



## **Preparing Rural Students for Success Beyond High School**

**Raleigh, North Carolina  
Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

### **Speaker Bios**

**June St. Clair Atkinson** has served as the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction since August 2005 and re-elected in 2008. Dr. Atkinson is the first woman elected to the post of State Superintendent. She oversees more than 1.4 million students in over 2,300 public schools. As State Superintendent, Dr. Atkinson heads the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, an agency which she served for nearly 30 years as a chief consultant and director in the areas of business education, career and technical education, and instructional services. A former business education teacher, Dr. Atkinson has been involved in instruction and curriculum development throughout her career. Improving instructional quality and student learning, creating environments that enable teachers' and students' success, and ensuring that education is modern and relevant are key priorities for Dr. Atkinson.

Dr. Atkinson has received numerous awards and held many professional offices. Her most recent honors are the Women of Achievement Award from the General Federation of Women's Club, the Distinguished Alumna Award from the North Carolina State University College of Education, the Inclusive Leadership Award from the North Carolina Association of Educators, the Friends of Education Award from the North Carolina Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Education Educator Hall of Fame Award from East Carolina University. She is the past president of the National Business Education Association, the Southern Regional Education Board's High Schools that Work, and the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education. In addition to her many honors, she has been published in numerous magazines and professional organization yearbooks as well as authoring two books related to technology and making presentations to business and other educational groups in 43 states and throughout North Carolina.

Dr. Atkinson grew up in rural Bedford County, Va., where she attended public schools and graduated from Staunton River High School, Moneta, Va., in 1966. She received a B.S. in Business Education from Radford University in 1969, an M.S. in Vocational and Technical Education from Virginia Tech in 1974, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy from North Carolina State University in 1996. After graduating from Radford, Dr. Atkinson taught high school in Roanoke, Va., and Charlotte, N.C. In Charlotte, Dr. Atkinson's teaching assignments required that she work with business people to find meaningful employment for her students. Seeing that her students were prepared for both further education and work became her passion.

**Vivian Martin Covington** is the Director of Teacher Education in the College of Education at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. She has been at ECU for 12 years, seven in her current role. She received a B.S. in Biology, and Master's and Sixth Year degrees in Science Education, and an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership all from East Carolina University. In her role as Director of Teacher Education, she oversees Licensure, Clinical Experiences, the Latham Clinical Schools Network, Wachovia Partnership East, Professional Development and Student Outreach, and the ECU Teaching Fellows and Maynard Scholars programs. Dr. Covington is a former Pitt County Teacher of the Year and Northeast NC Regional Teacher of the Year finalist who taught public high school physical science and chemistry for 12 years.

**Billy Ray Hall** is the founding president of the 23-year-old North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center. The Rural Center is recognized nationally as a leader in innovative rural economic development programs and policies. He serves on numerous economic development boards and is a graduate of North Carolina State University where he received his bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees. Prior to the Rural Center, Dr. Hall served four governors of North Carolina in ascending levels of policy positions, ranging from Policy Director to Deputy Secretary for the Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, as well as Chief Economist for the Office of State Planning. Governor Jim Hunt assigned him as Director of the Redevelopment and Disaster Recovery effort for North Carolina after Hurricanes Fran and Floyd.

**William (Bill) Harrison** was appointed to the State Board of Education by Governor Beverly Perdue in March 2009. A native of Pennsylvania, Dr. Harrison has served North Carolina public schools throughout his career. In addition to more than 11 years as Superintendent in Cumberland County, he also has served as Superintendent in Orange County and in Hoke County. He has also served as an Assistant Superintendent in Brunswick County Schools and as a principal and teacher. Dr. Harrison is an adjunct assistant professor at North Carolina State University. His experience includes serving on numerous state commissions, most recently as Co-Chair of the Education Lottery Oversight Committee and as Vice-Chair of the Military Child Education Coalition. Dr. Harrison holds a bachelor's degree in Intermediate Education from Methodist College - Fayetteville, a master's degree in Educational Administration and an Education Specialist degree in Education Administration from East Carolina University, and an Educational doctorate in Education Administration from Vanderbilt University.

**Stephen Laws** is a native of Gaston County. Following graduation from Wake Forest University, he returned to Gaston County where he taught, and later became principal at three different schools. He earned his Doctorate of Education from Vanderbilt University in 1997. In 1998 he became superintendent of Elkin City Schools. In March, 2003, he came to Wilkes County as superintendent of schools. Dr. Laws is married to Debbie (for 25 years). They have a daughter, Ellen, a rising sophomore at Wilkes Central High School.

**Brandon Patterson** was named assistant director of the Department of Public Instruction's Educator Recruitment and Development Division in December. He previously served DPI as a consultant in the Support Services Section of our Program Monitoring and Support Division where he monitored and provided technical assistance to 21st Century Community Learning Center program directors across the state, co-produced reports for the General Assembly and State Board of Education and served as point person for DPI's Alternative Learning Programs and school safety issues such as gang involvement and bullying. In addition, Brandon brings experience as an English teacher and administrator at the elementary, middle and high school levels. His credentials include a Master's degree in school administration from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Primary responsibilities of his new role include supervising consultants who provide professional development and instructional coaching across the state, support of National Board Certification for NC teachers, Title II monitoring, and Beginning Teacher support. He also coordinates the annual NC Principal of the Year and Teacher of the Year competitions and serves as point person for selected scholarships.

