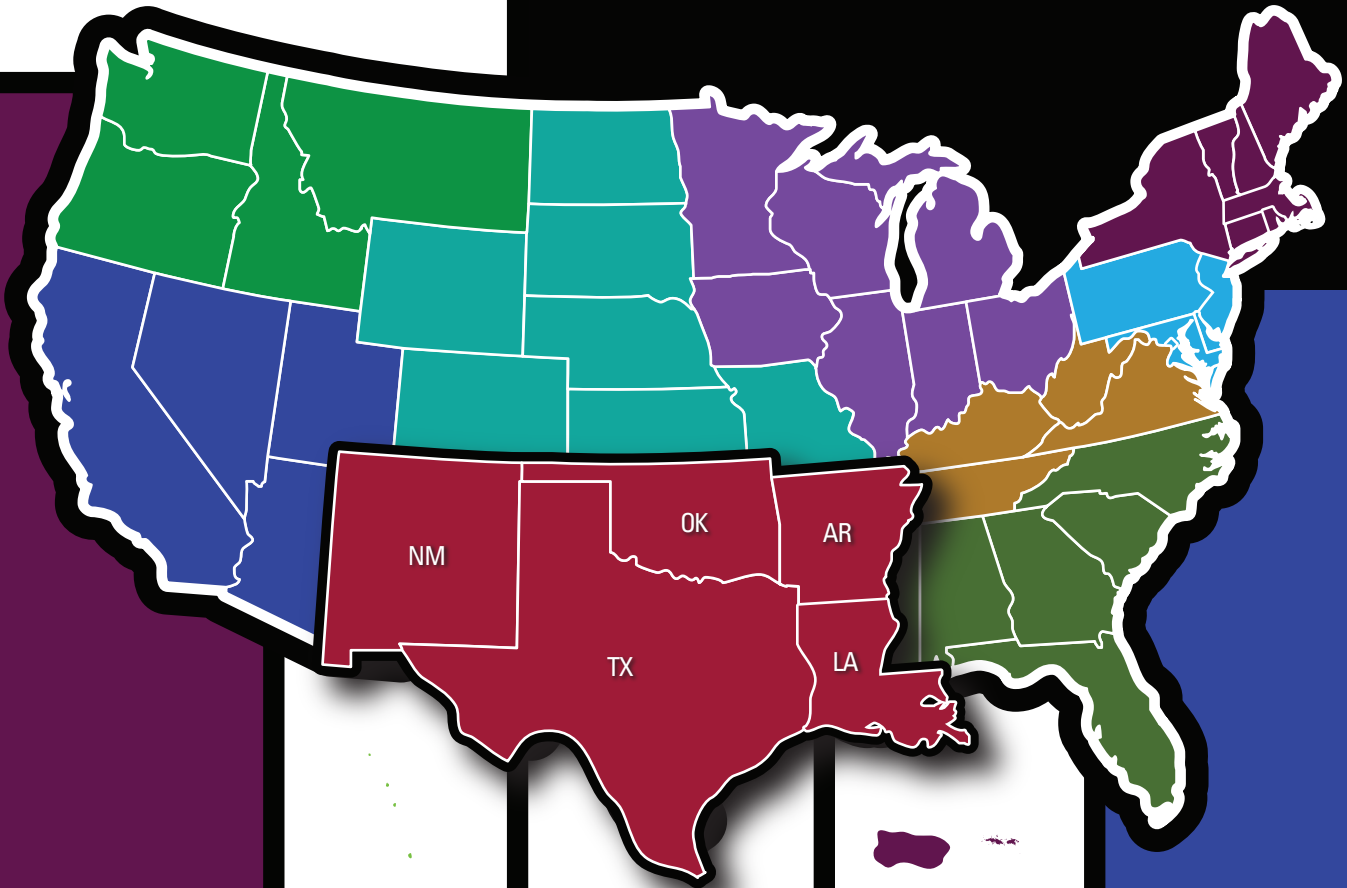# SOUTHWEST REGION:
A REPORT IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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U.S. Department of Education
Regional Advisory Committee
(RAC)

July 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002, authorized the Southwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), whose members represent the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, to identify and prioritize the region's educational needs and recommend how those needs can be met. The Southwest RAC conducted three public meetings; the first meeting was held on May 23–24, 2011 in Arlington, VA, while the next two meetings were online webinars held on June 16 and 23, 2011, respectively. At each of its meetings, members discussed the educational needs in the Southwest and strategies for meeting those needs.

The RAC reviewed regional background information for the Southwest. Some of the factors related to the educational challenges in this region were the rural environment of almost two thirds of schools; the diversity of the student population; the linguistically and culturally rich backgrounds of the families; the poverty that affects over half of all students; the potential language comprehension problems that many young students bring to school; and the significant levels of underachievement in reading and mathematics, especially among minority groups.

After preliminary deliberations about the most important needs, the RAC developed a data collection plan that tapped into various channels of communication, some of which relied on the use of technology. Constituents responded in great numbers to an online survey. Analyses revealed that respondents tended to validate many of the RAC's initial priorities and solutions. After an in depth examination of the information, the RAC used this information to narrow the list of priorities and amplify and enrich upon the list of strategies to address each need.

Ultimately the RAC decided to prioritize the following six challenges for its region:
(1) The most effective teachers are not assigned to the lowest performing schools; (2) Teachers going into the profession are unprepared to work in the lowest performing schools; (3) There is a shortage of effective school leaders; (4) There is insufficient access to effective, job-embedded professional development opportunities; (5) There is no system for galvanizing families and communities to make decisions for improving schools; and (6) There is a need to provide ready access to reliable, timely student data for use by educational stakeholders, and a need for guidance around effective use of data in instructional decision making.

With the generous help of its constituents, the Southwest RAC assembled a wide range of strategies it believes would be of value in meeting the significant educational needs of this region. Expert guidance will be needed to implement most of them; funds will be needed to implement some of them. The RAC also believes that work around defining commonly used terms such as "effective teacher" and "effective leader" needs to occur in short order.

INTRODUCTION

This report represents the regional needs assessment of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) for the Southwest region, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The Southwest RAC members conducted outreach activities to obtain input from various constituencies on regional needs and how to address those needs, used statistical data from the Southwest Regional Profile (Appendix B), and deliberated during three public meetings from May 23 through June 23, 2011.

Legislative Background

There are ten Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. sections 9601 et. seq.). The RACs are governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (Public Law 92-463). Each RAC also has a charter that defines the RAC's roles and responsibilities.

Regional Background Information

There is a wealth of educational data on the Southwest region. A regional profile was created to represent a descriptive statistical snapshot of the Southwest states' educational status in various areas. The Southwest RAC referred to the profile and used its own expertise as well as input from constituencies, to identify the region's most pressing needs. The entire profile can be found in Appendix B, but excerpts are presented below that relate to the six areas of need prioritized by the Southwest RAC.

Metropolitan Status. Figure 1 displays the percentage of school districts by metropolitan status.

The Southwest region's educational programming is predominantly rural. In every state more districts are rural than either urban or suburban, with a range of 46% rural in Texas, to 79% rural in New Mexico. Notably fewer districts are urban in nature, with Louisiana (18%) and Texas (also 18%) having the largest percentage of districts located in cities, and Oklahoma (1%) the smallest.

Figure 1: Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status
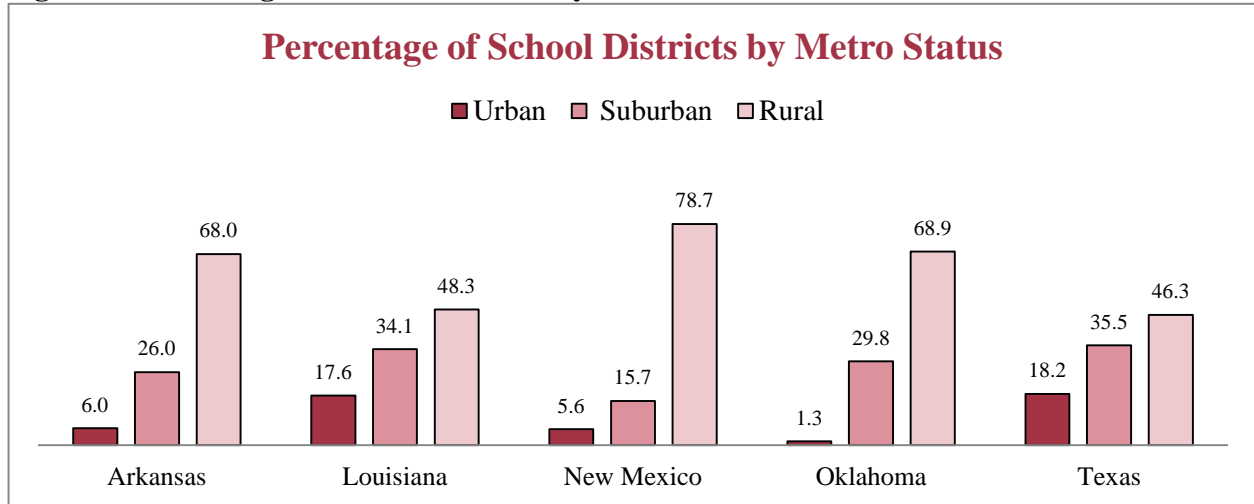
SOURCE: Common Core of Data, 2003-2004.

Racial Characteristics. Table 1 displays the percentage of public school students by racial characteristics.

The Southwest region is relatively diverse with respect to race. Non-white students comprise only of one third of all students in Arkansas, as compared to over 70% of students in New Mexico. The states in the Southwest region also differ from one another with respect to the distribution of minorities in each state. Two states—Oklahoma and New Mexico—have notable American Indian populations (19% and 11% respectively). Two states—Louisiana and Arkansas—have considerably larger proportions of black students than the other states (46% and 22% respectively). Finally, two states—New Mexico and Texas—have sizable percentages of Hispanic students (56% and 48% respectively).

Table 1: Percentage of Public School Students by Racial Characteristics

State	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic	Two or More Races
Arkansas	0.7	1.6	22.4	8.6	66.6	Not Applicable
Louisiana	0.8	1.4	46.1	2.9	48.8	Not Applicable
New Mexico	11.0	1.4	2.6	56.1	28.9	Not Applicable
Oklahoma	19.2	2.1	10.9	10.5	57.3	Not Applicable
Texas	0.4	3.6	14.2	47.9	34.0	Not Applicable

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009.

Language. Table 2 contains linguistic indicators, such as the distribution of people who speak a language other than English and the percentage of children whose parents speak English fluently.

The Southwest is a linguistically rich region. More than one in ten students between the ages of 5 and 17 speaks a language other than English at home in Louisiana and New Mexico, while in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas the number exceeds two in every ten students. In New Mexico

and Texas, one third or more of the general populace over the age of 5 speaks another language, and the students in these two states are less likely to have parents who speak English fluently.

Table 2: Linguistic Indicators

State	Percent of Population: Foreign Born[1]	Percent of People 5 and Over Who Speak Language Other Than English[1]	Percent of Children Whose Parents Are Fluent English Speakers[2]	Percent of Population Aged 5-17: Speak Language Other Than English at Home[1]	Percent of public School Students in ELL/LEP[3]
Arkansas	4.0	6.3	92.7	24.4	5.8
Louisiana	3.1	8.4	96.6	13.3	1.8
New Mexico	9.5	35.9	81.1	16.7	N/A
Oklahoma	5.0	8.4	92.2	21.2	NA
Texas	15.8	33.6	72.1	21.8	15.1

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009.

Socioeconomic Status. Table 3 displays socioeconomic indicators, such as the percentage of families below the poverty level, the percentage of families with children below the poverty level, and the percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL).

Poverty in the Southwest region's school population is a significant factor, with nearly half or more than half of the students in each state qualifying for FRPL at school. The percentage that qualifies is lowest in Texas (49%) and highest in Louisiana (65%). Eligibility guidelines for FRPL are based on the Federal income poverty guidelines that take into account household size.

Table 3: Socioeconomic Indicators

State	Total Number of Families[1]	Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Families With Children Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Children With at Least One Parent With a Postsecondary Degree[2]	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch[3]
Arkansas	754,486	13.5	21.6	35.1	57.1
Louisiana	1,112,049	14.2	21.4	34.5	64.9
New Mexico	484,979	13.7	21.4	35.6	62.9
Oklahoma	940,106	12.2	19.3	36.8	56.3
Texas	5,783,060	13.2	19.2	35.6	48.8

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009.

Academic Achievement – Math. Looking at math achievement broken down by race, four of the five states in the Southwest region had smaller percentages of white students scoring at or above proficient than the U.S. average of 50% for white students, with a low of 37% in Louisiana and a high of 61% in Texas. Overall the NAEP fourth grade math scores for the region show significant disparities between white and non-white students with respect to the percentage demonstrating proficiency or above.

