with aligned assessments and rigorous measurable objectives; and Improving transition from secondary to postsecondary education/workforce
Southeast	Identify and disseminate research and best practices related to achieving college and career readiness goals. Include a focus on middle school
West	Share models of career counseling to clarify expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed within a given field

Region	Recommendation for preparing students to be college and career ready
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Central	Establish scaffolding support and professional development to improve instruction
Midwest	Provide technical assistance to state departments of education so SEAs can study college remediation rates, college dropout rates, and college graduation rates of graduates
Northeast and Islands	Assist SEAs (and secondary schools) with understanding and identifying connections between specific subject areas and career opportunities for students
Northwest	Assist SEAs in the development of high quality, on demand, and low cost professional development/training programs that build educator capacity to deliver personalized instruction in the areas of literacy and STEM and engage in effective career counseling
Pacific	Assist with the design of a bridge curriculum in math and English language arts—provided at the postsecondary level—for graduates at risk of needing remediation
Southeast	Develop data-driven and evidence-based models of professional development and training to support educators in providing all students high-quality instruction and support. Focus on meeting both students’ social, emotional, and academic needs
Southwest	Support SEAs’ efforts to provide professional development and other technical support on developing student-focused, personalized learning systems
West	Provide technical assistance on helping students navigate the choice between traditional college and career technical education, applying for college and financial aid, and the college enrollment processes
West	Develop and implement professional development on linking learning and postsecondary opportunities
West	Support and promote plans to improve teaching and learning in STEM
West	Provide professional development focused on implementing Next Generation Science Standards, as well as understanding and responding to the evolving needs of higher education and business. Leverage train-the-trainer models for professional development

Table A-6. Recommendations to support the need to ensure equity and address disproportionality

Region	Recommendation to ensure equity and address disproportionality
<i>Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Help states create equity guidelines or inequity indicators to support administrators in ensuring equity for all students
Northeast and Islands	Assist SEAs in establishing a shared definition of effective family engagement, including established benchmarks of success for targeted populations
Southeast	Work with states to develop indicators that districts and schools could use to ensure the needs of all students are met
West	Provide technical assistance to states in creating and revising accountability plans to include measures other than academic achievement (i.e., measures of social-emotional learning and attendance metrics)
<i>Facilitate cross-group collaboration and partnerships</i>	
Central	Provide states opportunities for sharing best practices
Mid-Atlantic	Assist SEAs with hosting regional forums and training opportunities for state, district, and community leaders to develop and share strategies for fostering equitable access to resources, funding, and school programs
Northeast and Islands	Assist the SEAs with developing and using digital learning platforms that can be shared by districts so more students have access to courses and other resources
Northeast and Islands	Support the establishment of shared quality indicators across public school pre-K, Head Start, and private early childhood education systems

Region	Recommendation to ensure equity and address disproportionality
Northeast and Islands	Emphasize the use of Title I funding to support a collaborative early education local model to ensure adequate enrollment
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs ensure effective cross-system collaboration led by school principals/leaders that engage Head Start/early care providers and parents
Northeast and Islands	Consult with the 21 Educare Schools across the country on their comprehensive and evidence-based model of quality instruction, teacher coaching/training model, and family engagement
Northeast and Islands	Assist SEAs in identifying the kinds of partnerships likely to be effective in both identifying at-risk children and providing appropriate supports
Northwest	Providing technical assistance to state education agencies that will enable them to provide additional support to districts for pre-K, special education, and English language learners
Southeast	Support SEAs' efforts to collaborate and coordinate with educators, students, families, and community members to develop strategies for addressing key equity issues within the region
West	Coordinate with the American Association of School Librarians to develop an education plan regarding the educational purpose, critical need, and results-based value of professionally staffed library programs
West	Facilitate collaboration among expert practitioners and thought leaders in the region to share successes and challenges and address identified needs
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides</i>	
Central	Support SEAs in creating rubrics and monitoring plans to evaluate innovative supports and interventions
Central	Identify and highlight demonstration sites with successful practices
Central	Provide examples of models of school improvement that focus on positive school climate and improved learning environments
Mid-Atlantic	Develop a promising practices database to assist educators in supporting equity at all levels of the educational system
Mid-Atlantic	Identify strategies for promoting academic growth for minority students
Midwest	Identify and disseminate information about ways districts can successfully reduce the achievement gap, and provide professional development and training in those practices and how to scale them up
Northwest	Share best practices on providing professional development/training specific to low achieving subgroups of students, using evidence based interventions for trauma-informed care, and conducting innovative work despite financial limitations
Southeast	Identify and disseminate best practices in ensuring equity in and access to high-quality curricula, programs, and services. Topics should include a focus on developing and retaining effective educators
Southeast	Develop and share guidance on ways to handle discipline proactively. This may include establishing a bank of online resources for positive behavior interventions
West	Collect and disseminate research and data on teacher librarians and their role in school improvement. Specifically, provide state-by-state data regarding the number of elementary and secondary schools (and LEAs) that have full-time, licensed, teacher librarians
West	Provide examples of how libraries can serve as centers for parents and best practices in resource distribution and budgeting

