

Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

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Rural Educational Equity Conference

The Rural Educational Equity Conference was held March 9 on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University. Focused on the theme of “Ensuring Equitable Access To Excellent Educators,” the conference had four primary purposes:

- Provide an overview of the Missouri Equity Plan
- Share perspectives on current patterns of educational inequity in the southeastern region of the state
- Discuss environmental, institutional and workforce factors that affect teaching and learning in rural school communities
- Gather stakeholder input on viable solutions for ensuring equitable access to excellent educators in rural school settings

The conference featured two keynote speakers, both of whom are professors at Southeast Missouri State University’s College of Education. Dr. Sherry Copeland addressed “Rural Equity Issues and Insights,” and Dr. Shonta Smith presented “Culturally Responsive Teaching: How to Bridge the Disconnect.” Conference attendees participated in small discussion groups on the topics: “Equality vs. Equity: What Does Inequity Look Like?” and “Equity Conversations Continued ...”



In addition, as part of an educator think tank, stakeholders provided input on critical areas of the Missouri Equity Plan:

- Recruiting high-quality, culturally diverse teacher candidates
- Ensuring relevant and effective teacher preparation
- Addressing high-needs content areas/geographic locations
- Identifying competitive teacher incentives

Participants were empowered to serve as change agents and continue the educational equity conversations within their respective higher education institutions, rural school communities and educational organizations. Plans are underway for an Urban Educational Equity Conference in Kansas City (June 2016) with the goal of “Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.” If your district is interested in participating, please contact the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Office of Educator Quality at moequality@dese.mo.gov or 573-751-2931.

The conference was a collaboration between the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Office of Educator Quality and its technical assistance providers, Central Comprehensive Center and the Midwest Equity Assistance Center, as well as the Southeast Regional Professional Development Center. Participants included Southeast Missouri State University, College of Education faculty; Cape Girardeau, Puxico, and Meadow Heights school district leaders; professional association representatives from MSBA and MSTA; and other educational stakeholders concerned about rural equity issues.