The range for black students demonstrating proficiency or above extended from a low of 8% in Louisiana to a high of 23% in Texas, as compared to a U.S. average of 15% for black students. Among Hispanics, students in New Mexico had the lowest percentage demonstrating proficiency or above, at 18%, while Arkansas and Texas tied for the highest at 26% proficient, as compared

to a U.S. average of 21% for Hispanic students. The percent proficient or above for Native Americans was calculated only for the states of New Mexico and Oklahoma as the other states in the region had small numbers of these students. The range extended from 14% in New Mexico to 29% in Oklahoma, as compared to a U.S. average of 23% for Native American students.

Figure 2: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ American Indian/Alaska Native

	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
White	46.0	37	47	40	61
Black	12.0	8.0	19.0	14.0	23.0
Hispanic	26.0	23.0	18.0	20.0	26.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	NA	NA	14.0	29.0	NA
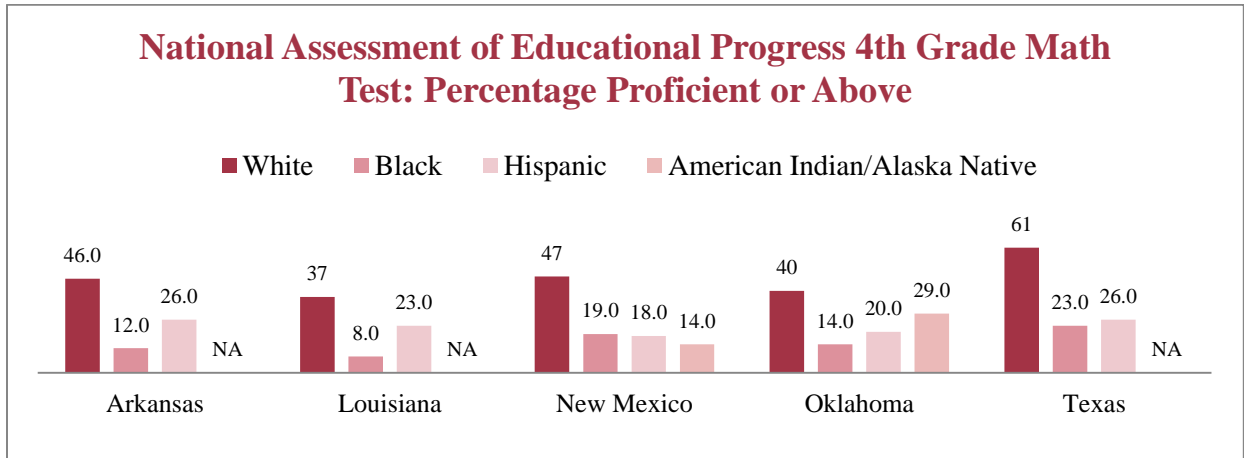
SOURCE: NAEP State Profiles, 2009.

Academic Achievement – Literacy. Figure 3 contains results of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth grade reading test administered in the Southwest Region.

Looking at reading achievement broken down by race, four of the five states in the Southwest region had smaller percentages of white students scoring at or above proficient than the U.S. average of 41% for white students, with a low of 28% in Louisiana and a high of 43% in Texas. Overall the NAEP fourth grade reading scores for the region show significant disparities between white and non-white students with respect to the percentage demonstrating proficiency or above.

The range for black students scoring proficiency or higher in reading extended from 9% in Louisiana to 20% in Texas, as compared to 15% for black fourth graders in the nation. Among Hispanics the lowest scores were in New Mexico at 14% and the highest in Texas at 18%, as compared to 16% for the nation. The percent proficient or higher for Native Americans was 10% for New Mexico and 27% for Oklahoma, as compared to 22% for the nation.

In almost all areas students fared worse on the NAEP reading than on the NAEP math assessment.

Figure 3: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade
Reading Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ American Indian/Alaska Native

State	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaska Native
Arkansas	35.0	14.0	16.0	NA
Louisiana	28.0	9.0	16.0	NA
New Mexico	35.0	13.0	14.0	10.0
Oklahoma	33.0	11.0	17.0	27.0
Texas	43.0	20.0	18.0	NA
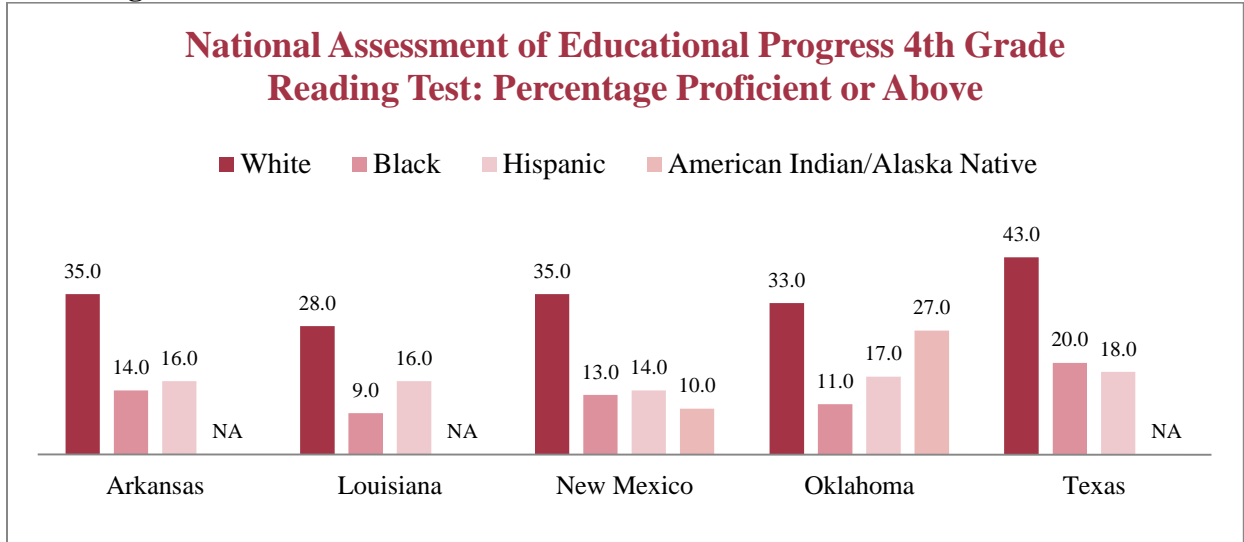
Teaching Profession. Table 4 contains teaching profession criteria, such as whether states require formal coursework in subject areas taught, and initial licensure requirements for all prospective teachers.

Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico require new teachers to participate in state-funded induction programs, and Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma require substantial formal coursework in subject areas taught. All five Southwest Region states require prospective teachers to pass written tests in basic skills and subject-specific knowledge, and Texas also requires written tests in subject-specific pedagogy. Also, all states require student teaching, and Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas require other clinical experiences during teacher training.

Table 4: Teaching Profession

State	Initial Licensure Requirements for All Prospective Teachers (2009-2010)						
	All New Teachers Are Required To Participate in a State-Funded Induction Program	State Requires Substantial Formal Coursework in Subject Area(s) Taught	Prospective Teachers Must Pass Written Tests			State Requires Clinical Experiences During Teacher Training	
			Basic Skills	Subject-Specific Knowledge	Subject-Specific Pedagogy	Student-Teaching (Weeks)	Other Clinical Experiences (Hours)
Arkansas	✓		✓	✓		12	
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓		9	180
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓		14	
Oklahoma		✓	✓	✓		12	45
Texas			✓	✓	✓	12	30

Teacher Performance Incentives. Table 5 shows teacher performance incentive criteria, such as whether the state provides financial incentives for teachers and principals to work in targeted hard-to-staff schools or assignments.

Table 5: Teacher Performance Incentives

| State | Has Pay-for-Performance Program or Pilot Program Rewarding Teachers for Raising Student Achievement | Formally Recognizes Differentiated Roles for Teachers | Provides Incentives or Rewards to Teachers for Taking on Differentiated Roles | Provides Financial Incentives for Teachers To Earn National Board Certification | Provides Incentives to Teachers Who Work in Targeted Hard-To-Staff Assignments | | Provides Incentives for National-Board-Certified Teachers To Work in Targeted Schools | Provides Incentives to Principals Who Work in Targeted Schools |
					Targeted Schools	Hard-To-Staff Teaching-Assignment Areas		
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
New Mexico		✓	✓					
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Texas	✓				✓			✓

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010.

DATA COLLECTION: PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Southwest RAC held three public meetings. The first was held on May 23 and 24, 2011 in Arlington, Virginia. During that meeting, Southwest RAC members identified nine regional educational need areas based on committee members' expertise and experience, input received from their constituent groups, public comments made during the meeting, and the Southwest Regional Profile (see Appendix B).

The second meeting was an online webinar on July 16, 2011. The public was invited to listen and submit their comments via the RAC web site (www.seiservices.com/rac). At that meeting, committee members reviewed information submitted by the public to the RAC web site, responses to an online survey RAC members had sent to their constituents, and input from RAC colleagues relevant to the needs identified by the committee and the public. Using the priorities identified from the online survey together with their own knowledge and experience, Southwest RAC members narrowed down the number of need areas to address from nine to six. At the end of the meeting, each member accepted an assignment to compile the solutions for one of these six areas of need for review at the next meeting.

The third and final meeting was also an online webinar held on June 23, 2011. Again, members of the public listened and submitted their comments via the RAC web site. RAC members presented their compilation of solutions and gave each other input. The ultimate goals were to reach consensus on the key educational needs and provide solutions to addressing those needs with recommended strategies, all of which was accomplished.

DATA COLLECTION: OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Southwest RAC members developed an outreach strategy to elicit stakeholder review of the initial set of challenges corresponding to the needs of the region and to give input into potential solutions and strategies to address those and other unmet needs. A variety of communication strategies were made available for stakeholders to use. These included the RAC web site, an online survey using Survey Monkey, outreach through newsletters, outreach at meetings, personal phone calls, word of mouth, and one-to-one meetings. RAC members drafted personal

e-mails to constituent groups, inviting them to take the online survey or visit the RAC website to leave open-ended comments.

The RAC targeted the following constituencies:

- Governors' offices.
- Secretaries of education.
- State departments of education.
- Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy.
- Afterschool Network.
- Oklahoma Education Association.
- Professional educators' organizations.
- Legislative leaders.
- Oklahoma Technology Association.
- Teacher of the Year groups.
- Parent-teacher associations.
- School boards associations.
- Rural schools associations.
- Suburban schools associations.
- Charter schools associations.
- Tribal leaders.
- Centers for disabilities.
- Students.
- Families.
- School staff.
- Higher education institutions.
- Business leaders.
- Community members.
- Community leaders.
- University researchers.
- Districts.
- Schools.
- Teacher unions.

By far the largest response from all of the outreach strategies was generated by the online survey. Southwest RAC members distributed the online survey beginning on May 27 and closed it on June 9. One hundred and one responses were received from the region, with the greatest number coming from New Mexico and the smallest from Texas. Tables 6 and 7 detail a breakdown of respondents by state and role.

Table 6: Respondents by State

State	% Of Regional Total
Arkansas	15
Louisiana	18
New Mexico	43
Oklahoma	16
Texas	8

Table 7: Respondents by Role

Role	% Of Total
School administrator	23%
Education researcher	13%
State ed. agency official	9%
Teacher	9%
Non-profit business leader	8%
Parent	7%
Community Member	6%
School district official	5%
School board member	4%
State legislator	4%
State government official	3%
For-profit business leader	2%
Other	9%

Note: Almost half of all school administrator respondents work for charter schools and almost all other school personnel respondents work for public schools. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 4 shows the priorities selected by respondents to the online survey.