Region	Recommendation to ensure equity and address disproportionality
<i>Disseminate evidence-based research and guides</i>	
Central	Develop a research base of best practices to assist struggling schools and students differentiated by target area (homeless, gifted, rural, etc.)
Mid-Atlantic	Conduct research on the impact of universal pre-K and early learning programs on students' academic success
Midwest	Compile and disseminate research on improving existing after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Rigorously evaluate the ideas and programs piloted or implemented within region
Midwest	Provide research on the factors outside school that lead to differences in achievement between children from lower SES backgrounds and those from middle-class backgrounds; provide research on school-based programs and curricula that will offset those negative effects on lower SES children
Northeast and Islands	Share with SEAs the knowledge gained from the recently implemented federal Early Head Start Partnership grant projects, as well as the findings related to the broader public/private program partnerships with Head Start
West	Identify and disseminate research and best practices, including strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality educators, supporting family engagement, and improving school culture and climate
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Central	Assist SEAs with training educators on cultural competence and cultural deficits
Midwest	Conduct training and professional development on topics related to equity or disproportionality, evaluate the success of various initiatives, identify and disseminate best practices, and assist with the development of state policies
Midwest	Develop and implement training to help SEA staff understand how their cultural and racial identities impact education, equity, and excellence
Midwest	Leverage national experts to produce and deliver highly researched and powerful professional trainings SEAs can use to equip teachers with the necessary skills
Midwest	Provide professional development training on addressing students' socioeconomic needs; convene consortiums of educators, law enforcement, and mental health agencies in multi-area "think tanks" to create concrete measures SEAs can use to address the needs of socioeconomic disproportionality
Midwest	Provide technical assistance on advancing and sustaining effective classroom practices that genuinely engage and motivate all students. This includes student-centered learning environments and evidence-based practices shown to have potential in closing achievement gaps among student groups
Northeast and Islands	Provide professional development to SEAs on strategies for growing educators' capabilities to teach multiple subject areas
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs train teachers in academic interventions for struggling learners
Northeast and Islands	Support SEAs' training of LEA staff on establishing and deepening partnerships through greater engagement of school staff in addressing adverse circumstances and conditions
Southeast	Assist states in developing and/or facilitating regional or state-specific online and face-to-face professional development opportunities focused on equity
West	Provide professional development, both in person and using technology, on teaching methodologies for diverse student populations, support for mentors, and co-teaching
<i>Other</i>	
Midwest	Support SEAs' efforts to encourage districts to develop and test enrichment strategies that would boost the extracurricular and enrichment participation rates for disadvantaged students
Northeast and Islands	Provide assistance in identifying, developing, and administering authentic assessments

