44 MEMBERS ACROSS THE STATE

- 30 School Board Members
- 14 Superintendents
- All Volunteered
- Split into North and South
- Worked with National Rural Education Association and Dr. Mara Tieken, author of *Why Rural Schools Matter*, Associate Professor of Education Bates College, Georgia Department of Education, Department of Early Care and Learning, Atlanta Regional Commission
TASK FORCE GOALS

• Identify ways for GSBA to support rural districts’ efforts to meet their challenges and take advantage of their opportunities.

• Identify educational challenges that need to be addressed through cross-sector collaboration.

• Improve the understanding of public education advocates statewide on issues/challenges impacting rural school systems.

• Develop methods for information sharing with the public and across public school systems.

• Develop an ongoing discussion with state legislators and key decision-makers for public education policy and public policy.

• Explore ways to promote investment in rural communities.
CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED AND RANKED

SOUTH GEORGIA
• Poverty; Economic Development
• Funding; Teacher Recruitment and Retention
• Transportation; Technology
• Early Learning; Healthcare

NORTH GEORGIA
• Funding
• Early Learning; Technology
• Teacher Recruitment and Retention; Healthcare
• No priority votes for Transportation or Economic Development
POVERTY VS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

POVERTY

• Opportunity gap – lack of literacy and numeracy at start of school
• Lack of opportunities to “catch up” and stay caught up
• Generational issues – poor parenting habits, teen pregnancies, little urgency around education

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• Students and workforce – Graduation requirements, lack of consistency in agencies, time for soft skills, global skills vs local opportunities
• Losing the best with no jobs to come back to as professionals
• Helping people understand why it is important (they like their location as is)
TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION: ISSUES

• Equity in being able to attract teachers, especially Special Education and STEM
• Quality of life, need things to do
• Amount of turnover seemed to depend on geographic location, whether they pay Social Security, lack of a place for the spouse to work
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Support teaching as a high demand workforce initiative
• Pilot a marketing specialist from the Department of Economic Development to work with district on promotional package of area to attract teachers
• Allow retired teachers to return to the classroom in rural areas without impact to retirement, particularly subjects with a teacher shortage
• Explore a fast track for paraprofessionals to obtain teaching certificate while working
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assistance with setting up a “Grow Your Own” program
- Pilot for financial incentives targeted to special education and STEM teachers to test viability and effectiveness
- Mentor program
- Districts partner with HBCUs and Latino organizations to build teacher pipeline and mentors
- Develop marketing campaign with higher education to showcase the profession, provide support and guidance needed to succeed
FUNDING: ISSUES

- Out of date formula
  - $150 to cover 8 days sick leave, same as 1985
  - Counselors funded at 1:450, needs and duties increasing
  - No weight for poverty
FUNDING: ISSUES

• Transportation
  • Mileage and terrain shorten bus lifespan
  • Finding school bus drivers
    • Impact of opioid crisis

• Healthcare costs for non-certified personnel
  • Currently $11,340 per year
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Phase in an increase for sick leave to mirror current costs or by rate of inflation – 2018 would bring it to $350 for 8 days

• Update and fund pupil transportation formula to take into account variable costs

• State partially fund insurance for non-certified employees

• Continue to explore less expensive ways to provide this benefit
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Research costs and grants for wi-fi on some buses for student use on long commutes and creating community hotspots
• Phase in an increase to bring counselor ratio to national recommendation 1:250
• Add a QBE weight for poverty and prioritize funding for rural areas
EARLY LEARNING: ISSUES

• Access
  • PreK cap
  • Funding for PreK space
  • Transportation funding

• Beginning parental involvement

• Lack of aligned curriculum in PreK and child care centers with kindergarten

• Ability to provide mobile learning for early learning support

• No state mandate for early learning
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Districts work with private early learning providers on shared professional development
• Require early learning centers receiving state funding to align curriculum so students are prepared for kindergarten
• Additional funding for transportation and space for PreK
HEALTHCARE: ISSUES

- Access to health services
  - Transportation
- Few healthcare professionals in area
- Keeping rural hospitals open
- Increasing costs of insurance
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Districts explore use of telemedicine with city and county governments, seek USDA grants
• Explore and/or partner with healthcare profession to recruit and retain personnel to provide access to care for students and adults
• Funding for low cost or subsidized transportation to healthcare facilities that are not easily accessible
• Increase awareness of rural hospital tax credit and prioritize receiving hospitals if not designated on contribution
CONTACT INFORMATION

Angela Palm
Director of Policy & Legislative Services
Georgia School Boards Association

apalm@gsba.com

770-962-6849 (office)
404-578-8707 (cell)