



The Alliance for Excellent Education Presents a Briefing

America's Rural High Schools: Challenges and Opportunities for Success

February 5, 2010 ♦ 8:30 am – 11:00 am
Newseum, Room 705
555 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC

Speaker Biographies

Gene Bottoms

Senior Vice President and Founding Director, *High Schools That Work*, *Southern Regional Education Board*

Since 1987, Gene Bottoms has served as director of the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) High Schools That Work (HSTW) initiative, which is a program focused on improving high schools for career-bound students involving over one thousand high schools in more than thirty states. In 1997, Mr. Bottoms was promoted to senior vice president of SREB, reflecting his role and SREB's interest in and commitment to the HSTW initiative.

Prior to joining SREB, Mr. Bottoms served as executive director of the American Vocational Association, where he emphasized academics as an integral part of vocational education at the secondary and postsecondary levels. He also served as director of educational improvement for the Georgia Department of Education for thirteen years, overseeing improvement efforts in both vocational and academic education.

In 1995, Mr. Bottoms received the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education. In 2000, he was appointed to the National Commission on the Senior Year, which was created by the U.S. Department of Education to examine students' experiences in their last year of high school. Mr. Bottoms has also served as a local school teacher, principal, and guidance counselor. He is a native of Georgia and a product of its public school system.

Caitlin Brosseau

Legislative Assistant, *Office of U.S. Senator Kent Conrad (ND)*

Caitlin Brosseau is a legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Kent Conrad (ND) in his Washington, DC office. Her primary responsibilities include researching and advising Senator Conrad on a diverse portfolio of federal policy issues including those related to education, the arts, banking, housing, and science. In her capacity as an education aide, she supports the senator in his cochairmanship of the Senate Rural Education Caucus and works to promote the rural education initiative, the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) Reauthorization Act.

Greg Darling

Superintendent, *Humboldt Community School District (Iowa)*

Greg Darling is superintendent for Humboldt Community School District in Iowa. This district is noted for its test scores, postsecondary enrollment options, technology, and extracurricular activities throughout Iowa as well as nationally.

Previously, Mr. Darling has served in many roles within rural schools systems including teacher, coach, athletic director, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. In each school and district he has led, test scores have risen. The facilities, technology, and extracurricular activities in each school district—under his leadership—have also seen improvement.

Allison L. Dembeck

Professional Staff Member (Minority Staff), *Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives*

Allison Dembeck is a professional staff member for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor. She has been with the committee since November 2009. This is Ms. Dembeck's second stint working for the Committee on Education and Labor; she was also a staff member during House Republican Leader John Boehner's tenure as the committee's chairman.

Before coming to the committee, Ms. Dembeck was a legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (NH), where she handled education, labor, pension, and child/family issues. Prior to joining the senator's staff, Ms. Dembeck served as the manager of government relations for Ceridian Corporation, a third-party benefits administrator, where she focused on pension, health care, and payroll compliance issues.

Allison is a former adjunct faculty member of Montgomery College. She has a master's degree from The George Washington University and a bachelor of arts degree from Binghamton University-State University of New York (SUNY).

John Hill, EdD

Executive Director, *National Rural Education Association*

John Hill has been executive director of the National Rural Education Association (NREA) since 2008. His primary interests are those that impact rural schools and the role of instructional leaders at the district and building levels. Prior to joining the NREA, Dr. Hill served many years in public schools as a middle school mathematics teacher, middle and high school principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. He is also involved in the Purdue Educational Leadership Initiative for Small and Rural Schools and the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship program.

Dr. Hill earned a bachelor of science degree from Manchester College, a master of science in education from Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI), and a doctor of education degree from Indiana University.

Bethany M. Little

Chief Education Counsel (Majority Staff), *Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, U.S. Senate*

Bethany Little is chief education counsel to U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (IA), chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP). In this role, Ms. Little works on legislation governing early childhood programs, elementary and secondary education, higher education, and workforce training.

Prior to joining the Senate HELP Committee staff, Ms. Little was vice president for policy and federal advocacy at the Alliance for Excellent Education in DC, where she was responsible for guiding the Alliance's policy work on high school reform issues. Ms. Little came to the Alliance from the Children's Defense Fund, where, as director of government relations, she managed advocacy efforts and provided policy direction. From 2001 to 2003, Ms. Little worked in the office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray (WA) as a legislative assistant focused on education, welfare, and children and families issues. Prior to that, she was associate director for the White House Domestic Policy Council serving as an education policy advisor to President Clinton and Vice President Gore.

Ms. Little has also held positions at the U.S. Department of Education, Council for Excellence in Government, the Presidential Inaugural Committee, and Clinton/Gore '96. She is a graduate of Georgetown University with a bachelor of science in foreign service.

