RAC Northwest
For Educational Needs Assessment

A Report to the
U.S. Department of Education
On Educational Challenges and Technical Assistance Needs
For the Northwest Region

Prepared by the
Northwest Regional Advisory Committee
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Preface

This report of the Northwest Regional Advisory Committee (NW RAC) for Educational Needs Assessment was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) under a contract number ED04CO0043/0001 awarded to The CNA Corporation (CNAC). The law governing the RACs requires committee members from the following stakeholder groups: state education agencies, local education agencies, practitioners, both education and non-education researchers, parents, and the business community. RAC members were not regarded as spokespersons for their stakeholder group, but rather as leads in soliciting the views of members of those stakeholder groups. Membership, affiliation, and stakeholder groups for the NW RAC are listed below.

Ray Barnhardt	University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska
Marilyn Davidson	Kodiak Island Borough School District, Alaska
Mary Alice Heuschel	Washington Department of Education, Washington
Wendy Horman	Ammon, Idaho
Karen Johnson	Raymond School Board, Washington
Patti Kinney	Talent Middle School, Oregon
Rob Larson	Oregon Department of Education, Oregon
Karen McGee	State Board of Education, Idaho
Karen Rehfeld	Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Alaska
Douglas Reisig	Hellgate Elementary Public School #4, Missoula, Montana
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Dennis Williams	Office of Public Instruction, Montana

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Executive summary

Background

The Northwest Regional Advisory Committee (NW RAC) was appointed by the Secretary of Education in December 2004 to assess and report on regional needs in accordance with Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 207-279). The NW RAC's thirteen members represented each of the region's five states: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington as well as each of the required stakeholder groups, state departments of education, rural and urban school districts, institutions of higher education, practicing educators, parents, business persons, and researchers.

Between December 2004 and March 2005, the NW RAC engaged in a variety of activities designed to seek public input and to develop a report. These activities included sending out press releases, informational letters, and listserv messages; participating in forums, meetings, and focus groups to obtain public input; making presentations at state and local conferences; holding four public meetings; and posting the NW RAC's draft challenges and technical assistance strategies on a Web site. Public interest in the NW RAC's work is reflected in the receipt of 60 comments, 56 participants at the NW RAC meetings, and 1522 views recorded on the Web site.

The uniqueness of the Northwest Region

The Northwest Region is one of the largest geographic regions of the country; however, in terms of population density, it has one of the lowest population totals of any region. Although it does contain isolated urban pockets, the Northwest Region still remains predominately rural in nature, with over 60 percent of all school in Montana, Idaho, and Alaska located in rural

communities and between 20 and 25 percent in Washington and Oregon. More importantly, many of the rural schools are located in very remote areas, which impacts the availability of "highly qualified" teachers and administrators who have the expertise necessary to work in culturally diverse, multi-graded, and high-poverty schools. It also greatly compounds the problem of providing effective, ongoing and job-embedded educational services and training that is needed in order to address student achievement gap issues when put into context of national population density.

Currently, the need is growing to address the student achievement gap among racial/ethnic groups as well as for economically disadvantaged students. Minority students represent 24 percent of the Northwest's Region total student enrollment. American Indian and/or Alaskan Native students comprise 25 percent of Alaska's student population and 11 percent of Montana's; the national average is one percent. Data on student poverty rate shows that Oregon (38 percent) and Idaho (36 percent) are at or above the national rate of 36 percent with Washington (34 percent) and Montana (32 percent) just below the poverty rate. The diversity of languages and cultures, as well as, the current poverty rate among student populations, is a significant feature of the Northwest region.

The Northwest Region shares the issues of an achievement gap in reading and mathematics between the performance of White students and both Hispanic and African-American students based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP does not provide data for American Indian and Alaskan Native students due to small sample size but state level assessments provide evidence of a similar gap.

The educational challenges of the Northwest Region

The overriding regional challenge is to close the achievement gap between White students and students of other cultural and racial groups. In addressing the student achievement issues, three additional challenges were identified: (1) improving school leadership at the state, district, and

building level, (2) addressing language, culture, and diversity among students, and (3) developing strategies to engage the community, especially families, in effective and meaningful two-way communication.

Although there is universal agreement on the importance of school leadership at the building level in the transformation of schools from low achieving to high achieving, the challenge becomes creating a system that focuses on processes and not outcomes, that teaches leaders how to inspire and empower others, how to work collaboratively, how to listen and communicate effectively with their stakeholders, and how to transform the school into a learning community. Highly trained and effective leaders create the environments in which improvement processes thrive. The large number of rural schools serving diverse communities necessitates a strong knowledge base centered around cultural competency and literacy. Currently, schools systems, especially rural schools, are finding it difficult to attract and keep qualified and highly trained instructional leaders, to identify and develop prospective leaders, and to provide the continuous support that is necessary to build capacity at the local level.

Culturally responsive curricula and instructional strategies that capitalize upon and are tailored to the diverse populations of the Northwest Region requires a significant shift in emphasis from the "one-size-fits-all" composite approach that has been typical of past response to "diversity" in the schools. The rural nature of the Northwest Region requires a teaching workforce and educational delivery structures that can accommodate multi-graded classrooms and multi-subject teaching expertise, considerations that aren't always easy to reconcile with current definitions of "highly qualified" educators. For American Indians and Alaskan Natives the challenge also includes strengthening the research base concerning which curricular materials and instructional strategies are most effectively employed.

Finally, schools are institutions of the community and parents are children's first (and, some would say, most influential) teachers. Mutual support and effective, ongoing two-way communication between schools and those they serve are critical. Teachers and administrators must learn how to engage parents as well as the larger community of businesses and other institutions and organizations as effective partners.

Underlying all of this work that is conducted collaboratively between the technical assistance providers and the clients they seek to serve must be the understanding that, in the Northwest, the only sustainable approach to educational improvement involves building local capacity to address educational issues because of the factors of geographic size, isolation, and cultural diversity.

The recommendations of the Northwest Regional Advisory Committee

The NW RAC recommendations are firmly grounded in the unique nature of the region and its most pressing educational needs. The areas identified for technical assistance include: 1) improving school leadership, 2) implementing proven educational programs characterized by differentiated curriculum and instruction to promote higher achievement of underachieving racial and ethnic groups, and 3) strengthening the partnerships of schools with their families and communities. To be effective the technical assistance needs to (1) make full use of the capabilities of technology, (2) bring together educators and administrators across the region in a variety of professional communities for learning, sharing, and mentoring, (3) support the development of local capacity for ongoing educational improvement; and (4) be culturally competent (i.e., knowledgeable and respectful of the region's diverse cultures, and free of a "one size fits all" mentality regarding reform processes).

Lastly, the NW RAC recommends that a separate technical assistance center be based in Alaska (with a satellite center in Montana) and charged with the responsibility for serving the

particular needs of the Alaskan Native and American Indian children and communities throughout the Northwest Region.

Introduction

The Northwest Regional Advisory Committee (NW RAC) provides an assessment of the technical assistance needs of educators in our region in response to a directive from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). This RAC is one of ten such committees appointed by the Secretary to conduct the assessment over the period between December 2004 and March 2005. The committee first identified the major challenges facing the region in improving student achievement and implementing the provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It then assessed the types of technical assistance that might enable educators in the region to overcome these challenges.

Legislative background

Section 203 of Title II of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279) directs the Secretary of the ED to establish 20 comprehensive centers to provide technical assistance to state educational agencies, local educational agencies, regional educational agencies, and schools in implementing the goals and programs of NCLB, and in the use of scientifically valid teaching methods and assessment tools for use by teachers and administrators in:

- Core academic subjects of mathematics, science, and reading or language arts
- English language acquisition
- Education technology
- Facilitating communication between education experts, school officials, teachers, parents, and librarians
- Disseminating information that are usable for improving academic achievement, closing achievement gaps, and encouraging and sustaining school improvement to schools, educators, parents, and policymakers within the region in which the center is located

- Developing teacher and school leader in-service and pre-service training models that illustrate best practices in the use of technology in different content areas.

In addition, these comprehensive centers are expected to coordinate and collaborate with the regional education laboratories, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, the Office of the Secretary of Education, state service agencies, and other technical assistance providers in the region.

Outreach efforts and data collection procedures

A main goal of the RAC was to disseminate information regarding its task and to solicit the views of its respective stakeholder groups on the roles of the new comprehensive centers. During the Orientation Meeting in December 2004, the NW RAC developed a work plan that outlined the outreach activities each member would undertake to reach stakeholders. Over the months of December, January, and February presentations were given to state boards of education, professional organizations, and workshops. An initial outreach letter was developed for members to send out to their stakeholders describing how to participate in the public proceedings. Additional outreach efforts included:

- Press releases, televised interviews, newspaper articles, and listserv e-mails
- Two-day educational needs assessment forum in Alaska which brought together all technical assistance providers (to achieve the capacity building), co-sponsored by the Alaskan Federation of Natives and included representatives from the regional Native Education Association
- Presentations given at a state bilingual, multicultural conference which included the deans of the three schools of education in Alaska

- Personal presentations to business, parent-teacher organizations, education forum committees, professional organizations across the region, such as Washington State School Directors Association

- A link to the RAC Web site listed on the National Middle School Association (NMSA) Web site

- Parent focus groups conducted in Idaho

- Information disseminated and collected through the Montana Advisory Committee for Indian Education (MACIE) listserv

- Article in Idaho State School Board Association's publication.

