

Alignment in SEDL's Working Systemically Model

RESEARCH REPORT

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL

DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY

211 E. 7th Street, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78701-3253
800-476-6861
<http://www.sedl.org>

Alignment in SEDL's Working Systemically Model

**Stephanie Bond Huie, Joan L. Buttram, Frances P. Deviney,
Kathleen M. Murphy, and Miguel A. Ramos**

**Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 E. 7th Street
Austin, TX 78701**

November 2004

©Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2004. This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number ED-1-CO-0009. The content herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education, any other agency of the U.S. Government, or any other source.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December, 2000, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) a 5-year research and development (R&D) contract to develop and refine a systemic model to improve student achievement in reading or mathematics in low-performing districts and schools (SEDL, 2000). The model is based on the premise that student achievement will improve as districts and schools build their capacity to work systemically. This report describes 2003-2004 school year activities taken to implement the model in a sample of sites in the southwest region; reports on the districts' and schools' progress to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards (one critical aspect of working systemically); and presents preliminary student achievement data for the sites.

During the past year, SEDL worked with 16 districts and 30 schools. Three research questions organized the research team's work over this past year:

- To what extent are low-performing districts and schools building their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards?
- What strategies are SEDL field staff using to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards?
- How has student achievement data changed in SEDL's intensive sites over time?

The SEDL research team collected data on the intensive site work undertaken by SEDL field staff and on the progress of the sites to build capacity to work systemically and improve student achievement. To gather data, the research team

- interviewed a sample of educators at each site in the fall and spring,
- administered a paper and pencil survey at each site,
- examined site contact records maintained by SEDL field staff about their

interactions with the districts and schools, and

- analyzed state-mandated achievement test results.

Interview and survey responses both indicated that alignment capacity and leadership capacity to oversee this work has improved over time. For example, interview respondents gave high ratings to the alignment of their district's curriculum with state standards, the use of assessment to guide instruction, and the alignment of curriculum at the school level and within grades. They also noted that educators' understanding of alignment has improved in the past year. In spite of these positive findings, the spring 2004 interview responses to open-ended questions suggested that educators do not have a deep understanding of alignment, particularly concerning the relationships between curriculum and instruction and instruction and assessment. Most of the educators demonstrated only a basic understanding of horizontal and vertical alignment, many confused instruction with curriculum, and few described the dynamic interrelationship between instruction and assessment. These seemingly inconsistent findings underscore the challenges faced within these districts to build and support a deeper understanding of teaching and learning.

Research staff analyzed site contact records that reported on meetings, professional development sessions, and workshops that SEDL staff conducted with educators between August 1, 2003 and May 31, 2004. This reading of the site contact records suggests two general observations. First, field staff strategies fell into two subsets: 1) providing professional development that ranged from formal presentations to one-on-one coaching and 2) organizing teams and supporting team leaders as they brought their districts' curriculum, instruction, and assessment into alignment with state standards. The second observation was that the SEDL site coordinator role was distinct and somewhat broader than that of the site

specialist, even though they worked as partners and were often present together at the same meetings. Site coordinators oversaw all activity in the districts assigned to them, and so were usually involved in all of the site activity, building leadership capacity and teaching educators about alignment. Site specialists were more directly engaged with teachers and promoted understandings of alignment through the modeling and hands-on professional development they offered at the school and classroom level.

State-mandated test results were gathered from publicly available Web sites and other records to determine if student achievement is improving. SEDL examined the percentages of students categorized as low performing on state-mandated standards-based tests in the focus areas of either reading or mathematics. The assumption was that the percentages of students scoring in the lowest-performing band category should decrease as overall student achievement scores rise. In 13 of 16 schools, student results in one or more grade levels have shown decreases in the percentage of students categorized in the lowest performance categories. Out of 21 sets of test results, 15 sets of results decreased greater than five percentage points in the percentage of students categorized at the lowest performance levels on the state exam. These analyses and findings provide an initial indicator that student achievement is improving in these districts. However, it is important to note that these schools' gains in scores were not compared to either a random or matched sample and therefore do not prove that SEDL's model contributed to the improvement in student achievement. Additional analyses are necessary to investigate the model's influence on test scores.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary iii

List of Tables vii

List of Figures viii

Acknowledgements x

Section I: Introduction 1

Section II: Systemic Reform 3

Section III: Methods 15

Section IV: Results for Research Question 1 31

Section V: Results for Research Question 2 81

Section VI: Results for Research Question 3 105

Section VII: Discussion 139

References 148

Appendices

 Appendix A: Profiles of Sites 157

 Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments 163

 Appendix C: Narrative Descriptions of Field Staff Strategies 177

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1. | Pseudonyms for SEDL’s Intensive Sites | 16 |
| 2. | Participants Who Completed the Working Systemically Survey | 20 |
| 3. | Sample of Educators Interviewed | 22 |
| 4. | Roundtable Topics and Rationale | 24 |
| 5. | Percentage of Educators that Named Each Element of Alignment..... | 32 |
| 6. | Educators’ Perceptions of the Current Status of Alignment..... | 52 |
| 7. | Educators’ Perceptions of Change in Alignment Since This Time Last Year..... | 54 |
| 8. | Analyses of 2-year (2003-2004) and 3-year (2002-2004) Indicators of Alignment Status | 57 |
| 9. | Analyses of 2-year (2003-2004) and 3-year (2002-2004) Indicators of Instructional Coherence Strategies | 61 |
| 10. | Percentage of Educators that Identified Leadership Role as School- and/or District-Level Role..... | 64 |
| 11. | Educators’ Perceptions of Leaders’ Current Involvement in the Alignment Process..... | 75 |
| 12. | Educators’ Perceptions of Change in Leaders’ Involvement in the Alignment Process... | 75 |
| 13. | Analyses of 2-year (2003-2004) and 3-year (2002-2004) Indicators of Leadership Capacity to Support Alignment..... | 78 |
| 14. | Cross-site Strategies to Promote Leadership Capacity (L) and Coherent Understandings of Alignment (A): Number of Sites Using Strategies | 102 |
| 15. | Overview of Student Data..... | 107 |
| 16. | SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Arkansas | 109 |
| 17. | SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Louisiana..... | 116 |
| 18. | SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: New Mexico..... | 123 |
| 19. | SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Oklahoma..... | 129 |
| 20. | Numbered List of Strategies and Substrategies | 180 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1. | SEDL’s Working Systemically Model | 7 |
| 2. | Stages and Phases of Work | 11 |
| 3. | Percentages of Responses: A Comparison of District and School Educator Responses .. | 33 |
| 4. | Percentage of Responses: How Educators View Alignment of Curriculum with State Standards | 38 |
| 5. | Percentage of Responses: How Educators View Alignment of Curriculum and Instruction..... | 42 |
| 6. | Percentage of Responses: The Relationship Between Instruction and Assessment..... | 47 |
| 7. | Fourth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004..... | 111 |
| 8. | Fourth-Grade Arkansas Math Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004..... | 112 |
| 9. | Sixth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004..... | 113 |
| 10. | Sixth-Grade Arkansas Math Benchmark Test: Percent at or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004..... | 114 |
| 11. | Eighth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004..... | 115 |
| 12. | Fourth-Grade LEAP 21 English/Language Arts Test: Percent At or Below “Approaching Basic” Level, 2000-2004..... | 118 |
| 13. | Fourth-Grade LEAP 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below “Approaching Basic” Level, 2000-2004..... | 119 |
| 14. | Eighth-Grade LEAP 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below “Unsatisfactory” Level, 2000-2004..... | 120 |
| 15. | Tenth-Grade GEE 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below “Unsatisfactory” Level, 2000-2004 | 121 |
| 16. | Fourth-Grade New Mexico Standards-based Language Arts Assessment: Percent At or Below “Nearing Proficient” Level, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 | 125 |
| 17. | Eighth-Grade New Mexico Standards-based Language Arts Assessment: Percent At or | |