Kara Marchione

Education Policy Advisor (Majority Staff), *Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives*

Kara Marchione is an education policy advisor for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor. Her portfolio includes various K-12 policy work as well as adult education, child nutrition, and national service. Prior to serving on the House Education and Labor Committee, Ms. Marchione spent three years as legislative director for U.S. Congressman Dave Loebsack from the 2nd district of Iowa. While in that position, she oversaw Congressman Loebsack's legislative agenda, and advised him on education, labor, and health care issues. Ms. Marchione also spent seven years in the U.S. Senate where she worked in the personal office of U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy (MA), and later as a policy advisor for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP).

Lori Meyer

Vice President, *Collaborative Communications Group*

Lori Meyer is vice president of Collaborative Communications Group and leads their research and policy analysis efforts, with a special emphasis on moving research to action in order to drive change. Ms. Meyer brings with her a deep and broad network in the education community, having worked with a variety of associations and nonprofit organizations. Her experience includes the design and development of research studies, serving as the lead author and public panelist on policy reports, providing professional development to education stakeholders, and strategic advice and consulting to a variety of policymakers and organizational leaders.

At Collaborative, Ms. Meyer has contributed research, editing, and writing for the award-winning *Leading Learning Communities* publication and the Aspen Institute's Commission on No Child Left Behind. She has also worked with the National Academy Foundation to provide extensive research on

investments in education in New Orleans and Los Angeles. Ms. Meyer is currently partnering with the Alliance for Excellent Education to better understand high school reform efforts in California.

Ms. Meyer has a master's degree in policy sciences from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) where she is currently pursuing her doctorate in public policy. She also has a bachelor's degree in political science and public policy management from the University of Akron.

Lyndsay M. Pinkus

Director of Strategic Initiatives, *Alliance for Excellent Education*

Lyndsay Pinkus is director of strategic initiatives at the Alliance for Excellent Education. Since joining the Alliance in January 2002, she has served in a variety of research, coordination, and advocacy roles, where her work has included managing policy and grant work on a range of issues including graduation rates, data, secondary school accountability, secondary school improvement, and authoring a number of Alliance publications.

Prior to rejoining the staff in January 2006, Ms. Pinkus served as a legislative associate at Washington Partners, LLC, providing government relations and policy research and analysis for a variety of clients, including the Alliance.

Ms. Pinkus graduated from the School of Public Affairs at American University as a presidential scholar. She is also a graduate of the Public Affairs and Advocacy Institute at the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies and the Institute for Educational Leadership's Education Policy Fellowship program.

Elizabeth Schneider

Vice President of State Advocacy and Outreach, *Alliance for Excellent Education*

Since spring of 2005, Elizabeth Schneider has served as vice president of state advocacy and outreach at the Alliance for Excellent Education. In this role, she works to help deepen the Alliance's understanding of state and local high school reform; expand relationships with state and local reform leaders; and connect local, state, and federal policy conversations around secondary school improvement. From March 2009 to January 2010, she served as the Alliance's interim vice president for policy.

Prior to joining the Alliance, Ms. Schneider served as executive director of the Southern Governors' Association for ten years where she guided the development and advocacy of regional policy recommendations on federal issues, multistate efforts to address regional challenges, and an active leadership forum for the governors of sixteen states and two U.S. territories. Prior to that, she worked as a senior legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Howell Heflin (AL).

Ms. Schneider is an active member of the Parent Teacher Associations for George Mason Elementary School and George Washington Middle School, both in Alexandria, Virginia. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Birmingham Southern College with a bachelor of arts degree in English and has done graduate work in English at Georgetown University.

John White

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach, *U.S. Department of Education*

John White joined the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in May 2009. He is responsible for leading outreach efforts to rural schools and stakeholder groups. Mr. White came to ED after serving as the chief communications officer for Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland for five school years.

Mr. White has seen both ends of the spectrum of schools—working in Prince George's County with 130,000 students and 209 schools, after growing up in Calvert County, Maryland in the late 1970s and early 1980s when there were only two high schools with tobacco fields and family farms in between.

Mr. White began his career as a newspaper journalist and has held communications positions in the public and private sectors.

Bob Wise

President, *Alliance for Excellent Education*

Bob Wise is president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. He is author of the book *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation* and chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Since joining the Alliance in February 2005, Governor Wise has become a sought-after speaker and advisor on education issues. He has advised the U.S. Department of Education, White House Transition Team, and frequently testifies before the U.S. Congress.

As governor of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005, he fought for and signed legislation to fund the PROMISE Scholarship program and created the Governor's Helpline for Safer Schools. During his administration, West Virginia saw a significant increase in the number of students completing high school and entering college. From 1983 to 2001, Governor Wise served in the U.S. House of Representatives representing the 2nd district of West Virginia, where he aggressively worked to preserve federal financial aid for students to attend college.

Governor Wise serves on the board of directors of the Public Education Network and C-Change. He is an advisory committee member for several organizations including, the Springboard Project, Campaign for Educational Equity, Editorial Projects in Education, the National High School Center, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, and the Moffitt Cancer Center. Governor Wise earned a BA degree from Duke University and a JD degree from Tulane University School of Law.