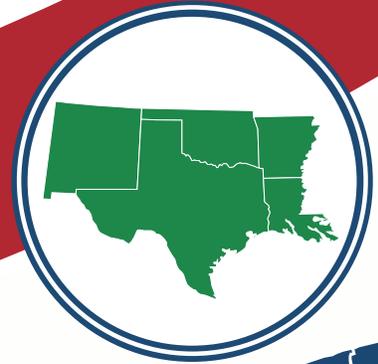
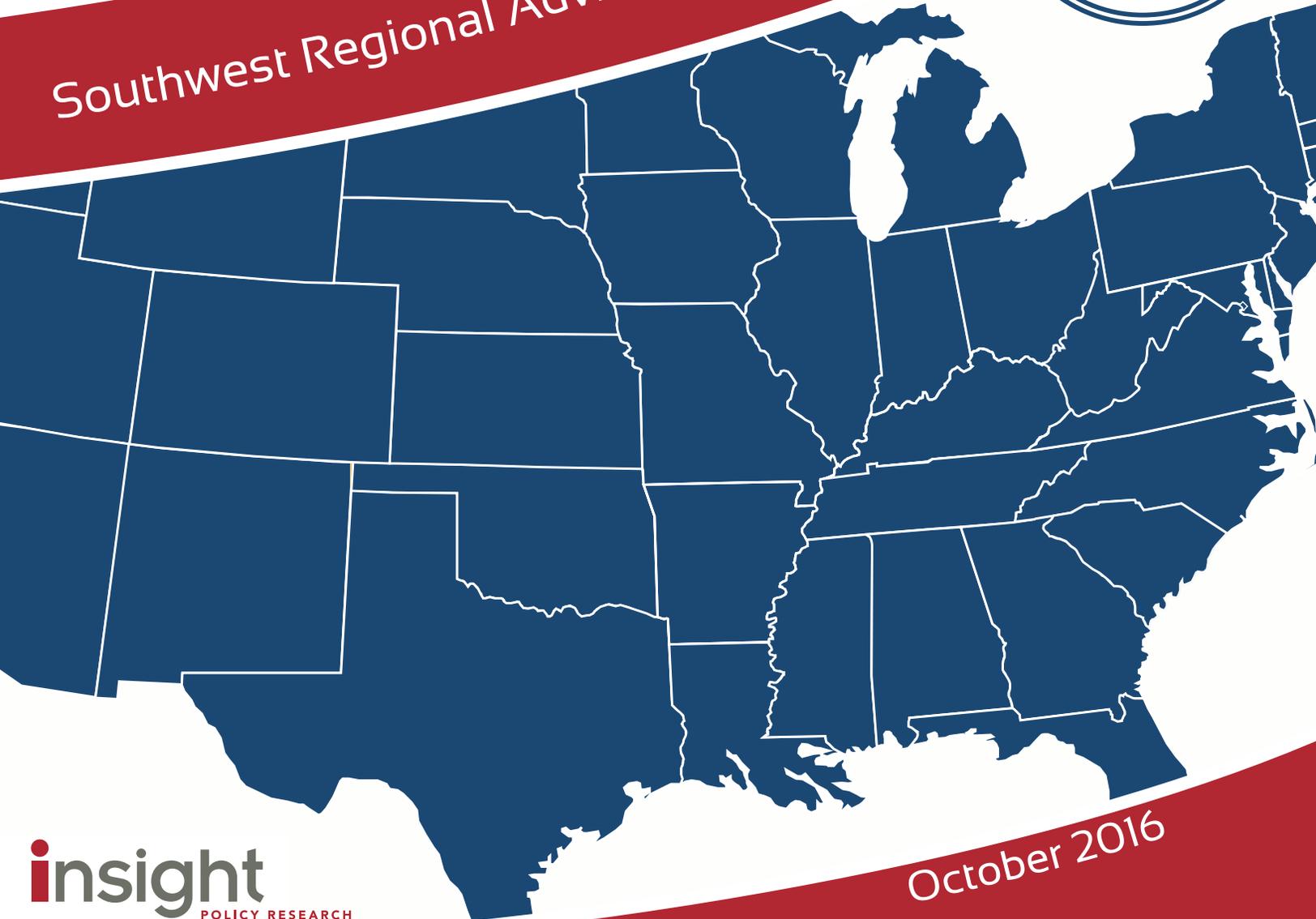


Identifying and Addressing Regional Education Needs

U.S. Department of Education



Southwest Regional Advisory Committee



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The Southwest Region:

A Report Identifying and Addressing the Region's Educational Needs

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities and results of the Southwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), 1 of 10 RACs established under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.). The RACs were formed to identify the 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 supporting local education agencies (LEAs or districts) and schools, especially low-performing districts and schools; improving educational outcomes for all students; closing achievement gaps; and improving the quality of instruction. The report represents the work of the Southwest RAC, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Committee members convened three times and reached out to their respective constituencies between July 19, 2016, and August 31, 2016. Members of the Southwest RAC represented a variety of stakeholders, including LEAs and SEAs; institutions of higher education; parents; practicing educators; and organizations serving youths, educators, or both. The members shared resources, communicated, and collaborated using Communities360^o, an interactive online platform hosted within the larger GRADS360^o system and housed within the secure U.S. Department of Education environment. Table A provides a list of committee members and their affiliations. An additional stakeholder from Arkansas (representing institutions of higher education) declined the invitation to participate in the Southwest RAC.

Table A. Southwest RAC members

Member name	Affiliation	State
Karli Saracini	North Little Rock School District	Arkansas
Ivy Pfeffer	Arkansas Department of Education	Arkansas
Chris Trombly	Arkansas Tech University	Arkansas
Bernell Cook ^a	Louisiana Department of Education	Louisiana
Alan Morgan	Pearson, Inc.	New Mexico
Courtney Lockridge	Piedmont Public Schools	Oklahoma
Viola Garcia	Aldine ISD School Board	Texas

^a Severe flooding in Louisiana in August 2016 caused catastrophic damage, particularly in the Baton Rouge area, and the Louisiana representative had to withdraw from the committee.

Members reviewed a regional profile containing educational statistics and other relevant data to inform their individual assessments of the challenges facing their region. These data show the Southwest Region is characterized by lower educational attainment and greater poverty than the country as a whole. Per-pupil spending is lower in all five Southwest Region states than the national average, and all states derive a higher percentage of revenue from the federal government than the national average. There is much diversity in the Southwest region, including three states (Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas) in which a majority of students are non-White. In two states—New Mexico and Texas—more than one-third of the population speaks a language other than English at home. In four of five states, the proportion of rural school districts is higher than the national average, while in the remaining state, Louisiana, there is a much greater proportion of urban and suburban districts than the country overall. Compared to teachers across the United States, a greater proportion of teachers in the Southwest region, especially in Louisiana and Texas, complete alternative preparation programs. Although public

high school graduation rates are near or higher than the national average in all Southwest region states except New Mexico, the 4-year public college completion rate is lower than the national average in all five states. See appendix A for detailed tables on the educational characteristics of the region.

Members also collaborated to develop a plan for soliciting information on the region's educational needs. They engaged stakeholders and disseminated information by administering an online survey, conducting key informant interviews, and exchanging written correspondence with key stakeholders. Members focused their efforts on distributing the survey to the widest possible groups of stakeholders.

As a result of the committee's outreach efforts, a total of 1,185 individuals responded to the survey. Approximately half represented schools (principals, librarians, curriculum coaches), 21 percent were classroom teachers, 18 percent represented school districts (superintendents, school board members), and 7 percent represented SEAs or state boards of education.

Each committee member prepared a report containing a needs assessment and specific recommendations for future technical assistance based on his or her assessment of the region's unique educational environment, the survey results, and the results of other data collection efforts.

Committee members in the Southwest region identified the following five educational needs. They are listed in ranked average order of priority as listed by RAC members:

- ▶ preparing students to be college and career ready;
- ▶ support with implementing and using assessments, especially formative assessments;
- ▶ research and resources on early childhood education;
- ▶ strategies to address the achievement gap at the student and school levels; and
- ▶ strategies to improve the distribution of effective teachers.

Committee members also developed the following four broad recommendations for technical assistance to better address the educational needs:

- ▶ **Training and professional development.** RAC members recommended identifying effective training on personalized learning, differentiated instruction, data literacy, and developmentally and culturally appropriate teaching strategies for underperforming students. They also suggested that Comprehensive Centers provide information about formative assessment strategies, such as videos of teachers implementing specific practices and student responses to strategies, and create a repository of vetted professional development providers and resources.
- ▶ **Building and enlarging the educational community.** RAC members recommended the facilitation of interdisciplinary efforts to better understand, coordinate, and promote early childhood learning. They also suggested creating linkages with employers, community colleges, and 4-year colleges to promote college and career readiness.
- ▶ **Compiling resources and best practice guides.** RAC members recommended providing resources SEAs can disseminate to teachers on preparing students for college and careers. They also recommended Comprehensive Centers assist SEAs with the development of strategic plans to identify, recruit, and distribute information that highlights effective teachers throughout the region.

- ▶ **Assisting with data collection and analysis.** RAC members recommended Comprehensive Centers investigate the relationships between teacher pay, teacher quality, and teacher recruitment. They also suggested providing SEAs assistance with collecting, interpreting, and responding to data on student achievement gaps.

See appendix B for each committee member’s individual needs assessment and recommendations for addressing those needs.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This report represents the regional needs assessment of the RAC for the Southwest region, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The RAC members used statistical data from the Southwest regional profile (appendix A); conducted data collection and outreach activities to obtain input from various constituencies; and met three times between July 16, 2016, and August 31, 2016, to assess regional needs and how to address the needs identified.

A. Legislative Background

The RACs are authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq.). 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 provide technical assistance to state, local, and regional educational agencies and to schools. The technical assistance is to be directed toward implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and to achieving goals through the use of evidence based teaching methods and assessment tools for use by teachers and administrators in the following areas:

- ▶ core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts;
- ▶ English language acquisition;
- ▶ education technology;
- ▶ communication among education experts, school officials, teachers, parents, and librarians;
- ▶ information that can be used to improve academic achievement; close achievement gaps; and encourage and sustain improvement for schools, educators, parents, and policymakers within the region in which the center is located; and
- ▶ teacher and school leader in-service and preservice training models that illustrate best practices in the use of technology in different content areas.

B. Regional Background Information

A variety of educational data sources informed the development of the Southwest regional profile, which provides a descriptive snapshot of the educational landscape in the region. The RAC members used these data to inform their individual assessments of the region's most pressing needs. The regional profiles include sections on demographics; SEA capacity; educational resources; teacher preparation, qualifications, and certification; and student educational attainment. Summaries of the data presented in each section of the profile appear below. See appendix A for the descriptive tables and charts that represent this regional profile.

There is racial/ethnic and language diversity in the Southwest region. Three of the five states in the region have a student population in which the majority is non-White; in New Mexico and Texas, a majority of students are Hispanic (61 percent and 52 percent, respectively), while in Louisiana 45 percent of students are Black and 5 percent Hispanic. New Mexico and Texas also have a much higher proportion of households where Spanish is spoken at home (29 percent and 30 percent, respectively) than the country as a whole (13 percent), although the other states in the region have lower percentages of Spanish-speaking households than the national average. The Native American population

in public schools in Oklahoma (15 percent) and New Mexico (10 percent) is substantially higher than the country as a whole (1 percent). The proportion of school districts in rural areas is higher than the national average in each state in the region except Louisiana, which has a higher proportion of urban school districts (14 percent) than the country as a whole (6 percent).