Region	Recommendation to ensure equity and address disproportionality
Northeast and Islands	Encourage SEAs to monitor students' progress throughout a birth through grade 3 continuum
Northwest	Assist in conducting a regional assessment of district needs related to educational equity/disproportionality. Provide targeted technical assistance to SEAs in the region based on the results
Northwest	Assist in conducting a survey of each state in the Northwest region to measure district capacity to provide effective early childhood education/pre-K. Target technical assistance efforts to the identified capacity deficiencies
Southeast	Support states in improving their Educator Equity Plans through research and technical assistance
West	Provide technical assistance to states in identifying chronically low-performing schools and districts

Table A-7. Recommendations to support the lowest performing schools and reduce achievement gaps

Region	Recommendation to support lowest performing schools and reduce achievement gaps
<i>Engage stakeholders in decision making processes</i>	
Northwest	Coordinate or otherwise facilitate a convening of education stakeholders across the Northwest region to develop strategies for increasing community involvement in education and building a strong education culture
Southeast	Provide technical assistance to help districts understand state and federal regulations
Pacific	Develop plans for remedying achievement gaps that account for the cultural and nonschool-related factors contributing to the gaps
Southeast	Support states in developing plans to implement personalized and blended learning and leveraging technology
<i>Facilitate cross-group collaboration and strengthen partnerships</i>	
Appalachia	Assist states in developing local school districts community of practices and opportunities for sharing what has worked. This would be away for higher performing schools to share best practices with lower performing schools; provide technical assistance on sustaining the community of practice (webinar or face-to-face regional collaboration through state-funded conferences, how often, incentives to encourage higher performing schools to participate, etc.)
Appalachia	Facilitate communities of practice and networks of state department staff across the region focused on learning from and supporting one another through ESSA implementation
Northeast and Islands	Support SEAs' efforts to conduct regular onsite support to low-performing schools to more effectively address their unique needs
Southeast	Support states and districts in educating and engaging stakeholders, including parents and policymakers, in the work of school improvement
Southeast	Consider supporting the creation of parent engagement centers in low-performing school districts
Southeast	Foster collaboration and coordination within states and across the region focused on school improvement
Southeast	Further teacher preparation partnerships between SEAs and institutions of higher education and encourage sharing (among districts) of best practices to reduce achievement gaps

Create or compile resources, tools, and best practice guides	
Appalachia	Identify and showcase best and promising practices from around the country on intervention models to close achievement gaps, and provide technical assistance information and training about those practices to SEAs
Northeast and Islands	Assist with the identification and implementation of teacher and administrator recruitment strategies, especially in rural and low-performing districts
Northwest	Help SEAs to collect data and resources that highlight districts making achievement gains from the lowest performing schools
Northwest	Help SEAs to collect data and resources that highlight curriculum and resources that can support quality supplemental instruction programs
Southeast	Identify and disseminate examples of online and in-person professional development aimed at assisting teachers with educating all students
Southeast	Develop and disseminate metrics and tools for measuring schools' progress toward closing achievement gaps
Southwest	Create curriculum and resources SEAs can provide to principals and teachers to use in their classrooms
Disseminate evidence based research and guides	
Appalachia	Document and disseminate best strategies for retaining the most highly effective teachers and leaders
Appalachia	Document and disseminate best practices related to ways teachers can leverage limited resources or collaborate with others to overcome the lack of physical resources
Pacific	Identify schooling-related factors contributing to achievement disparities
Southeast	Identify evidence-based strategies related to school improvement and closing achievement gaps. Topics should include improving teacher quality, stakeholder engagement, and access to and participation in accelerated courses
Southeast	Disseminate research and best practices
Develop or identify training and professional development	
Appalachia	Help states understand ESSA's accountability components
Appalachia	Provide technical assistance and guidance in how SEAs can assist local districts and schools on "customizing" school improvement plans
Appalachia	Develop or share training on student and parent engagement
Northeast and Islands	Provide technical assistance on implementing data-driven, evidence-based practices that have been successful in low-performing schools
Northwest	Assist SEA efforts to provide professional development and demonstration programs on how to analyze data to identify achievement gaps
Northwest	Assist SEA efforts to provide professional development and demonstration programs on how to monitor the success or failure of interventions
Pacific	Provide instructional coaching and coordinate efforts among states, territories, and nations to implement evidence-based practices for improving student achievement
Southeast	Provide state-specific training and resources to support the transition to ESSA, including planning for recruiting and retaining effective educators in high-need schools. Effective teachers are needed in lowest performing schools
Southwest	Provide training and technical assistance on the use of research-based best practices and implementation of programs under ESSA
Southwest	Identify professional development opportunities SEAs could provide to districts, principals, and teachers in the following targeted areas: assessments, personalized learning, differentiated instruction, data literacy, college and career readiness, culturally responsive teaching, and school turnaround models.
Southwest	Assist SEAs in their efforts to provide continuous professional development opportunities using data to drive instruction.