Figure 4: Priorities Selected by Respondents to the Online Survey
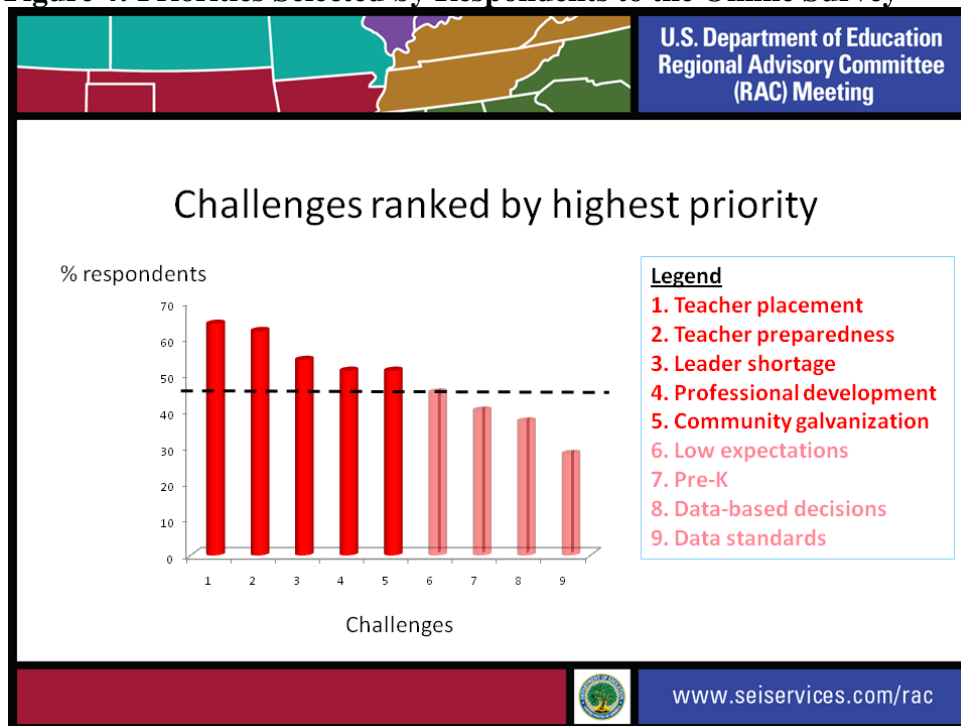
The Southwest RAC decided to address the five highest ranked challenges based on the survey results and to combine the two data challenges into one additional challenge.

CROSS-CUTTING CHALLENGES IMPACTING REGIONAL NEEDS

The Southwest RAC discussed issues that elucidate the context in which educators operate. This is a region in which poverty among families with school age children figures prominently. Poverty leads to overwhelming life challenges for families; many of these problems affect children and confront unprepared educators when students arrive at school. One of the key challenges for educators is related to children's language development. It is not uncommon for children in this region to start school without the essential language skills that are considered a foundation for school learning. This has serious implications for school readiness across the region.

The ramifications of poverty also lead to low performing schools of which there are many in the region. The Southwest RAC members favored the more descriptive term "low performing" over the commonly used term "high risk." They also described a serious consequence arising from this mélange of poverty and low performing schools: extremely low expectations for students and schools alike. There is a perception that the education community, and perhaps even the community at large, is willing to accept outcomes that would be unacceptable in other regions. Some members wondered if their constituents had ever seen excellence in education in order to have a base of comparison. Interestingly, this comparison is occurring in New Orleans, where some families who fled Hurricane Katrina are now returning from regions where they witnessed

excellence in education for the first time. As illustrated, the impacts of poverty in these states are both tangible and intangible and have a crosscutting effect across the region.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

After much discussion and subsequent review of input from the public, the Southwest RAC synthesized information into six challenge areas that it identified as priorities corresponding to the needs of the region. These are presented in hierarchical order in the table below. In the ensuing discussion, each challenge is explained along with suggested strategies and solutions for addressing it.

Figure 5: Challenges Prioritized by Southwest RAC

The most effective teachers are not assigned to the lowest performing schools.
Teachers going into the profession are unprepared to work in the lowest performing schools.
There is a shortage of effective school leaders.
There is insufficient access to effective, job-embedded professional development opportunities.
There is no system for galvanizing families/communities to make decisions for improving schools.
There is a need to provide ready access to reliable, timely student data for use by educational stakeholders, and a need for guidance around effective use of data in instructional decision making.

Challenge: The most effective teachers are not assigned to the lowest performing schools.

Description
The Southwest RAC believes that the most effective teachers are not teaching in the lowest performing schools and that this is having a negative impact on the achievement of students in the region. Confounding the ability to address this challenge, is the fact that an agreed-upon definition for an effective teacher has yet to emerge in the field, and the belief that the pool of available teachers with adequate training to teach in low performing schools is too small to meet the need (see the section on teacher preparedness). With the academic well-being of so many students hanging in the balance, it is essential to tackle these challenges, yet some of the solutions are currently out of reach without government-facilitated intervention.

Despite the lack of a formal definition of an effective teacher, experienced leaders with a firm grasp on their community's culture and diverse needs seem to have a sound intuitive understanding of the types of teachers that would do well in their schools. Many respondents believe that in addition to having expertise in a content area, teachers must be passionate about closing the achievement gap, believe in the potential of lowest performing students to succeed, and be culturally attuned to their students in order to connect with them. Some stated that teachers who come from the community themselves will be the most effective. Anecdotal evidence suggests these leaders are often successful in finding the right teachers through a hiring process that may culminate in observing prospective candidates guest teach their prospective students. But SW RAC members agreed that all leaders would benefit from being able to make

evidence-based decisions when it comes to a high stakes process such as hiring, and less experienced leaders require additional guidance in identifying teachers who would fit best in their schools.

RAC members also agreed that incentives to attract teachers to the lowest performing schools are extremely important. Favorable working conditions can act as potent incentives for many. For example, teachers may be willing to work in a low performing school if (a) they know in advance what is going to be expected of them; (b) they will have ongoing training and support once they get there; (c) they will have the ability to rotate out after a pre-determined period of time; and (d) they may opt out if the post turns out to be a poor fit without suffering serious professional ramifications. Other teachers may be attracted by factors such as supportive leadership; a summer institute orientation prior to the start of the school year; and a teacher-friendly system for monitoring children's learning. Leaders may need guidance and flexibility to create teacher friendly work environments. Salaries and financial incentives are undoubtedly part of the mix. Generally speaking, teacher salaries are uneven across the southwest region, and it is not uncommon for teachers to cross state lines in order to procure a teaching position that provides more family-friendly wages.

Branding and marketing, concepts that are foreign to many educators, may also be important strategies for attracting the right teachers to the lowest performing schools. These strategies when thoughtfully applied may help counterbalance the perceived low status of the teaching profession, although a much larger effort in this regard is indicated.

Strategies to Address the Challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address the need to place the most effective teachers in the lowest performing schools. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting this need:

1. Create a culture of achievement. Give leaders information on techniques that change school culture. Support schools to develop and implement strategies that have been shown to be effective in school environments where there is a culture of achievement. This should include mechanisms for identifying and supporting struggling teachers to avoid failure.

2. Link together research, policies, and practices. The Department of Education should link together the research, policies, and practices around lowest performing schools, so that each informs the others; identify good models for selecting and placing teachers; and make this knowledge known through technical assistance. This should include examining any relevant lessons learned from programs such as Apollo 20.

3. Determine what an effective teacher looks like. Provide technical assistance that includes profiles of effective teachers based on examples from schools that have made progress in this area.

4. Help school leaders identify teachers with profiles that predict effectiveness in lowest performing schools. Hire those truly committed to closing the achievement gap.

Implement effective teacher evaluation processes and incentives for truly committed and effective teachers to accept placement in lowest performing schools.

5. Instruct leaders in how to make working conditions (other than salary) rewarding. This could include all levels of school staff becoming actively engaged with students and taking responsibility for their success.

6. Make monitoring classrooms, promoting student engagement, and offering support to teachers who do not meet standards top priorities of school leaders. Reward leaders engaged in this level of reform.

7. Incorporate a plan that allows teachers to change schools after a period of time to avoid burn-out; include technical assistance to support teachers and school leaders; and allow rotation of the most effective teachers in lowest performing schools

8. Offer technical assistance to leadership in how to empower and support teachers.

9. Hold high expectations of teachers through rigorous evaluation systems while supporting them and providing examples of success drawn from practices of successful schools.

10. Leverage National Board Certified teachers to build human capital especially in low performing schools.

Challenge: Teachers going into the profession are unprepared to work in the lowest performing schools.

Description
The Southwest RAC believes that there is a gap between the skill level of teachers emerging from teacher preparatory institutions and the skill level teachers must have in order to improve the achievement of students in the lowest performing schools. This is a significant problem in the Southwest region with implications for the recruitment process, teacher preparatory institutions, and teacher support systems.

In the communities where the lowest performing schools are located, many families live in poverty, and children commonly start kindergarten with language comprehension problems. They are met by teachers and schools ill equipped to understand or meet their needs and unable to connect with their cultures, native languages, or communities. As students continue to be underserved from one year to the next, their difficulties compound until they are at risk of dropping out. The low expectations that these schools have for their students are only matched by those that the students and families have for themselves.

The members of the RAC considered plausible explanations for why so many teachers are unprepared to instruct these students. One has to do with the availability of talent, and postulates that the right people are not choosing to enter into the field of education. As a profession, teaching in this country is neither prestigious nor lucrative. While many of the best and brightest students are drawn to the profession regardless, others may not consider it for those reasons.

Another challenge is the shortage of teachers with credentials in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), bilingual education, and special education. While general teacher shortages are expected down the road, shortages of teachers in these areas are more immediate.

Another explanation has to do with the readiness of teacher preparatory institutions to prepare teachers to enter the profession. These institutions may be out of touch with the complexities of teaching in the lowest performing schools and as a consequence failing to put into place the curricula, cooperative agreements, and field experiences needed to educate prospective teachers. In addition they may underestimate the influence of regional differences. For example an institution that has done a good job preparing a teacher to work in rural Oklahoma, may find that that teacher would not be prepared to work in the city of New Orleans.

Being adequately prepared and motivated to work in a low performing school is only the first step. Teachers in these schools need upfront and ongoing training, support, and encouragement in order to succeed.

Strategies to Address the Challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address the need to prepare teachers to work in the lowest performing schools. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting this need:

1. Identify a teacher competency model for the lowest performing schools that can be used to identify, attract and select the right talent.

2. Provide technical guidance to districts and charter management organizations on how to select teachers based on the competency model.

3. Disseminate a comprehensive list of the lowest performing schools in the region so that prospective candidates can do their sample lessons in these schools during recruitment and possibly be placed there.

4. Identify funding sources to help attract candidates to this environment by paying for additional professional development; alternately, pay teachers who enter lowest performing schools a higher salary.

5. Help regions create strategies for recruiting teachers who are products of lowest performing schools and communities themselves.

6. Provide competitive grants to redesign teacher education programs targeted to lowest performing states.

7. Provide a national directory of teacher preparatory programs that teach classroom management tactics and cultural competency with a broad repertoire of strategies.

8. Require that all teacher preparation programs focus on experiential, hands-on preparation and not just pedagogy.

9. Require teacher preparation programs to partner with low-income districts (urban and rural) for planning, teaching, and supporting the development of those in the student teaching process.

10. Pair teachers new to low performing schools with veteran teachers who have successful track records.

11. Require members of the Technical Assistance Team to visit classrooms in low performing schools and to hone their craft by providing on the spot coaching and training.

12. Provide a model for teaching cultural competence appropriate to students in low performing schools.

13. Develop university practicum classes with on-site modeling and practice in low performing schools.

14. Require prospective teachers wishing to teach in low performing schools to learn about the communities and families of these schools as they attend curriculum evenings and parent-teacher interviews, conduct home visits, and get involved with extra-curricular activities.

Challenge: There is a shortage of effective school leaders.

Description
The Southwest RAC believes that there is a shortage of effective school leaders in the region that adversely impacts the ability of schools to operate effectively and ultimately affects student achievement. The lack of a clear and consistent definition of what comprises an effective school leader makes it more difficult to address this need at all levels from preparation, to recruitment, to support.

While effective school leaders are easy to recognize, they are less readily defined. RAC members describe leadership characteristics as competencies in areas such as mining student data, understanding the culture of the children, working with families, and managing teachers. While some characteristics may be regional and definitions may be crafted at the state level, RAC members agree that a national effort to compile and release the existing research in this area would assist all concerned. A collaborative environment of discussion and discovery around the research is critical to the success of defining what an effective leader will be. Once a definition is established, criteria for evaluation of principals will need to follow.

The shortage of effective leaders is not restricted to the school level; districts are also affected. A restricted pool of talent may be part of the problem, but the larger challenge is believed to be one of recruitment and human capital management. Creating partnerships between universities and K–12 institutions could facilitate creation of a stronger leadership pipeline and provide for the training of prospective principals within schools. Creating vertical mobility for talented teacher-leaders is another important means of filling the leadership gap, wherein efforts are made to

attract teachers to a leadership path that culminates in their completing a principal certification program.

Given the difficulty in recruiting effective school leaders, it behooves institutions to develop marketing campaigns to find talent, especially for the lowest performing schools. Recruitment from minority groups represented in the populace is important. Another viable strategy is recruiting from other regions in hopes of relocating school leaders with proven records of success in lowest performing schools. Other suggestions include going so far as to recruit successful leaders from fields outside of the education arena.