The Southwest region is generally poorer than the country as a whole. The median household income is lower in each state than the national average, and every state in the Southwest region has a higher percentage of persons in poverty than the national poverty rate (15.1 percent), ranging from 15.9 percent in Oklahoma to 20.9 percent in New Mexico. The poverty rate is even higher among children aged 5–17, with a range from 21.1 percent in Oklahoma to 27.7 percent in New Mexico, compared to 20.3 percent in the entire country. It is no surprise, then, that the percentage of public school students receiving free or reduced-price lunch is higher across the Southwest region than the national average (52 percent). Every state in the Southwest region except Oklahoma also has a greater proportion of Title I schools than the nation as a whole, where 66.4 percent of schools are eligible for Title I.

State spending per pupil is lower in every state in the region (ranging from \$8,813 in Oklahoma to \$11,648 in Louisiana) than the national average (\$12,020). Schools in the region also receive a greater percentage of their revenue from the federal government (ranging from 11.7 percent in Texas to 15.2 percent in Louisiana and New Mexico) than the national average (9.3 percent), although three of five states in the region (Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) spend a greater proportion of all state spending on education than the national average. Although every state in the region enrolls a higher percentage of 4-year-olds in state-funded prekindergarten programs (ranging from 30 percent in New Mexico to 75 percent in Oklahoma, compared to 29 percent across the country), state spending per child enrolled in prekindergarten programs is lower than the national average in three states (Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) and about the same as the national average in Louisiana (\$4,570). At the K–12 level, the pupil-to-teacher ratio is lower than the national average in all states except Oklahoma, which at 16.2:1 is nearly the same as the national average (16.1:1). Every state in the Southwest region has a greater proportion of teachers who completed alternative preparation programs than the national average (17.4 percent); in fact, a majority of teachers in Louisiana (53.4 percent) and Texas (51.5 percent) completed alternative preparation programs.

The high school graduation rate is higher than the national average (82 percent) in three states in the Southwest region: Texas (88 percent), Arkansas (87 percent), and Oklahoma (83 percent), but lower in Louisiana (75 percent) and New Mexico (69 percent). Students in the Southwest region score lower than the national average on several national assessments, including the 4th-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment, where the proportion of students scoring at or above proficient is lower in each state than the national average; the Advanced Placement exam, where the average score in each state is lower than the national average; and the ACT, where the average composite score is lower in each state than the national average. The 6-year college completion rate at 4-year public institutions is lower than the national average (65 percent) in every state in the region, ranging from 46 percent in New Mexico to 60 percent in Texas.

C. Challenges Affecting Regional Needs

RAC members' data collection efforts identified several challenges affecting the Southwest region's educational needs. Differences in specific state contexts resulted in varying approaches to addressing the challenges. The challenges affecting the region are summarized briefly below:

- ▶ **Attracting and retaining effective teachers, especially in rural areas.** As discussed in the Southwest regional profile, most states in the Southwest region have more rural schools than the national average. Stakeholders reported it is particularly challenging to fill openings for teachers and to retain effective teachers in these areas. In many instances, school districts rely on long-term substitutes or teachers with lower qualifications than preferred.
- ▶ **Preparing students for college and careers.** As indicated in the Southwest regional profile, students in the Southwest region perform below the national average on the major indicators of college readiness, such as Advanced Placement exams, the ACT, and the SAT. College completion rates are also lower in every state in the region than the national average.

D. Data Collection and Outreach Strategies

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. RAC members received briefs, PowerPoint presentations, and other RAC-related materials that describe the purpose of the Comprehensive Centers program and how technical assistance builds the capacity of SEAs and LEAs. Members disseminated materials to their educational organizations and their professional networks.

RAC members conducted needs sensing and data collection between July 19, 2016, and August 31, 2016. Methods included disseminating an online survey link through email, posting on social media, or posting on public websites; personal phone calls; and small meetings or 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 in comment boxes.

RAC members had access to a Communities of Practice website to help facilitate interactions and align data collection activities. Members used the website to access background materials and data, upload and share documents, and pose questions for discussions with one another and the RAC facilitators. RAC members held three meetings internally to review the data collected and discuss the needs and the strategies to address those needs.

A total of 1,185 individuals took the online survey. An additional 220 individuals provided feedback through written or oral correspondence with RAC members. Table 1 illustrates responses received through the survey and other data collection efforts in each of the states.

Table 1. Members of the public submitting comments by state

State	Number of individuals providing feedback	Percentage
Arkansas	474	34
Louisiana ^a	50	4
New Mexico	185	13
Oklahoma	239	17
Texas	457	33
Total Southwest region	1,405	100

^a Severe flooding in Louisiana in August 2016 caused catastrophic damage, particularly in the Baton Rouge area, and prevented outreach to stakeholders.

Note: Some percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Table 2 shows the number of responses received by major education stakeholder groups.

Table 2. Members of the public submitting comments by stakeholder group

Role	Number of individuals providing feedback	Percentage
State level	98	7
SEA staff	79	6
Other, state level	19	1
Local district or regional level	257	18
Superintendent or director of schools	107	8
School board member	91	6
LEA or central office	49	3
Other, local or regional level	10	1
School level	683	49
Principal or other school administrator	226	16
Librarian	342	24
Curriculum specialist or instructional coach	29	2
Parent/grandparent/guardian	64	5
Other, school level	22	2
Classroom level	290	21
Teacher	290	21
Community level	74	5
Higher education	29	2
Community member	23	2
Business	15	1
Other, community level	7	< 1
Other or missing	3	< 1
Total	1,405	100

Note: Some percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Chapter 2. Educational Needs and Recommendations for Addressing the Needs

RAC members used information from the regional profile, input from constituencies, and committee members' individual expertise to identify the region's most pressing educational need areas and to make recommendations accordingly. Each committee member chose up to five priority needs and recommended one or more potential strategies to address those needs (see appendix B). Overall, individual members of the Southwest RAC identified the following five needs:

- ▶ **Preparing students to be college and career ready.** Most Southwest RAC members reported the region needs to better prepare students for colleges and/or careers. Members observed that the Southwest region lacks a framework to define college and career readiness and guide policies and practices, and noted that LEAs and SEAs need guidance on implementing provisions of ESSA related to college and career readiness. Members also noted the region does not have curriculum for college and career readiness, and teachers need resources and professional development to prepare students for college and careers. Members stated the region needs better connections between schools and partners, such as employers, community colleges, and 4-year colleges, to promote college and career readiness.
- ▶ **Support with implementing and using assessments, especially formative assessments.** Southwest RAC members frequently noted the Southwest region needs to improve assessment and accountability systems. They observed that states in the Southwest region are implementing new state standards and responding to requirements in ESSA, and they need assistance in understanding requirements and developing ways to benefit from data generated by assessments. In particular, some members emphasized a need to improve how formative assessments are used in the Southwest region.
- ▶ **Research and resources on early childhood education.** Almost all Southwest RAC members described early childhood education and kindergarten readiness as a high priority. Members frequently reported that elementary schools in the region face growing numbers of children who enter kindergarten without the requisite skills to succeed. Some members observed that the Southwest region needs a common understanding of what it means to be ready for kindergarten and a strategy to communicate these expectations to parents, schools, government agencies, and childcare providers. They suggested the Comprehensive Centers could support research about early childhood cognition and how it influences learning later in life. Members also observed that government agencies in the region rarely coordinate on the topic of early childhood well-being.
- ▶ **Strategies to address the achievement gap at the student and school levels.** Many Southwest RAC members reported that inequality across the Southwest region manifests in disparities in student achievement. Members suggested that SEAs and LEAs in the Southwest region need assistance on how to collect, interpret, and respond to data on student achievement gaps. One member suggested policymakers in the region need to improve how they interact with local communities to address local needs. Members also suggested that teachers in the Southwest region need professional development on personalized learning, differentiated instruction, and data literacy, as well as in ways to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate teaching strategies for underperforming students.

- ▶ **Strategies to improve the distribution of effective teachers.** Several Southwest RAC members observed that the region does not have an equitable distribution of effective teachers. In particular, Southwest RAC members noted that schools in rural areas have difficulty finding and retaining effective teachers. One member suggested the Southwest region needs to develop a strategic plan to better identify and distribute highly effective teachers. Another member suggested research on the relationships between teacher pay, teacher quality, and teacher retention could help the Southwest region devise better policies to attract and retain effective teachers, especially in underserved areas. One member noted that schools in the Southwest region, especially in small towns and rural areas, needed training on how to evaluate, motivate, and improve low-performing teachers. Another member also suggested that school districts in the Southwest region need to improve the way they recruit high-achieving students into teacher training programs.

The committee members made recommendations in five broad categories to help address the identified needs:

- ▶ training and professional development;
- ▶ building and enlarging the educational community;
- ▶ compiling resources and best practices; and
- ▶ assisting with data collection and analysis.

Table 3 provides a high-level summary of the recommendations expressed by each RAC member related to the priority need areas.

Table 3. Summary of needs and recommendations by committee member

Member name	Recommendation
<i>Preparing students to be college and career ready</i>	
Christopher Trombly	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
Christopher Trombly	Support vocational training for non–college-bound students
Viola Garcia	Improve teacher professional development/resources by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping SEAs’ efforts to provide professional development and other technical support on developing student-focused, personalized learning systems • providing curriculum resources, information, and data (preferably online and easily accessible) • hosting forums, both in person and online, to allow educators from across the respective regions to draw upon one another’s experiences
Karli Saracini	Provide technical assistance in refining policies and best practices that will support success for all
Karli Saracini	Provide support for identifying the knowledge and skills necessary to compete globally and examine the data to drive next steps
<i>Support with implementing and using assessments, especially formative assessments</i>	
Courtney Lockridge	Create an online resource for teachers and administrators to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical examples to model across grades and content areas (could include videos of teachers implementing specific practices, interviews and reflective feedback surrounding the practice itself, student responses to the strategies, and new ideas

Member name	Recommendation
	<p>and suggestions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher-friendly lessons, activities, questioning strategies, formative assessment questions, and technology-based resources listed by standard and objective across each grade level or course
Courtney Lockridge Viola Garcia	Facilitate the identification, development, and dissemination of strategies and resources by
Courtney Lockridge Alan Morgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging cross-group collaboration sites where educators can share best practices, resources, and other tools • support SEAs' efforts to provide a forum for educators to collaborate or locate information on specific topics or strategies • building a statewide or regional system for teachers to view and see relevant, purposeful implementation of formative assessment strategies • combining ideas across different states in the region to extend teaching and learning beyond geographic barriers; • demonstrating how standards are cross-referenced in different states
Viola Garcia Courtney Lockridge Alan Morgan	<p>Support transition to new assessment standards and legislation by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing information on ways to address increased flexibility and the anti-testing movement • assisting SEAs in better understanding and implementing ESSA over the next 4 to 5 years
Research and resources on early childhood education	
Karli Saracini Christopher Trombly	<p>Provide readiness standards and teaching credentials by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a common understanding of what it means to be “ready for kindergarten” • developing a system to ensure preschoolers will transition to kindergarten successfully • helping SEAs' partner with institutions of higher education to design a rigorous birth to age 5 teaching credential
Christopher Trombly	<p>Increase awareness of and disseminate research on benefits of early childhood education by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing technical assistance to SEAs to increase the awareness of the need for quality early childhood education • promoting the importance of children’s earliest experiences to their cognitive growth and development
Christopher Trombly	Integrate services by modeling “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
Strategies to address the achievement gap at the student and school levels	
Christopher Trombly	<p>Help educators collect and analyze data, and learn from successful models by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing training and technical assistance on the use of research-based best practices and implementation of programs under ESSA • monitoring 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 • collecting data on achievement gaps that could be shared with SEAs, which could then bring more resources to bear and/or fashion new policy