A follow-up letter was produced after the January public meeting to reconfirm the purpose of the RAC. The success of the RAC's outreach efforts is evidenced in the number of public members registered to attend the meetings as well as the number of comments on the Web site forums (See table 1).

Public interest and input

The goal of the outreach efforts was to generate public interest and input in the RAC's deliberations. The RAC Web site (www.rac-ed.org) provided the central point for giving the public access to the RAC. Table 1 provides a summary of these interactions. The first line in the table shows the number of enrollees on the RAC Web site from the Northwest. The Web site served as the information center for the RAC. The public was encouraged to provide comments both of a general nature and on specific RAC ideas in a variety of ways. The next section of the table shows the amount of input the NW RAC received through online comments and through the RAC Support Office either through e-mail or regular surface mail. The third section of the table tries to discern public interest in a more indirect way by capturing the number of times the public views

comments on the Web site. Another indicator of public interest is attendance at RAC meetings.

Each RAC convened four public meetings. In the meetings held in Washington, DC, and Houston,

TX, the public was invited to observe the proceedings in person. The other two meetings were

online teleconferences. For the online teleconferences, the public was invited to observe with a link

through the RAC Web site. The next section of the table shows the number of public attendees at

RAC meetings either in person or through the Web site.

Table 1: Public input for the Northwest RAC

Type of input	Numbers
Enrollment on RAC Web site	285
Comments	60
On Web site forums	38
Through e-mail to the RAC Support Office	18
Through surface mail to the RAC Support Office	4
Views on the RAC Web site	1522
Attendance at RAC Public Meetings 1 and 2	38
Focus Groups	4

*As of February 28,2005

Information obtained through public input was critical to helping the Northwest RAC

accurately represent the needs of the education community in implementing NCLB. Public input

gathered through the above means from stakeholder groups confirmed issues initially brought up by

the RAC such as the need for improved cultural competence in education. However, the public

input also raised issues that were overlooked, such as the need to include certain special needs

groups. The new issues that were raised through public comments and reactions to posted RAC

efforts were incorporated into the developed list of challenges. The RAC took these into

consideration when developing technical assistance solutions to address the needs of the region.

Regional background

This section provides an overview for the Northwest Region that will provide a context for the remainder of the report.

School and student demographics

The Northwest Region includes the following states: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The demographic characteristics of these states' public school systems vary greatly, from a low of 500 public schools in Alaska to a high of 2,207 schools in Washington. Idaho and Montana are also relatively small with 660 and 865 schools, respectively, whereas Oregon is slightly larger with 1,262 public schools. A similar trend is evident in enrollment. Alaska has the smallest enrollment (134,364 students), followed by Montana (149,995), Idaho (248,515), Oregon (554,071), and Washington (1,014,798).

With the exception of Oregon and Washington, schools in the region are primarily rural. In Washington, 82 percent of districts are urban or suburban, and in Oregon this rate is 74 percent. By comparison, Montana, Idaho, and Alaska schools are overwhelmingly rural, with these schools accounting for 60 percent to 68 percent of the state total.

Diversity and special populations

Except for Alaska, with its large share of American Indian/Alaska Native students, Whites account for an overwhelming majority of students in this region. Whites represent more than 85 percent of all students in Idaho and Montana and more than 70 percent of students in Oregon and Washington. In Alaska, American Indians/Alaska Natives comprise more than 25 percent of the student population, whereas Asian/Pacific Islanders are six percent of the student population. The large number of reservations in Montana contributes to its 11 percent American Indian student population, which is much larger than the national average (one percent). African-American

enrollment is low throughout the region, including rates of less than one percent in Idaho and Montana. However, the Hispanic populations of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington exceed 10 percent of all students.

Northwest states have small to moderate numbers of English language learners. Alaska has the highest rate at 12 percent, followed by Oregon (nine percent) and Idaho (eight percent). English language learners represent seven percent of students in Washington and only four percent of Montana's students.

Student achievement (based on NAEP results)

In all Northwest states, African-American, and Hispanic students trail White students in academic achievement based on National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) assessments of fourth graders. The NAEP does not report out separate data for American Indians and Alaskan Natives, which are critical subgroups in determining AYP for the Northwest Region.

In Alaska, 40 percent of White students scored at a rate of proficient or above in reading, double the rate for African-Americans and Hispanics. In mathematics, a similar 40 percent proficiency rate for Whites compared with rates of only 15 percent for African-Americans and 25 percent for Hispanics.

In Idaho, White students were three times more likely than Hispanic students (34 percent versus 11 percent) to score at the proficiency level in reading. A similar gap was evident in mathematics, with proficiency rates of 33 percent for Whites and 12 percent for Hispanics. No NAEP data were available for African-Americans due to the small sample size. Montana had comparison data available only in mathematics, where 34 percent of Whites and 25 percent of Hispanic scored at the proficiency level or better.

Racial gaps in achievement also are evident in Oregon and Washington. Among White fourth graders in Oregon, 34 percent were proficient in reading and 37 percent were proficient in

mathematics. Only 20 percent of African-Americans and 15 percent of Hispanics were proficient in each category. In Washington, 38 percent of Whites were proficient in reading, more than double the rate for Hispanics (16 percent) and substantially above the rate for African-Americans (23 percent). In mathematics, 40 percent of Whites scored at the proficient level, compared to only 18 percent of Hispanics and 17 percent of African-Americans.

High school graduation rates varied across the Northwest states, led by Idaho and Montana, each with 81 percent in 2001. Oregon and Washington each had 66 percent graduation rates, whereas Alaska was at 64 percent.

Appendix A includes state specific achievement analysis.

Poverty

Data on free and reduced-price lunch eligibility shows that two of five states in the region have poverty rates at or above the national rate of 36 percent. Oregon has the highest rate at 38 percent, followed by Idaho at 36 percent. Washington at 34 percent and Montana at 32 percent fall below the national rate, whereas Alaska has the lowest poverty rate among the student population, at 26 percent.

Teacher demographics and qualifications

The number of public school teachers in each Northwest state generally follow the enrollment numbers of public school students, with Alaska hiring the smallest number (8,080), followed by Montana (10,362), Idaho (13,896), Oregon (27,126), and Washington (52,953). Montana has the smallest student to teacher ratio (14:1), followed by Alaska (17:1) and Idaho (18:1). Oregon and Washington have the largest ratios with (20:1) and (19:1), respectively.

NCLB also requires that each classroom in a core academic subject have a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2005-06 school year. Northwest states have a mixed record in this area, as

shown in Table 2. Idaho has the highest percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers, at

98 percent. Although Oregon and Washington also have high rates, only 16 percent of Alaska

teachers meet the criteria. Few teachers in the region are National Board Certified (NBC). The

percentage of secondary teachers who are teaching in their field of specialty ranges from 53 percent

in Alaska and Washington to 62 percent in Montana.

Table 2: Teacher quality indicators

State	Percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers	Number of NBC teachers (SY2004)	NBC teachers as a percentage of all teachers	Percent of high school teachers with college major in the relevant core academic subject
Alaska	16	39	0	53
Idaho	98	312	2	56
Montana	N/A	35	0	62
Oregon	82	102	0	58
Washington	80	345	1	53

N/A indicates data were not available for this state

Sources: Center on Education Policy Year 2 of NCLB Report (2002-2003), Measuring Up: 2004 Education Week's Quality Counts 2005.

Alignment with standards

The states have mixed records in terms of developing statewide standards in core subjects.

Establishing state curriculum standards. Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington have met the

requirements under the NCLB for creating standards in science, reading and mathematics. However,

Alaska has only partial compliance on standards in each of the three categories.

Table 3: Meeting requirements to establish state standards

State	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Alaska	Partial	Partial	Partial
Idaho	Yes	Yes	Yes
Montana	Yes	Yes	Yes

Oregon	Yes	Yes	Yes
Washington	Yes	Yes	Yes

Test Alignment with State Standards. Education Week analyzed the alignment of state assessments with state standards and found that no Northwest state has assessments aligned with standards across all grade spans and in all four major subject areas. State exams in Oregon and Washington are aligned with standards in all grade spans for English, mathematics, and science but not in social studies/history. For elementary, middle, and high school, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana have aligned assessments with state standards in mathematics and English but not in science and social studies/history.

Educational challenges in the Northwest Region

The NW RAC developed a list of challenges that educators struggle with throughout the region and categorized these into the following priority topic areas. The challenges do not represent a particular order of importance.

Leadership

- Promoting a no-excuse educational environment that fosters positive change

- Aiding building level leaders in balancing instructional responsibilities with management responsibilities

- Developing and sustaining successful school improvement models that include community participation, particularly in rural, remote sites

- Creating and sustaining meaningful collaboration among federal, state, district, and local school leaders

- Developing and promoting use of data and data analysis as indicators of student performance.

Closing the achievement gap for diverse populations (English Language Learners, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, African-Americans, other high need groups)

- Reducing the dropout rate

- Identifying, developing, and disseminating proven effective instructional strategies in order to provide differentiated instruction for all students

- Developing and/or identifying culturally appropriate research-based materials for curriculum, learning, and assessment relevant to particular diverse populations in order

to close the achievement gap and provide access to higher level learning opportunities for all students.

Diversity/Language/Culture

- Developing culturally appropriate curriculum materials, teaching, and assessment practices for American Indians and Alaskan Native students

- Preparing teachers to work in culturally diverse, multi-graded/subject classrooms, especially in rural areas

- Identifying and disseminating research based practices that address the unique challenges associated with low socioeconomic conditions

- Identifying and disseminating research based practices associated with English Language Learners.

