



Appearing in this photo from left to right are, U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers, Dr. Margo Delli Caprini, Dean of the College of Education, Morehead State University, Rodney Hitch, Economic Development Manager, East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Randal Barrette, Teacher in Residence, Morehead State University, Lana Swartz of Menifee County High School, Brad Thomas, Economic Development Associate Manager, East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Governor Steve Beshear, and Tim Couch, Kentucky Representative for District 90 (Missing from this photo is Thomas Woolford of Menifee County Middle School).

MANCHESTER, Ky. (July 20, 2015) – Gov. Steve Beshear and U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, co-chairs of SOAR – Shaping Our Appalachian Region, joined educators from 22 eastern Kentucky school districts at the Clay County High School to help kick-off an innovative 3 phase education and workforce development initiative aimed at building a STEM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workforce by creating new opportunities for teachers through National Board Certification. Morehead State University has partnered with SOAR, 16 Kentucky Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, University of

Pikeville, Department for Local Government and the Kentucky Valley Education Cooperative (KVEC).

Phase one provides regional implementation for 64 teachers across 22 of the highest unemployment, highest poverty SOAR counties. Personalized support is designed to help insure all teachers obtain a Teacher Leader Master's Degree and their National Board Teaching Certification (NBTC). The selected teachers started the three-year program earlier this month.

"National Board Certification of teachers is the critical first link in the chain of creating an environment where eastern Kentucky students can get a high-quality STEM-based education that leads to higher-wage jobs," said Anthony "Tony" Campbell, president and CEO of East Kentucky Power Cooperative.

Along with obtaining the certification, teachers will receive a master's degree with an emphasis on leadership at regional teaching centers close to their homes, plus a rank change and salary increase, all provided at no cost to them or their school districts.

"This is where the rubber meets the road for the mission of SOAR – preparing our teachers and students for new opportunities through advanced, high-tech education in the classroom," said Congressman Rogers. "It's truly the first step to developing a skilled workforce pipeline that can improve our region's portfolio for entrepreneurs and job creators."

Nationwide, STEM jobs are growing 1.7 times faster than non-STEM jobs, according to the Department of Commerce. By 2018, the U.S. will have more than 1.2 million unfilled STEM jobs, STEM is where jobs are today and job growth will be in the future. Working with the top STEM-based curriculum provider Project Lead The Way (PLTW), Morehead State University and the Kentucky Educational Development Corp. are working to launch the second phase, STEM-Transforming Eastern Kentucky (STEM-TEK) initiative in a 22-county region.

Our vision is to create a skilled, knowledgeable workforce that can fill high-wage, high-demand jobs, drawing employers to the region.

Combined with ongoing efforts to establish high-speed broadband Internet access, this initiative knocks down barriers and creates the building blocks for success in Eastern Kentucky. It holds a promise of training and keeping the best and brightest in this region," said Anthony "Tony" Campbell, president and CEO of East Kentucky Power Cooperative.

Over a three-year period, the STEM-TEK partners plan to implement PLTW's K-12 STEM curriculum in 177 schools over 29 districts. Engaging 82,000 students in high-quality project-based STEM learning, which prepares them for postsecondary education and ultimately for careers in STEM.

Additionally, 3,000 teachers will receive professional STEM training development and support. All PLTW teachers must pass a rigorous professional development program. Upon certification, teachers will be given ongoing support through PLTW and network of peers, and the ongoing training through PLTW's Learning Management System. Despite the STEM skills shortages, few states have taken deliberate steps to truly build a STEM talent pipeline. Employers have taken notice and this presents a tremendous opportunity for Eastern Kentucky.

"To accelerate our economic momentum and to make it sustainable long term, especially in eastern Kentucky, we realize we must build a workforce that can compete in the global economy," Gov. Beshear said. "This STEM-based initiative will strengthen one of our greatest assets, our teachers, who will empower our students and better prepare them for a complex world. I want to thank all our partners with this innovative program for working together to make Kentucky's education system a national model."

Gov. Beshear invested \$100,000 in funding for the initial project planning phase through ARC. He and Congressman Rogers are supporting \$370,000 of ARC funding for each of the masters and National Board Certification's three year timeline.

The second phase brings Project Lead The Way STEM curriculum to schools in the SOAR region. Project Lead The Way is endorsed nationwide as the premier approach to STEM education and

dramatically changes the way STEM education is provided in our schools. Paired with these National Board Certified Teachers, this curriculum provides opportunities for the new age of manufacturing, biomedical and technology careers that will revitalize Kentucky's Appalachian Region.

In the future third phase, Morehead State University will provide a doctoral program with an emphasis on economic development and workforce development. Provided to school district superintendents and education leaders helping to bridge a current gap in many areas of Kentucky with education, workforce and economic development truly working together.

"These initiatives will be a great addition to the SOAR legacy in improving education and developing a K-16 future workforce across the region," said Jared Arnett, executive director of SOAR. "We are very proud of the teachers, school districts involved and all our supporting partners. Without question, this will help pave the road to a brighter future in Eastern Kentucky."

For more information about SOAR, <http://dataispower.org/soar-stem/>