There is a consensus among the RAC members that principals entering the profession are not adequately prepared for the work that awaits them. This is especially true for those going into urban and rural schools. In addition to completing a certification program, it is essential that aspiring leaders have ample opportunity to shadow accomplished leaders in effective districts. Some members expressed the belief that knowing what excellence looks like, is a prerequisite for being able to create it. School leaders need guidance throughout their careers but especially in the early years. It is essential to provide them with ongoing training and support that includes research findings so that they can see the value of implementing proven practices.

Finally, some RAC members believe that school bureaucracy stands in the way of school leaders being able to focus on teaching and learning. They believe that leaders would be more effective if they were given more autonomy and then held accountable for the results of their actions.

Strategies to address the challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address the shortage of effective school leaders. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting this need:

1. Continue to develop and fund leadership training for school leaders using content from research and providing apprenticeship models (for example, New Leaders for New Schools at http://www.nlns.org/ and New Mexico Leadership Institute at www.nmli.org).

2. Earmark teacher-leaders for school leadership positions and begin training them through a middle leadership program such as Leading Educators (http://www.leadingeducators.org/).

3. Create mentorship programs led by districts or local education agencies where aspiring school leaders shadow effective school leaders for a semester.

4. Create an effective school leader competency rubric that captures necessary characteristics to be successful across the region. Check with Achievement First, KIPP, Uncommon Schools, and successful school districts.

5. Develop an effective marketing campaign for effective school leaders around the country to be placed in the Southwest region.

6. Develop a marketing campaign to recruit successful minority leaders in other fields for school leadership training programs.

7. Create a regional task force to support development and implementation of school leader evaluation rubrics with participation of traditional and alternative certification programs.

8. Create competitive grants for districts and local education agencies to develop rigorous evaluations for school leaders.

9. Make a list of school leaders who are leading failing schools readily available to the public so as not to retread those leaders with poor performance for new positions.

10. Tie funding incentives for traditional university programs and alternative certification programs to the success of their graduates or training participants.

11. Create competitive grants for districts or other local education agencies to add additional school leaders in schools.

12. Share lessons learned from the field-testing of National Board Certification for Principals.

Challenge: There is insufficient access to effective, job-embedded professional development opportunities.

Description
The Southwest RAC believes that effective professional development is critical to educators' ability to teach, lead, and ultimately raise student achievement. Furthermore, in order for professional development to be effective it must support the transfer of newly learned skills to the job setting. Job-embedded professional development does just that. The medical model, in which future doctors are trained under the tutelage of physicians while treating patients in a hospital, is a prime example of job-embedded professional development. In the Southwest region this is not the norm for either teachers or principals.

The responsibilities placed upon educators are immense, as are the expectations for their performance. However, the type of support that would help teachers improve learning among a diverse group of students is frequently lacking. Teachers often receive short episodes of training at conferences and other venues away from their schools, colleagues, classrooms, and problems of daily practice. Subsequently, they have difficulty applying the professional development content and skills to the unique needs of their students. Job-embedded training on the other hand can be continuous, take place in the school or classroom, and target the individual teacher's skills and abilities while interacting with a particular group of students. Coaches, mentors, and master teachers can play an active role in providing embedded professional development, as can principals.

Teachers also need to have enough unencumbered time available for meaningful training to occur. Japan's Lesson Study Model, where teachers spend considerably more time without students than in the U.S. in order to review student work and prepare lessons, is one such model that takes into account teachers' need for enhancing their professional growth.

The Southwest RAC proposes consideration of the National Staff Development Council's formal definition of professional development that was created for use in the reauthorized version of NCLB. This definition refers to "a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement," that among other provisions "provides job-embedded coaching or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom."

RAC members considered the following tenets concerning professional development:

1. Principals need to have access to a menu of training options for teachers that are supported by research.

2. The frequency and content of training should be tailored to the experience and skill level of the recipients.

3. Homegrown training may be more relevant than commercial options.

4. Educators need training that is targeted and intensive.

5. Technology can provide an important delivery mechanism for professional development, and video is one promising avenue for showing teachers live classroom examples. To take full advantage of this delivery mechanism, the Southwest region needs to have greater access to up-to-date technology and to use the technology it has more effectively. That being said, there is less agreement among the RAC members about the role of technology in providing professional development that is truly job-embedded.

Strategies to address the challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address the need for greater access to effective, job-embedded professional development opportunities. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting this need:

1. Require SEAs and LEAs to plan, develop and offer, through a state or district website, free, high quality, research-based, job-embedded professional development opportunities. Such professional development should be leveled to teachers' skill, experience, and subject area, with an emphasis on providing special opportunities for new teachers (at least into their fourth year) in the areas of classroom management, instructional strategies, and data analysis. To the extent possible, state and district experts, in lieu of commercial vendors, should provide the training. Include teacher and administrator tracks in each area.

2. Create and adopt state and district policies that require time for teacher collaboration and planning. For core teachers such time should be scheduled during the contract day when students are in elective or special classes with non-core teachers/instructors/facilitators. See promising practices for teacher collaboration and enrichment at http://www.timeandlearning.org/promisingpractices/teachercollaboration.

3. Determine LEAs specific instructional areas of need and create corresponding full time equivalent positions for coaches or facilitators to provide the requisite expertise and onsite support for teachers and administrators.

4. Require teacher certification to include a section on data analysis to support instruction; create state and local policy requiring demonstration of skills to use data to inform instruction; require SEAs and LEAs to post student achievement data in a transparent, user-friendly manner on the state and district websites; convene quarterly data retreats at each LEA to support the development, alignment, delivery, and modification of instruction in accordance with student performance and behavior data.

5. Establish a requirement for all teachers to have a reading endorsement and provide free, online course work to support that endorsement.

6. Establish a P-20 council (or group of education stakeholders for the years from pre-school through age 20) for teacher preparation and professional development.

7. Fund time for all teachers to observe classrooms and conduct instructional rounds both onsite and offsite. This would require at least three class periods, three times a year to allow for briefing, observation, and debriefing. See Instructional Rounds video and profile at http://www.timeandlearning.org/promisingpractices/teachercollaboration.html.

Challenge: There is no system for galvanizing families and communities to make decisions for improving schools.

Description

The Southwest RAC members believe that in their region low-income families and communities are not sufficiently involved in the education of their children and in the improvement of their schools. They further believe that this failure of educators to partner together with families and communities is having a deleterious effect on student achievement in the region. The concept of community is broadly visualized as a collective entity with a past and a present that acts together to define a future. The galvanization of a community should come from the local levels.

There are two significant challenges in high-minority and economically depressed areas. Often educators are from outside of the community and lack cultural competency. Also, some students and families face significant life challenges on a daily basis. Students might arrive at school harboring the effects of these problems. Educators are ill equipped to deal with many of these challenges and recognize that the burden placed upon them is too great to solve alone. Everyone feels the impact of a failing education system in terms of high unemployment and crime. Yet in most areas the few constituencies that support education do not know how to build bridges that will allow meaningful partnerships to emerge.

Despite some educator efforts, families often perceive a lack of transparency regarding what transpires during the school day and do not have an easily understood roadmap that would allow them to navigate the system. Educators' use of complex terminology unique to the schooling paradigm contributes to this failure to understand the system. This is further exacerbated in the Southwest region where the populace includes many non-English speakers. Furthermore,

families may not always feel welcome when they ask questions or make requests, and in fact do not have the expertise, English language fluency, or transportation to become involved in a meaningful way. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they may be unable to judge the quality of their children's schools or appreciate the challenges faced by their teachers.

The RAC members considered the following tenets and values:

1. We need to define family and community involvement and include minimum guidelines for serving diverse families from rural and isolated communities that communicate in native and other non-English languages.

2. Families and communities are the experts on their own children, and institutions need to reach out to them for their expertise.

3. We need to inform parents on the components of a quality education, and then listen to their needs and ideas.

4. We need to provide families access to forums with information, empowering them to self-identify needs and contribute solutions for educational improvement.

5. Schools and communities should dialogue without hierarchy among the participants.

6. Family involvement should not be prescriptive, but may require some things of families, such as attending report card conferences.

7. We need to recognize the challenges families face, help them understand why we need a collaborative relationship, and offer them incentives to become involved.

Strategies to address the challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address the need for a system for galvanizing families and communities to make decisions for improving schools. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting this need:

1. The U.S. Department of Education should partner with SEAs, LEAs, and community representatives, to develop a technical assistance plan that identifies information parents, communities, and educators need in order to be partners in improving education. They should also identify methods for disseminating information that targets specific needs of communities and for being responsive to community input.

2. Expand the Department of Education Office of Community Outreach to one representative per state or region to support building up community capacity.

3. Develop "Parents as Partners" program and culture.

4. Create parent liaisons that are responsible for informing, connecting, and educating parents on education reform.

5. Incentivize programs that identify and implement successful family and community involvement strategies.

6. Develop plans or campaigns consisting of successful outreach strategies for schools to use in their communities.

7. Open funding to non-profit organizations focused on community organizing and family involvement in school improvement. Include community schools, and provide technical assistance to grassroots organizations to navigate available funding.

8. Provide a clearinghouse on community organizations and strategies focused on family and community participation in school improvement decision making.

9. Identify and support intermediaries to connect grassroots community organizations with SEA/LEA education organizations and state policy-makers.

10. Make data, research, policy, processes, and educational options understandable to multiple audiences, targeting these options to the families and communities of the lowest performing districts and schools.

Challenge: There is a need to provide ready access to reliable, timely student data for use by educational stakeholders and a need for guidance around effective use of data in instructional decision making.

Description

The Southwest RAC believes that education agencies need to collect data that is reliable, current, and standardized; to make the data readily accessible to stakeholders; and to train stakeholders to use the data to make decisions relevant to students and instruction. The members agree that the education systems in their states already gather a plethora of data, but concur that there are problems from the standpoint of data indicators, quality, format, timeliness, access, consistency between and across programs, and usability.

Educators would like data systems to drive decisions for tomorrow, not just next year. They would like data to enable them to improve how they do their jobs and ultimately improve teaching and learning. They envision using data to do things such as monitor student progress, make short-term instructional decisions for individuals and groups, ascertain program effectiveness, make budgeting decisions, examine teacher effectiveness, monitor compliance issues, and answer questions such as, "Who went to college and how long did it take them to graduate?" For reasons such as these, the RAC believes that longitudinal data systems and guidance on their use should be required of all states.

Instructors, administrators, family and community members, researchers, and legislators are key stakeholders that need access to relevant data for information or decision making purposes. At the same time it is important to counterbalance stakeholders' need for information with families' legitimate rights and concerns around student privacy, and to permit differing levels of access to different stakeholder groups.

Providing educators with a plethora of data, does not in and of itself lead to higher achievement. Even the right data is not enough if educators do not know how to use data or lack the time to do so. Data analysis and data-informed decision making require that educators have time away from students. The RAC believes it is important to provide adequate time for teachers and school leaders to use data. A collaborative team provides an excellent environment for both learning how to use data and for engaging in ongoing data study and use.

RAC members considered the following tenets and values concerning data and data use:

1. Stakeholders need to be made aware of what data are being collected and are available.

2. Stakeholders need data that are transparent and thus easily understood.

3. Data delivery needs to be timely so that data can be used to make decisions from day-to-day and week-to week.

4. Access to data should be user-friendly.

5. Achievement data should come from reliable, valid measures.

6. There are many ways to gather data and many types of data; principals, for example, often gather data through instructional rounds.

Strategies to address the challenge
The Southwest RAC discussed potential strategies to address educators' data-related needs. The following summarizes the public input and committee's thoughts on meeting these needs:

1. Identify implementation models and provide guidance to districts, states, and universities for implementation of statewide data tracking systems that extend from birth to career.

2. Demonstrate key examples of how to use and report data to inform educational practices relevant to specific challenges faced by schools and individual students.

3. Provide training on using data relevant to grouping, moving, and monitoring students and adjusting instruction.

4. Provide training in methods for creating and operating data teams, collecting and analyzing data, creating a data-driven school culture, and using data for the Response to Intervention (RTI) process.

5. Teach evidence-based decision making and how to use data to drive instructional decisions, determine next instructional steps or interventions, and monitor progress.

6. Train all educators to think more critically about process, outcomes, and opportunities using data.

7. Use various forums for training including: website, workshops, seminars, FAQs, and webinars; incorporating varying degrees of technology sophistication and capacity in crafting solutions.

8. Build school and district expertise in data evaluation practices and in providing access to these practices, specifically in low performing schools.

9. Promote awareness of the importance of timely, ready-to-use, easy-to-understand data.

10. Inform parents and community on availability and use of data.

11. Provide guidance on the effective use of data, the difference between good and bad data, the use of consistent definitions across states, and the use of common formative assessments.