Collect and analyze data	
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs identify schools in need of wraparound services and collaborative research for English language learners and students with Individualized Education Plans
Pacific	Provide assistance to enhance the region’s ability to systematically identify and document persistent gaps
Southwest	Monitor the degree to which students across the region are being treated equitably and the degree to which educators across the region are equipped to help all students
Southwest	Collect data on achievement gaps that could be shared with SEAs, which could then bring more resources to bear and/or fashion new policy
Northeast and Islands	Consider the need for culturally relevant learning (and recognizing the skills that already exist) in communities where achievement gaps persist
Southeast	Support states and districts in identifying and accessing additional funding opportunities

Table A-8. Recommendations to help recruit, retain, and equitably distribute effective teachers and leaders

Region	Recommendation to help recruit, retain, and equitably distribute effective teachers and leaders
Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes	
Northeast and Islands	Bring together stakeholders to advance a strategy for developing the teaching workforce that is informed by state and regional forecasts of teacher demand and the profile of supply
Northwest	Help districts and schools develop buy-in from teachers, leaders and education stakeholders around shared continuous improvement goals
Southwest	Convene stakeholder engagement meetings to help develop a strategic plan to ensure the distribution of highly effective teachers
West	Provide technical assistance on creating alternative pathways into teaching
West	Seek ongoing feedback from practitioners and other key stakeholders on the work of the comprehensive centers to improve supports and better align them to regional needs in this area
West	Help states simplify and clarify new federal and state mandates before they are passed down to districts, schools, and teachers
Facilitate cross-group collaboration and partnerships	
Appalachia	Facilitate a community of practice to discuss and strategize how to address barriers to equitable distribution
Central	Partner with institutions of higher education to improve educator preparation and provide feedback to institutions about content need areas
Central	Develop a community of practice for beginning teachers and leaders. Share best instructional practices from mentor teachers. Allow communication and collaboration across levels
Midwest	Help SEAs promote communication between high-needs schools and universities to strengthen teacher preparation programs. Teachers and schools should be able to communicate their needs to universities, whose expert professors can prepare teachers for addressing these needs
Midwest	Support SEA efforts to work with colleges and universities in the region to redesign teacher preparation programs so that teachers and leaders are prepared to teach/lead in 21st century schools
Pacific	Provide hands-on and onsite technical assistance—as opposed to webinars and online sessions—on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Work with SEAs to ensure that the information is effectively disseminated to all education stakeholders, including parents and boards of directors that oversee governance

