

Written testimony prepared for U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown

Senator Brown, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I know that you care deeply about the future of Public Education.

My name is Bob Caldwell and I am the Superintendent of Wolf Creek Local Schools in Washington County, Ohio.

While I have been in education for thirty-four years, only fourteen have been as Superintendent of Wolf Creek. However, all thirty-four have been in the Appalachian Region of southern Ohio.

Few issues do I carry the passion that I have toward helping the young people of my home region.

Wolf Creek Local School has a total school population (k-12) of 640 students. This is an average of fifty in each grade. Fifty-nine percent of our teachers have ten or more years of experience and make on the average a little less than \$46,000. This compared to the Ohio average with ten or more years experience of \$56,000, while the State is overall income was just over \$68,000.

A strong argument can be made that Rural and Appalachian school teachers become embedded in their communities and do not relocate for career or financial reasons.

This testimony is not just about the teachers commitment to the students. It is about the students, the people who will soon be sitting in our respective chairs.

Wolf Creek while attaining an "excellent" rating the past two years on the report card and have a 98% graduation rate concluded they needed help!

The Battelle for Kids Ohio Appalachian Collaborative may just be the answer to our problem. This collaboration joins the average daily membership of 21 rural Ohio school districts, which serve approximately 35,000 students.

It is our belief that this collaboration will allow us to compete against Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati for State, Federal, and private grants in a way that individually we simply could not.

We, members of the collaborative effort, hope to increase the number of Advanced Placement courses offered and students who score at least a three. We hope to attain a 100% graduation rate. Yes, Wolf Creek is at 98% graduation rate and we are proud of that, however, what if you are in the 2% (one or two students for Wolf Creek) that did not graduate.

It has been quoted that Ohio has the 4th largest rural school enrollment in the country and one of every two Ohio districts is rural.

The Battelle for Kids Ohio Appalachian Collaborative is bolstered by good faith and shared responsibilities by everyone involved. This group of districts is uniquely challenged by a shrinking tax base, difficulty in recruiting teachers but welcomes the mission of accelerating college and career readiness of every student.

We believe that six major areas will be our focus: 1) expand student opportunities; 2) enhance teacher quality and instruction; 3) transform leadership; 4) understand and use assessments and data; 5) engage communities; 6) recognize and reward effective teaching and leadership.