12. Identify and publicize effective programs in data use.

13. Highlight model programs and practices that demonstrate successful use of data-driven decision making.

14. Train educators in strategies to apply lessons learned from student data to their everyday instruction.

15. Establish a network that helps determine and define research-proven practices in data analysis.

16. Develop and provide online toolkits and other collections of resources that instruct stakeholders in how to use disaggregated data to inform instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

The members of the Southwest RAC, representing Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, and coming from a variety of professions, backgrounds, and interests, engaged in a month long process to identify the highest priority educational needs of its region. Significant effort was expended in reaching out to constituents for input about the region's challenges and strategies that would help address them. Ultimately the members came up with six high priority challenges and corresponding solutions that they believe have the potential to improve teaching, learning, and leading in these five states. Poverty casts a long shadow over many schools in this region. Nevertheless the RAC believes that educational progress can be made by improving the preparation, placement and support of educators; making families and communities genuine partners in the education of their children; and improving access to, and use of, longitudinal data for instructional decision making.

APPENDIX A

Glossary

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Community. A collective entity, with a past and a present, that acts together to define a future.

Designated Federal Official or DFO. A DFO acts as a liaison between a federal advisory committee and federal agency and must be present at all committee meetings.

Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL). Eligibility guidelines for FRPL are based on the federal income poverty guidelines that take into account household size.

Low performing schools. Low performing schools are schools that have many students who are at risk of dropping out because they have been academically underserved for many years; schools that have poor academic performance and low expectations for students; and schools that do not provide instruction that connects with students' culture, community or native language.

Highly qualified teacher. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires that all K-12 public school teachers of core academic subjects meet the "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) requirements of the Act (Section 9101(23) of ESEA), that includes provisions regarding state certification, licensure, degree requirements, and subject matter compentency. For more information on highly qualified teacher requirements go to: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg107.html

Japanese Lesson Study. Lesson Study is a practice among Japanese educators for improving the teaching process. Teachers convene to jointly plan, observe, analyze, and refine classroom lessons. For more information on lesson study go to: http://www.lessonresearch.net/

National Board Certified Teachers. National Board Certification is an advanced teaching credential that complements, but does not replace, a state's teacher license. Teachers with this credential have met rigorous standards through intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review. For more information on this certification process go to: http://www.nbpts.org/become_a_candidate/what_is_national_board_c

Professional development. An ongoing approach to improving educator's effectiveness in raising student achievement that incorporates elements such as evaluating learning needs, setting goals, aligning content with state achievement standards, and providing job-embedded coaching; and occurs several times per week on site at the school, is facilitated by the school's principal, coaches, mentors, or other staff, and may be supported by external courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences. For more information about professional development go to: http://www.learningforward.org/standfor/definition.cfm

Response to Intervention (RTI). Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-level approach aimed at maximizing student achievement and reducing behavior problems through evidence-based interventions and subsequent adjustment of those interventions based on student response. Ongoing data collection is an essential component. RTI is used to diagnose learning disabilities. For additional information go to: http://www.rti4success.org/

School locale. A rural area is a territory that is away from an urbanized area or urban cluster. An urban area is a territory that is inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city. In both cases the subcategory of locale may vary based on population size.

Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/page2.asp

APPENDIX B

Southwest Regional Profile

SOUTHWEST REGION EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

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SCHOOL AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Tables 1 through 5 and Figure 1 display the number of schools; location of those schools by metro status; student racial characteristics; selected student subgroups, such as percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL); measures of cultural fluency, such as number of students enrolled in English Language Learners (ELL) programs; and socioeconomic indicators, such as percentage of households with children below the poverty level for the Southwest Region states. These data are displayed below.

Number of Schools. Table 1 contains number of public students and schools, private schools and charter schools collected in the Southwest Region. During the School Year (SY) 2008-2009, **Texas** had 4,752,148 public school students and 8,530 public schools. **Louisiana** had a greater number of students (684,873) than **Oklahoma** (645,108), but had fewer schools — **Louisiana** had 1,643 and **Oklahoma** had 1,796. **Texas** had 1,651 private schools during SY2007-2008, and **New Mexico** had 212. **Arkansas** had 35 charter schools collected and **Louisiana** had 99 charter schools collected during 2011.

Table 1: Number of Schools

State	Public School Students, SY2008-2009[1]	Public Schools, SY2008-2009[1]	Private Schools, SY2007-2008[2]	Charter Schools Collected, 2011[3]
Arkansas	478,965	1,129	305	35
Louisiana	684,873	1,643	393	99
New Mexico	330,245	853	212	82
Oklahoma	645,108	1,796	300	18
Texas	4,752,148	8,530	1,651	426

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, 2008-2009; [2]U.S. Department of Education, Private School Universe Study, 2007-2008; [3]Center for Education Reform (www.edreform.com), 2011

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status. Figure 1 displays the percentage of school districts by metro status. A suburb is a territory that is outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size. A rural area is a territory that is away from an urbanized area or urban cluster. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size, while an urban area is a territory that is inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city. The subcategory of locale may vary based on population size.[1] As seen below, the majority of school districts in the Southwest Region were located in rural areas, with 68.9 percent of school districts in **Oklahoma** and 78.7 percent of school districts in **New Mexico** located in rural areas. In **Texas**, 18.2 percent of school districts were located in urban areas, and in **Oklahoma**, 1.3 percent were located in the same areas. In **Louisiana**, 34.1 percent of school districts were located in suburban areas, and 26 percent of school districts in **Arkansas** were located in these areas.

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[1] NCES's urban-centric locale categories, released in 2006: http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/page2.asp. Last accessed on May 5, 2011.

Figure 1: Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

Percentage of School Districts by Metro Status

■ Urban ■ Suburban ▢ Rural

State	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Arkansas	6.0	26.0	68.0
Louisiana	17.6	34.1	48.3
New Mexico	5.6	15.7	78.7
Oklahoma	1.3	29.8	68.9
Texas	18.2	35.5	46.3
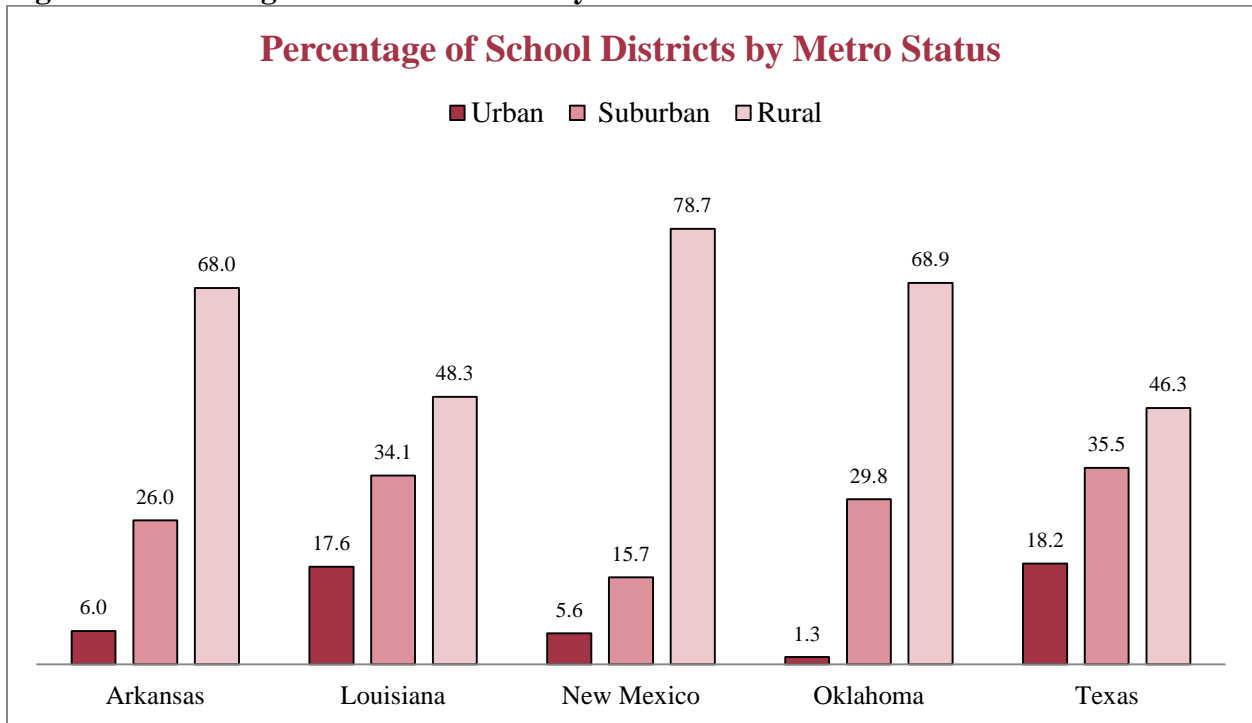
SOURCE: Common Core of Data, 2003-2004

Percentage of Public School Students by Racial Characteristics. Table 2 displays the percentage of public school students by racial characteristics. In **Oklahoma**, 19.2 percent of public school students identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, while in **Texas**, 0.4 percent did the same. **Texas** had the greatest percentage (3.6 percent) of Asian/Pacific Islander students, and **Louisiana** and **New Mexico** had the smallest (1.4 percent). In **Louisiana**, 46.1 percent of students were black, and in **Arkansas** 22.4 percent were black. In **Texas**, 47.9 percent of students identified as Hispanic, and in **New Mexico**, 56.1 percent of students identified as Hispanic. **Arkansas** had the greatest percentage of white students (66.6 percent) and **New Mexico** had the smallest percentage (28.9 percent) of the same.

Table 2: Percentage of Public School Students by Racial Characteristics

State	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic	Two or More Races
Arkansas	0.7	1.6	22.4	8.6	66.6	Not Applicable
Louisiana	0.8	1.4	46.1	2.9	48.8	Not Applicable
New Mexico	11.0	1.4	2.6	56.1	28.9	Not Applicable
Oklahoma	19.2	2.1	10.9	10.5	57.3	Not Applicable
Texas	0.4	3.6	14.2	47.9	34.0	Not Applicable

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

Selected Student Subgroups. Table 3 shows selected student subgroups, such as the percentage of students receiving FRPL, percentage of students identifying as ELL and the percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Exactly 64.9 percent of students in **Louisiana** and 62.9 percent of students in **New Mexico** received FRPL during SY2008-2009. In

Texas, 15.1 percent of students identified as ELL, and in **New Mexico**, 13.9 percent had an IEP. **Texas** had 54,929 migrant students and 80,940 homeless students during SY2008-2009.

Table 3: Selected Student Subgroups

State	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch[1]	Percent of Students in ELL/Limited English Proficient Programs[1]	Percent of Students With an IEP[1]	Number of Migrant Students[2]	Number of Homeless Students[2]
Arkansas	57.1	5.8	13.5	7,340	6,344
Louisiana	64.9	1.8	12.6	3,382	25,362
New Mexico	62.9	N/A	13.9	674	8,380
Oklahoma	56.3	N/A	14.6	773	12,139
Texas	48.8	15.1	9.5	54,929	80,940

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009; [2]Consolidated State Performance Reports: SY2008-2009

Linguistic Indicators. Table 4 contains linguistic indicators, such as the distribution of people who speak a language other than English, and the percentage of children whose parents speak English fluently. In **Louisiana**, 3.1 percent of residents were foreign born, while in **Texas**, 15.8 percent were foreign born. The percentage of children whose parents speak English fluently was 96.6 percent in **Louisiana**, and 72.1 percent in **Texas**. In **Arkansas**, 24.4 percent of the population aged 5 through 17 speaks a language other than English at home, and in **Texas** this figure was 21.8 percent.

Table 4: Linguistic Indicators

State	Percent of Population: Foreign Born[1]	Percent of People 5 and Over Who Speak Language Other Than English[1]	Percent of Children Whose Parents Are Fluent English Speakers[2]	Percent of Population Aged 5-17: Speak Language Other Than English at Home[1]	Percent of public School Students in ELL/LEP[3]
Arkansas	4.0	6.3	92.7	24.4	5.8
Louisiana	3.1	8.4	96.6	13.3	1.8
New Mexico	9.5	35.9	81.1	16.7	N/A
Oklahoma	5.0	8.4	92.2	21.2	NA
Texas	15.8	33.6	72.1	21.8	15.1

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

Socioeconomic Indicators. Table 5 displays socioeconomic indicators, such as the percentage of families below the poverty level, the percentage of families with children below the poverty level and the percentage of students receiving FRPL. **New Mexico** had 484,979 families, with 13.7 percent below the poverty level. **Texas** had the largest number (5,783,060) of families, while **Oklahoma** had the lowest percentage (12.2 percent) below the poverty level. **Arkansas** had the greatest percentage of families with children below the poverty level (21.6 percent), and **Texas** the lowest (19.2 percent). In **Oklahoma**, 36.8 percent of children had at least one parent with a postsecondary degree, and in **Louisiana**, 64.9 percent of students received FRPL.