Region	Recommendation to help recruit, retain, and equitably distribute effective teachers and leaders
Southeast	Foster coordination and collaboration among states, districts, and institutions of higher education to provide effective professional development for current and future school leaders
Southwest	Support SEAs' efforts to work closely with colleges and universities to ensure high-achieving students are selected for educator preparation programs
Southwest	Help SEAs partner with colleges and universities to design and engage school leaders and other educators in high-quality, ongoing, and—ideally—job-embedded professional development experiences
West	Work with states to develop teacher leader networks designed to improve teacher retention in schools
West	Collaborate with organizations such as 100Kin10, a network designed to expand STEM opportunities, to identify and disseminate knowledge and bright spots in preparing, recruiting, and retaining excellent STEM educators
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and practice guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify teacher incentive experts to help states work with budgets, incentives, and salaries
Appalachia	Identify and disseminate best practices on how to identify effective teachers and ensure a match between student needs and teacher skills
Appalachia	Identify and disseminate examples and best practices on how other states have addressed equitable distribution (e.g., reports of obstacles, and how other states overcame them with specific, actionable steps)
Appalachia	Identify resources or advise SEAs on providing in-service training and professional development on personalized learning, experiential instruction, and other focused learning strategies
Appalachia	Identify high quality teacher professional learning programs by vetting sources in the targeted areas (individualized and experiential teaching techniques, use of assessment information in planning instruction) and providing a database of these sources to SEAs
Midwest	Document and disseminate best strategies for retaining the most highly effective teachers and leaders
Pacific	Create or aggregate resources on teacher practice, instructional leadership, and teacher and student assessment that are specific to the unique demographics, culture, and educational characteristics of each state and territory in the region
Pacific	Provide training and resource materials on effective classroom instruction and promoting safe learning environments
Southeast	Provide support, including guidelines and training, for the development of a regional leadership academy focused on providing professional development to school leaders
West	Collect and publish data on the leadership/management training offered to both in-service and preservice educational leaders
West	Collect data on what, and how many, new mandates and requirements states ask of teachers each year, including which person, department, or agency required the mandate
<i>Disseminate evidence-based research and guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify and disseminate best practices around recruiting and retaining teachers in rural and/or high-needs schools
Central	Provide region-sensitive (rural, urban, reservation) research and models for effective strategies in the recruitment and retention of educators
Central	Describe different incentive models for schools and districts to attract and retain staff, including costs, benefits, how to work with unions, and unintended consequences. Share this resource broadly

Region	Recommendation to help recruit, retain, and equitably distribute effective teachers and leaders
Midwest	Identify and disseminate best practices research, provide professional development and training, and evaluate and demonstrate how to evaluate various programs and strategies
Northwest	Promote evidence-based practices in teacher recruitment, retention, and professional preparation/development
Southeast	Work with states to develop and disseminate resources, research, and a rigorous set of leadership standards and best practices to support the development of principals and administrators (including formal principal mentors)
Southeast	Provide research and technical assistance to states in supporting new educators through state-specific induction programs, virtual communities of practice, and mentorship models
West	Identify and disseminate research and data on preparation, recruitment, and retention of excellent educators including best practices for professional peer-to-peer management and improving perceptions of the teaching profession
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Appalachia	Assist SEAs in developing training for pre-service teachers on addressing socioemotional aspects of students living in poverty and working with low-performing students
Appalachia	Develop training for superintendents and principals on best practices on attracting, retaining, and placing teachers in positions of success. This would include learning how to mine teacher effectiveness data and student learning capabilities
Appalachia	Develop and provide professional development to SEA staff critically analyzing policy around equitable distribution of teachers
Northwest	Support PD to develop statewide plans to recruit and retain high-quality teachers
Northwest	Foster development of a growth mindset among teachers and leaders
Northwest	Support SEAs' efforts to prepare teachers for culture challenges, meeting individual students' needs, technology use, effective instruction, curriculum, and assessment
Pacific	Provide training to the states, territories, and nations on strategies to systematically identify underprepared and underperforming teachers
Pacific	Provide training and resources on comprehensive strategies for developing teachers tailored to the specific needs of the state, territory, or nation
Southeast	Assist states in developing and providing ongoing professional development for teachers. Professional development opportunities could include training modules on classroom management and cultural competency.
Southwest	Identify preservice and job training and professional development options for teachers that includes cognitive psychology
West	Provide training on group decision-making techniques so that teacher professionals are actively involved in decision-making
West	Develop best practice-based, professional peer-to-peer leadership/management trainings and materials
<i>Other</i>	
Southwest	Examine the relationship between salary and educator performance
Northeast and Islands	Assist with the identification and implementation of strategies to provide incentives to teachers to enter administrative licensing programs
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs design a process for potential administrators to intern with experienced administrators
Northwest	Assist in conducting a regional assessment of states' technical assistance needs related to improving teacher hiring/certification processes and improving the recruitment of highly effective teachers and leaders
Southwest	Assist SEAs' efforts to promote teaching in the community and make it a desirable profession

