



Alabama Rural Action Commission
Region 3 - Central Alabama Education Committee

Tuesday, November 13, 2007
10:00 a.m.
Hoover Board of Education

Meeting Summary

Present: Johnna Baker (Walker Co. Schools), Stoney Beavers (Blount Co. Schools), Andy Benefield (ARAC), Carol Bruser (Leadership Shelby Co.), Tammy Dunn (Jefferson County Schools), Barbara Johnson (Alabama Power Co.), Naomi Nock (St. Clair County Day Program), Anita Norton (Jefferson State Community College), Sallye Longshore (Co-Chair, UM Inservice Center), Jack Riley (Co-Chair, University of Montevallo).

After introductions, members discussed adding items to the original brainstormed list of issues and needs. Members agreed that the original list was very extensive. After school care was the only item added to the list. The remainder of the meeting was focused on discussion of dropout prevention, business and industry linkages, and arts education in rural counties.

School system representatives described efforts at revitalizing career/technical education, which has had a diminished emphasis because of No Child Left Behind. These include targeted efforts on high school campuses, career clusters, and programs underwritten by business and industry, such as those at the Shelby County School of Technology underwritten by BE&K and Cisco Systems. Difficulties identified in making these programs viable included the lack of a critical mass of students at most high school sites and the inability to offer core curriculum courses at "technical school" sites. This last barrier is due in part to the state's "4x4" high school graduation requirement. Most courses offered in career-specific programs have elements of core curriculum subjects, but are not accepted by the Alabama Department of Education because they do not match the Alabama Courses of Study. It was agreed that courses in English, mathematics and the sciences could and should be tailored to the needs of students not anticipating going to a four-year college.

In addition to the businesses already mentioned, hospitals in the region and other large employers such as the Alabama Power Co. were identified as potential partners. Carol Bruser agreed to recruit representatives from these types of businesses to attend the next meeting to explore possible avenues for partnerships. The role of community colleges was also seen as critical to the success of career-specific programs bridging high school to post-secondary education.

Naomi Nock briefly discussed the success of her art program at the St. Clair County Day program. This avenue to success was seen by the group as vital to any effort at keeping youth

interested and involved in their own education. The state of art education in the rural systems in Region 3 was also discussed.

In hopes of lining up several potential partners as well as recruiting more attendees at the next meeting, and because of inherent conflicts over the holidays, it was agreed that the next meeting would not be held until late January. Jack Riley and Sallye Longshore will coordinate with Carol Bruser to identify a specific date and publicize it soon.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.