Table 5: Socioeconomic Indicators

State	Total Number of Families[1]	Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Families With Children Below the Poverty Level[1]	Percent of Children With at Least One Parent With a Postsecondary Degree[2]	Percent of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch[3]
Arkansas	754,486	13.5	21.6	35.1	57.1
Louisiana	1,112,049	14.2	21.4	34.5	64.9
New Mexico	484,979	13.7	21.4	35.6	62.9
Oklahoma	940,106	12.2	19.3	36.8	56.3
Texas	5,783,060	13.2	19.2	35.6	48.8

SOURCES: [1]American Community Survey, 2005-2009: U.S. Census Bureau; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011; [3]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009

INDICATORS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Tables 6 through 10 and Figures 2 and 3 all contain indicators of student achievement, such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data; proficiency of 4th grade students in math and reading as measured by performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests; other measures of education, such as total number of credits required to earn a standard diploma; whether the states of **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas** are meeting requirements to establish state standards; and the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool for these Southwest Region states.

Adequate Yearly Progress. Table 6 displays AYP data for the Southwest Region. In Arkansas, 494 schools failed to make AYP, and Louisiana, 115 did the same. The percentage of schools that failed to make AYP was highest (68.2 percent) in New Mexico and lowest in Texas (5 percent).

Table 6: Adequate Yearly Progress

State	Number and Percentage of Schools That Failed To Make AYP in SY2008-2009
Arkansas	494 (45.7%)
Louisiana	115 (9.2%)
New Mexico	558 (68.2%)
Oklahoma	190 (10.6%)
Texas	353 (5.0%)

SOURCE: ED Data Express, State Snapshots, SY2008-2009

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test. Figure 2 displays results of the most recent NAEP 4th grade math test administered in the Southwest Region. Performance for white students was best in **Texas**, with 61 percent of white 4th graders achieving proficiency in math, while in **Louisiana**, 37 percent demonstrated proficiency. Exactly 23 percent of black students in **Texas** were proficient in math, and 8 percent of black students in **Louisiana** were proficient. Among Hispanic students, 26 percent of Hispanic 4th graders in **Arkansas** and 18 percent in **New Mexico** were proficient in math. For American Indian/Alaska Native students, 14 percent were proficient in **New Mexico** and 29 percent in **Oklahoma**. American Indian/Alaska Native students comprise less than 1 percent of public school students in **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, and **Texas**, and did not constitute a large enough sample to determine proficiency on the NAEP 4th grade math test.

Figure 2: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Math Test: Percentage Proficient or Above
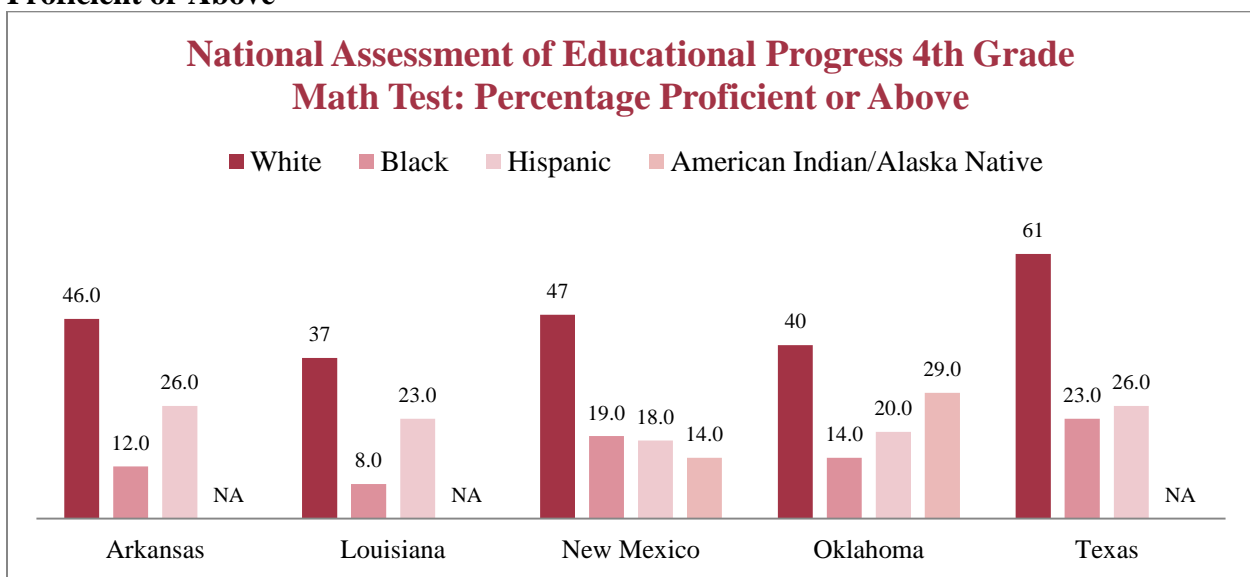
SOURCE: NAEP State Profiles, 2009

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test. Figure 3 contains results of the most recent NAEP 4th grade reading test administered in the Southwest Region. In **Arkansas** and **New Mexico**, 35 percent of white students were proficient, and in **Texas**, 43 percent demonstrated proficiency. Among black students, performance was best in **Texas**, with 20 percent proficient in reading, while in **Louisiana**, 9 percent were proficient. Precisely 17 percent of Hispanic 4th grade students in **Oklahoma** and 18 percent in **Texas** were proficient in reading. For American Indian/Alaska Native students, 10 percent were proficient in **New Mexico** and 27 percent in **Oklahoma**. American Indian/Alaska Native students comprise less than 1 percent of public school students in **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, and **Texas**, and did not constitute a large enough sample to determine proficiency on the NAEP 4th grade reading test.

Figure 3: National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

National Assessment of Educational Progress 4th Grade Reading Test: Percentage Proficient or Above

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- American Indian/Alaska Native

Arkansas: White 35.0, Black 14.0, Hispanic 16.0, American Indian/Alaska Native NA
Louisiana: White 28.0, Black 9.0, Hispanic 16.0, American Indian/Alaska Native NA
New Mexico: White 35.0, Black 13.0, Hispanic 14.0, American Indian/Alaska Native 10.0
Oklahoma: White 33.0, Black 11.0, Hispanic 17.0, American Indian/Alaska Native 27.0
Texas: White 43.0, Black 20.0, Hispanic 18.0, American Indian/Alaska Native NA

SOURCE: NAEP State Profiles, 2009

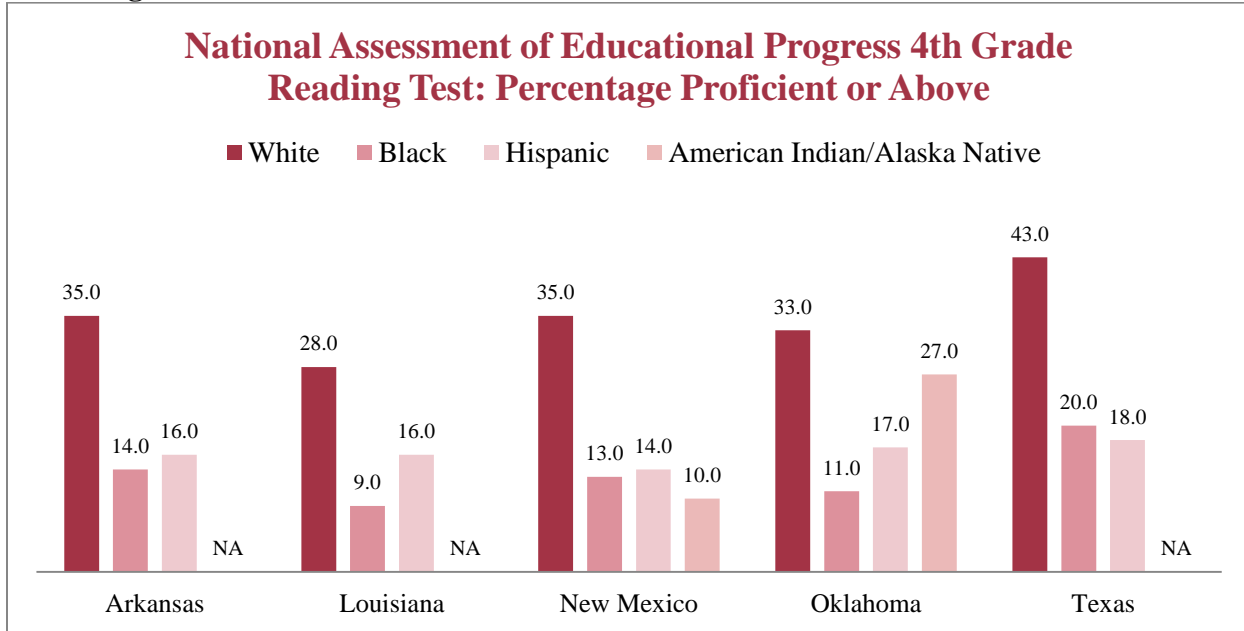**Educational Standards.** Table 7 contains educational standards, such as high school graduation rate, Advanced Placement (AP) test scores, whether the state has an exit exam and whether the state finances remediation for students failing exit exams. During SY2007-2008, the high school graduation rate was 60.3 percent in **New Mexico**, and 83.4 percent in **Arkansas**. Among 11th and 12th graders who took AP tests, 21.5 percent in **Texas** and 3.5 percent in **Louisiana** scored a 3 or above on the test. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Texas** required exit exams, and **Oklahoma** will require these beginning in 2012. **Arkansas**, **New Mexico** and **Texas** financed remediation for students failing exit exams.

Table 7: Educational Standards

State	High School Graduation Rate, SY2007-2008[1]	Advanced Placement High Test Scores (3 or Above) Per 100 Students in Grades 11 and 12 for 2009[2]	Total Number of Credits Required To Earn Standard Diploma[2]	Alternative Credential for Not Meeting All Standard Requirements[2]	Basis for Alternative Credential[2]	State Has Exit Exam[2]	State Finances Remediation for Students Failing Exit Exams[2]
Arkansas	83.4	13.6	22.0			✓	✓
Louisiana	65.0	3.5	23.0	✓	Disabilities, Fail Exit Exam	✓	
New Mexico	60.3	9.5	23.0	✓	Fail Exit Exam	✓	✓
Oklahoma	75.5	11.9	23.0			Class of 2012	
Texas	79.1	21.5	24.0	✓	Local Option	✓	✓

SOURCES: [1]EDFacts/Consolidated State Performance Report, 2008-2009; [2]EPE Research Center, 2011

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity. Table 8 contains dropout rates by race and ethnicity for the Southwest Region states. The overall dropout rate during SY2007-2008 was highest (7.5 percent)

in **Louisiana** and lowest (3.1 percent) in **Oklahoma**. For American Indian/Alaska Native students, the dropout rate was 9.2 percent in **New Mexico**. Asian/Pacific Islanders had the lowest overall dropout rates in this region, with 3.4 percent in **Louisiana** and 1.3 percent in **Texas** dropping out. The dropout rate for Hispanic students was 7.8 percent in **Louisiana**, and 5.1 percent in **Arkansas**. Black students had a dropout rate of 3.5 percent in **Oklahoma** and 10.9 percent in **Louisiana**. The dropout rate for white students was highest (4.8 percent) in **Louisiana** and lowest (1.8 percent) in **Texas**. Graduation and dropout rates do not add up to 100 percent, because they are based on different groups of students. Graduates are counted based on a single freshman class, whereas dropouts are calculated based on all students in any year.

Table 8: Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

	Number of Dropouts and Dropout Rate for SY2007-2008	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White
Arkansas	4.7% (6,492)	4.9% (49)	2.8% (62)	5.1% (452)	6.7% (2,131)	4.0% (3,798)
Louisiana	7.5% (13,580)	7.2% (98)	3.4% (100)	7.8% (319)	10.9% (8,580)	4.8% (4,483)
New Mexico	5.2% (5,132)	9.2% (1,169)	3.2% (42)	5.3% (2,696)	5.9% (148)	3.5% (1,077)
Oklahoma	3.1% (5,598)	3.3% (1,106)	2.3% (86)	5.2% (721)	3.5% (664)	2.8% (3,021)
Texas	4.0% (51,369)	3.2% (145)	1.3% (583)	5.3% (29,348)	6.3% (12,116)	1.8% (9,177)

SOURCE: Common Core of Data, SY2007-2008

Meeting Requirements To Establish Standards. Table 9 displays whether Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas are establishing requirements to meet state standards in reading, mathematics and science, and whether they have agreed to adopt common core standards. All five Southwest Region states met requirements to establish state standards in the above-mentioned subjects, and **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Oklahoma** agreed to adopt common core standards.

