

State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Rural Schools, Libraries and Communities

Policy Issue Brief Second Priority—Collaboration/Quality Teachers January 2005

Collaboration/Resource Sharing

- Combining public and school libraries/staff: the department has already produced a guidebook on this topic called “Combined School and Public Libraries—Guidelines for Decision Makers.” It’s a 36-page document produced in 1998, and is available on the department’s website at: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/pld/comblibs.html>.
- Nothing in state law currently prohibits school districts from sharing programs, staff and/or resources.
- Sixty-five percent of the 426 public school districts currently have a dedicated video classroom, allowing them to share teaching resources by allowing access to courses districts cannot offer themselves.
- Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs)—there are 12 CESAs in Wisconsin “that serve the educational needs of Wisconsin citizens by enabling school districts to work with each other and with the Department of Public Instruction. Because they work on a regional cooperative basis, CESA’s are able to economically and efficiently provide programs and services requested by local school districts and other public entities.” (from CESA 9) Some examples of resource sharing or collaboration in CESAs include:
 1. Regional Service Network (RSN) for Special Education—The state RSN is made up of representatives from each of the 12 CESAs. The major focus for the state RSN is to provide a comprehensive system of personnel development to assure the quality of personnel and services for individuals with exceptional education needs. Activities may include: resource and technical assistance, a network of communication, staff development and program assistance in the areas of planning, coordination, and implementation of special education and related services. Because of the varied needs within each of the CESA regions, individual RSNs operate differently to meet specific local needs.
 2. Administering state and federal grants on behalf of CESA member districts.
 3. Educational Technology- helping school districts and teachers implement, integrate and incorporate technology into the educational process (CESA 9).
 4. Distance education consortia.
 5. The CESA 6 Grant Writing Office facilitates the development of small pockets of educational reform that respond to the needs of area school children. Now in its tenth year, the consortium has expanded to include thirty-two members. The office has been very successful, raising over 34 million dollars in competitive grants for participating school districts. Because many schools lack the necessary time and expertise to write competitive grant proposals, their access to professional grant writing services affords them an advantage over other school districts competing for the same money.
 6. The CESA 2 program for the visually impaired and orientation and mobility program provide itinerant services to students, families and school districts. Educational instruction in those compensatory skill areas needed due to a lack of vision or decreased visual functioning are provided.

Quality Teachers/Rural Focus—What Other States Are Doing

In 1999, Dr. Timothy Collins, former director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, cited a report from the American Association of School Administrators which he says observes “that the main problem of rural school districts is attracting and keeping quality teachers”. All subject areas are affected by the shortage of rural teachers, but math, science, and special education are particularly hard hit.

ALASKA

The University of Alaska has started Alaska Teacher Placement, a statewide non-profit clearinghouse to place teachers and maintain an internet job bank. The state also has an annual teacher supply report. (Collins, p.2)

ARIZONA

The state has a loan deferral program (Stafford Loans and Supplemental Student Loans) for teachers in designated school districts which have a shortage of teachers. All schools within the designated district are eligible for loan deferments. (www.cerra.org/states1-25.pdf)

CALIFORNIA

Developed CalTeach, an information and referral recruitment agency based on South Carolina’s CERRA, to recruit teachers to alleviate the state’s teacher shortage. It offers information and counseling services to prospective teachers. (www.cerra.org/states1-25.pdf)

CONNECTICUT

The state has equalized teacher salaries on a statewide basis to reduce regional inequalities. (Collins, p.2)

FLORIDA

Florida has a loan forgiveness program for teachers who serve in critical shortage areas. The Florida Department of Education operates an office of Teacher Recruitment and Retention, which advertises opportunities in states that are targeted. (Collins, pp. 2-3)

GEORGIA

Financed by the Georgia Lottery for Education, the *HOPE Teacher Scholarship Program* offers loan that are service-cancelable to Georgia residents seeking an advanced degree that leads to certification in critical shortage teaching fields at a Georgia State University system institution. To be eligible, potential students must a teacher without a master’s degree who seek an advanced degree in their field or a new field with a critical shortage; teachers with master’s who are working on doctorates or specialist degrees; a state resident who has a bachelor’s degree who is not teaching or has not taught. Students may receive up to \$10,000 for an approved program of study that is completed within five years. The student must agree to teaching in the critical shortage area within the Georgia school system. \$2,500 of the loan is canceled for each year the student subsequently teaches in the system; the full obligation must be fulfilled within five years