Table A-9. Recommendations to improve access to early childhood education

Region	Recommendation to improve access to early childhood education
<i>Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes</i>	
Southwest	Develop a common understanding of what it means to be “ready for kindergarten,” and develop a system to ensure preschoolers will transition to kindergarten successfully
Southwest	Provide technical assistance to SEAs to increase the awareness of the need for quality early childhood education
Southwest	Promote the importance of children’s earliest experiences to their cognitive growth and development
<i>Facilitate cross-group collaboration and partnerships</i>	
Central	Facilitate partnerships between SEAs and universities to improve SEA access to research on early childhood education
Central	Facilitate partnerships between SEAs and universities to conduct needs assessments in communities to identify early childhood education needs
Central	Facilitate partnerships between SEAs and universities to help improve understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
Central	Facilitate partnerships between SEAs and universities to help improve instructions for students with exceptional development
Southeast	Support states in developing a strategic, regional approach to supporting early childhood education initiatives. This could include support for the development of a family and community engagement plan
Southeast	Foster collaboration and partnerships in support of early childhood education. Consider supporting a regional community of practice of state early childhood providers and partnerships between states and educator preparation programs
Southwest	Help SEAs partner with institutions of higher education to design a rigorous birth to age 5 teaching credential
Southwest	Model “silo-busting”—that is, helping agencies not accustomed to working with one another to work together—to accomplish the enormously important goal of meeting young children’s needs for nutrition, health care, and learning
West	Share strategies for states to align with other federal and state programs serving infants, toddlers, and children under age 5 (e.g., Head Start, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)
West	Connect leaders across states in collaborative groups to share successes and challenges
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and practice guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify and compile a list of effective practices to improve access from across the region. Share methods for implementing effective practices with SEAs
Central	Develop an online, editable repository of research and evidence-based resources to support early childhood education teachers
Southeast	Develop and disseminate early childhood resources and tools, including preschool and kindergarten diagnostic measures and procedures for monitoring and evaluating early childhood programs
West	Share best practices and strategies used by states or regions to build high-quality programs from birth through kindergarten, including development of quality indicators
West	Share best practices in aligning state and federal funds toward the expansion of early childhood without sacrificing quality
<i>Disseminate evidence-based research and guides</i>	
Appalachia	Identify recently published reports, publications, and research related to family-identified needs associated with family/school partnerships. Condense and share this information to assist educators in better understanding barriers to family involvement

Region	Recommendation to improve access to early childhood education
Appalachia	Compile research syntheses and compendium of effective family engagement strategies from recently published reports
Midwest	Document and disseminate best practices related to how high-poverty districts can support families of preschool-aged children. This should include strategies, funding mechanisms, and best implementation practices
Southeast	Identify and disseminate best practices in developing or acquiring an early childhood data collection system
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Central	Provide evidence-based training to states on best practices in early childhood education, successful transitions, and strategies for addressing mental health issues
Southeast	Develop training and professional development models to support early childhood educators and administrators. Topics might include early learning curricula, standards, instructional practices, and transition programming
West	Provide professional development SEAs can disseminate to early childhood educators, leveraging a train-the-trainer model to expand professional development opportunities
Central	Provide support to SEAs to conduct a gap analysis of access to high-quality early childhood programs in rural and low-income communities

