



The Alliance for Excellent Education Presents a Webinar

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

February 5, 2010 ♦ 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Speaker Biographies

Gene Bottoms

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

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

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

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

Greg Darling

Superintendent, *Humboldt Community School District (Iowa)*

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

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

John Hill, EdD

Executive Director, *National Rural Education Association*

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

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

Steven R. Means

Special Assistant, *Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education*

Steven Means serves as special assistant in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, he serves as a policy and program advisor to the assistant secretary of education. Previously, Mr. Means was principal of a seven-hundred-student elementary school in the Downey Unified School District in south Los Angeles County. Throughout his career, Mr. Means has focused on curriculum and instruction, teacher and school leader professional development, establishing and building partnerships between schools and the community, and providing excellence in education for traditionally underserved communities.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Means developed and managed an elementary school's Title I program, which received the California State Title I Achieving Schools Award in 2002 and 2004. He was also named *Teacher of the Year* for elementary education for Downey Unified School District in 2004. Mr. Means has served as a teacher professional development leader for the California Professional Development Institute, and has presented at a variety of teacher professional development conferences.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles, Mr. Means also holds a master's degree from UCLA in education, with an emphasis in administrative and policy studies. He earned a second master's degree from California State University, Long Beach, in elementary education with an emphasis in curriculum and instruction.

Lori Meyer

Vice President, *Collaborative Communications Group*

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

At Collaborative, Ms. Meyer has contributed research, editing, and writing for the award-winning *Leading Learning Communities* publication and the Aspen Institute's Commission on No Child Left

Behind. She has also worked with the National Academy Foundation to provide extensive research on investments in education in New Orleans and Los Angeles. Ms. Meyer is currently partnering with the Alliance for Excellent Education to better understand high school reform efforts in California.

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

Elizabeth Schneider

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

Elizabeth Schneider is vice president of state advocacy and outreach at the Alliance for Excellent Education. In this role, she works to help deepen the Alliance's understanding of state and local high school reform; expand relationships with state and local reform leaders; and connect local, state, and federal policy conversations around secondary school improvement.

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

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

Bob Wise

President, *Alliance for Excellent Education*

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

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

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