Community

- Identifying and developing strategies for engaging families and communities in partnership with schools to support success for all

- Assisting parents and families in preparing their students for school.

Technology

- Identifying and developing effective use of distance learning especially for rural and remote areas

- Developing and disseminating best practices on utilization of technology to promote:

- Sustainable, on-going professional development

- Avenues for local capacity building to enhance instruction, curriculum, and assessment

- Data based decision-making strategies

- Opportunities for interactive parent/school communication enhancement.

Professional development

- Developing and preparing a highly effective workforce to work in the culturally diverse, multi-graded, high-poverty, and rural schools of the region

- Developing and providing continual professional development that can be embedded into the daily practice of all staff.

Resources

- Increasing access and capacity to provide intervention programs and services

- Developing and facilitating strategies for sharing resources and best practices to meet the needs within each state and the region.

When addressing the technical assistance needs as they pertain to the region, the committee members determined that the areas of technology, professional development, and resources were a common thread and are addressed within the framework of leadership, closing the achievement gap, diversity/language/culture, and community.

Challenge #1: Developing leadership that is open to necessary change, able to develop and sustain improvement models, and able to balance the managing and instructional aspects of leadership to create an environment of trust and collaboration among educators and the community they serve

Leading change begins with being able to identify a school's current reality, the ability to articulate the changes being considered, and a firm understanding of where the school needs to be headed. Over the past few years, recent research has identified the primary role of the principal as a strong instructional leader who has the knowledge, skills, and ability to create and sustain a supportive, professional learning organization. Research and common sense support the notion that improving school leadership at the building level holds tremendous potential to help schools bolster student academic performance, particularly for low-income and minority students. Studies of

effective urban schools have found that a key factor in the success of these schools is the presence of a skilled principal who creates a sense of shared mission around improving teaching and learning and is able to delegate authority to educators who have the trust and support they need to get the job done.[1] Meanwhile, research shows that schools that have raised student achievement in spite of students' socioeconomic backgrounds almost invariably do so with the guidance of an effective leader.[2]

Skillful leadership is required to ensure that teachers can operate in an environment that values and takes advantage of what they know. This is one reason principals have found their jobs more challenging. Not only must school leaders perform what Richard Elmore (2000) calls "the ritualistic tasks of organizing, budgeting, managing, and dealing with disruptions inside and outside the system,"[3] today's instructional leaders must be able to coach, teach, and develop the teachers in their schools. They must be steeped in curriculum instruction and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance. They must build learning communities within their schools and engage the broader school community in creating and achieving a compelling vision for their schools.

In the words of the blue-ribbon Consortium on Renewing Education: "If we could do only one thing to build school capacity, we would develop a cadre of leaders who understand the challenges of school improvement, relish academic achievement, and rally all stakeholders to higher standards of learning."[4]

Although there seems to be universal agreement on the importance of the principal, school systems, especially rural ones, are finding it difficult to attract qualified candidates for vacancies

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[1] Mendez-Morse, Sylvia (1992). *Leadership Characteristics that Facilitate Change*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
[2] Keller, Bess (1998). "Principal Matters," *Education Week*, Nov. 11, 1998.
[3] National Staff Development Council (1995). *Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn*. Oxford, OH: December 2000.
[4] Consortium on Renewing Education (1998). 20/20 Vision: A strategy for doubling America's Academic Achievement by the Year 2020. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

created by retiring administrators. Additionally, few districts have "aspiring principal" programs to identify and develop prospective leaders, more and more districts find themselves between a proverbial rock and a hard place. Consequently, the skillful principals that schools so desperately need are harder than ever to come by. Current principals need practical training aimed at helping them do their jobs more effectively from the start, additional professional development to keep them fresh and adaptable, and continuous support in order to incorporate new thinking about what constitutes effective leadership. These leadership qualities must be developed beyond the principal so leadership is provided by other educators throughout the system.

Experts note that quality leadership means sharing authority and responsibility, establishing a culture that supports high achievement, and continuously using information about student performance to guide improvement and hold individuals and groups accountable for their work.

Many administrators need continued support in how to inspire and empower others, work collaboratively, listen and communicate effectively, or transform the school into a learning community. Existing professional development for leaders tends to be either too academic or abstract or too focused on managerial tasks. Programs emphasize discipline, finance, legal issues, and management but ignore instructional leadership and exploring better ways to use leadership to raise student achievement. "The preparation of administrators makes the preparation of teachers look outstanding. Principals and vice principals and superintendents rarely have good places to learn."[5]

The best preparation for principal leadership is participation in programs "focused around the real work of principals."[6] Williamson says principals need to "grapple and deal with issues that are really important to them, things they can use and apply in their own schools….It's all about having them identify an issue or a problem and then researching it and ultimately designing a solution that works for their own setting."

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[5] Alvarado, Anthony (1999). Address to the NSDC 1999 Annual Conference, Dallas, Texas.
[6] Williamson, Ron (2000). Interview with NSDC researcher.

Technical assistance needs

The technical assistance needs for state education agencies and local school districts to address leadership disparities for the Northwest Region must include assistance in the following:

- Helping states set up opportunities for current and emerging leaders to be mentored by experienced and/or retired educators in order to develop effective instructional leadership in the region.

- Examining ways to replicate successful programs on developing effective leadership to spread knowledge about what works in principal development. It can form coalitions with key professional organizations to consolidate and disseminate research findings.

- Creating online learning experiences and electronic networks for principals to communicate with each other, share ideas, and solve problems.

- Promoting demonstration programs that encourage districts and higher education institutions to collaborate on new approaches to professional development.

- Providing tools and methods to evaluate the professional development of administrators, including guides and criteria for comparing programs and calculating the costs and benefits. Many of these tools and programs are developed in states and have evidence of their effectiveness, but there is no avenue for sharing or replicating the components of these leadership programs.

- Surveying the leadership of small rural schools in order to determine their specific needs.

- Providing a forum or clearinghouse for district and school level leaders to come together with technical assistance providers to share challenges and brainstorm solutions including those related to implementing NCLB.

- Helping to resolve audit and compliance issues such as: preparation for peer reviews; methodologies and criteria to be used; processes of conducting the reviews; and resolving the issues that arise from the findings.

Challenge #2: Identifying effective strategies for closing the achievement gap among diverse populations specific to the Northwest Region

Disparity in academic achievement among the students in the Northwest Region is evidenced in data analyses based upon race/ethnicity, income levels, language background, disability status, and gender. These achievement gaps are documented in a variety of data collection measures, such as proficiency test results, achievement levels and/or growth rates, enrollment in advanced classes, high school graduation rates, and college participation/success rates. The existence of such disparities is ultimately harmful to the Northwest Region's tax base, its ability to attract new industry, the health of its communities, and most of all, the lives of its children. Closing achievement gaps that exist is not, and will not be an easy task for any school district, any individual state education agency, or any regional technical assistance center because it will require the active collaboration of students, parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

Across the United States, school efforts to close the gap in academic achievement have been difficult at best. Despite attempts made within each state comprising the Northwest Region, differences in educational performance persist in achievement levels, with the greatest gap involving Alaskan Native students, Native American students, Hispanic students, African-American students, migrant students, and economically disadvantaged students in comparison to their White and Asian American peers. The need for a solution to this problem has new urgency now as the relationship between educational success and social and economic opportunity steadily strengthens and the relationship between educational differences and social conflict becomes more manifest.

Adding to the urgency for a solution has been the implementation of NCLB. It has placed weighty demands and accountability on public schools in the Northwest and across the nation. Closing the performance gap is a key part of the performance requirements. All schools are motivated to avoid being publicly labeled as "not making adequate yearly progress (AYP)." Schools are labeled as such if they do not meet state objectives for student performance in reading/language arts and mathematics, test participation, and one additional academic indicator. The additional indicator is attendance in elementary and middle schools in most states and graduation from high schools in all states. Furthermore, schools are held accountable not only for all students as a group, but also for race/ethnic and language minority subgroups, as well as for students with disabilities and their differing economic status. Title I-funded schools are especially scrambling to meet performance and participation demands because they face an array of stronger sanctions. Substantial funding and administrative control issues ride on continued improvements in student performance on, and participation in, standardized tests for these schools. Adding to the crisis is the lack of a systemic, internal capacity building dissemination model that could be provided through a regional comprehensive assistance center that could help state and local education entities develop, implement, and evaluate a broad-scale approach in addressing student achievement issues inherent in the AYP considerations of NCLB that will magnify over time.

Moreover, the geographic expanse of the Northwest Region, which contains isolated urban pockets, but still remains predominately rural and remote in places only serves to compound the problem of providing effective technical assistance to address student achievement gap issues when put into context of national population density. Consider the following statistics on how much land area needs to be covered to provide technical assistance to a demographically sparse population:

- In terms of geographic size, the Northwest Region is one of the largest, if not the largest, geographic regions of the country. In comparison with the other states, Alaska is the largest of the 50 states; Montana ranks 4th; Oregon 10th; Idaho 11th; and Washington 20th.

- In terms of population density, however, the Northwest Region has one of the lowest population totals of any region of the country. Compared to the other states, Alaska ranks almost last in population by placing 48th among the 50 states; Montana ranks 44th; Idaho 39th; Oregon 28th; and Washington 15th.