Table A-10. Recommendations to improve accountability and assessments

Region	Recommendation to improve accountability and assessments
<i>Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes</i>	
Midwest	Aid states in developing pilot changes to standards, report cards, and state examinations before mandating statewide changes
Midwest	Support SEAs in creating alternative measurement plans that are acceptable under ESSA for holding schools accountable. Centers should also help SEAs understand ESSA's accountability components and how to measure them
Northwest	Assist states in their efforts to define key performance indicators that predict academic success, adopt accompanying assessments, and use the resulting data to hold school leaders accountable for results
Northwest	Help SEAs develop better and more efficient assessment systems that measure student growth, yield information that can be used by teachers to target instruction, and reduce over testing
Southeast	Provide technical assistance and support to states in the development of their accountability plans, including collecting stakeholder feedback on state assessment and accountability systems
<i>Facilitate cross-group collaboration and partnerships</i>	
Southeast	Develop and implement a regional community of practice for state assessment and accountability staff
Southwest	Facilitate more communication on best practices and use of effective strategies
Southwest	Build a statewide or regional system for teachers to view and see relevant, purposeful implementation of formative assessment strategies
Southwest	Combine ideas across different states in the region to extend teaching and learning beyond geographic barriers; show how standards are cross-referenced in different states
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and practice guides</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Identify strategies and best practices for states to publicly communicate student achievement data with parents, families, and school communities
Mid-Atlantic	Develop easily understood overview materials on state standards and accountability systems

Region	Recommendation to improve accountability and assessments
Midwest	Assist states in developing qualitative evaluation metrics and forms that will be descriptive of what is being done well and what is in need of improvement
Southwest	Create an online resource for teachers and administrators to include practical examples to model across grades and content areas
Southwest	Create an online resource for teachers and administrators to include teacher-friendly lessons, activities, questioning strategies, formative assessment questions, and technology based resources listed by standard and objective across each grade level or course
Southwest	Support SEAs' efforts to provide a forum for educators to collaborate or locate information on specific topics or strategies
<i>Disseminate evidence based research and guides</i>	
Appalachia	Disseminate and provide information on various assessment approaches including the use of a series of benchmark tests throughout the year that are closely aligned with the end-of-the-year test as tool for states to use to improve assessment and accountability systems
Mid-Atlantic	Conduct or review research on class time usage to inform assessments and testing policies
Southeast	Identify and disseminate research supporting improved assessment and accountability systems. Topics should include development of robust career-ready indicators and accountability and assessment reporting methodology
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Identify strategies for streamlining progress reporting
Midwest	Provide technical assistance and research to reorient states from ranking teachers and schools to focusing on improving schools
<i>Other</i>	
Northwest	Identify appropriate high school assessments that meet ESSA requirements and are useful to postsecondary placement
Southwest	Provide information on ways to address increased flexibility and the antitesting movement

Table A-11. Recommendations to assist in implementation of Every Student Succeeds Act

Region	Recommendation to assist in implementation of ESSA
<i>Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes</i>	
Central	Facilitate conversations between SEA staff and classroom teachers about how policies are implemented on the ground, and what teachers see as working/not working
<i>Facilitate cross group collaboration and partnerships</i>	
Midwest	Create sustained communities of practice and networks of state department staff focused on learning from and supporting one another through 3–5 years of ESSA implementation, rather than shifting gears to the next initiative
Midwest	Build content-expert networks across states on a variety of key topic areas; create steering committees of these experts for work on particular topics to pool resources, share content, and host joint professional learning experiences
Northeast and Islands	Create a professional learning community to engage stakeholders at all levels, and create explicit accountability standards based on stakeholder feedback
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and practice guides</i>	
Central	Identify and disseminate region-specific promising practices in school improvement efforts
Central	Provide research, guidance, and success stories from different contexts on implementing personalized learning and addressing achievement gaps
Northeast and Islands	Provide materials, such as videos and infographics, workshops, webinars, and conferences to help assist with the transition to ESSA