Also funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education, the *PROMISE Teacher Scholarship Program* provides up to \$3,000 in loans that are service-cancelable to teaching students during their junior and senior years who are willing to teach in the Georgia school system after graduation. A 3.6 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) is required. The student must teach in the system for one year for each \$1,500 obtained through the grant; the teaching requirement must be completed within five years. (www.cerra.org/states1-25.pdf)

IOWA

A study done by the Iowa Governor's office documented that states have urban-rural pay discrepancies (1997). (Collins, p. 2)

KENTUCKY

The state has equalized teacher salaries on a statewide basis to reduce regional inequalities. (Collins, p. 2)

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi offers incentive loans to teachers who work in underserved rural areas. (Collins, p. 2)

The state makes scholarships available, as well as home loans or rental housing, to teachers in shortage areas. (Collins, p. 2)

The state Department of Education has a staff person with in-state and out-of-state teacher recruitment responsibilities. (Collins, p. 2)

The state also has established the *Mississippi Teacher Corps* for college graduates who wish to make a minimum two year commitment to teaching math, science, social studies, English, French, and Spanish in high school. In addition to providing a structured entry into the teaching profession for liberal arts graduates who never taught before, the program seeks to address the issue of inadequate supply of teachers in some areas. An eight week summer institute at the University of Mississippi at Oxford trains prospective teachers to make the transition to teaching. Attendance at the summer institute, in addition to passing Praxis I and Content Mastery Examinations for educators, qualifies participants for alternative certification in the state. They then teach at least two years in schools picked on the basis of local need. Upon reaching the classroom, additional support is given to the new teachers through their participation in the Master of Arts degree program in Curriculum and Instruction. (www.cerra.org/states1-25.pdf)

NEBRASKA

Largely due retirements, there is a predicted geographic and subject area teacher shortage in Nebraska. A supply and demand study was commissioned. The state was considering partnering with institutes of higher education to encourage freshmen and sophomores to become teachers. A teacher loan forgiveness program for those who teach in rural areas was either under consideration or in place (information on the website not clear on this point). The state was reviewing the idea of a statewide salary scale with state income tax funding (rather than funding through the local property tax). It is hoped that this will help rural districts, since they do not produce as much property tax revenue as more urbanized areas (and therefore cannot afford to pay their teachers as much). (www.cerra.org/states26-50.pdf)

NORTH DAKOTA

According to the Education Commission of the States: "One isolated district in North Dakota managed to lure a teacher by promising him bird-hunting rights on private farmland." (McClure, et al., p.3)

NEW YORK

New York has a *Teacher Incentive Program* designed to attract teachers into shortage areas. Undergraduates who qualify are given annual \$4,000 scholarships for up to four years. In exchange, they must teach one year in an eligible school. Graduate students who qualify are given a one-year \$10,000 scholarship. In exchange they must teach in an eligible school for three years. Qualified certified applicants get a \$10,000 bonus and are obligated to teach in a high-need school for three years. (www.cerra.org/states26-50.pdf)

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma's supply-and-demand study asserts that:

- Rural school districts need more elementary and early childhood teachers.
- In general, rural districts (which comprise one-fifth of Oklahoma's educators and two-thirds of its districts) have a greater need for teachers.
- There is a need for additional research to understand why Oklahoma trains more teachers than are hired to teach in the state's schools.

(Collins, p. 2)

PENNSYLVANIA

The state has instituted a 25 member bi-partisan Commission on Rural Education in 2003. The commission made 32 recommendations relating to:

- "Defining rural, urban, and suburban" (Section A)
- "Securing a good learning environment" (Section B)
- "Meeting the challenges of 'No Child Left Behind'" (Section C)
- "Bridging the Gaps with Technology" (Section D)
- "Preparing Rural Students for Future Success" (Section E)
- "Opening Doors to Postsecondary Education" (Section F)

Among the recommendations:

- That the Pennsylvania General Assembly enact an amendment to the Agricultural Loan Forgiveness Act which would provide loan forgiveness to those who take employment as agriculture education teachers. (#23 in Section E)
- That the Pennsylvania General Assembly increases the reimbursement amount to school districts for providing agriculture education. (#22 in Section E)
- Rural school districts should establish programs that will encourage development of future school administrators (superintendents and principals) from the ranks of current faculty. (#7 in Section C)
- "To the extent possible" rural districts should provide "compensation and financial incentives to teachers and administrators". (#8 under Section C)

(Pennsylvania Commission on Rural Education, 2003)

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina has a Center for Teacher Recruitment (the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement, or CERRA, <http://www.cerra.org>.) which has, among other things, a *Teaching Assistant*

program, which has students working on a one-to-one basis with teachers in areas that are considered to have a critical shortage. (Collins, 1999) (www.cerra.org)

The Teaching Assistant program complements the *Teacher Cadet* program, which introduces academically qualified high school juniors and seniors to the teaching profession by providing insight into the profession, problems of schooling, and critical issues that affect educational quality. South Carolina first piloted the program in four high schools in the 1985-86 school year. Today roughly 150 high schools in the state are involved serving more than 2,200 talented young people. A 3.0 GPA in college prep courses, five written recommendations from teachers, and an essay explaining why the student wants to take the class are required for participation. (Interviews are optional.) Teacher Cadet sites are supported by twenty-four of the 30 South Carolina institutions of higher education that have teacher education programs. More than two-thirds of these institutions grant college credit for the class. SAT scores for Teacher Cadet participants are nearly 100 points higher than the South Carolina average.

A teaching fellows program offers teaching students up to \$6,000 in scholarships annually for four years while they pursue a teaching degree. Recipients must agree to teach in South Carolina one year for each year a fellowship was received.

In order to retain good teachers, the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment administers the National Board Certification Program, which recognizes outstanding teaching by receiving a salary supplement (currently, \$7,500 per year). In addition, out-of-state teachers holding a national certification receive full reciprocity from South Carolina. Their teaching certificates are automatically renewed during the 10-year National Board certification validity period.

Teachers may qualify for the state's Teacher Loan Cancellation program if they teach in a subject area that is in a Critical Need subject area. (In 2004-05, the Critical Need subject areas are: Art, Business Education; English/Language Arts; Family and Consumer Science (Home Economics); Guidance; Industrial Technology; Foreign Language (Spanish, French, Latin, and German); Library Science (Media Specialist); Mathematics; Music; Science (all areas); Special Education (all areas); Speech and Drama, Theatre.

In addition, teachers in identified schools in the state's rural areas may repay their South Carolina Teachers Loan by teaching. The South Carolina State Board of Education selected the schools serving rural students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

(Information in previous five paragraphs came from the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement, www.cerra.org.)

The state's *Minority Access to Teacher Education (MATE)* at Benedict College recruits minority students from school districts that are rural and underdeveloped, and who are college-bound, and encourages them to become teachers in South Carolina. (www.cerra.org/states26-50.pdf) (*Please note:* The underlying premise of this program seems to follow the rationale embodied in the section regarding "Nurture local talent" from McClure, pp. 4-6, in the "Strategies for State/School Districts to Consider Addressing Teacher Recruitment"; see page 8 of this report for a summarization.)

UTAH

The Utah Rural School Association offers a Professional Development of Rural Educators Project. Funding can be used to enhance teaching skills in core (or in some cases non-core) academic subjects; to take workshops, seminars, or college courses to take the PRAXIS II subject competency exam, as well as

to qualify for “highly qualified” status; to qualify as an advanced placement or concurrent enrollment instructor. (Utah Rural School Association website, www.ursa.k12.ut.us).

WASHINGTON

Washington uses the South Carolina Teacher Cadet program in its district teacher academies. (www.cerra.org/states26-50.pdf)

General Issues Relating To Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Rural Districts

The Rural School and Community Trust found that the following 13 states, listed in priority order (quoting McClure, et al. p.2) “have a critical need for specific policy attention to rural education”:

- Mississippi
- Alabama
- Kentucky
- North Dakota
- South Dakota
- North Carolina
- Arkansas
- West Virginia
- South Carolina
- Louisiana
- Tennessee
- Montana
- Maine

In response to a 2003 survey (T. Schwartzbeck, *How Are Rural School Districts Meeting the Teacher Quality Recruitments of No Child Left Behind?* (Charleston, WV: AEL, 2003, p. 9) cited the following factors identified by Superintendents (cited in McClure, et. al., p.2):

- Salaries are low
- Isolated socially
- Isolated geographically

Other factors are:

- Inadequate housing
- Surrounding community is not economically healthy
- The expectation that teachers will teach multiple grade levels or multiple subjects.