Below “Nearing Proficient” Level, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004126

LIST OF FIGURES (continued)

18. Ninth-Grade TerraNova Reading Exam: Median National Percentile, 1999-2003.....127

19. Ninth-Grade TerraNova Language Arts: Median National Percentile, 1999-200128

20. Fifth-Grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Reading Test: Percent At or Below “Limited Knowledge” Level, 2000-2003132

21. Eighth-Grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Reading Test: Percent At or Below “Limited Knowledge” Level, 2000-2003133

22. Third-Grade State-Mandated Reading Test: Percent Failing, 2000-2003135

23. Fourth-Grade State-Mandated Reading Test: Percent Failing, 2002-2003136

24. Fifth-Grade State-Mandated Reading Test: Percent Failing, 2000-2003137

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank H. Dickson Corbett and Archie George for their guidance and insight during the writing process. We also thank Judy Waisath for her patience and diligent work on the editing of the report. Thanks to our internal reviewers, Celeste Alexander, Janice Bradley, and Debra Hughes Jones for their advice. The authors also extend thanks to Leslie Blair for her copy-editing work. Finally, we would like to thank the project field staff and school district personnel whose dedication to children is the foundation for this work.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

In December 2000, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) a 5-year research and development (R&D) contract to develop and refine a systemic model to improve student achievement in reading or mathematics in low-performing districts and schools (SEDL, 2000). The Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin partnered with SEDL on this work, with support from American Indian Research and Development.¹

The first report (SEDL, 2002) documenting this work described the procedures used to identify and recruit sites in SEDL's five-state region. It also provided demographic and other descriptive information on the sites. The second report (SEDL, 2003) examined SEDL's early work with these districts and schools in developing and refining its Working Systemically Model, summarized the activities undertaken to implement the model in these sites through December 2002, and explored factors that influenced the development and refinement of the model. During the 2003-2004 school year, site work attended to the alignment of standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Given the site work emphasis on these components of the Working Systemically Model, this report describes activities taken to implement the model; reports on the districts' and schools' capacity to align standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and presents preliminary student outcome data for the sites.

In addition to the Introduction (Section 1), the remaining sections of this report provide a brief review of the school reform literature and SEDL's Working Systemically Model (Section 2); the methods, instruments, data collection and analysis procedures, an

¹ Throughout the remainder of this report, SEDL is used to designate the partnership of organizations that are actively involved in this work.

overview of the questions guiding the analyses, and the strengths and limitations of this approach (Section 3); the findings related to each of the research questions (Sections 4, 5, and 6); and a summary and next steps (Section 7). Appendix A contains detailed demographics on each of the sites. Appendix B contains the instrumentation SEDL used to gather the data for this report. Appendix C contains narrative descriptions of strategies SEDL field staff used during the Taking Action/Monitoring Results stage of the Working Systemically Model.

SECTION II: SYSTEMIC REFORM

For more than a decade, the systemic reform movement has dominated education policy and has become the basis for nearly all state and federal improvement efforts aimed at public education (Puma, Raphael, Olson, & Hannaway, 2000). Under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, SEDL works with state, district, and school-level educators across the five-state region to develop and refine a model for systemic reform in low-performing schools.

Origins of the Model²

Drawing upon over three decades of school reform research and theory, SEDL designed its Working Systemically Model to assist low-performing districts and schools in improving reading and mathematics. Beginning with the work of Edmonds (1979), school reform research first sought to identify the characteristics that defined effective schools (Bossert, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Stringfield, 1995). Once identified, reform models often used a rational planning process to identify the gaps between effective and low-performing schools, and then made a plan to address those gaps (Blum & Landis, 1998; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). For many reform efforts, however, improvement plans only addressed one particular gap to the exclusion of the more systemic problems that may have existed. As school reform research progressed, two different approaches gained popularity: the first focused on the school's curriculum and instruction program; the second on the organization of the school itself (see Cicchinelli, 1999; McDonnell, 1989; and Sashkin & Egermeier, 1993 for reviews).

² While this report attempts to ground SEDL's Working Systemically Model in the research and theory of the school reform movement, it is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the reform literature. We invite interested readers to utilize the citations provided in this brief review for further information on the history of school reform.

Focus on Curriculum

Numerous school reform efforts have concentrated on implementing curriculum and instruction innovations (Datnow, Borman, & Stringfield, 2000; Sizer, 1996; Slavin, Madden, Dolan, Wasik, Ross, Smith, & Dianda, 1996). A significant contribution of these reforms is the value placed on content knowledge, pedagogy, and alignment—all variables that directly impact student achievement. Specifically, Datnow and colleagues (2000) noted that the alignment of curriculum with instruction leads to greater collaboration between teachers and decreased repetition between grades.

A major limitation of this approach is whether the educational system has the capacity to implement the selected curriculum and instruction program, and whether it has the support necessary to sustain changes over time. Fullan (2001) notes that schools receive “great pressure and incentives to become innovative, and this resulted in many schools adopting reform for which they did not have the capacity (individually or organizationally) to put into practice” (p. 6). House (1974) described additional difficulties with such reform, indicating that when change is implemented top-down (e.g., the principal makes a unilateral decision to implement a particular curriculum without the input and acceptance of the teachers), the reform is often vehemently resisted and ultimately defeated. However, curriculum reform driven from the bottom-up may not be able to implement change, much less sustain it, without the necessary supports from the upper levels of the system (Ford Foundation, 1972; Sashkin & Egermeier, 1993).

Focus on the Organization

Another reform approach addresses problems at the organization level. Typically, organizational reform efforts have drawn from successful business models, such as school-

based management, which assumes that the closer the decision makers are to students, the better the decision will be (see McDonnell, 1989, for a review).

Although organizational reform allows for the unique culture of each school to interpret reform as it best fits its needs, inequities between schools in resources, educator expertise, or effective instructional methods may still occur if the capacity levels of the schools differ (McDonnell, 1989). In addition, organizational reform efforts often include issues that are, at best, tangentially related to student achievement.