**Bryan Setser** is the Executive Director of the North Carolina Virtual Public School. Since his hire in December of 2007 by the State Board of North Carolina, Dr. Setser's innovative practices and transformative leadership style have tripled online enrollment to over 36,000 students, standards and test scores have risen dramatically in all subject areas, and Dr. Setser continues to provide a vision that is well on its way to establishing the North Carolina Virtual Public School and Learn and Earn Online as national models for e-learning as the North Carolina Virtual Public School is ranked 8th in the nation. Dr. Setser serves on the North Carolina Distance Learning Association's Board, is a member of the Leadership for Innovation Committee of the North Carolina State Board of Education. Moreover, he sits on the E-learning Commission for North Carolina, and is a member of the National Advisory Boards for Wimba and NBC Learn. Dr. Setser also serves as a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools evaluator and works as a Baldrige National Examiner of world class organizations for the United States Department of Commerce.

A sought after state and national speaker, Dr. Setser regularly appears at state and national conferences, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the American Educational Research Association, the National Virtual School Symposium, Apple's Executive Academies, the Southern Regional Education Board, the State Virtual Leaders Alliance, and the Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference to name a few. Dr. Setser also blogs extensively and his work has been published in print on several occasions throughout his career.

**Marshall Stewart** is a native of rural, eastern North Carolina. As the son of a minister, he had the opportunity to live in Bladen, Pitt, Nash and Sampson counties as a young person. He graduated from Midway High School located near Spivey's Corner and attended East Carolina University for two years before completing his undergraduate (BS '86) and graduate degrees (MS '93; Ed.D. '03) from NC State University. Marshall began his career as an agriculture teacher in 1986 in Sampson County, North Carolina. In 1988, he joined the National FFA Organization staff where, over a period of six years, he served as the manager of leadership and personal development workshops, director of membership marketing, recruitment and retention, and eventually moved into an executive position as the director of FFA's teacher services division. In 1994, he was named executive director of the National Association of Agricultural Education and led their initiatives in membership development, legislative affairs and teacher professional development. In 1996, Marshall joined the NC State University faculty to serve in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education as State Agricultural Education Coordinator. In 2004, Marshall ran on the Democratic ticket for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He won a three-way primary with 36% of the vote, but was defeated a month later in a run-off election. In October 2004, he returned to NC State University in his former position where he provided oversight for 380 agriculture teachers and 43,000 students involved in North Carolina's public school agricultural education program. On July 1, 2005, Marshall began his tenure as Head and State Program Leader for the Department of 4-H Youth Development. On July 1, 2006, his role further expanded to include program leadership for the state's 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences programs and began service as Associate Director of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. In this role, he oversees the state 4-H program, which reaches 239,000 youth per year through a network of

over 140 field faculty and staff and 25,000 volunteers and the state FCS program, which provides nutrition, human development and family resource management through a statewide network of agents and volunteers in all 100 North Carolina counties.

Marshall currently serves as an ex-officio member of the NC 4-H Agents and NC FCS Agents Association. Marshall has served as Vice President of the Association for Career and Technical Education Board of Directors (1997-2000) and president of the National Council for Agricultural Education Board of Directors (1997-2003). He has also served concurrent terms on the National FFA Organization Board of Directors and National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees (2000-2003). In total, Marshall has served on five national non-profit boards and two state non-profit boards. He brings with him over 20 years of non-profit board service experience in the areas of education, agriculture, and youth development. Additionally, Marshall has co-authored two leadership textbooks, a leadership handbook and an experiential learning curriculum that are utilized in every state in the nation. He is widely recognized for his knowledge and expertise in leadership development, legislative affairs, educational and agricultural trends, youth development and rural issues.

In addition to his professional responsibilities, he enjoys teaching Sunday School and serving as deacon and moderator at New Hope Baptist Church, fishing, watching college basketball, eating "Eastern North Carolina" barbeque, time with family and friends, and serving as an author, workshop presenter and speaker. Marshall lives in rural Wake County with his wife Jan and 16-year-old son John. Marshall's professional mission in life is to make a positive impact on the state of North Carolina by serving its citizens in ways that will provide greater opportunity and hope for future generations. Personally, his passion is to be a great husband and dad and be remembered for living a life of service that is best stated in Luke 14, "To those that much is given, much is required."

**Douglas Yongue** was appointed to the North Carolina House of Representatives in February, 1994. He has been elected to eight terms in office. Representative Yongue represents Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland Counties. As a Co-Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, he is known to be a strong advocate for funding public schools, community colleges, and universities. Representative Yongue has been the voice for low-wealth funding, teacher licensure reciprocity, disadvantaged student supplemental funding, strong vocational education, increased community college equipment funding, and policies to curb childhood obesity. He serves as Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee during the interim and was recently elected by peers as Vice Chair of the Legislative Advisory Council of the Southern Regional Education Board. Before serving in the legislature, Representative Yongue was a career educator – a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent of schools in rural North Carolina. He lives in Laurinburg, NC with his wife, Millie.