Member name	Recommendation
Viola Garcia Karli Saracini	Help SEAs develop, identify, or provide professional development in the following topic areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessments • personalized learning • differentiated instruction • data literacy • college and career readiness • culturally responsive teaching • school turnaround models • using data to drive instruction
<i>Strategies to improve the distribution of effective teachers</i>	
Karli Saracini	Convene stakeholder engagement meetings to help develop a strategic plan to ensure the distribution of highly effective teachers
Alan Morgan	Examine the relationship between salary and educator performance
Christopher Trombly	Improve teacher preparation and training by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting SEAs' efforts to work closely with colleges and universities to ensure high-achieving students are selected for educator preparation programs • assisting SEAs' efforts to promote teaching in the community and make it a desirable profession • identifying preservice and job training and professional development options for teachers that includes cognitive psychology • helping 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

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Appendix A. Region Educational Profile

Demographics

Understanding the demographic makeup of the states in each region helps to establish the context for the educational issues that are most pressing. This section presents tables from the *Digest of Education Statistics*, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and *American Fact Finder* related to

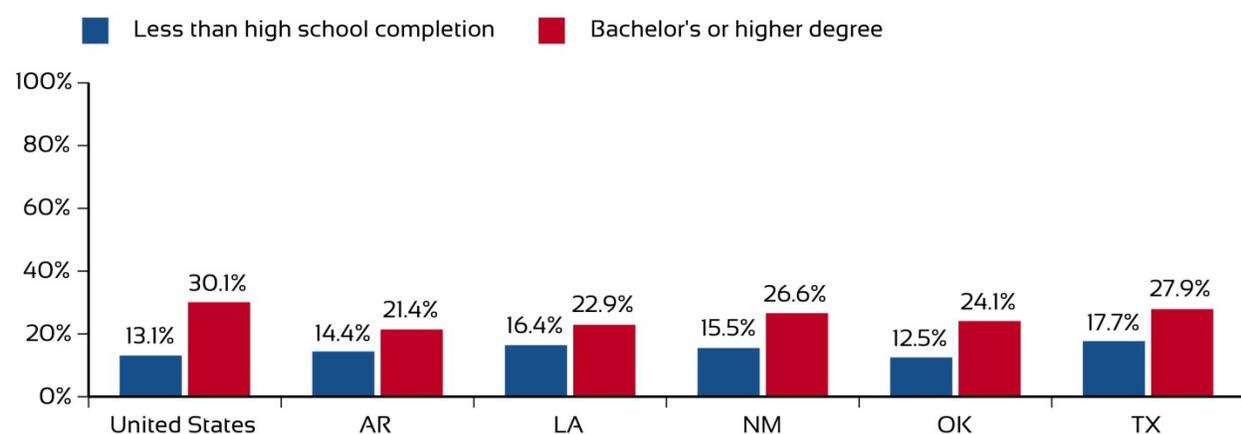
- ▶ The educational attainment of the adult population;
- ▶ The poverty rate, median household income, and unemployment rate;
- ▶ The overall number of students, teachers, and schools, both public and private;
- ▶ The racial/ethnic distribution of students served by public schools;
- ▶ Participation in public school services (free or reduced-lunch program, English language learners, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, state-sponsored prekindergarten); and
- ▶ The percentage of the population who speaks a language other than English at home.

A. Educational Attainment

The highest level of education completed by the adult, working-age population (25- to 64 year olds) is a proxy for human capital, the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population. Higher educational attainment (a bachelor's degree or higher) is associated with better income and employment. Figure 1 displays the percentage of the adult population with less than a high school diploma in 2014 and the percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2014.

Additional information about the **educational attainment of young adults** and differences by race/ethnicity can be found in the latest *NCES Condition of Education*.

Figure 1. Educational attainment by state, 2014



Source: 2015 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 108.40. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.80.asp

B. Economic Indicators

Table 1 displays socioeconomic indicators such as the percentage of persons and percentage of children below the poverty level in 2014. The table also displays the median annual household income in 2014 and the unemployment rate in May 2016.

Table 1. Selected socioeconomic indicators, by state

State	Percent of Persons in Poverty, 2014 ^a	Percent of Children Ages 5 to 17 in Poverty, 2014 ^a	Annual Household Income (Median), 2014 ^b	Unemployment Rate, May 2016 ^c
United States	15.1	20.3	\$53,700	4.9
Arkansas	18.3	24.9	\$41,300	3.8
Louisiana	19.0	25.3	\$44,600	6.3
New Mexico	20.9	27.7	\$44,800	6.2
Oklahoma	15.9	21.1	\$47,500	4.7
Texas	16.8	23.6	\$53,000	4.4

Source: ^a 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 102.40. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_102.40.asp?current=yes;

^b 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 102.30. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_102.30.asp?current=yes;

^c Bureau of Labor Statistics Monthly Unemployment Report. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

C. Schools and Students

Tables 2 through 5 contain school and student demographics such as the total number of schools, teachers, and students; the racial/ethnic distribution of students in public schools; the percentage of schools by urbanicity; and the percentage of Title I schools.

Number of schools, teachers, and students. Table 2 displays the number of schools, teachers, and students in fall 2013 for public and private schools.

Table 2. Count of schools, teachers, and students, by sector and state, fall 2013

State	Public			Private		
	Schools ^a	Teachers ^b	Students ^c	Schools ^d	Teachers ^d	Students ^d
United States	94,758	3,113,764	50,044,522	33,620	441,500	5,395,740
Arkansas	1,082	34,933	489,979	190	2,530	30,340
Louisiana	1,322	46,437	711,491	420	9,230	129,720
New Mexico	862	22,239	339,244	170	2,020	21,750
Oklahoma	1,787	41,983	681,848	170	2,950	32,740
Texas	8,586	334,580	5,153,702	1,740	26,600	312,640

Source: ^a 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 216.43. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_216.43.asp?current=yes;

^b 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 208.30. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_208.30.asp?current=yes;

^c 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.40. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.40.asp?current=yes;

^d 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 205.80. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_205.80.asp?current=yes

Percentage of public school students by race/ethnicity. Table 3 displays the racial/ethnic background of public school students in fall 2013.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and state, fall 2013

State	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races
United States	50.3	15.6	24.8	4.8	0.4	1.0	3.0
Arkansas	63.1	21.0	11.2	1.5	0.6	0.6	2.0
Louisiana	46.8	44.5	4.8	1.5	0.1	0.7	1.6
New Mexico	24.6	1.9	60.7	1.2	0.1	10.1	1.4
Oklahoma	51.7	9.2	15.0	1.8	0.3	15.0	7.1
Texas	29.5	12.7	51.8	3.7	0.1	0.4	1.9

Source: 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.70. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.70.asp

Percentage of school districts by urban-centric locale. Table 4 displays the percentage of school districts classified by the Census locale codes. The large, midsize, and small city codes were summed to create the total number of city districts. The large, midsize, and small suburban codes were summed to create the total number of suburban districts. The fringe, distant, and remote town codes were summed to create the total number of town districts. The fringe, distant, and remote rural codes were summed to create the total number of rural districts. The percentages of districts within each of the four major locale codes are presented.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of public school districts, by urban-centric locale and state, 2013-14

State	City	Suburban	Town	Rural
United States	5.7	22.9	18.4	53.0
Arkansas	5.9	5.9	26.2	62.0
Louisiana	14.3	25.7	24.3	35.7
New Mexico	4.5	3.4	30.3	61.8
Oklahoma	1.5	4.3	18.9	75.4
Texas	7.1	10.8	20.6	61.4

Source: National Center for Education Statistics Rural Education in America, table A.1.a.-1. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/a.1.a.-1.asp>

Percentage of Title I schools. Table 5 presents the total number of schools and the percentage of schools that were eligible for Title I in 2010-11. A Title I eligible school is one in which the percentage of children from low-income families is at least as high as the percentage of children from low-income families served by the local education agency (LEA) as a whole, or because 35 percent or more of the children in the school are from low-income families.

Table 5. Number of schools and percentage by Title I status, 2010-11

State	Number of Operating Schools	Percent Title I
United States	98,817	67.4
Arkansas	1,110	73.0
Louisiana	1,471	84.6
New Mexico	862	87.0
Oklahoma	1,785	66.7
Texas	8,732	77.9

Source: *Number and Types of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2010-11*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/pesschools10/tables/table_02.asp

D. Participation in Public School Services

Tables 6 and 7 provide information about participation in public school services.

Public school services. Table 6 provides the percentage of students in public schools who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, participated in English Language learner programs, were served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act Part B, or participated in programs for gifted and talented students.

Table 6. Percentage of public school students participating in school services

State	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, 2013-14 ^a	English Language Learners, 2013-14 ^b	Students with Disabilities, 2013-14 ^c	Gifted and Talented, 2006 ^d
United States	52.0	9.3	12.9	6.7
Arkansas	61.2	7.5	13.3	9.5
Louisiana	66.8	2.2	11.1	3.4
New Mexico	67.2	15.3	13.9	4.0
Oklahoma	61.9	7.0	15.1	13.7
Texas	60.1	15.5	8.6	7.6

^a 2015 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 204.10. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.10.asp?current=yes;

^b 2015 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 204.20. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.20.asp?current=yes;

^c 2015 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 204.70. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_204.70.asp?current=yes;

^d 2014 *Digest of Education Statistics*, table 204.90. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_204.90.asp?current=yes

Prekindergarten participation and per student spending. The National Institute for Early Education Research publishes a yearly *State of Preschool* report with **profiles of each state**. The state profiles provide detailed information on access to preschool, quality standards, and resources. Table 7 displays the percent of 3-year-old and the percentage of 4-year-old population enrolled in prekindergarten and state spending per child enrolled in prekindergarten.

Table 7. State-funded prekindergarten programs, 2015

State	State Spending Per Enrolled Child	Percent of 4 Year-Old Population Enrolled in State-Funded Program	Percent of 3 Year-Old Population Enrolled in State Funded Program
United States	\$4,489	29	5
Arkansas	\$4,372	39	21
Louisiana	\$4,570	32	N/A
New Mexico	\$4,722	30	0
Oklahoma	\$3,709	75	N/A
Texas	\$3,584	48	7

Source: *National Institute for Early Education Research*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2015-state-profiles

E. Other

Table 8 contains linguistic indicators such as the percentage of the population who speak English only at home, the percentage who speak Spanish at home, the percentage who speak an other Indo-European language at home, and the percentage who speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home.

Table 8. Percentage of population 5 years and older by language spoken at home and by state

State	Language Spoken at Home, Percent of Population 5 and Older				
	English Only	Spanish	Other Indo-European Language	Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	Other Languages
United States	79.1	13.0	3.7	3.3	0.9
Arkansas	92.9	5.2	0.8	1.0	0.2
Louisiana	91.4	3.6	3.5	1.2	0.3
New Mexico	63.8	28.8	1.3	1.0	5.2
Oklahoma	90.4	6.5	1.0	1.4	0.7
Texas	65.1	29.5	2.1	2.7	0.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder*.

State Education Agency Capacity

State Education Agencies (SEAs) are the primary customers of the Comprehensive Centers. Understanding the capacity in the SEA, the number of districts served, and the governance structure of each state provides context. Data in this section come from the *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, the Education Commission of the States report, *50-State Comparison: K-12 Governance Structures*, and Achieve’s report, *Leadership Turnover: 2015 Year of Significant Change in State Education Leadership*.