Strategies For States / School Districts to Consider Addressing Teacher Recruitment

Collins (p. 3) cites the following strategies to address recruitment and retention of rural teachers that have been suggested by the Education Commission of the States (1999) (quoting Collins):

- “Offer programs for high school and college students”;
- “Recruit midcareer professionals from other fields”;
- “Forgive scholarship and loan debts in exchange for teaching service”;
- “Make a special effort to place teachers in low-performing schools suffering economic hardships”;
- “Create programs, positions, and agencies to promote recruitment”

Collins says the following strategies can be used by rural schools for teacher recruitment and retention, regardless of what state policies are in place:

- “They can create local programs, possibly in cooperation with a nearby college or university, to attract local youth into teaching.”
- “Districts can develop orientation programs and mentoring, and support joint school-community efforts to help new teachers feel more at home.”
- “Most importantly, schools and communities should publicize the advantages of teaching in a rural community.”

McClure, et al., (pp. 4-6) suggests that policymakers can do the following:

- “Improve incentives for teaching in hard-to-staff rural schools.” State policies should be put in place that even out funding disparities between urban and rural districts.
- “Promote improved recruitment and hiring practices.” Use targeted marketing strategies that emphasize the attractiveness of rural life. Reduce paperwork that is required when applying. Hiring process needs to have interactions between the applicant on the one hand and teachers and the principal on the other; there should be “more opportunities for a two-way exchange of information.” Such an exchange is important in districts that are isolated or which have “distinct cultural environments.”
- “Require and finance comprehensive induction programs.” Studies show such programs aid in retention. (Cited: State Support for Teachers [chart], *Quality Counts 2003: “If I Can’t Learn from You...”* (Education Week, January 9, 2003; NCTAF, *No Dream Denied*, 11; Smith and Ingersoll, *Reducing Teacher Turnover*. US DOE suggested that such programs feature professional development and mentoring opportunities.
- “Nurture local talent” (identified by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality). Specifically mentioned are out-of-field teachers, students in high school, school paraprofessionals, and second-career adults. If nurturing local talent is to be done, there needs to be increased collaboration between districts and postsecondary institutions to deal with a widening gap between urban and rural areas in completing college.
- “Foster greater collaboration among public school systems and postsecondary institutions”. Distance learning can be used in remote areas to help teachers meet NCLB certification requirements. Emphasizes the importance of community colleges in rural areas. Cites the Appalachian Model Teaching Consortium requires collaboration between the school district, community college, and the nearest university. It is suggested that the feds and the states “could provide assistance and incentives for creating such alliances.”
- “Create avenues for greater community involvement”. Quotes Timothy Collins, former director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools: “The degree to which a rural teacher becomes involved in community educational and cultural programs influences his or her decision to remain; therefore, retention requires a coordinated school-community effort.” Collins recommends that

new teachers undergo school-community orientation and that other methods be developed to welcome them and integrate them into the life of the community.

- “Support high-quality research on rural education issues.”

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Loan Forgiveness Programs

In Wisconsin, there are several loan forgiveness programs in place for certain professions and/or geographical areas. These programs include:

- Nursing students
- Minority teachers who agree to teach in districts with at least 29% minority enrollment
- Teachers for the visually impaired
- Physicians and dentists who agree to serve in designated medical service shortage areas

A similar program could be considered for Wisconsin teachers who agree to teach in certain rural and/or small school districts.

Discussion Outcome Questions

1. Do any of the examples from the “Quality Teacher/Rural Focus” section have potential for future development for Wisconsin? What are the features/benefits that are most important?
2. For the next meeting, does the Advisory Council want the Department to develop a specific rural teacher recruitment/tuition/loan proposal, based on any of the examples in this Issue Brief? If the answer is “Yes”, should the proposal focus on teachers, or should it also strive to include provision for administrators and/or superintendents in rural schools/districts?