

## Early Learning Initiative in West Virginia

- [00:05] My name is Clayton Burch and I'm the Associate Superintendent of Schools for the West Virginia Department of Education. I work directly under the State Superintendent, Dr. Steven Paine. The role of the early childhood/early learning initiative is really where we got most of our work done with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center.
- [00:24] It started off as a small project that they were going to help us facilitate some early meetings but I don't think anybody anticipated the project growing into what it became, and what originally started out as just facilitation for some meetings we wanted to have to expand our early childhood network and some ideas around literacy.
- [00:40] We had a governor that really wanted to push the envelope and expand that universal pre-K system and really look at the impact it was making on the state, and in particular third-grade literacy. In order to do that, we had to devise a plan that brought all the players together just like we had for early childhood.
- [00:57] With 55 districts doing 55 different things, state partners, national partners, we really had to think about how do we get everybody pointed in the right direction and I think that's where the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center came in. They started off facilitating meetings for us but we soon found that we needed a little more than facilitation.
- [01:17] We needed to really think about a true long-term logic model and how do we bring all the players together, how do we organize the work, and do it in a way that was efficient for everybody, but actually moved the needle and got us moving in a direction of not meeting for the sake of meeting.
- [01:34] We were very, very fortunate to rely on a young lady by the name of Sarah Sayko. Sarah came from the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center, really sat down as a collaborative partner. She brought resources. She helped us connect. And you know, there's an art to facilitation, but I think what ARCC was able to do for us was take it beyond facilitation and true collaboration and coordination.
- [02:00] Because of that, we ended up with a plan—a comprehensive plan that is now recognized nationally. It is a plan that has garnered a lot of accolades from across the nation. In fact, the National Campaign for Grade-Level Literacy just recognized us. Two weeks ago they came and recognized us with being the only state in the nation able to pull off such a plan. You know, the reason we were so successful is if you go back to the beginning, and the way ARCC helped us organize and really put the work together so that it was meaningful for all stakeholders and I think we can rely on the ARCC for a lot of the success.