Table 9: Meeting Requirements To Establish Standards

State	Reading[1]	Mathematics[1]	Science[1]	Agreed To Adopt Common Core Standards[2]
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

SOURCES: [1]Education Commission of the States NCLB database, downloaded March 2011; [2]Common Core State Standards, downloaded March 2011

Preschool. Table 10 contains preschool enrollment data for the Southwest Region. Preschool enrollment, defined as the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool, was highest (53.9 percent) in Louisiana and lowest (40.5 percent) in New Mexico. During 2010-2011, Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico provided readiness interventions (i.e., state-provided or funded programs) for children not meeting school-readiness expectations.

Table 10: Preschool

State	Preschool Enrollment (Percentage of 3- and 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in Preschool)	Readiness Interventions: State Provides or Funds Programs for Children Not Meeting School-Readiness Expectations (2010-2011)
Arkansas	49.7	✓
Louisiana	53.9	✓
New Mexico	40.5	✓
Oklahoma	42.5	
Texas	42.7	

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011

TEACHER PREPARATION, QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Tables 11 through 16 display data on the number of teachers; the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers; licensure requirements; evaluation criteria of teacher performance; teacher performance incentives; and professional development standards for **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas**.

Number of Teachers and Teacher Salaries. Table 11 displays the number of teachers and average teacher salaries for the five Southwest Region states. During SY2008-2009, **Texas** had the highest number (327,905) of teachers and **New Mexico** had the lowest number (22,825) of teachers. The average teacher salary was greatest ($48,627) in **Louisiana** and lowest ($43,846) in **Oklahoma**. Teacher pay-parity (i.e., teacher earnings as a percentage of salaries in comparable occupations) was 93.8 percent in **New Mexico** and 80 percent in **Oklahoma**.

Table 11: Number of Teachers and Teacher Salaries

State	Number of Teachers[1]	Average Teacher Salary (SY2008-2009)[2]	Pay Parity (Teacher Earnings as a Percentage of Salaries in Comparable Occupations, 2008)[3]
Arkansas	37,162	$47,472	87.2
Louisiana	49,377	$48,627	82.6
New Mexico	22,825	$45,752	93.8
Oklahoma	46,571	$43,846	80.0
Texas	327,905	$47,157	83.0

SOURCES: [1]Common Core of Data, SY2008-2009; [2]NEA's Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010 Report; [3]EPE Research Center, 2010

Teacher Quality Indicators. Table 12 contains teacher quality indicators, such as the percentage of core classes taught by highly qualified teachers, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certified teachers as a percentage of all teachers. According to the U.S. Department of Education (ED), teachers considered as highly qualified must have a bachelor's degree, full state certification or licensure and must prove that they know each subject they teach[2]. In **Texas**, 99.2 percent of core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, while in **Louisiana**, 85.9 percent were taught by the same. Exactly 6.1 percent of teachers in **Oklahoma** held NBPTS certification, while 0.2 percent in **Texas** were NBPTS certified.

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[2] U.S. Department of Education: http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/hqtflexibility.html. Last accessed on May 5, 2011.

Table 12: Teacher Quality Indicators

State	Percentage of Core Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers[1]	National Board Certified Teachers as a Percentage of All Teachers[2]
Arkansas	97.6	4.5
Louisiana	85.9	3.4
New Mexico	98.2	2.5
Oklahoma	99.0	6.1
Texas	99.2	0.2

SOURCES: [1]Consolidated State Performance Reports: SY2008-2009; [2]National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, April 2011

Teaching Profession. Table 13 contains teaching profession criteria, such as whether states require formal coursework in subject areas taught, and initial licensure requirements for all prospective teachers. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana** and **New Mexico** required new teachers to participate in state-funded induction programs, and **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Oklahoma** required substantial formal coursework in subject areas taught. All five Southwest Region states required prospective teachers to pass written tests in basic skills and subject-specific knowledge, and **Texas** also required written tests in subject-specific pedagogy. Also, all states required student teaching, and **Louisiana**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas** required other clinical experiences during teacher training.

Table 13: Teaching Profession

State	Initial Licensure Requirements for All Prospective Teachers (2009-2010)						
	All New Teachers Are Required To Participate in a State-Funded Induction Program	State Requires Substantial Formal Coursework in Subject Area(s) Taught	Prospective Teachers Must Pass Written Tests			State Requires Clinical Experiences During Teacher Training	
			Basic Skills	Subject-Specific Knowledge	Subject-Specific Pedagogy	Student-Teaching (Weeks)	Other Clinical Experiences (Hours)
Arkansas	✓		✓	✓		12	
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓		9	180
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓		14	
Oklahoma		✓	✓	✓		12	45
Texas			✓	✓	✓	12	30

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

Evaluation of Teacher Performance. Table 14 displays evaluation of teacher performance measures, such as whether teacher evaluation is tied to student achievement and if it occurs on an annual basis. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas** all required teacher performance to be formally evaluated, and required all evaluators to receive formal training. In **Oklahoma** and **Texas**, teacher evaluation was tied to student achievement, and in **Arkansas** and **Oklahoma**, teacher evaluation occurred on an annual basis.

Table 14: Evaluation of Teacher Performance

State	State Requires All Teachers' Performance To Be Formally Evaluated	Teacher Evaluation Is Tied to Student Achievement	Teacher Evaluation Occurs on an Annual Basis	State Requires All Evaluators To Receive Formal Training
Arkansas	✓		✓	✓
Louisiana	✓			✓
New Mexico	✓			✓
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓	✓
Texas	✓	✓		✓

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010 (SY2009-2010)

Teacher Performance Incentives. Table 15 shows teacher performance incentive criteria, such as whether the state provides financial incentives for teachers to NBPTS certification, and if the state provides incentives to teachers who work in targeted hard-to-staff assignments. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas** had pay-for-performance programs or pilot programs rewarding teachers for raising student achievement. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Oklahoma** formally recognized differentiated roles for teachers and provided incentives or rewarded teachers for taking on differentiated roles. **Arkansas** provided incentives to teachers who worked in targeted schools and hard-to-staff teaching assignment areas, and **Arkansas**, **Louisiana** and **Texas** provided incentives to principals who worked in targeted schools.

Table 15: Teacher Performance Incentives

State	Has Pay-for-Performance Program or Pilot Program Rewarding Teachers for Raising Student Achievement	Formally Recognizes Differentiated Roles for Teachers	Provides Incentives or Rewards to Teachers for Taking on Differentiated Roles	Provides Financial Incentives for Teachers To Earn National Board Certification	Provides Incentives to Teachers Who Work in Targeted Hard-To-Staff Assignments		Provides Incentives for National-Board-Certified Teachers To Work in Targeted Schools	Provides Incentives to Principals Who Work in Targeted Schools
					Targeted Schools	Hard-To-Staff Teaching-Assignment Areas		
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
New Mexico		✓	✓					
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Texas	✓				✓			✓

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

Professional Development. Table 16 shows professional development criteria, such as whether the state has formal professional development standards, and whether the state finances professional development for all districts. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Oklahoma** had formal professional development standards, and **Arkansas**, **Louisiana** and **Oklahoma** financed professional development for all districts. **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico** and **Oklahoma** required districts to align professional development with local priorities and goals.

Table 16: Professional Development

State	State Has Formal Professional Development Standards	State Finances Professional Development for All Districts	State Requires Districts To Align Professional Development With Local Priorities and Goals
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana	✓	✓	✓
New Mexico	✓		✓
Oklahoma	✓	✓	✓
Texas			

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2010

SELECTED FUNDING RESOURCES AND STUDENT EXPENDITURES

Tables 17 through 19 display measures of school finance data such as adjusted per-pupil spending and source of funding; school finance; and U.S. Department of Education funding by grant; for the Southwest Region states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The data may be found below.

Adjusted Spending Per Student and Source of Funding. Table 17 displays adjusted spending per student and source of funding for the Southwest Region. Per-pupil expenditures (PPE) in 2008 were highest ($11,540) in **Louisiana** and lowest ($8,439) in **Texas**. The percentage of students in districts with PPE at or above the U.S. average was 3.3 percent in **Oklahoma** and 28.1 percent in **Louisiana**. The spending index (i.e., per-pupil spending levels weighted by the degree to which districts meet or approach the national average for expenditures) was 92.1 in **Louisiana** and 71.9 in **Oklahoma**. In 2008, **Arkansas** spent 4.2 percent of total taxable resources on education.

Table 17: Adjusted Spending Per Student and Source of Funding

State	Per-Pupil Expenditures, Adjusted for Regional Cost Differences (2008)	Percentage of Students in Districts With Per-Pupil Expenditures at Or Above U.S. Average (2008)	Spending Index (2008)[1]	Percentage of Total Taxable Resources Spent on Education (2008)
Arkansas	$10,541	10.0	82.7	4.2
Louisiana	$11,540	28.1	92.1	2.9
New Mexico	$10,593	18.1	86.8	4
Oklahoma	$9,137	3.3	71.9	3.3
Texas	$8,439	10.8	83.1	3.4

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011; [1]Per-pupil spending levels weighted by the degree to which districts meet or approach the national average for expenditures (cost and student need adjusted)

School Finance. Table 18 contains school finance measures, such as Wealth-Neutrality Score, the McLoone Index, the Coefficient of Variation and the Restricted Range. The wealth-neutrality score (i.e., the relationship between district funding and local property wealth) was lowest in **New Mexico**, indicating proportionally higher funding for poorer districts than in the other states. The McLoone Index (i.e., actual spending as a percentage of the amount needed to bring all students to the median level) was 90.3 percent in **Texas** and 94 percent in **Louisiana**. The coefficient of variation (i.e., the amount of disparity in spending across districts) was lowest in **Arkansas**, indicating greater equity in spending across districts in that state. Finally, the

restricted range (i.e., the difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles of spending) was lowest ($2,772) in **Oklahoma** and highest ($4,070) in **New Mexico**.

Table 18: School Finance

State	Wealth-Neutrality Score (2008)[1]	McLoone Index (2008)[2]	Coefficient of Variation (2008)[3]	Restricted Range (2008)[4]
Arkansas	0.076	92.3	0.123	$2,943
Louisiana	0.212	94.0	0.135	$3,827
New Mexico	0.020	92.9	0.213	$4,070
Oklahoma	0.035	92.6	0.178	$2,772
Texas	0.090	90.3	0.195	$3,980

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011; [1]Relationship between district funding and local property wealth (negative value indicates higher funding for poorer districts); [2]Actual spending as percent of amount needed to bring all students to median level; [3]Amount of disparity in spending across districts (lower value indicates greater equity); [4]Difference in per-pupil spending levels at the 95th and 5th percentiles

U.S. Department of Education Funding by Grant. Table 19 contains information on U.S. Department of Education grants such as Language Acquisition State grants, Special Education grants, Title I grants, Rural and Low Income Schools grants and Safe and Supportive School grants. Data for **Arkansas**, **Louisiana**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma** and **Texas** are found below.

Table 19: U.S. Department of Education Funding by Grant

State	Language Acquisition State Grants[1]	State Agency Program — Migrant[1]	Special Education Grants[1]	ESEA Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies[1]	Improving Teacher Quality Grants[1]	Education Technology Grants[1]	Rural and Low Income Schools Grant[1]	Small Rural School Achievement Grant[1]	Race to the Top Grant[2]	Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant[3]	School Improvement Grant[1]	Safe and Supportive School Grants[4]
Arkansas	$2,993,001	$5,276,291	$106,603,388	$144,267,804	$28,692,584	$2,712,476	$3,646,838	$1,337,016	$0	$18,129,183	$5,287,815	$0
Louisiana	$2,401,383	$2,470,444	$179,911,586	$294,842,964	$65,226,437	$5,509,032	$4,479,547	$133,950	$0	$4,056,510	$10,477,049	$3,211,259
New Mexico	$5,797,995	$889,073	$86,618,033	$113,156,234	$23,044,481	$2,098,225	$1,474,291	$513,022	$0	$0	$3,979,924	$0
Oklahoma	$3,490,217	$1,075,989	$140,573,963	$148,405,592	$33,969,928	$2,776,952	$3,983,058	$7,118,174	$0	$0	$5,259,252	$0
Texas	$93,022,484	$58,879,762	$916,138,464	$1,299,356,262	$247,415,976	$23,798,317	$7,344,489	$8,646,094	$0	$26,074,861	$46,768,248	$0

SOURCES: [1]U.S. Department of Education: 2008; [2]Ed.gov Race to the Top Fund; [3]U.S. Department of Education, Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program, 2006-2009; [4]Ed.gov Safe and Supportive School Grants

APPENDIX C

Public Comments from

RAC Website

APPENDIX C: PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM RAC WEBSITE

Role	State	User Comments
Other	NM	I am a higher ed. researcher. I wanted to ask a question and make a comment on your webinar. I was disappointed that audience participation was not possible and wonder if you will be doing webinars to gather public input? In addition I heard someone remark that New Mexico had low standards and had a test with low standards. New Mexico has one of the most demanding annual standardized tests in the country where 50% of the points on the math standardized test are based on open-ended responses so students need to explain their thinking. The Regional Educational Lab in San Antonio, Texas has ranked the New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment as close to the NAEP exams. the standards and tests are high level, our cut-of point for competency is very high and this helps explain some of the low rankings. But as we all know one shouldn't be comparing apples and banannas. Thanks for listening, [name, position deleted]
School Administrator	TX	Here are a few suggestions (feedback) to the US Department of Education as they prepare to set priorities for the Regional Technical Assistance Centers: 1. Holistically educate the whole person (intellectual - knowledge, skills, critical and creative thought, social and emotional growth) through the common core. 2. Promote reflection on individual growth (both for the student and professional) as a way to empower all learners to take personal responsibility. 3. Provide a structure of cooperation and collaboration among students, parents, community partnerships, and educators for the sharing of successful practices and experiences and for the purpose of creating compassionate life long learners.
Other	AR	Regional Technical Assistance Centers should take a greater role in disseminating information about the needs of advanced learners. Little or NO fiscal assistance is directed toward gifted and talented learners at the federal level. Greater awareness of the needs of these students, particularly gifted and talented learners from low-income homes, is sorely needed by the educational community at large. Regional Technical Assistance Centers could and should disseminate research and evidence-based practices related to gifted and talented students.