As with curriculum reforms, the organizational approach often does not address how the district and state levels impact decisions made at the school. Fullan (2001) describes the problem of not addressing all levels of the educational system as follows:

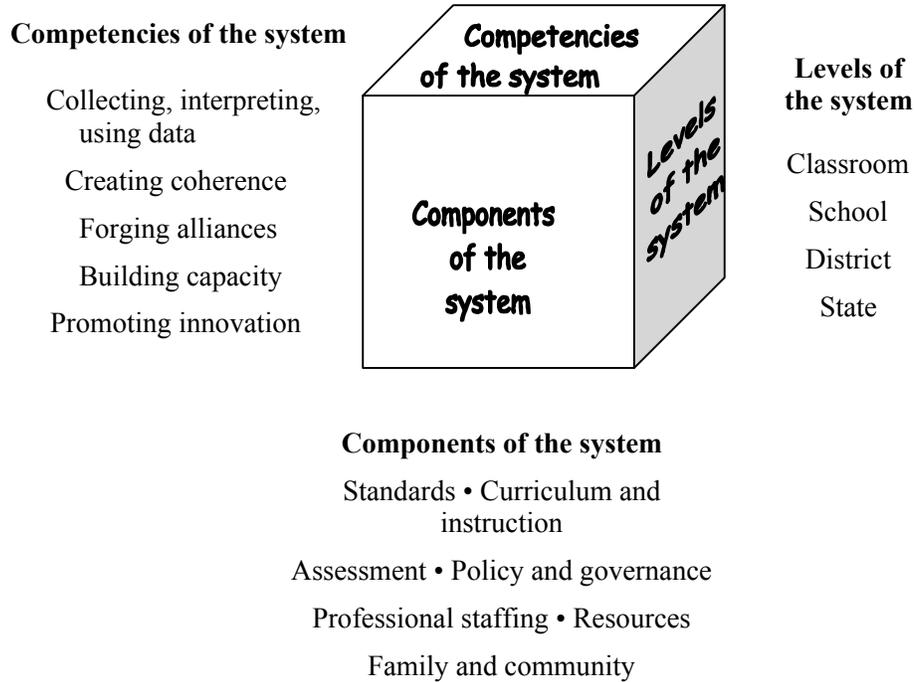
The main reason that change fails to occur in the first place on any scale, and does not get sustained when it does, is that the infrastructure is weak, unhelpful, or working at cross purposes. By the infrastructure I mean the next layers above whatever unit we are focusing on. In terms of successive levels, for example, . . . a school can initiate and implement successful change, but cannot sustain it if it is operating in a less than helpful district; a district cannot keep going if it works in a state which is not helping to sustain reform (p. 18).

Focus on the System: SEDL's Working Systemically Model

The impact of many school reform models is limited because they do not utilize the factors affecting change in interaction with one another. Solutions attempting to improve the function of any one academic component (e.g., curriculum) or organizational level (e.g., principal's leadership capacity) in isolation will have minimal impact (Fullan, 2001). Unlike piecemeal approaches to reform that are unlikely to sustain positive change, systemic approaches improve how the academic components and organizational levels work together to initiate and sustain change over time (Smith & O'Day, 1991).

SEDL designed its Working Systemically Model to build upon the strengths of the previous models, while addressing their weaknesses. SEDL's Working Systemically Model provides a three-dimensional framework that represents the factors that educators must address as part of their work (see Figure 1). First, working systemically involves all levels of the educational hierarchy (i.e., state, district, school and classroom). Second, all components that directly impact education must be considered in making improvements (i.e., standards, curriculum and instruction, assessment, policy and governance, professional staffing, resources, and family and community). Third, five competencies must be mastered by the educators involved so that they have the needed skills to achieve and sustain school improvement (i.e., collecting, interpreting, and using data; creating coherence; forging alliances; building capacity; and promoting innovation). The educational system must address each dimension to increase its capacity to achieve, support, and sustain broad scale improvement (see SEDL, 2000, for an in-depth discussion of the Working Systemically Model).

Figure 1
SEDL's Working Systemically Model



The complexity involved in systemic change requires knowledge and skills that typically are not part of the professional training for educators within low-performing schools and districts (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2001). Substantive reform across an educational system often requires external facilitators to help create a climate of change and establish the necessary structures to support and maintain that change over time (Fullan, 2001). To that end, SEDL tends to both the organizational and pedagogical needs of each intensive site by providing a pair of experts to help educators implement the Working Systemically Model. The site coordinator, often a former administrator with a history of school reform success, oversees and coordinates the process of change at each site. Site coordinators help develop district and school leadership capacity to create an environment supportive of collaborative decision-making and shared responsibility. The site specialist, a

proven expert in either reading or math, helps educators identify areas of weakness in teaching and learning and provides content specific strategies to improve classroom instruction and student achievement. Although charged to work on different aspects of the model, the site coordinator and specialist work in harmony to establish a foundation for sustainable school reform

SEDL field staff established leadership teams at each site to initiate implementation of SEDL's model. These teams will also be the driving force to sustain the work upon SEDL's departure in 2005. In SEDL's original proposal, the expectation was that site work would begin at the district and school-levels simultaneously with a cross-section of representatives from the district and school, including the superintendent, district office staff, principals, teachers, parents, and community representatives. These individuals would comprise the district or school leadership team and proceed through the model's stages (see description below). However, in an effort to acknowledge the unique sociopolitical culture at each site, SEDL initially allowed districts and schools to include or exclude representatives from one or more of these groups on their leadership teams. Eventually, all groups should be represented as the teams progress in their work and realize the importance of diverse membership to develop and secure buy-in for proposed improvements.

SEDL's Working Systemically Model further distinguishes itself by specifically addressing student achievement. Past school improvement efforts have often spent valuable time on concerns, such as school environment, discipline, and parent involvement, that do not directly improve student achievement (American Federation of Teachers, 1999). As described by Mujis, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ (2004), disadvantaged schools benefit from focusing on a goal of improving student achievement. With the push for improvement

in student achievement central to most state and federal accountability plans (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), it is important to direct districts' and schools' attention squarely on student achievement (Elmore, Abelman, & Furman, 1996; Odden, 1998).

Focus on the Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with State Standards

From a systems perspective, alignment is a key concept because it is a prerequisite for organizational development. Alignment fosters a commonality of purpose that allows organizations to pursue goals more efficiently and cohesively (Senge, 1990), and is a necessary condition for effective and valid assessment. Gronlund (1996) and Airasian (2004) point to the importance of having instruction and assessment congruent with desired educational outcomes. Jennings (1997) suggests that students should be told what they need to know, instructed in that material, and then assessed accordingly with the ultimate goal of mastery. In addition, there is evidence that aligning curriculum, instruction, and standards is a common characteristic of high-performing, high-poverty schools (Fullan, 2001).

Indeed, the language and intent of systemic reform lends itself to the goals of standards-based accountability systems, especially around the alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. According to Puma and colleagues (2000), "in the theory of systemic reform the interactions that are of primary interest are those that create alignment . . . between the overriding goals of the system (also expressed as content and performance standards) and the other parts of the K-12 educational system" (p. I-18).