Table 9 displays the number of agencies in each state. Table 10 displays the governance model (e.g., who is elected, who is appointed). Table 11 shows changes in education leadership over the past 2 years (2015 and 2016).

Table 9. Number of education agencies in 2013–14, by type and state

State	Total	District/LEA	RESA	State	Independent Charter Schools and Other
United States	18,194	13,491	1,522	255	2,923
Arkansas	288	237	15	5	31
Louisiana	133	70	0	6	57
New Mexico	150	89	0	6	55
Oklahoma	598	517	0	3	78
Texas	1,252	1,027	20	3	202

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 214.30. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_214.30.asp?current=yes
 Note: RESA = Regional Education Service Agency

Table 10. State governance

State	Governance Model	Legislature	Local School Boards
Arkansas	Governor appoints board, board appoints chief	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	310 local boards; members elected.
Louisiana	8 spots on board are elected, 3 spots are appointed by Governor	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	68 local boards; members elected.
New Mexico	Elected Public Education Commission, advisory only; Governor-appointed chief	The legislature has a house education committee and a senate education committee.	89 local boards; members elected.
Oklahoma	Appointed board, elected chief	The legislature has a house common education committee and a senate education committee.	543 local boards; members elected.
Texas	Elected board; Governor-appointed chief	The legislature has a house public education committee and a senate education committee.	1,043 local boards; members appointed and elected.

Source: Education Commission of the States. (2013). *50-State Comparison: K-12 Governance Structures*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <http://www.ecs.org/k-12-governance-structures/>

Table 11. State education leadership changes in 2015 or 2016

State	New Governor	New State Board Members	New Chief State School Officer	New State Higher Education Officer
Arkansas	Asa Hutchinson-R, Jan 2015	3/9 voting members	Johnny Key, Mar 2015	Brett Powell, Feb 2015
Louisiana	John Bel Edwards, Jan 2016	8/11 voting members	N/A	Joseph C. Rallo, Jan 2015
New Mexico	N/A	No board	Hanna Skandera, Feb 2015	Barbara Damron, Jan 2015
Oklahoma	N/A	0/7 board members	Joy Hofmeister, Jan 2015	N/A
Texas	Greg Abbott-R, Jan 2015	1/15 voting members	Mike Morath, Jan 2016	N/A

Source: Achieve. (2015). *Leadership Turnover: 2015 Year of Significant Change in State Education Leadership*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <http://www.achieve.org/files/LeadershipTurnover2015.pdf>

Educational Resources

Indicators of educational resources include school finance information such as revenues and expenditures, access to fiber and broadband connectivity, and pupil to teacher ratios. Data for the tables presented in this section come from the *2015 Digest of Education Statistics, American Fact Finder*, and *Education Superhighway's 2015 State of the States* report on broadband connectivity in public schools.

Table 12 provides the total revenue for each state by source of funds.

Table 12. Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source, 2012–13

State	Total Revenue (in Thousands)	Percent Revenue From Federal	Percent Revenue From State	Percent Revenue From Local
United States	\$603,686,987	9.3	45.2	45.5
Arkansas	\$5,051,804	12.1	51.9	35.9
Louisiana	\$8,439,545	15.2	43.3	41.6
New Mexico	\$3,695,203	15.2	68.6	16.2
Oklahoma	\$5,912,975	12.4	49.2	38.5
Texas	\$50,053,709	11.7	40.2	48.0

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 235.20. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_235.20.asp?current=yes

Table 13 provides the per-pupil expenditures and the percentage of expenditures on instruction, support services (student support, instructional staff, general administration, operations and maintenance, student transportation, and other support services), and other (food services, capital outlay, interest on debt).

Additional data on total current expenditures for elementary and secondary education, by function, subfunction, and state is available through NCES. See http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015301/tables/table_03.asp.

Table 13. Per-pupil expenditures, 2012-13, by function

State	Per Pupil Expenditures	Percent Instruction	Percent Support	Percent Other
United States	\$12,020	54.4	31.3	14.3
Arkansas	\$10,908	49.2	33.0	17.8
Louisiana	\$11,648	51.2	34.4	14.5
New Mexico	\$10,410	50.5	33.2	16.2
Oklahoma	\$8,813	49.7	33.4	16.9
Texas	\$9,923	49.1	29.2	21.7

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 236.75. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_236.75.asp?current=yes

Table 14 provides another look at education expenditures. The last column provides an index of state and local education expenditures (excluding capital outlay) to total expenditures (excluding capital outlay, utilities, and intergovernmental expenditures).

Table 14. State expenditures on education, fall 2013

State	Total Enrollment ^a	Total Direct State and Local Expenditures ^{b,c}	State and Local Education Expenditures ^{b,d}	Percent Education to Total Expenditures
United States	50,044,052	\$2,366,783,591	\$796,049,064	33.6
Arkansas	489,979	\$19,144,416	\$7,300,579	38.1
Louisiana	711,491	\$36,918,894	\$11,128,362	30.1
New Mexico	339,244	\$16,170,296	\$5,358,812	33.1
Oklahoma	681,848	\$24,223,441	\$8,730,612	36.0
Texas	5,153,702	\$163,935,067	\$63,939,134	39.0

^a 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 203.20. Retrieved July 5, 2016, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_203.20.asp?current=yes

^b American Fact Finder, United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/govs/local/>

^c Total direct expenditures do not include capital outlay, utilities, and intergovernmental expenditures

^d Total education expenditures do not include capital outlay

Table 15 displays school district broadband connectivity for each state. The FCC set a minimum Internet access goal of 100 Kbps per student. The table provides the percentage of school districts in each state meeting that goal. Districts with access to fiber-optic connections are more likely to meet the minimum connectivity goal. The second column of table 15 presents the percentage of school districts in the state with access to fiber-optic connections. The FCC funds upgrades to fiber networks. The FCC also subsidizes the deployment of wired and wireless networks in schools. Accessing the E-rate budget for Wi-Fi networks is an indicator of whether districts are aware their E-rate budget can be used to upgrade Wi-Fi networks. Lastly, \$3/Mbps is a price target that will enable school districts to meet Internet access goals.

Additional information and maps of district fiber connectivity are available through the Federal Communications Commission website (<https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/e-rate-fiber-map/>).

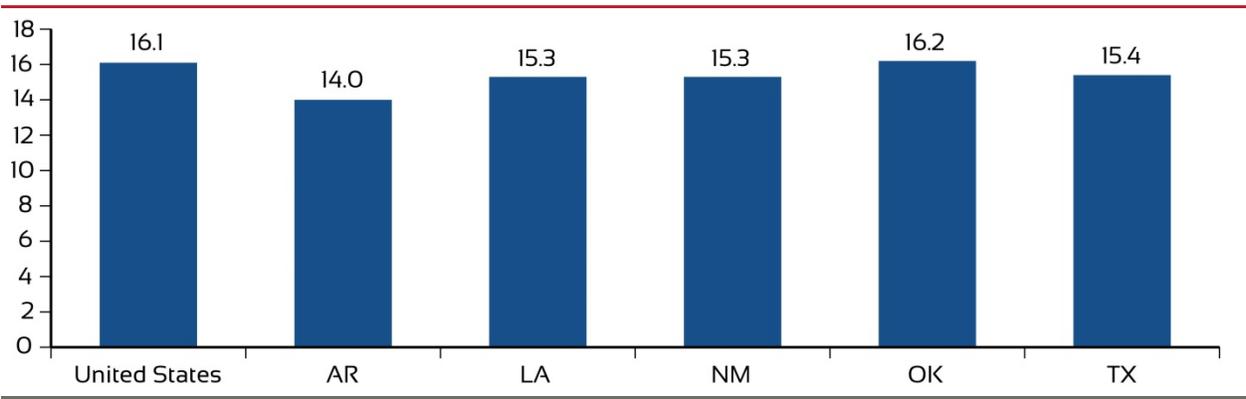
Table 15. School district broadband connectivity, 2015

State	Percent of School Districts			
	Meeting the Minimum 100 Kbps per Student Goal	That Have Fiber Connections To Meet Bandwidth Goals	That Accessed Their E-Rate Budget for Wi-Fi Networks	Meeting the \$3/Mbps Internet Access Affordability Target
Arkansas	79	82	58	4
Louisiana	67	98	78	9
New Mexico	65	89	61	0
Oklahoma	85	77	66	3
Texas	67	85	58	4

Source: Education Superhighway. (2015.) 2015 State of the States. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from http://stateofthestates.educationsuperhighway.org/assets/sos/full_report-55ba0a64dcae0611b15ba9960429d323e2eadbac5a67a0b369bedbb8cf15dddb.pdf

Another educational resource is teachers. Figure 2 presents the pupil to teacher ratio.

Figure 2. Pupil-to-teacher ratio, fall 2013



Source: 2015 Digest of Education Statistics, table 208.40. Retrieved July 6, 2016 from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_208.40.asp?current=yes

Teacher Preparation, Qualifications, and Certification

Tables 16 through 20 display data on teacher preparation programs, the percentage of teachers who completed their training in a different state from where they are teaching, and ways teacher preparation programs are addressing shortages of highly qualified teachers.

All the data come from the Title II Reports National Teacher Preparation Data file.

Table 16. Number of completers of teacher preparation programs in 2013–14, by program type and state

State	Total Enrollment	Total Completers	Completers by Program Type		
			Traditional	Alternative, IHE-Based	Alternative, not IHE-Based
United States	465,540	180,745	149,369	13,011	18,365
Arkansas	5,258	2,166	1,620	368	178
Louisiana	5,307	2,525	1,202	745	578
New Mexico	3,525	1,036	740	296	N/A
Oklahoma	4,916	2,152	1,607	N/A	545
Texas	45,385	20,549	9,964	1,409	9,176

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/DataTools/2015/AllStates.xls>

Note: IHE = institute of higher learning

Table 17. Percentage of completers of teacher preparation programs in 2013–14, by program type and state

State	Total Completers	Program Type		
		Percent Traditional	Percent Alternative, IHE-Based	Percent Alternative, not IHE-Based
United States	180,745	82.6	7.2	10.2
Arkansas	2,166	74.8	17.0	8.2
Louisiana	2,525	47.6	29.5	22.9
New Mexico	1,036	71.4	28.6	0.0
Oklahoma	2,152	74.7	0.0	25.3
Texas	20,549	48.5	6.9	44.7

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/DataTools/2015/AllStates.xls>

Table 18. Number and percent of newly licensed teachers who received their credential from a teacher preparation program in a different state

State	Total Number Receiving Initial Credential in the State in 2013–14	Total Number Who Completed Their Teacher Preparation Program in Another State	Percent Who Trained Out of State
United States	254,272	56,718	22
Arkansas	3,102	549	18
Louisiana	2,991	886	30
New Mexico	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	3,859	958	25
Texas	26,112	3,418	13

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01

Table 19. Do teacher preparation programs address shortages of highly qualified teachers by area of certification or licensure, subject, or specialty

State	Area of Certification or Licensure	Subject	Specialty
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	No	No	No
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01

Table 20. Description of ways teacher preparation programs are addressing shortages of highly qualified teachers

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
Arkansas	<p>Statewide strategies designed to address shortage areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program Grants, whereby funding could be provided to students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines to recruit highly qualified students with strong content knowledge. Utilizing in-house programs like the new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Residential College (UCA) and the Williams Teacher Education Program (WBC) to encourage teacher preparation majors to remain in the STEM field and to recruit new teachers to the field. <p>Advising students towards math and science areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining test scores of teacher education majors to encourage students who score highly on the math or science (etc.) to pursue teacher licensure in those areas. Inviting local school administrators and teachers to campus to speak to candidates and share the need for science and math teachers in schools. Faculty visiting high schools to recruit from math and science students. Job/Career fairs directed specifically at those teaching or willing to teach in high need subject/geographic areas of the state. Developing recruiting literature that includes mathematics teaching as rewarding career. Recruitment posters have been posted in the both college science buildings.