Region	Recommendation to assist in implementation of ESSA
Northeast and Islands	Create templates for all the new ESSA reports
Pacific	Develop online resources that are produced using local schools to clarify pedagogical and student achievement expectations created by the Common Core
<i>Disseminate evidence based research and guides</i>	
Midwest	Help connect SEA staff to emergent research by creating annotated bibliographies that are easy to read and understand, and convening states to talk and learn together from researchers in the field
Midwest	Assist SEAs as they pilot new education initiatives in order to account for the perceptions of all stakeholders, including teachers. Provide access to existing rigorous research that can inform practices in the pilot initiatives.
Pacific	Provide school districts in the outlying areas and other states briefs and guidelines on interpreting and implementing ESSA. The briefs may focus on some of the key components of ESSA, including the funding streams available to the outlying areas, the allowable uses of those funds, and the requirements that must be met to comply with the law.
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Central	Assist SEAs in leveraging state data systems to support local needs analysis.
Midwest	Help SEAs build internal capacity to pause, plan, and synthesize internal initiatives to strategically integrate them. Help SEAs strategically map how to align these initiatives and simplify the workload of the districts
Northeast & Islands	Provide SEAs with technical assistance in managing budgets to fund state and federal mandates.

Table A-12. Recommendations to promote personalized learning and innovative use of technology

Region	Recommendation to promote personalized learning and innovative use of technology
<i>Engage stakeholders from different groups in decision-making processes</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Support states in aligning problem-based learning, project-based learning, and team-work designed to standards
Northeast and Islands	Provide guidance for SEAs to identify desired elements of new models of schooling and develop means to realize those elements
<i>Facilitate cross group collaboration and partnerships</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Facilitate meetings and work groups with educators to share strategies and emerging effective practices related to the use of technology to promote personalized learning
Northeast and Islands	Encourage SEAs to focus on preservice training for teachers that prepares them for success in personalized environments
<i>Create or compile resources, tools, and practice guides</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Develop a guide/database of promising practices on implementing personalized learning
Mid-Atlantic	Identify and showcase exemplars of individualized, differentiated instruction through in-person regional field trips and/or videos
Mid-Atlantic	Support states in exploring online learning resources to complement onsite instruction
Mid-Atlantic	Identify strategies for purchasing effective technologies.
Northeast and Islands	Develop and pilot approaches for supporting personalized learning
Northeast and Islands	Help SEAs track the success of personalized learning initiatives and share stories with others
Northwest	Identifying and disseminating exemplars of best practice and resources related to effective strategies and interventions for personalized learning

Region	Recommendation to promote personalized learning and innovative use of technology
Northwest	Identifying policies from jurisdictions that are effectively implementing personalized learning models
Northwest	Identifying exemplary vendors and quality applications/software that will enhance efforts to pursue personalized learning
Southeast	Provide models for job-embedded virtual and in-person professional learning around effective technology integration
Southeast	Develop and disseminate an online database containing curated, standards-aligned digital resources
<i>Disseminate evidence based research and guides</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Conduct a review of the available research around the impact of personalized learning on academic growth
Midwest	Identify and disseminate information on research and best practices, conduct evaluations, provide training and professional development, and assist states and in identifying competencies and how to evaluate those competencies
<i>Develop or identify training and professional development</i>	
Mid-Atlantic	Provide educators with professional development opportunities to support and evaluate the effectiveness of the use of technology in the classroom
Northeast and Islands	Support SEAs provision of technical assistance to rural school districts in the development and implementation of digital learning platforms
Northeast and Islands	Support SEAs provision of professional development to teachers in differentiated instruction for students based on individual needs identified by assessment
Northeast and Islands	Assist SEAs with the provision of professional development to teachers in finding and using digital tools to promote individualized learning with embedded assistance for ongoing support
Northeast and Islands	Support ongoing guidance, workshops, and professional development to identify, extend, or adapt elements of new models of schooling.
Northwest	Support professional development on accessing open education resources to develop curriculum
Northwest	Support professional development on identifying research based interventions
Southeast	Support states in analyzing data to identify student needs and opportunities to address those needs with digital resources, such as adaptive software.