Great geographic distances within the Northwest Region must be covered in order to effectively provide quality technical assistance to state education agencies and local school districts. The need is growing to address student achievement gap needs among racial/ethnic groups as well as for economically disadvantaged students. For example, there are approximately one half-million (500,000) minority students in the Northwest Region. These students represent 24 percent of the Northwest's Region total student enrollment. Today, there are 54,308 teachers and 2,345 principals (not adjusted for schools with shared principals) serving in schools where more than 10 percent of the enrollment is made up of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islanders, African-American, or Hispanic students. The principals and staff in these schools must succeed in creating a school learning environment that serves the needs of a diverse student population. Understanding how the student's culture influences his or her learning and social needs can help teachers and administrators create a learning environment that is welcoming to all students and fully engages each in learning.

In addition, poverty is widespread across the Northwest Region. Census data from 2003 indicates that approximately 333,000 school-age children, or 15.1 percent of Northwest Region school-aged children, are living at or below the poverty level. Furthermore, another 394,000 school-age children live in families that qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL). Some schools have

much higher poverty rates than others, and the poverty rate for children has been increasing—up almost three percentage points since 2000. Understanding how poverty impacts students' lives and learning, and what it means for the school's instructional program and student support needs to close achievement gap disparities, is an important challenge for a technical comprehensive center positioned in the Northwest Region.

Reducing the dropout rate

Reducing the dropout rate among the various diverse student populations must be met in order to affect a workable solution to close the achievement gap among children in the Northwest Region. State department of education agencies and local school districts must have technical assistance that seeks to develop and implement capacity building education goals that reflect the desires, needs, and values of the public, of schools, and of parents, which can help generate a shared commitment to education excellence. To accomplish this, education entities must implement a rigorous set of standards that form the basis of curriculum development and instructional practice, specify students' competencies by subject and grade, and define the performance standards and responsibilities of school administrators and teachers. Moreover, education agencies must be able to disseminate existing researched-based instructional programs with demonstrated success to individual schools for adaptation, as appropriate, and dissemination of information about effective instructional strategies and exemplary practices that are especially effective in diverse classrooms and among diverse populations.

Further, to address the significant achievement gap disparity caused by dropout rates among diverse student populations, schools in the Northwest Region need technical assistance to build local capacity in order to effectively provide proactive, positive, and rigorous academic school climates. Elements in the creation of such school climates include an active promotion of the expectation that all students can succeed, a demand that they do so, and the encouragement to prepare for higher

education. In addition, success requires maintaining a school climate that is conducive to academic productivity by orienting students' attitudes and behavior toward excellence and giving them a sense of efficacy and power regardless of racial/ethnic background. Directing their time toward productive academic exercises, such as inquiry, seeking and using help, and identifying and developing every student's potential through individualized assessments, appropriate placements, and ongoing encouragement from school staff are key components that cannot be overlooked.

Within the Northwest Region, minority children drop out of schools at alarmingly higher rates than their White student counterparts (refer to Table 4). In Oregon, African-American students and Hispanic students exhibit a nine percent student dropout rate almost three times the rate for White students (3.6 percent). In Washington, American Indian students and Hispanic students exhibit a nine percent to 10 percent student dropout rate almost twice that of White students (3.6 percent). In Montana, Hispanic students and American Indian students exhibit a six percent to eight percent student dropout rate compared to only 3.1 percent from their White student counterparts. In Alaska, American Indian/Alaska Native students and with Hispanic students exhibit a nine percent to 10 percent student dropout rate, which are approximately twice the rates White students.

Table 4: Dropout rates, by race/ethnicity 2002-03

State	Alaska Grades 9-12	Idaho** Grades 9-12	Oregon Grades 9-12	Montana Grades 9-12	Washington Grades 9-12
State	6.2	3.9	4.4	3.6	6.7
White	5.0	N/A	3.6	3.1	5.7
African-American	6.2	N/A	9.0	3.8	10.2
Hispanic	10.1	6.4	9.1	6.0	11.6
Asian/Pacific	3.1	N/A	3.8	1.2	4.9
AmInd/AN*	9.4	N/A	6.3	8.1	14.6

*AmInd = American Indian; AN = Alaska Native; N/A indicates data were not available for this state
**Retrieved from the Idaho Department of Education Web site March 7, 2005, http://www.sde.state.id.us/finance/dropout.asp
Data obtained from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

To place the dropout crisis among minority students within the Northwest Region, one needs only to look to Montana and the plight of its American Indian children. The Equal

Educational Opportunity for Native American Students in Montana Public Schools, Montana

Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has stated that:

> "Indian children in Montana public schools are in a crisis situation, as evidenced
>
> by disparities in education, including dropout rates that are double those of
>
> non-Indian students, low achievement levels and test scores, and few high
>
> school graduates with little advancement to higher education."[7]

School organizations, through technical assistance provided by a comprehensive technical

assistance center dedicated to understanding diverse cultural needs of students and parents, can

address student dropout rate disparities. Moreover, those cultural needs, which are not monolithic in

nature, must be valued as components of the mainstream society. A balance must be established

between a child's native ways of communicating, learning, and behaving and the need for them to be

educated, to contribute positively to the school and community environment, and to develop the

skills for professional and social success in adulthood.

Identifying or developing, and disseminating proven effective instructional strategies in order to provide differentiated instruction for all students

The key to closing the student achievement gap for diverse student populations can be

found in the basic foundation of teaching and learning that, in fact, incorporates elements of

research-based curriculum and identification of best practices. Provisions must be made for

increased instructional time and innovation in reading, mathematics, and other basic skills through

the use of challenging curricula and instructional strategies that engage students' interest, promote

inquiry and discovery, and provide students with a sense of satisfaction from their own efforts.

Again, the educational statistics from the Northwest Region on state assessment data (see Appendix

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[7] "Equal Educational Opportunity for Native American Students in Montana Public Schools, " Montana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2001).

A) offers a stark comparison between achievement levels of White students and the region's minority students in reading and mathematics.

In Idaho, spring 2004 statewide assessment data (grades 3, 4, 7, 8, and 10) suggest that 84.4 percent of all White students were proficient in reading while 78.9 percent were proficient in mathematics on the Idaho state assessment protocol. At the same time, Hispanic children and Native American children were far less proficient than their White counterparts. The difference between the White students and the Hispanic students in terms of the percentage of children who were proficient was 24 percentage points. The proficiency difference between White students and Native American students was 23.4 percent.

In Oregon, spring 2004 statewide assessment data (grade 3) suggest that 87 percent of all White students were proficient in reading whereas 85 percent were proficient in mathematics on the Oregon state assessment protocol. At the same time, Hispanic children and African-American children were far less proficient than their White counterparts. The difference between the White and the Hispanic students in terms of the percent of children proficient was 24 percentage points. The proficiency difference between White students and African-American students was 13 percent.

In Washington, spring 2004 statewide assessment data (grade 4) suggest that 80 percent of all White students were proficient in reading whereas 66.1 percent were proficient in mathematics on the Washington state assessment protocol. At the same time, Hispanic children, Native American children, and African-American children were far less proficient than their White counterparts. The difference between the White students and the Hispanic students in terms of the percent of children proficient was 26 percentage points. The proficiency difference between White students and Native American students was 20.7 percent whereas the difference between White students and African-American students was 18.1 percent.

In Alaska, spring 2004 statewide assessment data (grade 3) suggest that 84.3 percent of all White students were proficient in reading while 81.6 percent were proficient in mathematics on the Alaska state assessment protocol. At the same time, Alaska Native children and Hispanic children were far less proficient than their White counterparts. The difference between the White students and the Alaska Native students in terms of the percentage of children proficient was 33 percentage points. The proficiency difference between White students and Hispanic students was 15.6 percent.

Finally, in Montana spring 2004 statewide assessment data (grades 4, 8, and 11) indicate that 66.3 percent of all White students were proficient in reading whereas 61.2 percent were proficient in mathematics on the Montana state assessment protocol. At the same time, Native American, Hispanic, and African-American children were far less proficient than their White counterparts. The difference between the White students and the Native American students in terms of the percent of children proficient was 34.5 percentage points. The proficiency difference between White students and African-American students was 17.4 percent whereas the difference between White students and Hispanic students was 15.7 percent.

Recruitment and retention of experienced, effective, and well-qualified teachers for students of all ability levels who have excellent teaching skills and a good command of their subject specialties and are held accountable for students' performance is key to increased student achievement. As stated in the leadership section, equally important is the recruitment and retention of high-performing administrators who provide pedagogical leadership, require the preparedness and efficacy of the teachers, and provide ongoing professional development to help teachers master new curricula and teaching strategies, especially those teachers who are effective in diverse classrooms, who improve students' ability to meet standards, and who treat and challenge all students equally. Moreover, high-performing administrators are needed to help the school organization internalize and convey the fact that race/ethnicity should not affect achievement; that

poverty can be overcome to achieve academic success; and to help solve academic achievement problems through the use of decision-making tools based on data collection and analysis, which include a review of school-wide data—current and past test scores, course enrollment patterns, and disciplinary actions—and a comparison of these data with those of other students, schools, and areas to help determine the overall school changes that are likely to improve student performance.