In the current climate of standards-based accountability, most state-level departments of education are concentrating on improving student achievement by providing specific guidelines for what students are expected to learn. Thus, the focus on standards provides a concrete educational goal for systemic reform efforts: to align the curriculum, instruction,

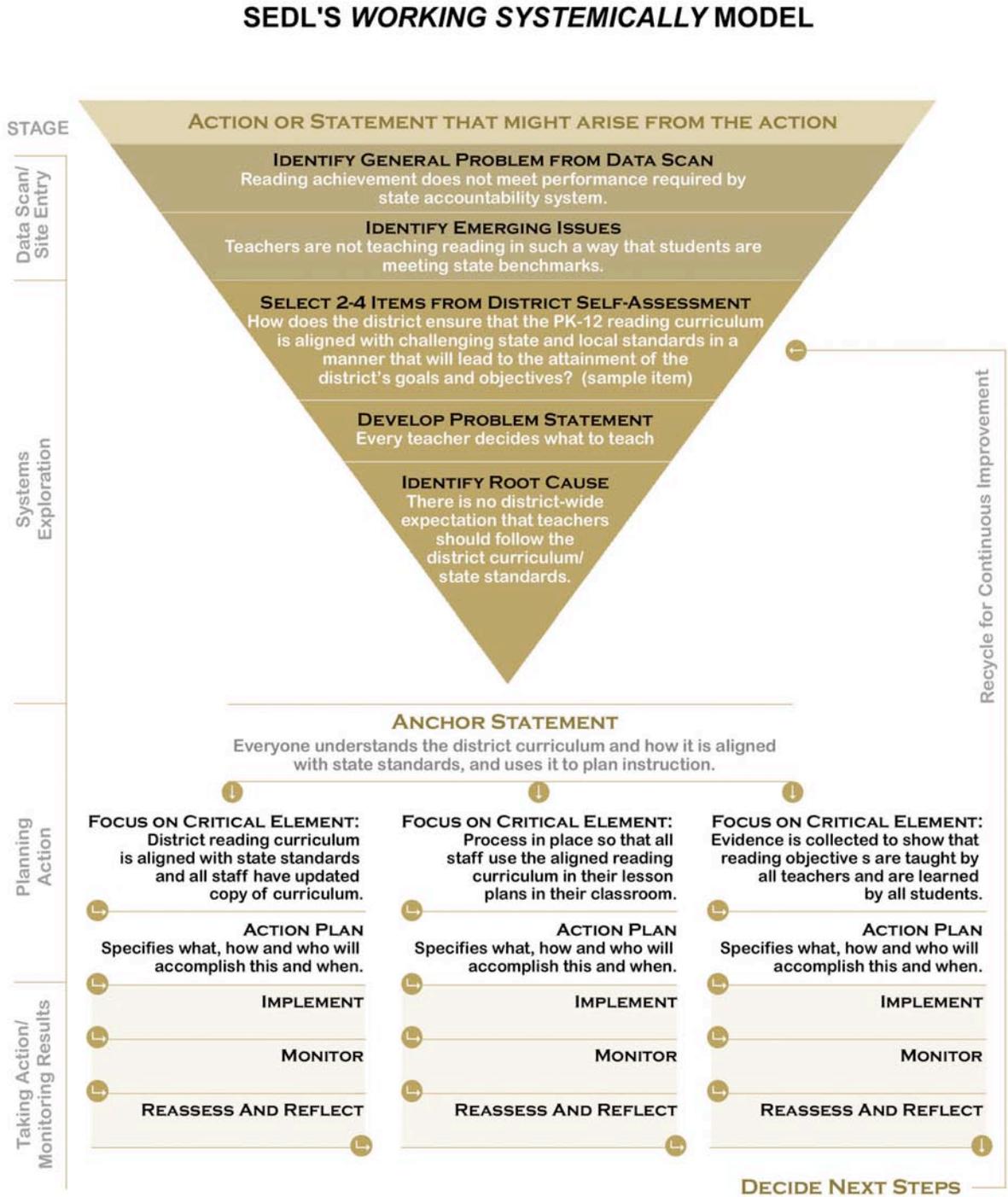
and assessments with the state's mandated standards. For this goal to succeed, the efforts of district-, school-, and classroom-level educators must be directed toward this common aim.

During the fourth year, SEDL field staff concluded that low-performing districts and schools must target specific components of the Working Systemically model—standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment—if they are to make significant improvements in student achievement in reading and mathematics. This conclusion stemmed from research and evaluation findings suggesting that districts that completed the Systems Exploration stage with other foci (e.g., improve communication with families and communities) were unlikely to develop plans that would improve student achievement (SEDL, 2003). As a result, alignment was a primary focus of the field staff's work at all of the intensive sites during the 2003-2004 school year. Therefore, this report will discuss educators' capacity to align and field staff strategies to help them achieve alignment.

Working Systemically Model in Action

Figure 2 provides an example of a hypothetical district that used SEDL's model to improve student achievement in reading. The three dimensions of the model's framework are addressed over the course of five stages. The first two stages of the model help narrow and deepen the district leadership team's focus of work. As part of the Data Scan/Site Entry stage, under the direction of SEDL field staff, the district leadership team learned that reading achievement did not meet the expectations set forth in the state's accountability system (see "Identify general problem from Data Scan") and that teachers may not be teaching reading in such a way that students were able to meet state benchmarks (see

Figure 2
Stages and Phases of Work



“Identify emerging issues”).

As the district leadership team moved into the Systems Exploration stage, they selected two to four items using a District Self-Assessment tool to help team members explore the emerging problem in more depth, often by collecting additional data on existing practices and their results. The team examined instruction and looked at how teachers decided what to teach (see “Develop problem statement”). After fully exploring existing practices and their results, the district leadership team concluded that the district failed to meet state benchmarks in reading because teachers were not expected to follow the state standards and district reading curriculum (see “Identify root cause”). To solve this problem, the district leadership team agreed that everyone has to understand the district curriculum and how it is aligned to the state standards, and use this curriculum to plan instruction (see “Anchor statement”).

As the district leadership team moved into the Planning Action stage, members focused on three critical elements that were necessary for the anchor statement to be realized: 1) aligning the district reading curriculum with state standards and the distribution of updated copies of the curriculum to all staff, 2) monitoring to ensure that all staff use the aligned reading curriculum to create their lesson plans and teach them in their classrooms, and 3) collecting evidence to determine whether teachers teach and students learn the reading objectives. The district leadership team developed plans to address each critical element at the district level.

In the Taking Action and Monitoring Results stage, the district leadership team implemented its plan, regularly checked to see that it was being conducted as planned, and made adjustments as necessary. After 1 year, the team decided that the existing plan was no

longer appropriate as teachers were diligently following the district curriculum in their classrooms. However, reading scores were still not acceptable for all students. As the project continues, however, the work will enter into the next stage.

To continue our hypothetical example, the team repeated the process (i.e., Recycling for Continuous Improvement stage), starting at the Systems Exploration stage to identify other root causes that must be addressed for the district's reading achievement to meet state expectations. For example, the team found that teachers had insufficient intervention strategies available to them when students did not master reading skills within an acceptable period of time. Similar activities occurred at each school. The work was then sustainable, and SEDL staff withdrew.

The hypothetical example presented above outlines the essential stages of the model and activities that may occur within each stage. The details of the actions within each stage, however, differ in the real world depending upon the unique needs of each site.