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science education faculty members are heavily involved in the Arkansas State Science Fair. • Arkansas colleges and universities utilize Educational Renewal Zone offices and through this entity are able to identify and incorporate the needs of the local educational agencies where our graduates teach. Additionally, through the use of partner schools, they are able to link with the needs of schools and the instructional decisions that new teachers face daily.
Louisiana	<p>Each year, the LDOE creates a teacher shortage area report for the U.S. Department of Education that allows qualified teachers to participate in federal loan forgiveness programs and grants.</p> <p>To ensure that teacher preparation programs address shortages of highly qualified teachers and to achieve the state’s teacher equity objectives, the LDOE intends to pursue and continue work that addresses the root causes of teacher shortages.</p> <p>The LDOE submitted an Equity Plan to USDOE in June 2015 that calls for:</p> <p>Expanding the believe and prepare pilot program's most promising teacher preparation practices. Beginning in 2014, the Believe and Prepare program has supported forty-one school districts and seventeen charter organizations to partner with twenty-four universities and alternate providers to develop mentor teachers, create year-long residencies and increase the number of special education teachers, as well as address workforce needs of districts, specifically in special education.</p> <p>Encouraging more and stronger partnerships between leas and preparation programs. Believe and Prepare pilots have demonstrated that strong LEA partnerships with preparation programs can help meet staffing needs in hard-to-staff schools and high-demand subject areas, such as special education, STEM and career and technical courses. Through the Believe and Prepare program, LEAs have been engaged in dialogue with preparation programs on their short-term and long-term hiring needs, and what it takes to be effective on day one in the classroom. As a result, these teacher pipelines will more likely ensure that new teachers are effective and hold the certifications they need to fill LEAs’ most critical shortage areas.</p> <p>Supporting innovative teacher recruitment and hiring practices. To support LEAs’ assessment of short- and long-term teacher hiring needs, the LDOE has enlisted the support of the South Central Comprehensive Center (SC3). SC3 is working with the LDOE to build a workforce projection tool that enables LEAs to project short- and long-term workforce needs. This resource will assist districts and preparation programs in projecting future staffing needs so they can jointly set goals and implement plans to prepare teachers that meet those needs. The goal is to share this tool with LEAs in the 2015-16 school year.</p>
New Mexico	<p>2010-2011 LEA plan for highly qualified teachers:</p> <p>Section I: In alignment with ESEA Title I, Part A, Section 1119(a)(3), "Local Plan," each LEA receiving Title I funds shall develop a plan to ensure that all teachers teaching in the core content areas within the LEA are highly qualified no later than the 2006-2007 school year. (Section 2141 Technical Assistance and Accountability (a) Improvement Plan)</p> <p>Place a check in front of each plan requirement to indicate that LEA administrators are aware of each compliance issue.</p> <p>The LEA's Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers must be submitted no later than June 4, 2010 in conjunction with the LEA's submission of its Title II, Part A Application.</p> <p>The LEA's Superintendent/Lead Administrator's signature is required at the bottom of this document. All teachers will be assigned to teach a grade level and/or subject(s) for which the teacher holds the proper New Mexico license and for which the teacher is highly qualified, defined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has obtained full State certification as a teacher or passed the State Teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the State, and does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis;

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds a minimum of a bachelor’s degree; and has demonstrated subject-matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, in a manner determined by the State and in compliance with Section 9101(23) of ESEA. <p>For each teacher that is not highly qualified for their current teaching assignment, the LEA must complete and submit the Individual Plan for Establishing Highly Qualified Status form. The LEA's Individual Plans for Establishing Highly Qualified Status form must be submitted with the LEA Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers (i.e. this document).</p> <p>The descriptions below represent the LEA's Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Describe the LEA's current challenges to meet the requirement that 100% of its teachers be highly qualified. II. Describe the actions, processes, and/or procedures the LEA will employ to ensure successful compliance with the requirement for 100% Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT). III. Describe how the LEA will use its Title I, Part A and/or Title II, Part A funds to ensure successful compliance with the requirement for 100% Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT). <p>Note: The LEA's Title II, Part A Application will not be reviewed without LEA responses in Section I for Parts I, II and III above and the Individual Plans for Establishing Highly Qualified Status for those teachers NOT established as being highly qualified on the 120th day STARS reports.</p> <p>Section II. If the LEA has NOT met the requirement for having 100% Highly Qualified Teachers for two consecutive years, then the LEA must develop a detailed plan with more rigorous interventions in consultation with PED. The LEA will be required to convene a district-wide team, including principals and teachers, to develop the plan and interventions. The Plan must describe specific strategies, activities, actions, and timeframe's.</p> <p>Describe the LEA's plan which include strategies, activities, actions and timeframe's. Annually, at the beginning of the school year, the LEA will notify parents in writing of each student attending each school that receives Title I, Part A funds that the parents may request and the LEA will provide information in a timely manner regarding the professional qualifications of the students' teachers in accordance with Section 1111(h)(6)(A) of ESEA Title I, Part A.</p> <p>Describe the LEA's processes and procedures to ensure successful compliance with this requirement. The LEA will ensure that each school that receives Title I, Part A funds provides to each parent, in a timely manner, notice that the parent's child has been assigned to, or has been taught by, for four or more consecutive weeks, a teacher who is not highly qualified [See Section 1111(h)(6)(B)(ii)]. (Note: Letters must be sent when the student is assigned to a teacher who is NOT highly qualified. If a teacher change during the school year results in a student's class being taught by a teacher who is NOT highly qualified, parents of each student must be notified in writing no later than the date by which students have been taught for four consecutive weeks.)</p> <p>Describe the LEA's processes and procedures to ensure successful compliance with this requirement. The LEA has policies and procedures to prohibit the use of Title II, Part A funds to pay the salary for any teacher hired for Classroom Size Reduction who does not meet NCLB and state definitions of a "highly qualified" teacher. (Section 2134 LEA use of funds (a) (10)(B) Recruiting and Hiring Highly Qualified Teachers to Reduce Class Size, Particularly in Early Grades)</p> <p>Describe the LEA's processes and procedures to ensure successful compliance with this requirement. The LEA has a plan to ensure that poor and minority students are not taught at higher rates than all other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. (Section 1111 (b)(8)(C) The LEA has a plan to ensure that poor and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers)</p>

State	Description of the Extent to Which Teacher Preparation Programs Are Addressing Shortages of Highly Qualified Teachers
Oklahoma	<p>In an effort to address potential shortages of highly qualified teachers, by area of certification or licensure, subject, and specialty, the Oklahoma State Department of Education informs teacher preparation programs of the teaching fields which fall within the parameters of a "shortage area" . Teacher preparation programs are encouraged to counsel potential teachers related to those fields.</p> <p>Additionally, The Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program (TSEIP) is a legislative ruling administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to address shortages. TSEIP was designed to recruit and retain mathematics and science teachers in Oklahoma. Successful candidates will be reimbursed eligible student loan expenses or an equivalent cash benefit upon fulfillment of the following requirements: a) complete an approved professional teacher education program from an Oklahoma-accredited teacher education unit and must include student teaching; b) hold a valid certificate to teach mathematics or science at the secondary level; and c) teach for five consecutive years in Oklahoma's secondary public schools.</p> <p>Oklahoma also has a variety of non-traditional teacher certification routes through which teacher shortages can be addressed. These programs include the Oklahoma alternative Placement Program, Troops for Teachers, American Board for Certification of of Teacher Excellence and Teach-for-America.</p>
Texas	<p>Existing preparation programs are counseling potential teachers into shortage areas as much as possible. Jobs are more plentiful in shortage fields, and programs have been encouraged to be honest in communicating to candidates about prospects, encouraging them to pursue fields in which there is a shortage when they are reasonably qualified to do so.</p> <p>In addition, any entity applying to be a new educator preparation program certifying teachers in Texas must justify the need of their proposed program to meet a shortage. Texas Education Code Sec. 21.0453.</p> <p>Information for Candidates for Teacher Certification. Requires that educator preparation program provide candidates for teacher certification with information concerning the following:(1) skills and responsibilities required of teachers;(2) expectations for student performance based on state standards;(3) the current supply of and demand for teachers in this state;(4) the importance of developing classroom management skills; and (5) the state's framework for appraisal of teachers and principals.</p>

Source: 2015 All States Report Data File, Title II Reports: National Teacher Preparation Data. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/DataFiles/DataFiles.aspx?p=5_01

Student Educational Attainment

Indicators of student educational attainment include:

- ▶ Fourth grade literacy
- ▶ Advanced Placement participation and performance
- ▶ Performance on college readiness assessments (ACT and SAT)
- ▶ Averaged freshman graduation rates
- ▶ College completion rates

A. Fourth Grade Literacy

Research has shown that students who are not reading well by third grade have a higher probability of dropping out of high school. Each state uses different assessments of reading and literacy. Table 21 presents results from the 2015 4th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment.

Table 21. Percentage at each achievement level on the 2015 4th grade NAEP reading assessment, 2015

State	Achievement Level				
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	At or Above Proficient
United States	32	33	27	8	35
Arkansas	35	34	25	6	32
Louisiana	37	35	23	6	29
New Mexico	46	31	19	4	23
Oklahoma	29	38	27	6	33
Texas	36	33	24	7	31

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *The Nation's Report Card*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading/state/acl?grade=4

B. Advanced Placement Participation and Performance

Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and performance on AP exams are predictors of college enrollment and performance. By taking AP courses, students are exposed to college-level course material while in high school. There are currently more than 30 AP courses. At the end of the school year, students in AP courses have the opportunity to take the associated AP exam. The exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Many colleges and universities grant college credit depending on the score. Each college has discretion for awarding credit based on AP exam performance, but generally a student must earn at least a 3 to receive college-level credit. Table 22 provides the number of students who took an AP course in 2015, the number of exams taken, the average exam score, and the percent of exams scored 3 or higher. There are more exams taken than students taking AP courses because individual students may take more than one AP course in a given year. The College Board provides detailed reports for each state, available [here](#).

Table 22. AP participation and exam performance, 2015

State	Number of Students Taking AP Course	Total Number of Exams Taken	Average Exam Score (1 to 5 Scale)	Percent of Exams Scored 3 or Higher
United States	2,416,329	4,343,547	2.82	57
Arkansas	26,500	46,061	2.12	33
Louisiana	21,350	30,751	2.27	38
New Mexico	9,314	14,942	2.35	40
Oklahoma	17,336	30,011	2.50	47
Texas	268,918	505,790	2.48	46

Source: *College Board State Summary Reports*. Retrieved July 12, 2016 from <https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/participation/ap-2015>

C. Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks

The two primary college readiness assessments in the United States are the ACT® and the SAT. Both tests have historically been taken by high school students planning on attending college. The test taken is largely a function of the state where a student attends high school. Recently, several states began providing all students the opportunity to take college readiness assessments. In 2015, 13 states had 100 percent participation of graduates in the ACT assessment: Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming. Because not all students participate in the ACT and/or SAT assessments, it is not appropriate to make comparisons between states. When larger percentages of students in a state participate in the assessment, the average score is generally lower because students from all ability levels are tested. In states with lower participation rates, the students tested are often more likely to be higher achieving.