The need for highly trained and highly qualified teachers and administrators within the Northwest Region is only exacerbated by the rural and remote geographic characteristics of the region. The geographic vastness and subsequent population isolation of the region inhibits the creation of a coordinated, systemic professional development model to build local capacity to address the academic needs of the region's diverse student population. Consider the geographic/demographic data for the Northwest Region found in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Table 5(a): Number of Northwest schools by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	359	94	N/A	N/A	133	132
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	890	15	149	63	197	466
Urban Fringe of Large City	885	31	N/A	N/A	216	638
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	599	12	96	38	141	312
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	82	11	11	29	17	14
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	616	57	125	99	185	150
Rural outside MSA	1,532	267	196	572	221	276
Rural inside MSA	531	13	83	64	152	219
Total	5,494	500	660	865	1,262	2,207

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau: Inc ludes all schools with reported enrollment

Table 5(b): Percent of Northwest schools by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	7%	19%	0%	0%	11%	6%
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	16%	3%	23%	7%	16%	21%
Urban Fringe of Large City	16%	6%	0%	0%	17%	29%
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	11%	2%	15%	4%	11%	14%
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	11%	11%	19%	11%	15%	7%
Rural outside MSA	28%	53%	30%	66%	18%	13%
Rural inside MSA	10%	3%	13%	7%	12%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau: Includes all schools with reported enrollment

Table 6(a): Number of Northwest students by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	163,076	48,889	N/A	N/A	65,986	48,201
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	469,628	6,512	78,379	33,601	112,851	238,285
Urban Fringe of Large City	515,386	13,364	N/A	N/A	130,584	371,438
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	277,005	6,994	51,609	8,790	65,752	143,860
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	40,809	5,833	6,558	16,249	7,834	4,335
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	231,196	15,408	45,989	32,021	77,656	60,122
Rural outside MSA	231,406	33,180	39,622	51,451	46,294	60,859
Rural inside MSA	169,185	4,184	26,209	7,883	43,211	87,698
Total	2,097,691	134,364	248,366	149,995	550,168	1,014,798

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau

Table 6(b): Percent of Northwest students by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	8%	36%	0%	0%	12%	5%
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	22%	5%	32%	22%	21%	23%
Urban Fringe of Large City	25%	10%	0%	0%	24%	37%
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	13%	5%	21%	6%	12%	14%
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	2%	4%	3%	11%	1%	0%
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	11%	11%	19%	21%	14%	6%
Rural outside MSA	11%	25%	16%	34%	8%	6%
Rural inside MSA	8%	3%	11%	5%	8%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau

Table 7 (a): Number of Northwest teachers by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	8,611	2,728	N/A	N/A	3,328	2,556
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	23,780	375	4,227	2,098	4,998	12,084
Urban Fringe of Large City	24,721	746	N/A	N/A	6,050	17,925
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	14,084	346	2,659	561	3,149	7,370
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	2,209	312	344	971	345	237
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	12,655	962	2,676	1,975	3,924	3,120
Rural outside MSA	15,003	2,145	2,471	4,185	2,712	3,490
Rural inside MSA	9,053	254	1,506	571	2,124	4,599
Total	110,117	7,867	13,882	10,360	26,629	51,379

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau

Table 7(b): Percent of Northwest teachers by locale: school year 2002-03

Locale	Region	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington
Large City (More than 250,000)	8%	35%	0%	0%	12%	5%
Mid-size City (50,000-250,000)	22%	5%	30%	20%	19%	24%
Urban Fringe of Large City	22%	9%	0%	0%	23%	35%
Urban Fringe of Mid-size City	13%	4%	19%	5%	12%	14%
Large Town (25,000-49,999)	2%	4%	2%	9%	1%	0%
Small Town (2,500-24,999)	11%	12%	19%	19%	15%	6%
Rural outside MSA	14%	27%	18%	40%	10%	7%
Rural inside MSA	8%	3%	11%	6%	8%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics: Common Core of Data; locale coding by the Census Bureau

As Tables 5, 6, and 7 suggest, the most restrictive definition of rural (that being rural areas outside of metropolitan counties, Locale 7 on all Tables 5 to 7) includes 28 percent of all schools in the Northwest region, 11 percent of students, and 14 percent of teachers. Montana is the most rural with 66 percent of schools, 34 percent of students, and 40 percent of teachers in rural areas outside of metro counties. Alaska is the next most rural with 53 percent of schools, 25 percent of students, and 14 percent of teachers in rural areas outside of metro counties and Idaho is third with 30 percent of schools, 16 percent of students, and 27 percent of teachers in such areas. Even the most populated states of the region, Oregon and Washington, have substantial numbers of non-metro rural schools, 18 percent and 13 percent of schools, respectively.

The Northwest Region is in dire need of technical assistance centers that can focus time, energy, and resources to disseminate and provide professional development on best practice research. To effectively accomplish the task, regional technical assistance centers must help Northwest Region educators make efficient use of education technology. It is the only way to economically bridge the geographic expanse of the region and address the challenge to develop or identify research based effective curriculum to close the achievement gap among the region's diverse student populations.

The use of technology can be an important tool to help expand the reach of comprehensive technical assistance centers. It can help administrators and teachers create databases to analyze student performance data to inform instructional decisions and effect instructional improvements for the region's diverse student populations. In school districts where release time for teachers is difficult to obtain, the use of web-based technologies greatly improves their access to center services. Technology can permit access from a greater number of participants and its continuous availability enables access to content for even the most hard-to-reach educators. Whether a function of geography, resource restrictions, time, or knowledge, local constraints in addressing the challenge

of developing or identifying research based effective practices to close the achievement gap can be impacted through knowledgeable applications of technology.

Developing or identifying culturally appropriate materials for curriculum, learning, and assessment appropriate to particular diverse populations[8]

Concrete steps to address the disparity in student achievement in Northwest Region schools have begun with efforts that are knowledge based; that is, they are informed by the existence of proven and promising strategies and by new research pointing to additional innovative measures. Moreover, it is now widely recognized that schools, communities, and families must be committed to the achievement of all children, must begin educating them when they are very young, must make a long-term commitment to educational improvement, and must develop an understanding of what has been termed "cultural competency."

Based on information from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and Oregon Department of Education, cultural competency is based on a commitment to social justice and equity. Culture refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and norms of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. Cultural competency is a developmental process occurring at individual and system levels that evolves and is sustained over time. Recognizing that individuals begin with specific lived experiences and biases, and that working to accept multiple worldviews is a difficult choice and task, cultural competence requires that individuals and organizations do the following:

- Have a defined set of values and principles, demonstrated behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively in a cross-cultural manner.
- Demonstrate the capacity to:

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[8] Information retrieved February 13, 2005 from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Web site: http://www.educ.state.ak.us/
Electronic Resources on Cultural Competency. Retrieved March 17, 2005 from the Oregon Department of Education Web site: http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/resrcescultcomp.aspx

- ? Value diversity

- ? Engage in self-reflection

- ? Facilitate effectively (manage) the dynamics of difference

- ? Acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge

- ? Adapt to the diversity and the cultural contexts of the students, families, and communities they serve

- ? Support actions which foster equity of opportunity and services.

- ▪ Institutionalize, incorporate, evaluate, and advocate the above in all aspects of leadership, policy-making, administration, practice, and service delivery while also systematically involving staff, students, families, key stakeholders, and communities.

This challenge of addressing the achievement gap is one that truly requires a universal approach. Through implementation of "cultural competency" awareness strategies, provision needs to be made for high quality preschool programs that foster young children's development of social and school readiness skills, develop their interest in learning, and orient them toward academic achievement. Moreover, it is vital that parent education programs and family literacy programs (1) promote respect for diversity, (2) seek to help families learn how to make a concrete commitment to their children's academic success while they are still very young, (3) seek to teach families to promote a child's cognitive and social development through creation of homes as learning environments, (4) and seek to encourage families to take advantage of school and community resources that support achievement. Efforts such as (1) family support and community involvement networks that promote active encouragement of parents' high expectations for their child's academic achievement, (2) development of a home atmosphere conducive to learning, (3) commitment on the part of the school and community to help all parents and all students, regardless of racial or ethnic background, meet performance standards through social functions, meetings, and workshops where the family

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involvement in educational success is valued cannot be overstated if the educational entities are to develop or identify culturally appropriate materials for curriculum, learning, and assessment appropriate to particular diverse populations.

Technical assistance needs

The technical assistance needs for state education agencies and local school districts to address student achievement gap disparities for the Northwest Region must include assistance in the following:

- Helping to build systemic state and local capacities to develop, implement, and evaluate a broad-scale approach to address student achievement issues required to meet AYP as specified in NCLB

    ? Assisting states to develop comprehensive, single-state accountability systems

    ? Working with states to develop coherent and aligned policies around NCLB implementation

    ? Helping to reconfigure policies and infrastructures at state, district, and school levels to develop or identify culturally appropriate materials for curriculum, learning, and assessment appropriate to particular diverse populations

    ? Providing research- or evidence-based professional development to build the capacity of all individuals across the educational system to implement district or school reform initiatives

- Identifying and disseminating research-based school performance audit protocols designed to identify areas of strength and areas of concern within school organizational practices to assist schools in the implementation of best practice methodologies

- Identifying or, where necessary, developing training and materials for instruction and assessment in the core content areas that are aligned with state standards

- Making professional development more accessible to educators, especially those in rural areas, through the use of technology and by partnering with educational organizations and professional associations to develop and deliver accessible and affordable training

- Creating models to assist schools in training educators on how to analyze and use student data to drive effective instructional practices for all students.