Developing and Refining the Model

SEDL is developing and refining its Working Systemically Model for school reform. It is conducting this work in 16 districts across five states (i.e., Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), with one or two schools in each district (SEDL, 2002). SEDL assigns a site coordinator along with a reading or mathematics specialist from its staff to each site. These field staff are responsible for working with district- and school-level staff in implementing the Working Systemically Model in each site using the framework and a set of protocols to structure and direct the work. SEDL field staff start their interactions with the leadership teams in a “guide and model” mode to direct them in moving forward through the stages. Over time, each leadership team gradually takes on more of the responsibility for

planning and directing the strategies for systemic work and improving student achievement as the SEDL field staff step further into the background. Eventually, SEDL expects districts to become proficient in implementing the model independently.

SECTION III: METHODS

SEDL received funding to conduct a research study to assess the impact of its Working Systemically Model on increasing districts' and schools' capacities to work systemically, and, in turn, to increase student achievement in reading and mathematics. Three questions were identified to direct this research:

- To what extent are low-performing districts and schools increasing their capacity to work systemically?
- What strategies are SEDL field staff using to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to work systemically?
- Does student achievement increase as districts and schools increase their capacity to work systemically?

During the 2003-2004 school year, site work focused on alignment; thus the research questions were narrowed for this report to focus on the capacity of districts and schools to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards. The questions were reframed as follows:

- To what extent are low-performing districts and schools building their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards?
- What strategies are SEDL staff using to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards?
- How has student achievement data changed in SEDL's intensive sites over time?

This section describes the sites participating in the research study, the instruments and methods used to gather data, a detailed overview of the questions guiding the analyses, and

the strengths and limitations of this approach.

Site Descriptions

During the 2003-2004 school year, SEDL worked with 16 districts and 30 schools (see Table 1). Twelve of the districts are development sites, recruited during the first two years of the contract. SEDL developed and refined its Working Systemically Model, protocols, and other resources in these sites. The remaining four sites, recruited at the end of the 2002-2003 school year, serve as test sites where field staff can more formally implement the model, protocols, and other resources. Thus the work in these latter sites provides a more formal assessment of the efficacy of the model.

The tables in Appendix A present detailed information on each of these 16 sites. Four tables outline the 12 development sites and a fifth table presents the same information for the four test sites.

Table 1
Pseudonyms for SEDL's Intensive Sites (N = 16)

| State | Development Sites | Test Sites |
|------------|--|--------------------|
| Arkansas | Delta Village Forked River | Grisham Roydale |
| Louisiana | Athens Bayou City Highway Junction River City | |
| New Mexico | Desert Hills Mesa Farmville | |
| Oklahoma | Wrightsville High Meadows Bricktown | Brooksville |
| Texas | | Pineland |

All sites were low-performing in reading and/or mathematics during the three years prior to participation in the work with SEDL (see SEDL, 2002, for more information about

selection criteria). During the 2003-2004 school year, field staff worked with two schools in 14 of the 16 districts. Only one school from the remaining two districts participated, resulting in a total of 30 schools that were involved in the project. In two thirds of the sites (11 of 16), the schools were selected so as to represent a feeder pattern; for example, SEDL worked with both an elementary school and the middle school where the elementary school's students would traditionally attend in latter grades. The work in each district centered on either reading or math, with the majority choosing to focus on reading (23 of the 30 overall).

The districts were diverse in size. The total number of schools in a given district ranged from 2 to 33, with a respective variation in average enrollment (from 247 to 19,356), and number of teachers (from 21 to 1,189). Only three of the 16 sites were in cities, (two in large cities and another in a mid-size city). The rest of the sites were divided fairly evenly among rural regions (four sites), small towns (five sites) and urban fringe areas (four sites).

All 30 schools enrolled substantial numbers of students who came from households with incomes low enough to qualify for the federal school lunch program. Only two schools did not have a student body where the majority of the population qualified for free or reduced lunch; in 20 of the 30 schools three-quarters or more of the students qualified.

The racial/ethnic composition of student populations varied across the sites. In eight of the 30 schools, white students were the majority. In four of these eight schools, the second most predominant racial/ethnic group was African-Americans. These four schools were in Arkansas and Louisiana. In two of the eight white-dominant schools, both in the same Oklahoma district, large numbers of American Indians were enrolled (around 30% in both cases). In the two remaining white-dominant schools, again both in a single Oklahoma district, while whites predominated and African-Americans comprised the second-largest

group, 15% of the student body was either American Indian or Hispanic.

Of the remaining 22 schools in which SEDL worked, 11 of the schools were majority African-American. These 11 schools were distributed throughout the Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma sites. Six other schools, all in New Mexico, enrolled virtually no African-Americans (at most .07%). Three of the six schools enrolled a majority of American Indian students; the other three were predominantly Hispanic. The five remaining schools had no racial/ethnic group as a majority, but enrolled students who identified with one of the four aforementioned groups (White, African-American, Hispanic, American Indian). Asian-Americans were not represented in high numbers in any of the project's school, with the highest rate at 4.6%. There were no Asian-American students at 11 of the 16 schools, and less than 1% at four others.

Instruments and Data Collection Methods

Working Systemically Survey

During the first 4 years of the contract, the research team developed and refined a survey to measure the capacity of districts and schools to work systemically to maximize student achievement. The original survey consisted of 79 six-point Likert items that assessed respondents' perceptions of whether the district- and school-levels of the system work together to make decisions that ensure all students can achieve high standards. The items address alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment; professional development; the alignment of resources to support district and school priorities; collaboration among stakeholders (school board members, administrators, teachers, families and community); and a shared vision that all students can and are expected to achieve high standards. Over multiple administrations, the SEDL research team has conducted factor and

other analyses to refine the item pool (e.g., eliminate items that did not have high factor loadings or were duplicates of each other). Prior to the fourth year administration, the survey instrument was reduced to 50 items. See Appendix B for a copy of the Working Systemically Survey administered in spring 2004.

In most cases, SEDL field staff administered the survey during late spring each year to the entire faculty at each intensive school site, as well as to all district personnel involved in the district leadership team or working with one of the schools involved with SEDL. Educators completed the surveys during after school faculty meetings, district leadership team meetings, or school or content team meetings. In a few cases, principals passed out surveys to staff and asked them to return them by a certain time to the office. The following table summarizes the educators who completed the survey each year. All administrations are included in the analyses for this report.