The ACT consists of four subject area tests (English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science,) which are often combined for a composite score. ACT® sets benchmarks for each subject-area test. The ACT benchmarks are the scores associated with a 50-percent chance of earning a B or higher in corresponding first-year college courses. The ACT benchmarks are 18 in English, 22 in both Mathematics and Reading, and 23 in Science.

The SAT consists of three subject area tests (Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing). The College Board sets a benchmark for the SAT composite score associated with a 65-percent probability of obtaining a first-year GPA of a B-minus or higher. The SAT college readiness benchmark is a 1550 composite score. The College Board produces detailed program results for each state. The state reports provide additional details and breakdowns by student subgroup. See more at <https://www.collegeboard.org/release/2015-program-results>.

Table 23. ACT and SAT participation and mean scores, 2015

State	Percent of Graduates Taking ACT ^a	Average ACT [®] Composite Score (Benchmark 21.25) ^a	Percent of Graduates Taking SAT ^b	Average SAT Composite Score (Benchmark 1550) ^b
United States	51 to 60	21.0	N/A	1,490
Arkansas	91 to 100	20.4	0 to 10	1,688
Louisiana	91 to 100	19.4	0 to 10	1,675
New Mexico	71 to 80	20.1	11 to 20	1,623
Oklahoma	71 to 80	20.7	0 to 10	1,693
Texas	41 to 50	20.9	61 to 70	1,410

^a *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015*. Retrieved July 2, 2016 from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-report-2015.html?page=0&chapter=9>.

^b *The College Board Program Results, SAT State Profile Reports*. Retrieved July 15, 2016, from <https://www.collegeboard.org/release/2015-program-results>.

Table 24. Percentage of ACT and SAT test takers meeting college readiness benchmarks, 2015

State	Seniors Taking ACT ^a	Met ACT [®] College Readiness Benchmark				Seniors Taking SAT ^b	Met SAT College Readiness Benchmark ^b
		English ^a	Reading ^a	Mathematics ^a	Science ^a		
United States	59	64	46	42	38	N/A	42
Arkansas	93	62	42	35	32	4	69
Louisiana	100	59	35	27	27	5	65
New Mexico	71	55	40	33	30	12	59
Oklahoma	80	64	47	34	33	4	69
Texas	41	59	44	44	38	64	32

^a *The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015*. Retrieved July 2, 2016 from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-report-2015.html?page=0&chapter=9>.

^b *The College Board Program Results, State Reports*.

D. Public High School Graduation Rates

The adjusted cohort graduation rate (known as ACGR) measures the percentage of public school students who attain a regular high school diploma within 4 years of starting 9th grade for the first time.

Table 25. Adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students overall and by race/ethnicity, 2013/14

State	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
United States	82	87	73	76	89	70
Arkansas	87	89	81	85	85	86
Louisiana	75	80	68	73	89	80
New Mexico	69	75	62	67	84	61
Oklahoma	83	85	76	78	88	82
Texas	88	93	84	86	95	87

Source: *2015 Digest of Education Statistics*, table 219.46. Retrieved July 5, 2016 from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_104.80.asp

E. College Completion Rates

One way that secondary schools measure their performance is by the transition of high school graduates into post-secondary education or the labor force. One source of longitudinal data on postsecondary enrollment and completion is the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). Following are data from a new report that shows 6-year outcomes for students aged 20 or younger at time of first entry. A detailed report and data tables are available for download from the (see <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport10-statesupplement/>).

Table 26 shows six-year completion rates for students aged 20 or younger who were first time degree-seeking students who started their postsecondary studies in fall 2009. The states refer to the state where a student entered an institution of higher education, not the state where a student graduated from high school.

Table 26. Overall 6-year completion rates for students aged 20 or younger who were first time degree-seeking students in postsecondary institutions in fall 2009, by institution type

State	4-Year Public	4-Year Private Nonprofit	2-Year Public
United States	64.97	76.02	40.72
Arkansas	52.66	73.86	39.08
Louisiana	58.77	N/A	N/A
New Mexico	45.63	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	46.88	N/A	N/A
Texas	59.83	73.86	41.68

Source: Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P., Yuan, X., and Harrell, A. (2015, February). *Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Attainment Rates* (Signature Report No. 8a). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Appendix B. Needs and Recommendations From Committee Members

Individual Needs Assessment

Name: Viola M. Garcia, Ed.D.

Affiliation: Vice President, Aldine ISD, NSBA Director

Priority Need 1. Preparing students to be college and career ready

Justification: 313 of 1,181 survey respondents in the SW region indicated this as the highest priority area. The largest numbers by primary role indicating this as the number 1 priority include: librarians (100), followed by principals (68), superintendents (37), and school board members (24).

188 of the 313 respondents are in the *School* stakeholder group. Educators in schools appear to indicate that preparing students for life after high school graduation is important. These are selected quotes from respondents supporting preparation for college and/or careers:

- ▶ Realize that every student is not going to college and re-institute home economics, wood shop, auto mechanics, drafting, fashion merchandising, that way students have productive options on contributing to the overall society.
- ▶ Focusing on different career paths. Not everyone desires to be a "rocket scientist." Some people want to work in other fields such as car mechanics, plumbers, laborers. That is okay. College is not for everyone and we need to address their strengths. Rather than labeling them as special ed. etc. just because they don't pass an irrelevant test.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: General information and resources about college and career options should be readily available at the Centers and provided to SEAs, LEAs and to school personnel. Professional development opportunities for college and career counselors and school personnel, including online resources, webcasts, and conferences to more effectively communicate these options to students and parents could be incorporated in Center offerings. These are selected supporting quotes from respondents that might guide communication, professional development and resources at the centers:

- ▶ Work on programs that help with college preparation so colleges aren't doing so much remedial work.
- ▶ Help make connections between communities and colleges easier, more profitable or enticing.

Priority Need 2. Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps

Justification: 156 of 1,181 survey respondents in the SW region indicated this as the second highest priority area. The largest numbers by primary role indicating this as the number 2 priority include: librarians (40), followed by principals (31), state education agency staff (19), and teachers (18). 87 of the 156 respondents are in the *School* stakeholder group. In addition to educators in schools indicating this as a priority, "Data from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that low-income students scored 24 to 28 points below their more advantaged peers. The achievement gaps between black and white students were between 24 and 32 points and achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students were between 18 and 24 points." Source: U.S. Department of Education,

National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Reading and Mathematics Assessments.

Purposeful data mining and its use for planning has allowed educators to more clearly identify specific needs of struggling students which has helped teachers and support staff plan and promote strategies to address identified needs. These are selected quotes from respondents supporting this priority:

- ▶ Making sure that all funded programs are accountable for the success of the program. At local schools, meaningful surveys and progression of services need to have a positive impact.
- ▶ Support (mandates) for certified Teacher-Librarians (MLS degree) in all public schools. Librarians lead in all areas of education - especially encouraging other teachers and students to tackle the digital environment.
- ▶ Listen to the local communities, especially teachers who are in the trenches, and make truly effective change.
- ▶ Addressing the impact of POVERTY
- ▶ Support teachers with help from educational aides to reteach students who are falling behind.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Comp Centers can provide technical assistance via professional development, by sharing and disseminating research practices, and making resources available to school personnel to better understand the effective and efficient use of assessment data and diagnostics tools. In addition, Centers should provide staff development in areas such as cultural competency and the implementation of relevant and successful instructional practices focused on the needs of struggling schools and students. To further alleviate obstacles and or impediments to learning, all school personnel that impact students in struggling schools should be included in staff development opportunities (nurses, child nutrition personnel, counselors, social workers, literacy and math specialists, instructional aides, teachers, principals, etc.).

Priority Need 3. Ensuring equity, including addressing issues of disproportionality

Justification: 110 of 1,181 survey respondents in the SW region indicated this as the third highest priority area. The largest numbers by primary role indicating this as the number 3 priority include: librarians (33), followed by principals (16), and school board members (15).

56 of the 110 respondents are in the *School* stakeholder group. Educators in schools indicate this is an important priority. These are quotes from respondents supporting this priority:

- ▶ “Provide funding for targeted PD in technological areas, ensure IDEA part D is adequately funded to ensure research for Tier 3 instruction is occurring, provide funding and resources to ensure ILT members are properly trained in leadership attributes.”
- ▶ “Support spaces in schools so that students can collaborate and problem solve. It ISN'T happening in the classrooms, too many teachers set in their ways. If you provide library commons, all students will have access to library staff that are becoming trained in maker and tinker spaces.”
- ▶ “All comes down to funding. Our district struggles to meet the needs of the students because of money.”

- ▶ “Rural, small towns have the largest problem finding and retaining teachers that are highly qualified and experienced in the appropriate field. We live in the Mississippi Delta and struggle with teacher retention every year even though we are diligent in providing the needed support to our staff. Equal is not the same as equitable and this is evident in the funding and rewards given to high performing schools as to those that are struggling with multiple issues affecting student achievement which is what all schools in Arkansas are graded by and held accountable for this singular event. Positive interventions for schools would seem a better way to produce better results than punitive measures.”
- ▶ “Provide additional technology funds to increase equity in Title I schools, increase length of school day or limit time spent on test prep to allow for more appropriate teaching matter for students.”

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Comp Centers should work with SEAs to identify best-practices and proven programs that engage students in relevant, inspiring, and useful learning as is indicated by a respondent:

- ▶ “Identify programs that show success, as in, students are engaged in useful learning and continue to seek out opportunities to learn beyond those provided by schools. (A thirst is fostered.) Recruit quality people into classrooms and pay them quality salaries.”

In addition, Centers should provide professional development, support and resources in technological services, in IDEA part D, Tier 3 instruction, leadership attributes, and positive interventions as indicated by respondents.

Priority Need 4. Improving assessment and accountability systems

Justification: 93 of 1,181 survey respondents in the SW region indicated this as the fourth highest priority area. The largest numbers by primary role indicating this as the number 4 priority include: librarians (28), followed by teachers (12).

50 of the 93 respondents are in the *School* stakeholder group. Educators in schools indicate that this is an important priority. These are selected quotes from respondents supporting this priority:

- ▶ A need to teach students, not teach to the test.
- ▶ REVAMP your testing requirements because teaching no longer takes place as a result.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Comprehensive Centers should work with SEAs to identify effective and comprehensive models to set standards and for assessment and accountability systems. Centers should help establish challenging standards for all students. Along with standards, they should provide technical assistance in the development assessments that are aligned with the standards. Centers can provide support in building accountability systems for districts and schools that focus on more holistic educational needs and results. This work should be supported by professional development programs for school personnel so that they clearly understand and are able to implement curriculum aligned with the standards and assessments.

Priority Need 5. Improving access to early childhood education

Justification: 66 of 1,181 survey respondents in the SW region indicated this as the fifth highest priority area. The largest numbers by primary role indicating this as a priority include: principals (17), followed by librarians (11).

34 of the 66 respondents are in the *School* stakeholder group. Educators in schools indicate that this is a priority. These are selected quotes from respondents supporting this priority:

- ▶ Funding, and research to support establishing of full day PreK programs
- ▶ Pare down requirements in the early grades.
- ▶ Until all children have the opportunity for a quality pre-school experience, any other initiative will have minimal impact. Assistance with this should be the Center's number one priority.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: As states are rapidly expanding access, funding and programs for early childhood education, it is imperative that these efforts are research based, effective and efficient. Comprehensive Centers should play an important role in providing information and resources regarding related research, effective EC models and programs to SEAs and LEAs. An important aspect of this work is to secure the best thinking and research around early childhood development and ways to engage families and communities in this work. This could include work with SEAs and LEAs about how to engage with community child care providers so there is greater alignment between their work, the work of parent groups and schools.