- Sharing research on how high expectations for all students can be translated into classroom and school practices that improve student engagement in and responsibility for learning

- Helping schools identify effective strategies for increasing the cultural competency of their staff and identify best practices in instructional methodologies

- Helping schools develop instructional programs that build from the skill and knowledge base that each child brings from the home and community and identifying effective models of parent and community involvement that are relevant to the cultural context of their schools

- Developing distance learning infrastructure to support rural schools in providing a wider range of curricular offerings with instruction guided by highly qualified teachers.

Challenge #3: Preparing teachers to work in multi-graded and multi-subject classrooms and developing culturally appropriate materials and practices applicable to the culturally and linguistically diverse populations served in the region, including but not limited to American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Hispanic students

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that the way language and cultural considerations are addressed in the education system can have a significant impact on the performance of all students, especially those from particular cultural communities, such as American Indians and Alaska Natives. Culturally responsive curricula and teaching practices that capitalize

upon and are tailored to the diverse populations that make up a particular community requires a significant shift in emphasis from the one-size-fits-all composite approach that has been typical of past response to "diversity" in the schools.

Additional factors that come into play in addressing these considerations in the Northwest Region are those associated with the large number of rural schools serving diverse communities in remote settings with a small population base. This necessitates a teaching workforce and educational delivery structures that can accommodate multi-graded classrooms and multi-subject teaching expertise, considerations that aren't always easy to reconcile with current definitions of "highly qualified" teachers.

All five states in the Northwest Region are currently engaged in the development of some form of "cultural competencies" or "cultural standards" to identify the characteristics and conditions necessary to provide a culturally responsive education that prepares students who have a strong sense of personal efficacy and cultural well being as well as a solid academic preparation to make their own way in the world. For example, the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools* spells out the essential skills, knowledge, and practices associated with culturally responsive teaching, curriculum, schools, and communities that provide the support students need "to become responsible, capable and whole human beings."[9] In Montana, efforts related to the implementation of the *Indian Education for All Act* are directed toward assisting all schools in infusing information about Montana tribes into their local curriculum, whereas at the same time retaining a focus on improving academic achievement and reducing dropout rates among Montana's Indian student population. And, most recently, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho have initiated efforts to define and establish "cultural competency" standards to assist schools in implementing culturally responsive educational services.

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[9] Assembly of Alaska Native Educators. (1998). Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools. Fairbanks, AK, Alaska Native Knowledge Network, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

As schools seek new, more effective ways to address issues of diversity, language, and culture that take into account the considerations outlined above, it is to their own strengths and resources that they must turn for guidance and support. The role for technical assistance providers in such circumstances is not one of bringing in experts from outside to address local issues, but of providing support for building local capacity to help each school and community address their needs in locally appropriate and sustainable ways. The federal comprehensive technical assistance center can facilitate such a process by serving as a clearinghouse to identify and align existing resources, promote synergy, and avoid duplication of effort for local service providers.

Technical assistance needs

Issues of diversity, language, and culture have taken on a renewed urgency with the current requirements for data disaggregation in the determination of adequate yearly progress and implementing appropriate strategies to address the demands of NCLB. The technical assistance needs associated with responding to the challenges of diversity, language, and culture for the Northwest Region must include assistance in the following:

- Supporting active engagement of members of all cultural and linguistic communities in shaping educational programs and services

- Assisting in the development and utilization of locally oriented curriculum materials, assessments, and applications of technology

- Supporting region-wide collaboration in the development and implementation of cultural competency and/or cultural standards

- Assisting in the implementation of locally based cultural orientation programs for new school staff, including an extended cultural immersion experience and community mentoring support

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- Infusing effective teaching strategies for multi-graded, multi-subject classrooms especially in rural schools

- Using distance learning to foster local capacity building through a "grow your own educators" strategy that increases the diversity of school personnel and contributes to continuity, stability, and sustainability in the educational system

- Establishing ongoing partnerships between technical assistance providers and community advocacy organizations that represent the interests and aspirations of the cultural and linguistic populations being served

- Developing culturally appropriate leadership models of successful schools for use by schools and districts serving American Indian and Alaska Native students and communities as well as for other communities with minority populations.

Challenge #4: Engaging all families and communities in schools to support success for every student

The educational achievement of students is dependent not only on the student, teacher, and school but relies on support from the family and community. Community engagement is a challenging problem. The challenge for schools becomes how to engage the diverse community and establish a two-way dialogue for facilitating the achievement of all students.

Schools experience better parent and community relationships, as well as greater support and respect from the community when parents are actively engaged[10] yet it is not uncommon for parents to feel unwelcome at school and unsure of their role.[11] It is therefore critical that schools develop

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[10] Cotton, K., & Wikelund, K.R. (1989). *Parent Involvement in Education.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
[11] Shartrand, A., Weiss, H., Kreider, H., & Lopez, M. (1997). *New skills for new schools: Preparing teachers in family involvement.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

and identify roles in which parents can make meaningful contributions to their children's schools and teachers can make meaningful contributions to their students' communities.

Family involvement is known to play a critical role in effective schooling. Many educators and families agree that any solutions to the problems facing public education must include a substantial examination of school and community relationships. A framework for this two-way communication is necessary to invite parents' unique body of knowledge into the dialogue and collaboration already occurring in schools.

Members of the NW RAC committee acknowledge that building home-school partnerships is a process that varies from school to school and, therefore, they are hesitant to promote a specific model. However, several key elements are common to effective schools whether they are rural or urban, large or small. All schools must offer a variety of opportunities for parents to engage, from general activities such as attending school functions and parent teacher conferences to specific opportunities for substantive ongoing participation such as sitting in advisory capacities or on leadership teams which collaborate to effectuate positive change.

Research indicates that it is "teacher practices…that [makes] the difference in whether parents are productive partners in children's education."[12] Technical assistance efforts should therefore be focused on educating and supporting teachers and building administrators in identifying and using best practices in engaging parents as productive partners.

Providing information about school progress and achievement, and education policy in a format and context that is understandable to non-educators is an important element. Parents need to understand the motivating factors behind school improvement planning in order to participate in the process. Alternative methods of disseminating research and information for a school's outreach to its community are a necessity especially for rural and remote communities. Providing assistance

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[12] Epstein, J. (1988, Winter). How do we improve programs for parent involvement? *Educational Horizons*, 66(2) 58-59.

to schools in using the information to help staff engage parents and communities will help bridge the gap between community and school.

Technical assistance needs

The technical assistance needs for state education agencies and local school districts to address the community involvement and engagement disparities for the Northwest Region must include assistance in the following:

- Disseminating and coordinating information on state and local efforts to foster strong community school partnerships and organizing the information in a user-friendly format

- Identifying processes that can help schools coordinate community resources that support learning

- Providing information on how to use technology to increase communication with parents and the community in general

- Training school staff on effective two-way communication with the community, and providing techniques to assist educators in involving and informing parents and the community

- Assisting educators in understanding and utilizing the research in regards to the meaningful roles for parents in the school systems

- Assisting educators in understanding and utilizing the research in regards to the meaningful roles for educators interacting in the community from which their students come

- Identifying and disseminating best practices for involving parents of diverse cultural and/or linguistic groups.

Conclusion and recommendations

Across the United States, school efforts to close the gap in academic achievement have been difficult at best. Despite attempts made within each state comprising the Northwest Region, differences in educational performance persist in achievement levels. The need for a solution to this problem has new urgency now as the relationship between educational success and social and economic opportunity steadily strengthens.

In terms of geographic size, the Northwest Region is one of the largest geographic regions of the country. In terms of population density, however, the Northwest Region has one of the lowest population totals of any region of the country. Additionally, the demographic characteristics of these states' public school systems vary greatly, from a low of 500 public schools in Alaska to a high of 2,207 schools in Washington.

This geographic expanse and low population density of the Northwest Region, which does contain isolated urban pockets but still remains predominately rural and in places remote in nature, only serves to compound the problem of achieving economies of scale in providing effective technical assistance to address student achievement gap issues when put into context of national population density.

Currently, the need is growing to address the student achievement gap among racial/ethnic groups as well as for economically disadvantaged students. For example, there are approximately one half-million (500,000) minority students in the Northwest Region. These students represent 24 percent of the Northwest's Region total student enrollment.

Disparities in academic achievement among the students in the Northwest Region are evidenced in disaggregated data based upon race/ethnicity, income levels, language background,

disability status, and gender. These achievement gaps are documented in a variety of data collection measures, such as proficiency test results, achievement levels and/or growth rates, enrollment in advanced classes, high school graduation rates, and college participation/success rates. The existence of such disparities is ultimately harmful to the Northwest Region's tax base, its ability to attract new industry, the health of its communities, and most of all, to the lives of its children. Closing achievement gaps that exist is not, and will not be an easy task for any school district, any individual state education agency, or any regional technical assistance center because it will require the active collaboration of students, parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. The principals and staff in these schools must create a school learning environment that serves the needs of a diverse student population. Understanding how the student's culture influences his or her learning and social needs will help teachers and administrators create a learning environment that is welcoming to all students and fully engages each in learning.

Education agencies must be able to disseminate existing researched-based instructional programs with demonstrated success to individual schools for adaptation, as appropriate, and dissemination of information about instructional strategies and exemplary practices that are especially effective in diverse classrooms and among diverse populations.

The Northwest Region identified four primary challenges: achievement gap, leadership, cultural diversity, and community involvement. Technical assistance must focus on the following areas to address these challenges. Technical assistance in using research that improves school leadership at the building level holds tremendous potential to help schools bolster student academic performance, particularly for low-income and minority students.