Table 2
Participants Who Completed the Working Systemically Survey³

| Participants | 2001-2002 | | 2002-2003 | | 2003-2004 | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| District Level Educators | | | | | | |
| Administrators | 4 | <1.00 | 53 | 6.16 | 36 | 3.94 |
| Other | | | 28 | 3.26 | 11 | 1.20 |
| District Level Total | 4 | <1.00 | 81 | 9.42 | 47 | 5.14 |
| | | | | | | |
| School Level Educators | | | | | | |
| Administrators | 33 | 3.76 | 45 | 5.23 | 69 | 7.55 |
| Teachers | 631 | 71.95 | 702 | 81.63 | 747 | 81.73 |
| Other | 98 | 10.03 | 21 | 2.44 | 47 | 5.14 |
| School Level Total | 762 | 86.87 | 768 | 89.30 | 863 | 94.4 |
| | | | | | | |
| Other | 111 | 12.66 | 11 | 1.28 | 4 | <1.00 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total Respondents | 877 | 100 | 860 | 100 | 914 | 100 |
| Total Districts | 16 | | 16 | | 16 | |
| Total Schools | 30 | | 29 | | 32 | |

³ On the demographics information page of the Working Systemically Survey, the respondent could indicate multiple descriptors for their role in the district. However, for the purposes of describing the samples that completed the survey, categories were made mutually exclusive. Categories were placed in a hierarchy as follows: District Administrator, School Administrator, Teacher, Support Staff, Teacher's Aide, School/ District Leadership Team, School Volunteer, Parent, Community Representative. The respondent was counted in the topmost category that she indicated. For example, if a respondent indicated that she was a school administrator, a member of the district leadership team, and a parent, she was only counted in the school administrator category. The "other" categories included teacher's aide, school/ district leadership team member, school volunteer, parent, community representative, and non-respondents as follows:

2002 School Other: Teacher's Aide = 88, Members of School Leadership Team = 10
 2002 General Other: Support Staff = 41, Parents = 7, Didn't indicate demographic category = 63

2003 District Other: District Support Staff = 23, DLT member = 5
 2003 School Other: Teacher's Aide = 19, School Volunteer = 2
 2003 General Other: Didn't indicate demographic category = 11

2004 District Other: District Support Staff = 7, DLT Member = 4
 2004 School Other: Teacher's Aide = 46, School Volunteer = 1
 2004 General Other: Didn't indicate demographic category = 4

The analyses for the current report⁴ focus on those items that reflect the current status of alignment, as well as the strategies used to support that process. As each selected set of items is significantly intercorrelated with one another, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted for each item set to assess change over time. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) and independent samples' follow-up analyses, with appropriate adjustments to alpha made for multiple comparisons, were performed to localize group differences on specific indicators over time.

Interviews

The research team conducted open-ended, one-on-one interviews with educators in spring 2004. Traditionally, the spring interviews focused on particular themes that are important to the ongoing progress of work. The spring 2004 interviews delved specifically into administrators' and teachers' understanding of the alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Respondents also rated their respective district's or school's current alignment status and whether it had changed over the past year. A copy of the spring 2004 interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

A subsample of educators from each site participated in the interviews. The sample typically included the superintendent if he/she was involved in the improvement effort, other central office staff who played key roles in the improvement effort, and school principals and two to three teachers from the schools in which SEDL was working. Table 3 below describes the sample of educators interviewed in spring 2004.

⁴ As the Working Systemically survey is an instrument in development, items were added, rephrased, or eliminated during the refinement process based on results from factor, item, and other analyses (e.g. multicollinearity). Therefore, we did not compare factor structures across different versions of the measure. All survey analyses over time for this report will be conducted on individual items that have remained theoretically consistent across administrations of the survey.

Table 3
Sample of Educators Interviewed

| Participants | Spring 2004 Interviews | |
|---|------------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent |
| District Level | | |
| Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent | 15 | 13.5 |
| Curriculum Specialists | 10 | 9.0 |
| Other District | 7 | 6.3 |
| District Level Total | 32 | 28.8 |
| | | |
| School Level | | |
| Principals and Assistant Principals | 27 | 24.3 |
| Teachers | 46 | 41.4 |
| Other School | 6 | 5.4 |
| School Level Total | 79 | 71.2 |
| | | |
| Total Respondents | 111 | |
| Total Districts | 15 | |
| Total Schools | 30 | |

Note: Percent column represents the percentage of total interview respondents (N=11) by role.

Qualitative analyses. Using laptop computers, SEDL researchers took notes during the interviews, typing educator responses into a word processing program. Next, the research staff transformed the data into text files and entered into Atlas.ti.⁵ Researchers coded narrow “slices” of interview data by hand. For longer volumes of data, they used Atlas.ti software to 1) review the educator responses to the questions, 2) mark the pieces of text into a set of common themes, and 3) review the educator responses and themes to further collapse into a final set of categories. Specific procedures used to answer each of the research questions will be discussed in each section as that question is addressed.

Quantitative analyses. The research staff entered data from the quantitative ratings segment of the spring 2004 interview into SPSS, a quantitative analysis software program.

⁵ Atlas.ti is an object-oriented database that facilitates text analysis and interpretation - particularly selecting, coding, annotating, and comparing segments of text for qualitative analyses.
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Data were checked for normality, outliers, and missing entries, then cleaned and analyzed using MANOVA and univariate analyses where appropriate.

The research team also conducted quantitative analyses on leadership categories and the coherence of educators' understanding of alignment of standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment from the open-ended portion of the interview. The binomial data table from Atlas.ti was imported into SAS and percentages and cross-tabulations by role were calculated based on whether the respondent was a district- or school-level educator. Next, X^2 or Fisher exact tests were conducted to determine if statistically significant differences occurred between school- and district-level educators' response categories.

In addition to interview and survey data, the research team collected publicly available student achievement data from the department of education Web sites for each state collaborating with SEDL. These data reflect student outcomes on standards-based tests mandated by each state.

Cross-site Roundtable Records

The research team schedules cross-site roundtables monthly to provide opportunities for SEDL field staff to reflect on a particular issue that has emerged from reviews of site contact records and monthly site debriefings. In most cases, the roundtable has addressed an issue relevant to all the sites and all site coordinators and site specialists are asked to participate. Table 4 summarizes the topics and rationale for the seven roundtables held in FY04.

Table 4
Roundtable Topics and Rationale

| Date | Topic(s) | Rationale |
|----------|--|--|
| 02/20/04 | What role do superintendents play in setting expectations for student achievement in individual schools? How would you characterize communication between district administration, school administration, and teacher levels of the system? | To understand why large districts seemed to be struggling more than small districts, yet had many more resources to tap. |
| 03/12/04 | What factors contributed to the discontinuation of work in specific sites? | To document the factors that had contributed to the termination of work. |
| 4/30/04 | What strategies are being used to increase superintendent commitment to SEDL's work? | To document strategies used by field staff to build superintendent commitment and support. |
| 6/24/04 | What strategies will be used at the sites to implement the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle? | To document how field staff implement the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle in their sites. |
| 8/27/04 | What data are contained in site contact records? | To assist field staff in understanding what data are available to them in site contact records |
| 9/17/04 | What are the major findings from the FY04 research report? | To utilize data to inform field staff and plan next steps. |
| 10/15/04 | What is the ideal composition and function of the District Leadership Team and other site-based teams? | To begin analyzing implementation of model in sites (Part 1 of 2). |

The research team provided the roundtable topics to field staff prior to the roundtable and asked them to come prepared to discuss their answers. The structured discussion typically lasted about 90 minutes. Research staff summarized the discussions based on notes from the sessions as a way to distill the main findings and share the results with the field staff.

Site Contact Records

SEDL field staff complete an electronic site contact record following each interaction with district and school personnel. The site contact record includes prompts to structure the

information collected about a particular contact, including narratives of the plan for the particular contact, activities that occurred during the contact, the new steps for moving forward, and the SEDL field staff members' reflections about that contact. Each record also lists the location, duration, and other key pieces of information to enable tracking of site contacts and activities over time. SEDL field staff enter this information in a Filemaker Pro database for easy retrieval and regular reviews. A copy of the template used to create site contact records is included in Appendix B.