Role	State	User Comments
Other	NM	The public school administration are spending way too much in access goods and services while the classrooms, teachers, and students suffers. Teachers are burnt out and thus less enthuse to teach and only there to retire with benefits; new ones are being exit out because they are more energetic, enthused, and highly motivated. Higher Education is deplorable. [name deleted] ranks the worst raking in millions of dollars on a 'good ole boys' system and buying the ranking legislators to give them more money. Senior administrators are raking in a blue cool $300,000 plus to $800,000 plus a year salary, while increasing student tuitions. Something is wrong with this picture at all our major universities here. That needs to change quickly and appropriately. The universities in New Mexico has gotten out of hand.
Other	NM	1. I am interested in finding out how members are chosen for these committees. I am a professor and the director of research for a College of Education. I also serve on the governing board of a new Charter School and I am a professor of learning technologies. As an educator with over 40 years experience in public schools and then higher education and as the director of several NSF-funded and successful STEM grants in New Mexico I would be interested in providing feedback for the Educational Profile on New Mexico. 2. I would also like to provide some input into your profile. New Mexico is a very unique state in which Hispanics are often some of the earliest citizens. the needs of ELL students are quite different in New Mexico than in states like California (where I once taught) in that both Spanish and English are spoken and learned in many New Mexico communities and there are many dual-language programs that have proven to be successful. New Mexico also provides a unique opportunity for all sectors of the population to become involved in education which is shown for example in our state-wide Innovate-Educate organization where businesses, government, higher education and public schools work collaboratively to provide exciting programs in STEM for students during the summer in many of our poorest rural communities. Opportunities for collaboration across stakeholders in education are quite abundant in our state and important models for others. I can be reached at [name and email address deleted].

Role	State	User Comments
State Education Agency	AR	School librarians in Arkansas are called "teachers of technology skills" by state law. With keyboarding and research skills in primary school needed by the Common Core State Standards, plus the strong emphasis on foundational reading skills, librarians are more important than ever. In small school districts without curriculum supervisors, they frequently know more about the school curriculum than any other classroom teacher. Arkansas is fortunate to have a state law requiring a certified, Master's Degree librarian in every school of over 300 students. A good librarian can save the school more than his/her salary each year in careful management of school resources such as keeping track of barcoded textbooks with library circulation programs. [name and affiliation deleted]
Teacher	OK	PLEASE include as many diverse voices as possible in your discussions: students, teachers, parents, administrators. Educators know what will and won't work in the classroom. Students know what good teaching looks like. Parents know which schools and teachers will nurture their children. To freeze out educators' voices and family voices and listen only to the Billionaire Boys' Club, with nary an educator in the bunch, is a slap in the face of all of us who have devoted our lives (36th year of teaching successfully completed) to the education of young people. Listen to us, please. We have much to contribute. We want to be part of the solution, but much is outside our power, including the 22% child poverty rate in OK. How can I get involved?
School Administrator	AR	Need: One critical issue is finding, recruiting, and maintaining highly qualified and dedicated teachers and school administrators to work in Arkansas. Solution: Possibly exploring ways to create pipelines in Arkansas and out-of-state colleges of education (similar to what TFA does) to enhance the mission-driven, social justice aspect of public education and the specific needs and challenges of smaller, rural areas that have far fewer community/cultural resources combined with "urban" issues (albeit on a smaller scale than large cities).

APPENDIX D

Public Comments from

Survey Monkey

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM SURVEY MONKEY

Role	State	User Comments
Public school teacher	NM	NM has many quality early childhood programs available. However, with funding cuts there has been a negiative impact on the number of programs available.
Public charter school administrator	NM	Too much data is requested by the PED and very little is analyzed strategically. For example; the NMPED's Data Dashboard has bells, but it does not display whistles. Meaningful in-depth information is not able to be extracted presently.
State legislator	NM	train, teach, educate, recruit, reform
State education agency official	OK	OK does a good job in this area.
Parent	NM	Kindergarten was originally intended to prepare students for first grade.
Other	NM	There are ample quality programs, there are just not ample, low cost or free, programs. Children of poverty are the ones who suffer the most.
Parent	AR	It need to be a law before parents will actually get their children in 4 yr. old programs.
Public school administrator	NM	There is also a gap between the perception of "preparing children for kindergarten". Often the middle class or working poor do not qualify for the quality programs, they must utilize what they can afford and these programs are not always the best.
Education researcher	NM	We started a decent Pre-K program here under the last administration. Hoping it doesn't get cut too badly by the current.
Education researcher	NM	We have quality programs, such as pre-K and Head Start, but there aren't enough of them (due to funding constraints) to meet the demand.
Other	NM	We need opportunities to improve adult literacy that will support families and communities across P-20. See reply listed under no. 9
School district official		Depends on area but not all school districts have access to funds to provide a quality pre k program. Also lack of parental involvement and also teh ability of families to get their kids to programs....
School district official	TX	We have Pre-K and HeadStart programs that do an excellent job of preparing students for Kindergarten.
State education agency official	OK	The quality is definitely there but the volume of programs is the problem.

Role	State	User Comments
State legislator	NM	The Pre-K programs are in place but the slots are decreasing rather than increasing. It is about the money and where do get the most bang for the buck. Following the Pre-K experience, children must have high quality teachers in K-3 or much of what they have gained will be lost. We can't spend everything on Pre-K.
State education agency official	AR	Kindergarten prepares children for school....it is the 3rd grade level where you see students "catch-up" with their peers. Quality private preschool programs are available, but we need to see public preschools offered to students.
Other	AR	State supported preschools programs must become part of our education programs.
State legislator	NM	Rural school districts are having a hard time due to funding aspect. The state should fund school district based on needs.
Other	AR	Our community has many day cares and Mother's Day Out programs. I feel like we are average on this topic
Parent	NM	Allocate additional funds for pre-kindergarten programs.
Other	NM	We need prenatal care and early childhood education.. especially in a state like NM where there is so much poverty and lack of health access.
State government official	OK	Oklahoma has a fairly strong Pre-K program
Community member	NM	incoming Kindergarteners have all the basic knowledge, but as far as being really prepared for Elementary level. There needs to be more than learning colors, numbers, naming animals and shapes. They need to know additions and subtractions etc.
Education researcher	TX	Fund pre-K programs and programs that support high-quality early childhood and pre-K programs.
Public school teacher	NM	This would probably be the most effective thing we could do--Head Start like programs.
Other	NM	Pre k and early childhood programs are underfunded and in desperate need of attention. We need adequate accessible funding from birth thru career in order to prevent not just intervene problematic situations.
Public school administrator	OK	We lead the nation in pre-school and kindergarten programs.
Other	OK	We have a high-quality state-wide system available. Providing more access remains a challenge.
State education agency official	OK	This is the families job, not education.

Role	State	User Comments
Education researcher	OK	If this is the entire survey (which it is), I am now worried about how THESE data will be misinterpreted. This is by no means a comprehensive list of the kinds of problems -- or the biggest problems -- in our schools. Please don't act as though it is.
School board member	OK	there are in pockets, some districts do this well
Education researcher	TX	Partnerships between ISD, head start and child cares
Public school administrator	LA	Pre-K is underfunded forcing any school taking it on to be able to sustain a "loss leader" (since it supports early intervention in closing the achievement gap). Good teachers do not necessarily make good leaders. Leadership development should not be confused with teacher development, but it is just as vital. School leaders also need continued professional development and boards uphold the same rigorous standards we apply to our students and teachers to our school leaders. We should also consider flattenin administrative through a peer review system like PAR in Maryland.
Public charter school administrator	LA	- Students who fail to meet grade level standards and need to be retained often pull out of the school trying to retain them, and enroll in the next grade level in a different school, falling further behind. There needs to be a check in place to prevent this. - More emphasis is needed on families ensuring students are prepared and regularly able to attend school, with a consequence attached for failing to meet these standards. - There needs to be a support system/crisis response team that schools can access for help when working with students with extreme behavioral needs. - More attention needs to be paid to special education evaluation groups (SUNS center, CDS, etc.) and their standards for what "grade-level" or "proficient" really means. And, when students enter special education there needs to be additional resources to actually fund programs to help them. Often, a child receives a label and state-mandated accommodations, however, schools aren't given the resources to adequately meet the accommodations.
Parent	LA	As a parent, I need more info on school options I have for kindergarten.
Non-profit business leader	LA	Effective Leaders: I believe there is a need to not only develop strong talent pipelines for school leadership but to also develop leadership programs that streamline the process for individuals who are interested in moving into the field. While it's critical that the standards remain high for school leaders, thinking outside of the box in terms of who would make a successful leader and developing a path of least resistance to get them into the most high needs schools is

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		critical. Expectations: There continues to be a prevailing ideology in some schools and systems throughout the state that lowers expectations for students, particularly in our rural and urban schools that serve children from low income communities. That said, there are a number of proof points throughout the state, demonstrating that, regardless of student backgrounds (socioeconomic or academic), they can and will be as successful as their more affluent peers when provided the opportunity. By studying those schools that are proving it's possible for students, bringing visitors to see what it looks like in action, and using those school leaders and teachers as exemplars, we can help shift this mindset and develop more schools and systems that truly work for ALL kids. Decision Making Around Data While there are many schools that use data to constantly drive instruction, I do feel that more training and support needs to be provided to both leaders and teachers around analyzing data and using that information to develop meaningful professional development experiences, capitalize on student strengths while supporting their areas of need, and make employment decisions. In terms of employment decisions specifically we have seen in systems that have decentralized and given principals the autonomy to hire who they want/retain who they want- there has been increased student achievement. While I'm sure there are anomalies, the last hired, first fired adage continues to prevent teachers who may have had strong results from staying in a system. While there are many veteran teachers who are successful, we need to determine how to influence traditional systems so that the best teachers, regardless of tenure, are impacting student achievement and making instructional choices founded in student outcomes. Lack of Pre-K programs As a former special educator and early childhood educator, I fundamentally believe that we must provide more programs that support our children's early development in Louisiana. My passion for early literacy and strong preschool programs stems from my experience as a special educator who saw students being refereed to special education for poor reading skills in kindergarten. After further analysis and work with these students, I discovered that some students were mis-diagnosed as a result of their lack of exposure to literacy at an early age or a non-rigorous curriculum in the early elementary years. As a result, I transitioned to first grade regular education where my personal mission was to not refer any students for special services without significant intervention and literacy remediation. As a result, none of my students were classified as having disabilities, and my class made, on average 2 years reading growth. I share this example to illustrate that with the right intervention and strong instruction, our students can leave the ever so fundamental early grades not only on or above grade level, but more

Role	State	User Comments
Comment continued from previous page		prepared for the upper grades. If we begin to lay that foundation before our students attend kindergarten, they will be set-up for success throughout their academic career. Pre-kindergarten programs are essential levers to make that vision a reality.
Public charter school administrator	LA	1. Fully fund pre-K 2. Increase accountability for universities for certifying effective teachers and administrators.
Public charter school administrator	LA	There is a serious lack of funds for early childhood programs, many of which have shown great success rates.
Non-profit business leader	LA	There should be more opportunities for teachers to develop professionally so they can better serve the needs of students. Schools should be held accountable for student results and teachers should be responsible for providing layers of learning support that will enable students to succeed.