The second area of technical assistance must address language, culture, and diversity among our students. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that the way language and cultural considerations are addressed in the education system can have a significant impact on the

performance of all students, and especially those from particular cultural communities. Culturally responsive curricula and teaching practices that capitalize upon and are tailored to the diverse populations that make up a particular community requires a significant shift in emphasis from the one-size-fits-all composite approach that has been typical of past responses to "diversity" in the schools.

A third area must address assisting schools in developing strategies to engage the entire community and establish a two-way dialogue for facilitating the achievement of all students. Technical assistance efforts should be focused on educating and supporting teachers and building administrators in identifying and using best practices in engaging parents as productive partners and in defining meaningful roles for parents.

Finally, technical assistance needs to be provided in the effective use of technology within a school setting. The use of technology can be an important tool to help expand the reach of comprehensive technical assistance centers. It can help administrators and teachers create databases to analyze student performance data to inform instructional decisions and effect instructional improvements for the region's diverse student populations. In school districts where release time for teachers is difficult to obtain, the use of web-based technologies greatly improves their access to center services. Technology can permit access from a greater number of participants and its continuous availability enables access to content for even the most hard-to-reach educators. Whether a function of geography, resource restrictions, time, or knowledge, local constraints in addressing the challenge of developing or identifying research based effective practices to close the achievement gap can be impacted through knowledgeable applications of technology.

Although the needs for technical assistance of the Northwest Region are similar to that of the rest of the country, the delivery of technical assistance is exacerbated by the region's geographic vastness and subsequent population isolation. These factors, unique to the Northwest, make it

difficult to create a coordinated systemic professional development model to build local capacity to address the academic needs of the region's diverse student population. The need for highly trained and highly qualified educators and effective schools within the Northwest Region must become a priority if achievement gap disparities are to be reduced.

Recommendations

The NW RAC recommends that the following priorities be addressed by the technical assistance center in the Northwest Region.

Leadership

- Replicating successful programs on developing effective leadership, including mentoring, to spread knowledge about what works in principal development
- Providing a forum or clearinghouse for district and school level leaders to come together with technical assistance providers to share challenges and brainstorm solutions including those related to implementing NCLB
- Developing and sustaining successful school improvement models that include community participation.

Closing the student achievement gap

- Helping to build systemic state and local capacities to develop, implement, and evaluate a broad-scale approach to address student achievement issues required to meet AYP as specified in NCLB
- Identifying and disseminating research-based school performance audit protocols designed to identify areas of strength and areas of concern within school organizational practices to assist schools in the implementation of best practice methodologies

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- Making professional development more accessible to educators, especially those in rural areas, through the use of technology and by partnering with educational organizations and professional associations to develop and deliver accessible and affordable training

- Creating models to assist schools in training educators on how to analyze and use student data to drive effective instructional practices for all students.

Diversity/Culture/Language

- Supporting active engagement of members of all cultural and linguistic communities in shaping educational programs and services

- Infusing effective teaching strategies for multi-graded, multi-subject classrooms especially in rural schools

- Developing culturally appropriate leadership models of successful schools for use by schools and districts serving American Indian and Alaska Native students and communities, as well as other communities with minority populations.

Community

- Training school staff on effective two-way communication with the community, and providing techniques to assist educators in involving and informing parents and the community.

- Assisting educators in understanding and utilizing the research in regards to the meaningful roles for parents in the school systems and for educators interacting in the community from which their students come.

- Identifying and disseminating best practices for involving parents of diverse cultural and/or linguistic groups.

- Identifying and developing effective use of distance learning, especially for rural and remote areas.

- Developing and disseminating best practices on utilization of technology to promote:

    ? Sustainable, ongoing professional development

    ? Avenues for local capacity building to enhance instruction, curriculum, and assessment

    ? Data-based decision-making strategies

    ? Opportunities for interactive parent/school communication enhancement.

Other recommendations

A second technical assistance center based in Alaska should be retained to specifically deal with issues involving Alaskan Native and American Indian students throughout the Northwest Region with a satellite office in Montana. Priorities for this center would include:

- Developing and/or identifying culturally appropriate research-based materials for curriculum, learning, and assessment relevant to particular diverse populations in order to close the achievement gap and provide access to higher level learning opportunities for all students.

- Developing culturally appropriate curriculum materials, teaching, and assessment practices for American Indians and Alaskan Native students

- Identifying and disseminating research based practices that address the unique challenges associated with low socioeconomic conditions

- Identifying and developing strategies for engaging families and communities in partnership with schools to support success for all

- Developing and preparing a highly effective workforce to work in the culturally diverse, multi-graded, high-poverty, and rural schools of the region.

Appendix A: Achievement gap analysis

ALASKA

Table 8: Alaska benchmark exam results, Spring 2004: Achievement gap summary for grade 3

Subgroup	Percent at or above	
	Proficient in reading	Proficient in mathematics
All Students combined	73.80%	70.80%
Students with disabilities	44.30%	50.60%
Female	77.20%	73.50%
Male	70.50%	71.00%
Alaskan Native	51.30%	52.90%
American Indian	71.20%	69.80%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	71.50%	73.10%
Hispanic or Latino	68.70%	68.40%
African-American	70.50%	60.90%
White, Non-Hispanic	84.30%	81.60%
Low Income	59.50%	58.50%
Limited English proficiency	44.80%	49.70%

Table 9: Achievement gaps among white, non-Hispanic, and minority subgroups based on percentage of students meeting state standards

Subgroup	Reading	Mathematics
Alaskan Native	33.00%	28.70%
American Indian	13.10%	11.80%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	12.80%	8.50%
Hispanic or Latino	15.60%	13.20%
African-American	13.80%	20.70%
Limited English proficiency	29.00%	21.10%

IDAHO

Table 10: Idaho ISAT results, Spring 2004: Achievement gap summary of all tested grades (3, 4, 7, 8, 10)

Subgroup	Percent at or above	
	Proficient in reading	Proficient in mathematics
All Students combined	81.40%	76.00%
Students with disabilities	38.70%	38.30%
Female	no data	no data
Male	no data	no data
American Indian/Alaskan Native	61.10%	56.30%
Asian American	85.70%	84.80%
Hispanic or Latino	60.40%	56.20%
African-American	77.10%	66.90%
White, Non-Hispanic	84.40%	78.90%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	84.50%	84.00%
Economically Disadvantaged	71.40%	66.60%
Limited English proficiency	51.20%	50.30%

Table 11: Achievement gaps based on percentage of students meeting state standards among white, non-Hispanic, and minority/LEP subgroups

Subgroup	Reading	Mathematics
American Indian/Alaskan Native	23.40%	22.60%
Asian American	-1.30%	-6.00%
Hispanic or Latino	24.00%	22.60%
African-American	7.30%	11.90%
Limited English proficiency	30.20%	25.70%

MONTANA

Table 12: Montana district-level CRT results by subgroup, school year 2003-04

Subgroup	Percent at or above	
	Proficient in reading	Proficient in mathematics
All Students combined	62.20%	56.80%
Students with disabilities	22.50%	20.20%
Female	67.60%	57.10%
Male	57.10%	56.60%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	31.80%	25.00%
Asian American	69.70%	67.90%
Hispanic or Latino	50.60%	44.70%
African-American	48.90%	35.40%
White, Non-Hispanic	66.30%	61.20%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	66.70%	50.00%
Participates in Free/Reduced Lunch	46.00%	40.30%
Limited English Proficiency	15.40%	15.50%
Grade 04	65.70%	45.20%
Grade 08	58.30%	64.00%
Grade 10	63.00%	59.90%
Regular Assessment	62.10%	56.80%
Alternate Assessment	73.00%	63.90%

Table 13: Achievement gaps among white, non-Hispanic, and minority subgroups based on percentage of students meeting state standards

Subgroup	Reading	Mathematics
American Indian/Alaskan Native	34.50%	36.20%
Asian American	-3.40%	-6.70%
Hispanic or Latino	15.70%	16.50%
African-American	17.40%	25.80%
Limited English Proficiency	46.80%	41.30%

OREGON

Table 14: Oregon statewide assessment, Spring 2004: Achievement gap summary for grade 3

Subgroup	Percent at or above	
	Proficient in reading	Proficient in mathematics
All Students combined	82%	81%
Students with disabilities	52%	57%
Female	85%	81%
Male	80%	81%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	78%	73%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	86%	85%
Hispanic or Latino	63%	63%
African-American	74%	71%
White, Non-Hispanic	87%	85%
Economically Disadvantaged	73%	72%
Limited English proficiency	57%	60%

Table 15: Achievement gaps among white, non-Hispanic, and minority/LEP subgroups based on percentage of students meeting state standards

Subgroup	Reading	Mathematics
American Indian/Alaskan Native	9%	12%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1%	0%
Hispanic or Latino	24%	22%
African-American	13%	14%
Limited English proficiency	25%	21%

WASHINGTON

Table 16: Washington assessment of student learning, Spring 2004: Achievement gap summary grade 4

Subgroup	Percent at or above	
	Proficient in reading	Proficient in mathematics
All Students combined	74.40%	59.90%
Students with disabilities	39.00%	29.10%
Female	77.80%	60.90%
Male	71.50%	59.30%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	59.30%	42.40%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	78.30%	67.20%
Hispanic or Latino	53.90%	38.90%
African-American	61.90%	37.50%
White, Non-Hispanic	80.00%	66.10%
Low Income	61.10%	44.00%
Limited English proficiency	36.60%	26.60%

Table 17: Achievement gaps among white, non-Hispanic, and minority/LEP subgroups based on percentage of students meeting state standards

Subgroup	Reading	Mathematics
American Indian/Alaskan Native	20.70%	23.70%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1.70%	-1.10%
Hispanic or Latino	26.10%	27.20%
African-American	18.10%	28.60%
Limited English proficiency	37.80%	33.30%

Appendix B: Biographical information about members of the Northwest Regional Advisory Committee

Susan Williamson, Chair, is currently principal of William Howard Taft Elementary School in Boise, ID. Taft Elementary is the only school in Idaho to be selected as a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The award recognizes schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap or whose students achieve at very high levels. Before moving to Idaho, Dr. Williamson was an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and special programs for the Wylie Independent School District in Texas. She received her doctorate from Texas A&M University.