Analysis of the site contact records for this report targeted strategies SEDL field staff have used to build capacity for alignment and leadership to support alignment during the past school year (8/1/03-5/31/04). While some of these strategies occur early in the process of SEDL's work with schools (such as explaining the process of alignment), many take place during the Taking Action/Monitoring Results stage of the SEDL model, which is set off within a specific field in the FileMaker Pro database. However, field staff often mention strategies associated with the earlier stages of the model during the Taking Action/Monitoring Results stage as the later work builds upon them. Thus researchers could focus on the heart of building capacity for alignment and leadership to support alignment, without losing mention of prior work. The analysis focused on site contact records regarding formal meetings, workshops, and professional development training that SEDL field staff conducted. In these entries, communication about SEDL strategies to build coherent understandings of alignment and leadership capacity was most distilled and explicitly described (as compared with entries describing telephone and e-mail contacts).

Once bounded by these criteria, research staff exported the selected site contact records from FileMaker Pro into a textual format allowing for their subsequent importation

into Atlas.ti. This selected set of field notes produced just under 600 pages of textual data (N = 597 pages). Research staff read these notes closely and developed a coding system to tag parts of the texts that pertained to specific strategies. In addition, the documents were organized electronically so as to allow for groupings according to their demographic information, such as site and time period covered.

Overview of Questions and Analytic Rationale

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 1

Research question 1 asks to what extent are low-performing districts and schools building their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards. To answer this question, this report explores educators' current understanding of alignment (Part A), whether their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards has changed over time (Part B), the leadership roles necessary to promote alignment, and whether educators' leadership capacity has changed over time (Part C).

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 1, Part A: What is educators' current understanding of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards?

In part A, educators' current understanding of the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards are explored. Working with both district- and school-level educators on this issue has been a focal point for the SEDL field staff. A first step in achieving alignment, however, is for educators at all levels of the system to have a common understanding of the elements involved. Data from the open-ended questions asked during the spring 2004 interviews will be used to explore district- and school-level educators' understanding of: 1) the elements of alignment, 2) horizontal alignment, 3) vertical alignment, 4) alignment of curriculum with state standards, 5) the alignment of curriculum

with instruction, and 6) the relationship between instruction and assessment.

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 1, Part B: Has educators' capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards changed over time? When investigating whether SEDL's intensive sites have increased their capacity to align their curriculum, instruction and assessments with the state standards, SEDL is interested in not only their understanding of the concepts involved, but whether they are engaging in actions that would support this process within their schools and districts. The spring 2004 interview scale ratings and the Working Systemically Survey each assessed educators' perceptions of alignment status and the practices used to support the alignment process. These data will be used to assess whether educators' capacity to align has changed over time, operationalized as: 1) how educators rate the current understanding and processes of alignment in their school and district, and if they perceive short-term changes in these areas; 2) whether educators' reports of the processes of alignment changed over the course of SEDL's work in the sites, and 3) whether educators' reports of strategies used to support the alignment process changed over time.

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 1, Part C: What are educator perceptions of leadership roles to promote alignment and has leadership capacity changed over time? Strong leadership is a requisite for school improvement (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). SEDL field staff have focused on helping district- and school-level educators become more effective leaders during the process of aligning standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Part of becoming an effective leader is having a "clear and coherent strategy" (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). To address research question one, Part C examines educators' identification of district and

school leadership roles for alignment using data from the spring 2004 interviews. Next, this report explores the role of leaders further by examining whether administrators' capacity to support the alignment process has increased over course of SEDL's work with the sites. Data from the spring 2004 interview scale ratings and the Working Systemically Survey will be analyzed to determine: 1) how educators rate the current involvement of district and school leaders in the alignment process and whether they perceived a change in their involvement over time, and 2) whether educators' reports of strategies used by leaders to support this process have changed over time.

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 2.

Research Question 2 asks what strategies SEDL field staff are using to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards. In addition to conducting the Working Systemically Survey and interviewing educators, field staff who work directly with the sites write detailed notes after each site contact according to a structured protocol. These notes contain descriptions of events and behaviors. They also include the writer's own reflections on how the work is going and how he or she might improve various aspects. These data are used to answer Research question 2, which seeks to examine the role of SEDL's field staff in the sites' progress toward alignment. In many of the sites, the emphasis has been on introducing the model and on leadership formation. Analyses for Research question 2 will describe the strategies SEDL field staff use 1) to help educators' build a coherent understanding of alignment, and 2) to build leadership capacity.

Analytic Rationale for Research Question 3

Research question 3 asks how student achievement data has changed in SEDL's

intensive sites over time. Student achievement test results are the basis for an increasing number of state accountability programs across the United States. These programs are intrinsically linked to state curriculum, instruction, and assessment plans. Insofar as student achievement tells us something about capacity for learning, test results serve as a gauge for whether students are being successful. Therefore any school reform effort addressing the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in schools must necessarily examine student achievement outcomes since these results are the referent for whether these components have been implemented effectively.

Strengths and Limitations of Approach

The data collection procedures and analyses presented in this report have several strengths. Complex social phenomena, such as the systemic inter-workings of schools and districts, require multiple methods of data collection and analysis to best capture and make inferences about these complexities (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). To this end, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to provide both depth and breadth (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003) in the examination of the impact of SEDL's Working Systemically Model on districts and schools.

Qualitative data collected from the site contact records document all contacts with districts and schools and provide the SEDL research team with a rich history of how each site has implemented the model. The two rounds of interviews provide additional qualitative and quantitative perspectives from the administrators and faculty in these districts and schools. Data from the Working Systemically Survey allow for quantitative analyses of educators' perceptions of district and school level practices over time. Finally, cross-site roundtable records provided qualitative data on the process of implementing the model in the sites from

the perspectives of SEDL staff. Thus, analyses of these data permitted both convergent and complementary triangulation of emergent findings (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003).

This approach also has limitations. Site contact records, the Working Systemically Survey, cross-site roundtable records, and interview data are subjective in nature and may not always convey accurate representations of what is occurring in the sites. In addition, it is difficult to make firm statements about the associations among different variables as each site is at a different stage in the model, is confronted with numerous unique events and characteristics, and is a “work in progress” or subject to ongoing change. Despite these limitations, the analyses reveal some indicators of what is successful and what is not in SEDL’s Working Systemically Model.

As discussed previously, student test data has been collected for the purpose of examining achievement patterns across the various SEDL sites. Ideally, student achievement trends would be examined using individual student-level data. This type of data can be used to conduct more in-depth analyses due to the level of precision it provides. Unfortunately, federal regulations surrounding individual student data have prevented the use of this type of information due to concerns about confidentiality. While this development does present limitations in terms of the types of analyses SEDL is able to conduct, it is important to examine the test data that is available for any insight it may provide regarding the larger goal of increasing student achievement. The issue of student data and analytical limitations is discussed in more detail later in this report.