In addition to the recommended technical assistance for each of the identified needs, these general recommendations from survey respondents apply to all priority needs identified:

- ▶ Providing training and resources to teachers, especially first or second year teachers.
- ▶ Updated information on the Centers website would be great. Two of the three news stories are from 2014.
- ▶ Work with state leadership and provide them with training on how to support teachers verses mandating practices
- ▶ Reframe objectives- meet w/ constituents and encourage collaboration
- ▶ Help provide resources, information, and data (preferably online and easily accessible). Compliance with guidelines should be voluntary, not mandated. Decisions regarding learning should be made as close to the individual student as possible. Teachers with broad expertise might be available to provide advice and answer questions.
- ▶ Create curriculum and resources for teachers to use in their classrooms.
- ▶ Provide targeted specialized Professional Development via nontraditional educational partnerships
- ▶ We need to support teacher preparation for a school experience that doesn't exist right now, a student-focused, personalized learning system.

Individual Needs Assessment

Name: Courtney Lockridge

Affiliation: Curriculum Director, Piedmont Public Schools

Priority Need 1. Improving assessments and accountability

Educators and administrators need support in transitioning from assessment of learning to assessment for learning in the form of ongoing professional development and practical examples to model across various grades and content areas.

Justification: After discussing the many changes happening in education across the state of Oklahoma, some key themes emerged. The state has shifted away from several of the previously state-mandated assessments and focused instead on the ESSA-required state assessments, with the exception of US History at the high school level, which will still be assessed in 2016-2017. In addition to the changes in the assessment structure, new English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics standards have been adopted and are to be implemented in 2016-2017. Due to the changes in both the state standards in these two subject areas and the new testing structure, assessment for learning and generating specific feedback for students, as well as to guide instruction, have become increasingly significant. While state assessment data will continue to be important, the use of formative assessment as a routine part of instruction will provide much more detailed, immediate, and purposeful data at the time of instruction so that teachers, administrators, and districts can better meet the needs of students on a regular basis rather than waiting for state data that may or may not be received in time to help students who are struggling or who need acceleration opportunities.

In Oklahoma, with a lack of intermediary agencies to provide professional development or coaching, districts rely on support directly from the State Department of Education or private consultants. Often, this support is more generalized and not tailored to specific practices and needs within a particular district. Over the last couple of years, social media outlets have become a popular way to disseminate information statewide, but often teachers do not have access to this information or may simply miss the post that relates to the topic over which they are seeking information. Additionally, the use of Facebook and other groups for specific content areas and grade levels has increased. Many of the individuals interviewed reported that the information is primarily content-focused and includes a variety of lesson ideas or relevant articles, but that there is not a coherent structure or organization within the groups to easily locate information.

Feedback also showed that teachers and principals are more interested in ongoing coaching opportunities rather than a one-time professional development session with no follow-up. One group of teachers asked if they could visit another school to see how teachers in their specific grade and content area incorporate meaningful feedback for students and use formative assessment as a regular part of their classroom routine. A group of ELA teachers asked to talk with other ELA teachers in the region who have successfully implemented this practice in their classrooms and engage in dialog as they try out new strategies and ways of incorporating formative assessment.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Providing a forum for educators to collaborate or locate information on specific topics or strategies could facilitate more communication surrounding best practices and more widespread use of effective strategies. It would be beneficial to build a statewide

system and better yet, a system across the Southwest region, for teachers to view and see relevant, purposeful implementation of formative assessment strategies, or a number of other topics, such as differentiation, ELL strategies, and technology integration, which have become increasingly important over the last few years. Rather than asking teachers to check social media and search for relevant groups, the regional online forum could provide one standard location where teachers and administrators could view videos of teachers implementing specific practices, interviews and reflective feedback surrounding the practice itself, student responses to the strategies, and new ideas and suggestions. A portion of this online forum could include the creation of a repository of quality professional development or vetted professional development providers with expertise in different content areas or specific practices.

Priority Need 2. Educators need support in building understanding of the new state standards in ELA and mathematics.

Justification: As many states have seen changes in content standards over the last few years, Oklahoma has seen several iterations of changes in standards. Most recently, the state has approved the Oklahoma Academic Standards in English language arts and mathematics. In previous years when new standards were implemented, the state provided a transition period to incorporate new standards while filling gaps that were present due to the changes in a particular grade level. This school year will be the first time new standards were first implemented and tested in the same year.

While many teachers statewide have participated in general awareness sessions about the standards as a whole, or discussed specific content changes relevant to their grade level, many report having specific questions regarding the interpretation of particular standards, along with questions about how best to teach them. For example, consider the standard:

- ▶ **4.GM.2** Understand angle, length, and area as measurable attributes of real-world and mathematical objects. Use various tools to measure angles, length, area, and volume.
- ▶ And the corresponding objective:
- ▶ **4.GM.2.5** Solve problems that deal with measurements of length, when to use liquid volumes, when to use mass, temperatures above zero and money using addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division as appropriate (customary and metric).
- ▶ A group of 20 fourth grade teachers expressed frustration with this particular objective because it seems to combine too many concepts and is somewhat ambiguous in what is required with the operations due to the limitations placed on fourth grade in the Number and Operations strand. Additionally, a subset of the fourth grade teachers had questions regarding the following objective:
- ▶ **4.D.1.2** Use tables, bar graphs, timelines, and Venn diagrams to display data sets. The data may include benchmark fractions or decimals.

The teachers asked if there was a sample lesson or activity using Venn diagrams to illustrate the intent of the objective, along with best practices in addressing the information. After researching and checking with several other districts and the State Department of Education, it became apparent that there was not a commonly used reference or sample activity for this particular question. Educators and administrators overwhelmingly asked for some support and guidance in interpreting the new standards

and locating effective lessons, activities, and formative assessment questions to guide the implementation of new standards this year.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Create a repository of high-quality, teacher-friendly lessons, activities, questioning strategies, formative assessment questions, and technology-based resources that are listed by standard and objective across each grade level or course. This type of resource could help educators and administrators by promoting effective teaching practices while also addressing any questions that might be present regarding the interpretation of the specific standards. Combining ideas across different states in the region is also a way to extend teaching and learning beyond geographic barriers and show how standards are cross-referenced in different states.

Individual Needs Assessment

Name: Alan Morgan, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Vice President of Government Relations, High Desert Government Relations, Inc.

With regard to the summary embodied in this email, I will share what I perceive to be the five education priority issues as gleaned from numerous discussions since being appointed to the RAC. Secondly, I will share these five as my perceptions from not only from such discussions, but also as the former New Mexico Chief State School Officer for 13 years, a parent of four children in the Albuquerque public schools, and a former Chair of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (regional lab) in Austin.

Priority Need 1. Early Learning-pre K and primary level instruction

Justification: Early Learning-pre K and primary level instruction focused on ensuring children (often with limited English skills and often from homes with economic challenges) are provided support for literacy and numeracy by teachers (not simply day-care providers). The "need" seems characterized by both the quantity of students entering the early grades unprepared for the expectations of schools, and by the growing dearth of education-useful experiences of students entering the public schools;

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: None provided

Priority Need 2. Teacher professional development, teacher evaluation procedures, and advances in professional stature and recompense

Justification: Classroom teachers are hopeful for advances in professional development, teacher evaluation procedures, and, of course, advances in professional stature and recompense. Recognizing the USDE/regional labs and centers have little to do with salaries, ongoing efforts to examine the relationship between salary and educator performance might be in order.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Ongoing efforts to examine the relationship between salary and educator performance might be in order.

Priority Need 3. Understanding ESSA

Justification: District and state officials, while enthused by the promise of more latitude and support under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there remains a considerable gap in knowledge and understanding about ESSA between those closest to the federal law and those closest to students.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: There will be many opportunities for regional labs and centers to assist K-12 educators, higher education officials, legislators, governors' offices, and the general public better understand and implement ESSA over the next 4-5 years. Several examples were raised in my discussions, particularly with state officials, concerning future areas of needed assistance in implementing ESSA. School-level financial expenditure reporting will require considerable study, support, and training. Taking advantage of new flexibility (and likely less federal money) under the block grant approach of ESSA is an issue on the minds of many.

Priority Need 4. Improving communication

Justification: Communication, while obviously a cross-cutting issue, seems to remain a challenge for those of us in the Southwest. Likely true for all regions, it does appear the issue is one of being more strategic in the ways communication occurs between schools and parents, schools and districts/states, and between states and their many stake-holders.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: A region-wide plan to identify unique communication challenges, identify resources and thence train people at all levels might be worth consideration.

Priority Need 5. Re-examination of assessment and accountability issues, practices, and outcomes

Justification: A re-examination of assessment and accountability issues, practices, and outcomes appears more important in the Southwest than first thought as we consider the next few years. Although ESSA maintains many of the state testing requirements of NCLB, there is a new conversation underway in the Southwest region about how to re-balance local and state assessments. The efforts of some states to make interim and formative assessments serve the dual purpose of summative/high stakes tests is being met with resistance from local educators. And, local districts are searching for ways to reduce testing while ensuring support for teachers to choose assessments that help them guide instruction. There is enough commonality of concern and interest to warrant this issue as a "top 5" priority.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Help state officials as they look for ways to address increased flexibility, the anti-testing movement, and all the while gathering enough information about student progress to make sound accountability decisions concerning educators, schools, and districts.

Individual Needs Assessment

Name: Karli Saracini

Affiliation: Director of Human Resources, North Little Rock School District

Priority Need 1. Educators need to put emphasis on ensuring all students are exposed to rigorous, engaging, and relevant coursework that will prepare them for college- and career-ready.

Justification: In the Southwest region, the top priority with principals, school board members, superintendents and teachers was preparing students to be college and career ready. The report, *Meandering Toward Graduation: Transcript Outcomes of High School Graduates*, shows that too many students leave high school with a diploma in hand but no clear path forward. This would include the knowledge and skill development that would prepare them for life after graduation. Administrators and teachers both believe their goal is to better prepare their students for college and career success. All want what is best for kids.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Even though the Comprehensive Centers have limited resources, it can provide the research-based support that educators in the Southwest region need to make a difference for all students to be college- and career-ready. It may take working with education leaders at the state, district, and school levels to provide technical assistance in refining policies and best practices that will support success for all. Then provide the support for understanding the process of identifying the knowledge and skills necessary to compete globally and examining the data to drive next steps. The centers could create opportunities for educators to look at what will work best for their students to become college and career ready.

Priority Need 2. Educators need support and a voice with supporting the lowest performing schools and closing the achievement gaps through continuous professional development opportunities using data to drive instruction.

Justification: In the Southwest region, principals, teachers and superintendents identified supporting the lowest performing schools and closing the achievement gaps as a top priority. When teachers are empowered with data, students do better. Administrators and teachers need ongoing support using dashboards, assessment data, and other student progress to differentiate instruction. Administrators are aware that the major of teachers only experience traditional, workshop-based professional development which research shows as ineffective. Professional development will no longer be a one-time fits all workshop based on basic knowledge about a teaching methodology but rather based on assessment data and fundamental change in a teacher's practice which leads to improvement in student achievement. "Continuous effort not strength or intelligence is the key to unlocking our potential," by Winston Churchill. Teachers are the single most influence on a student's learning.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: The Comprehensive Centers can utilize the available of their expertise to provide training and technical assistance on the use of research based best practices and implementation of programs under ESSA. Feedback has provided that focus of professional development opportunities need to be in the following areas: assessments, personalized

learning, differentiated instruction, data literacy, college-and career-ready, culturally responsive teaching, and school turnaround models.