Ray Barnhardt is a professor of cross-cultural studies at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, where he has been involved in teaching and research related to Native education issues since 1970. He has served as the director of the Cross-Cultural Education Development Program, the Small High Schools Project, the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, the Center for Cross-Regional Education Programs and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. His research interests include Indigenous knowledge systems, Native teacher education, distance/distributed education, small school curriculum, and institutional adaptations to rural and cross-cultural settings. His experiences in education beyond Alaska range from teaching mathematics in Baltimore, MD, to research in Canada, Iceland, India, Malawi, and New Zealand.

Marilyn Davidson is the principal of Main Elementary in Kodiak, AK. She also serves as the director of the English Language Acquisition Program for the Kodiak Island Borough School District, is a member of the Alaska Arts Education Consortium Board, representative to the Kennedy Center Partners in Education program, and is co-director of the 21st Century Community

Learning Centers program. She has been a curriculum coordinator and the director of federal programs for KIBSD. Her teaching background is in music education, grades K-12. She has taught in public and private schools in Missouri, Indiana, Grand Cayman, and Alaska. Davidson holds a bachelor's degree from Anderson University, Anderson, IN, and a master's degree in education from Indiana University.

Mary Alice Heuschel joined the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in 1999 as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and became the Deputy Superintendent of Learning and Teaching in 2000. Dr. Heuschel is responsible for the OSPI Learning and Teaching departments; Assessment and Research, Curriculum and Instruction, School Improvement, Secondary Education Reform, Community Outreach, Professional Development, Teacher Certification, and Federal Programs including No Child Left Behind, Title I, Special Education, and Migrant/Bilingual. Heuschel earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership at Seattle Pacific University (SPU). Her superintendent's certificate is also from SPU and earned the principal and special programs director certification from Central WA University. Dr. Heuschel obtained her master's of science degree in special education from Northwestern University and bachelor's of science in K-12 education from Wheelock College in Boston. Previously, she was a principal, an inclusion specialist in special education, and an assessment specialist for the state department of Hawaii. Heuschel has taught preschool through adult education with the Department of Defense Schools throughout the country and in Europe, including the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Wendy Horman is a member of the Bonneville School Board in Idaho Falls, ID. She was elected in 2002 and served as Treasurer for one year. Horman was elected to the Executive Board of the Idaho School Board Association (ISBA) in 2003, and elected as vice president in 2004. Horman

is also a sits on the boards of the Idaho Falls Symphony Advisory Board, Eastern Idaho Chapter of American Guild of Organists, Parents as Teachers Advisory Board for HELP, Inc., and is the Fine Arts Coordinator at her children's elementary school. Horman is the mother of five school-aged children.

Patti Kinney is the principal of Talent Middle School in Southern Oregon. She is president-elect of the National Middle School Association (NMSA) and was the 2003 MetLife/National Association of Secondary School Principal's National Middle Level Principal of the Year.

Karen Johnson has been a member of the board of directors for the Raymond School District in Raymond, WA, for 18 years (4½ terms). She has also been a member of the Washington State School Director's Association (WSSDA) Diversity-Multicultural Team for 13 years, holding the chairman position for six years, and a member of WSSDA's Federal Relations Committee for the National School Board Association. Johnson is also a court administrator/manager for two municipal courts.

Rob Larson has been an active participant in Oregon education for over 20 years. He has served as a teacher and school administrator in a number of Oregon school districts during his education career. As co-author of Design Technology: Children's Engineering, he has consulted across the state and nationally in science education professional development initiatives. Currently, Larson is the Federal Liaison for the Oregon Department of Education. He also serves as the director of the Oregon State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP), a national education leadership initiative, funded by the Wallace Foundation.

Karen McGee is a member of the State Board of Education in Idaho. She is currently serving her second term as since first being appointed in April 1999. McGee holds bachelor of science and master of science degrees in Speech Pathology. She currently resides in Pocatello, ID.

Karen Rehfeld has served as Deputy Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development since June 2003. As deputy commissioner, Rehfeld has responsibility for policy and administrative matters of the department and a key role in working with the state legislature and the State Board of Education & Early Development in budget, legislation, regulation, and other activities. Prior to becoming deputy commissioner, she was the department's chief finance officer.

Douglas Reisig is the Superintendent of Schools for Hellgate Elementary in Missoula, MT. Dr. Reisig has been involved in Montana education for the past 29 years as a teacher, middle school/high school principal, and district superintendent. Reisig received his B.S. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of Montana and his Ed.D. degree from Montana State University. Dr. Reisig also serves on the Montana Board of Public Education Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, the University of Montana President's Advisory Council, the Montana Office of Public Instruction Testing Assessment Advisory Council, and the Montana Professional Educators' Preparation Program Standards Advisory Council.

Chris Rhines is currently the Title IA Coordinator for the Beaverton, OR, School District. Prior to this year Rhines was an NCLB federal programs specialist and Comprehensive School Reform program coordinator for the Oregon Department of Education. Rhines has over 25 years of teaching experience in Oregon schools, and has provided staff development on a variety of school improvement topics around the state and nationally.

Dennis Williams is Montana's Deputy Superintendent. For the past 30 years, Deputy Superintendent Dennis "Bud" Williams has served Montana schools as a teacher, principal, and for 22 of those years, as a School Superintendent. He was sworn in as State Deputy Superintendent of Montana Schools January 2004. Bud is recognized as a state leader for his work ensuring all Montana school children receive a high quality education. His focus areas are Indian Education, High School reform and P-20 initiative with Higher Education. Bud and his wife Eddie have raised three sons and have 4 grandchildren.

Glossary

ASA—Association of School Administrators

AYP—Adequate Yearly Progress, defined in the NCLB Act as a way to measure the academic achievement of elementary and secondary school students in relation individual state student academic achievement standards.

CHARTER SCHOOLS—Public schools that are largely free to innovate, and often provide more effective programs and choice to underserved groups of students. Charter schools subject to the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) and other accountability requirements of the NCLB Act.

COMPREHENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS—Centers authorized by Section 203 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279). Appropriations for the centers in Fiscal Year for 2005 would enable the ED to support 20 centers, 10 of which must be in current regions.

COMMON CORE OF DATA—The National Center for Education Statistics' comprehensive, annual, national statistical database of information concerning all public elementary and secondary schools and local education agencies.

CONSOLIDATED STATE PLAN FOR NCLB—Plan from each state that demonstrates it has adopted challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards that will be used by the state, its local educational agencies, and its schools.

CORE SUBJECTS—Refers to English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography [Section 9101(11)]. While the federal statute includes the arts in the core academic subjects, it does not specify which of the arts are core academic subjects; therefore, states must make this determination.

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

ELL—English Language Learners

FACA—Federal Advisory Committee Act was created in 1972 (Public Law 92-463) by the U.S. Congress to formally recognize the merits of seeking the advice and assistance of our nation's citizens. Congress sought to assure that advisory committees: provide advice that is relevant, objective, and open to the public; act promptly to complete their work; and comply with reasonable cost controls and recordkeeping requirements.

FRPL—Free or Reduced Lunch Program

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS—States must define a "highly qualified" teacher. The requirement that teachers be highly qualified applies to all public elementary or secondary school teachers employed by a local educational agency who teach a core academic subject. "Highly qualified" means that the teacher: has obtained full state certification as a teacher or passed the State teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state, and does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject matter competency in each

of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, in a manner determined by the state and in compliance with Section 9101(23) of ESEA.

IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

LEA—Local Education Agency

NAEP—National Assessment of Education Progress

NBC—National Board Certified

NCLB—No Child Left Behind Act

NWEA—Northwest Evaluation Association

NWREL—Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

OESE—Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the ED

RACs—Regional Advisory Committees that are authorized by Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-279)

RAC QUORUM—A majority of appointed members defined as half plus one. A RAC must have a quorum to meet or hold an official meeting.

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORIES—Federally-supported regional institutions that have operated since 1966 and reauthorized by Section 174 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002

SBA—School Board Association

SDE—State Departments of Education

SEA—State Education Agency

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE—Assistance in identifying, selecting, or designing solutions based on research, including professional development and high-quality training to implement solutions leading to (1) improved educational and other practices and classroom instruction based on scientifically valid research, (2) improved planning, design, and administration of programs, (3) assistance in interpreting, analyzing, and utilizing statistics and evaluations, and (4) other assistance necessary to encourage the improvement of teaching and learning through the applications of techniques supported by scientifically valid research (P.L. 107-279)

List of tables