The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast is located at Florida State University in partnership with SEDL, Instructional Research Group, and RMC Research Corporation. This year, the REL Southeast carried out its work through four research alliances that focus on priority issues in education for the region it serves, which comprises the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

SEDL staff are working with the REL Southeast’s Determining Charter School Effectiveness and Improving Charter School Performance alliance to help its members identify current rigorous research and apply it to their work. A monthly one-page Research Review is sent to all alliance members; it highlights high-quality research about charter schools and charter school leadership and includes questions designed to help educators apply the research to their work. The monthly newsletter also includes a feature, “Bridging Research to Practice,” that poses the questions again and invites readers to discuss the research and the questions using the alliance’s online discussion board. These discussions are particularly important because the research base for charter schools is limited, and effectiveness findings are mixed.

In July, the charter school alliance conducted a workshop on charter school leadership. This program was well attended by charter school principals, state department of education staff, and university researchers and educators. A panel discussion with charter school researchers and professors who are educating future charter school leaders focused on the differences between effective charter school leadership and traditional education leadership. In addition, presentations provided research specific to charter school leaders and served as examples of rigorous charter school research.

In November, the alliance conducted a breakout session at a state charter school association conference. The session, which centered around the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences practice guide on using student data to support instructional decision making, was conducted specifically for charter school teachers and principals and provided strategies for translating data into effective practice at their schools.

This past year, the REL Southeast also prepared for ongoing work in helping educators become more sophisticated users of research. In addition to planning an upcoming Beat the Odds study that will include every charter school in South Carolina, the REL Southeast developed a three-part video workshop series that explains what a State Longitudinal Data System is and describes how the data can be used in making policy decisions.

For more information, please visit www.sedl.org. You may also contact Regional Educational Laboratory project director Robin Jarvis at robin.jarvis@sedl.org or at 225-257-4986.

“The topic of charter schools is so new. Our goal is to help educators become better consumers of research, particularly because there isn’t a plethora of rigorous research out there.”

–DARLENE BROWN, PROJECT DIRECTOR WITH SEDL’S REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (REL) PROGRAM