Priority Need 3. Educators need a voice and involvement examining data to reveal equity gaps through analyzing root causes, determining strategies to address the gaps and identifying monitoring procedures.

Justification: Principals and superintendents as well as school board members identified ensuring equity as a top priority. Making the connection between the existing equity gaps and strategies designed to eliminate them is the best course of action.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: The Comprehensive Centers can leverage their resource to provide technical assistance through professional development opportunities that provide appropriate strategies that will be implemented to produce actions that will address ensuring equity for all.

Priority Need 4. Educators need to increase awareness in providing access to quality early childhood education that will positively impact school readiness of all students.

Justification: Principals were the group that expresses that access to early childhood education is a top priority. “Effective preschool programs lay a foundation for children’s subsequent school success by imparting the varied knowledge, abilities and dispositions children need to succeed in school such as rich vocabulary and complex sentence structure, an understanding of story structure, self-regulation, cooperative play and abstract thinking” (“The Effects of the Arkansas Better Chance Program on Young Children’s School Readiness,” 2007, p.5).

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: The Comprehensive Centers can work in collaboration with the states to develop a common understanding of what it means to be “ready for kindergarten” and develop a system to assure that preschoolers will transition to kindergarten successfully. The center will be able to use its expertise to provide technical assistance to increase the awareness of the need for quality early childhood education.

Priority Need 5. Ensure an equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders

Since the teacher in the classroom is the best indicator of student success, distribution of highly effective teacher is a priority. Given the importance of strong leadership, steps need to be taken to ensure that teachers in high poverty, high minority schools are supported by excellent leaders.

Justification: Students who attend high poverty, high minority schools, and student of color are taught at higher rates than other children are by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: The Comprehensive Centers can utilize their resources to provide technical assistance in preparing stakeholder engagement meetings and other assistance throughout the process of developing a strategic plan to ensure the distribution of highly effective teachers.

Individual Needs Assessment

Name: Christopher E. Trombly, Ph.D.

Affiliation: ASCD, Member of the Legislative Committee;
Faculty member, Center for Leadership and Learning, Arkansas Tech University

Stakeholder Outreach Activities: What follows is a summary of the data whose collection I facilitated as a member of the Southwest Regional Advisory Committee.

Pursuant to our very first telephone conference, which was held on Monday, July 25th, I took responsibility for contacting members of the higher education community, as well as leaders of ASCD's affiliates, in the Southwest Region. In efforts to discharge that responsibility, I reached out by email to the presidents or chancellors of public and private two- year, four-year, and research colleges and universities, as well as to the deans or heads of the colleges or departments of education within those institutions of higher education. At the same time, I reached out by email to the leaders of ASCD's affiliates in the five-state area. In communicating with both groups, I included the link to the online Needs Sensing Survey, which had been prepared for our use.

While the raw data from the Needs Sensing Survey make plain that twenty-nine (29) individuals who self-identify as working in higher education completed the instrument, it is regrettably unclear from the data how many representatives of the ASCD affiliates completed the instrument. I suspect that this is because the latter group is largely comprised of individuals who also self-identify as teachers, or building-level leaders, or superintendents, or some other category that was available for them to select when they completed the instrument. Consequently, what follows is an analysis of the responses of only of those respondents who self-identify as working in higher education.

Education Needs: Perspectives from Higher Education. Of the ninety-nine (99) higher education leaders who were sent the link to the Needs Sensing Survey, twenty-nine (29) responded. Eleven of those twenty-nine respondents were from Arkansas; one was from Louisiana; two were from New Mexico; three were from Oklahoma; and twelve were from Texas.

Priority Need 1. Preparing students to be college- and career-ready was the most frequently selected response to the question

Justification: Nine of 29 responding higher education leaders chose this as the highest priority need. In examining their responses to the question that asked *In your own words, what do you see as the top 3 educational needs in your region?*, participants shared the following information to support college- and career-readiness as a priority need. First, several respondents (6) indicated that the linkage between K-12 and post-secondary needs to be vastly improved upon, both because too many students who go on to college are required to complete remedial coursework, and because those who choose to enter the workforce from high school have not had opportunities to learn the requisite technical skills. Two (2) respondents explicitly identified that, in order for students genuinely to be college- and career-ready, their K-12 programs of study must include greater exposure to the arts, to physical education, and to career/technical education. Six (6) respondents identified that, in order for students genuinely to be ready for college and/or career, the quality and rigor of instruction and assessment need to be improved; of those six, four (4) were careful to clarify that they are not calling for more testing, just for the testing that is done to be used to inform/improve instruction. Finally, four (4) respondents called for

curricula and instructional practices both to acknowledge students' diverse learning needs and to be appropriate for their developmental levels.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: When asked to make a recommendation for how the Comprehensive Assistance Centers could address the needs that they had identified, numerous respondents cited the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act, and the states' needs both to be challenged to implement that law's mandates and to be supported as they do so. One respondent wrote of the need for the Comprehensive Assistance Centers to contribute to the Department of Education's work to "Hold states and districts accountable for the provisions of ESSA," which this respondent characterized as "the best hope we have for improving schooling in the U.S." Another wrote more specifically that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers need to provide "training and technical assistance" to SEA and LEA officials, in order that they will be able to fulfill the promise of the law...and, presumably, that the staff of the Comprehensive Assistance Centers would be in a position to see – and to report back to the Department – those aspects of the law and the associated regulations that might pose undue burdens on states or school districts.

Additionally, respondents identified that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers ought to offer professional development and other technical support to school and district leaders and teachers so that those educators could do the necessary work of transforming their existing curriculum into "a student-focused, personalized learning system." Hosting forums, both in person and online, to allow educators from across the respective regions to draw upon one another's experiences in doing this work is another of the recommendations that was suggested. Topics for such 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. Still another recommendation was that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers work to help community colleges to bridge the gaps between themselves and K-12 schools/districts on the one hand, and four-year colleges/universities on the other. Such an approach, it was suggested, would help K-12 schools better prepare students for academic success in post-secondary instruction without the need for remediation.

Priority Need 2. Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps and Ensuring equity, including addressing issues of disproportionality

Justification: The two closely related categories of 'Supporting the lowest performing schools and closing achievement gaps' and 'Ensuring equity, including addressing issues of disproportionality' were, collectively, the second most frequently selected response on the survey. Six (6) of the twenty-nine responding higher education leaders selected this response.

In examining their responses to the question that asked *In your own words, what do you see as the top 3 educational needs in your region?*, participants shared the following information to support the importance of this dual need. Twelve (12) of the respondents identified that, at present, funding for education is neither adequate nor equitable for public K-12 or higher education. Further, three (3) respondents identified "ensuring equity" as one of the top 3 educational needs in the region, while another three (3) identified "closing the achievement gap" as one such need. One (1) respondent indicated that, in order for achievement gaps to be closed and for equity to be ensured, the cultural prejudices of local school board members needed to be addressed. Acknowledging that there are factors outside of school that contribute to the lack of equity and to gaps in educational attainment, one respondent (1) highlighted that "broadband access for all" must be a priority. Likewise acknowledging

that out-of-school factors contribute substantially to the inequities and achievement gaps that are seen at school, one respondent to the initial question recommended, “Improving the economy, so that students’ families will experience financial security and be able to provide their children with proper nutrition, healthcare, and social/emotional development.”

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: While respondents were clear that issues of equity and disproportionality were both of enormous importance and in need of redress by the federal government, few offered recommendations for technical assistance training that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers could provide. Several respondents did, however, indicate that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers might have a role to play in monitoring the degree to which youngsters across the regions are being treated equitably, as well as in the degree to which educators across the regions are equipped to do that work. To that end, the facilitation of professional development experiences and the hosting of forums around this important topic would allow the Comprehensive Assistance Centers natural opportunities to collect data that could then be shared with the Department, which could then bring more resources to bear and/or fashion new policy.

Priority Need 3. Improving instructional leadership and Developing and ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders

Justification: Five (5) of the twenty-nine responding higher education leaders selected this response. This topic was identified as one of the top 3 educational needs in the Southwest region by well over half of the twenty-nine higher education respondents to the Needs Sensing Survey. Twenty (20) respondents wrote of the need for highly qualified educators to teach in, lead, or manage the library/media centers of, the region’s schools. Thirteen respondents wrote, not only of the need for all students to be taught by highly qualified teachers, but also of the need for higher education institutions to do a better job of recruiting highly talented young people to enter teacher preparation programs. Another respondent wrote of the importance of the teaching profession to reflect the diversity of the students whom it serves. One of those respondents explicitly wrote of the need for existing educators who are not meeting students’ needs to be helped to leave the profession. Closely related to that notion, six of the respondents identified that educational leaders must be better equipped to lead high quality instruction, beginning in leadership preparation programs.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Respondents identified numerous strategies by which the Comprehensive Assessment Centers could help to ensure that all students, regardless of neighborhood or region, could learn from high-quality teachers and leaders. A key theme among respondents was that the Comprehensive Assessment Centers, and the Department of Education generally, should work closely with colleges and universities to ensure that high-achieving students were selected for educator preparation programs, and with states and local communities to ensure that education was seen by young people as a desirable profession and by the general public as one worthy of respect. Another theme that emerged was that educators – both preservice and practicing – need to be far better versed in what is currently known about cognitive psychology, so that their instructional and assessment practices could reflect that knowledge. A third theme, and one that emerged more than a little strongly, was that educational leaders need to understand high-quality instruction, to be able to recognize the degree to which it is being demonstrated, to have the skills to help teachers to improve their instructional practices, and to have the will to dismiss those teachers whose practices do not improve. Moreover, according to the respondents whose contributions fell within this theme, states and districts must be held accountable for ensuring that school leaders are demonstrating the practices that are necessary if instruction is to improve. The Comprehensive Assessment Centers, then, could partner

with institutions of higher education and SEAs to design and to engage school leaders and other educators in high-quality, ongoing, and – ideally – job-embedded professional development experiences.

Priority Need 4. Improving access to early childhood education

Justification: In examining their responses to the question that asked *In your own words, what do you see as the top 3 educational needs in your region?*, participants shared the following information to support improving access to early childhood education as a priority need. Very simply, six (6) respondents identified that there needed to be universal access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education. One of those six respondents even wrote of the need for a rigorous “Birth to 5 credential” to acknowledge the importance and complexity of educating our youngest students.

Recommended Strategy for Technical Assistance: Respondents’ passion for meeting the needs of our youngest students was palpable from their answers on the Needs Sensing Survey. One strategy that is recommended is that the Comprehensive Assistance Centers could partner with institutions of higher education, as well as with SEAs, to design a rigorous Birth to 5 teaching credential. Further, the Comprehensive Assistance Centers could work with those same agencies, as well as with other government agencies, to promote the importance of children’s earliest experiences to their cognitive growth and development. Indeed, Comprehensive Assistance Centers should model silo-busting – i.e., helping agencies that aren’t accustomed to working with each other, and that too often focus on protecting their turf and/or demonstrating their own primacy, to work together to accomplish the enormously important goal of ensuring that young children’s needs for nutrition and healthcare and learning are met. The result of such interdisciplinary efforts could be used to shape legislation and regulations, and – even more important – to educate the community about the importance and long-term cost-effectiveness of investing in our youngest children.