SECTION IV: RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Research question 1 asks to what extent low-performing districts and schools are building their capacity to align standards curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards. To answer this question, the research team explored the educators' current understanding of alignment (Part A) and whether their capacity to align has changed over time (Part B). Also, the research team examined leadership roles necessary to promote alignment and whether educators' leadership capacity has changed over time (Part C).

Research Question 1, Part A: What is educators' current understanding of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards?

SEDL identified four critical elements of alignment in the Working Systemically Model: standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Working with both district- and school-level educators on alignment has been an important focus of the SEDL field staff. To achieve this alignment successfully, all levels of the system (classroom, school, district, state) must have a common understanding of these four elements.

During the spring 2004 interviews, SEDL research staff asked district and school educators open-ended questions about how they define different aspects of the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards. Data from these questions will be used to explore whether or not district and school level educators: 1) can name the elements of alignment, 2) understand horizontal alignment, 3) understand vertical alignment, 4) understand alignment of curriculum with state standards, 5) understand the alignment of curriculum with instruction, and 6) understand the relationship between instruction and assessment.

Can Educators Name the Elements of Alignment?

Members of the SEDL research team asked educators “what is included when educators discuss alignment?” Table 5 reports the total percentages of district and school educators who included curriculum, instruction, assessment, and standards as elements of the alignment process. Educators (67.5%) identified curriculum as an element of alignment followed by instruction (55.8%), standards (53.2%), and assessment (39.6%). All educators were able to name at least one element.

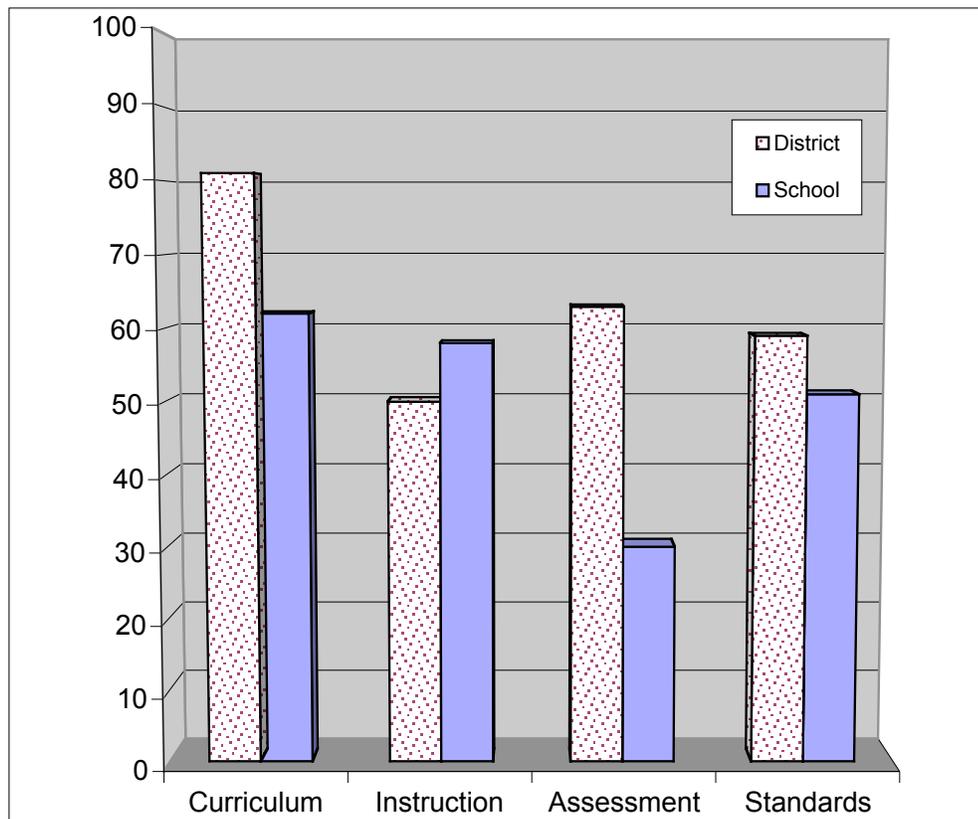
Table 5
Percentage of Educators that Named Each Element of Alignment

| Element of Alignment | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Curriculum | 75 | 67.5 |
| Instruction | 62 | 55.8 |
| Assessment | 44 | 39.6 |
| Standards | 59 | 53.2 |
| Total Respondents | 111 | |

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 as respondents may have identified more than one element of alignment in their answer.

Figure 3 disaggregates district and school educators’ responses. The highest percentages of both district- and school-level educators described curriculum as an element of the alignment process.

Figure 3
Percentages of Responses: A Comparison of District and School Educator Responses



Fisher exact analyses indicated that there was a significantly greater proportion ($p = .02$) of district-level educators (81.3%) than school-level educators (62.0%) who described curriculum as an element of alignment. Similarly, a greater proportion ($p = .001$) of district-level educators (62.5%) than school-level educators (30.4%) described assessment as an element of alignment. There were no significant differences between the proportion of district- and school-level educators that identified instruction and standards as elements of alignment. These data indicate that a greater proportion of district-level educators were able to consistently identify more elements of alignment than school-level educators.

Do Educators Understand Horizontal Alignment?

In order to obtain a more complete measure of district and school educators' understanding of alignment, we asked educators to define horizontal alignment. The question about horizontal alignment was phrased as follows: How do you define alignment within a single grade level in a school? Overall, about half of the educators (50.5%) had at least a basic understanding of horizontal alignment, meaning that the educators mentioned, at a minimum, that all teaching within each grade is based on either the same content, or the same scope and sequence, or standards. The following responses demonstrate educators' emphasis on these important elements of horizontal alignment within a single grade level.

The state gives us expectations to follow. We have a curriculum map and there are certain things that students are supposed to learn within a single grade. We align those with the state-mandated test, the curriculum guide, and other resources that we can obtain. We have to follow certain guidelines within each grade. In this school, we have ITP (individual test plans) for our students. We take a look at our results from the standardized tests and align that with the curriculum maps. (Grisham school staff)

Well the state has broken down our framework into grade levels. We have set objectives for each grade level. To limit, a single grade has to focus on this set. We have to know what came before, and what comes after so we know how to fit our set in. But within grade, means that all of the classrooms at a grade level cover the same thing. (Roydale school staff)

Within the grade level, a common alignment would be first the standards—that's the guiding force. All of the teachers are operating off of the same standards that are passed to them at the beginning of the year from the principal in their tool book. Everyone has a tool book to help them operate effectively in our school. They each have all the standards for all of the subjects they teach in that grade level. Therefore, they are all looking at the same ones. They even align their goals, long- and short-term. So the teachers will be shooting for the same goal at the end of the year as each other because they are wanting their children to reach those goals that are based on the standards. (Brooksville school administrator)

Fisher exact analyses indicate that there is not a significant difference between district- and school-level educators in their understanding of horizontal alignment.

Do Educators Understand Vertical Alignment?

Vertical alignment has two parts—alignment across grades in a single school (within school) and alignment across schools that serve successive grades (between schools). The question about vertical alignment within a school was phrased as follows: how do you define alignment across grade levels in a school? Overall 46.8% of all educators interviewed had at least a basic understanding of vertical alignment within a school, meaning that educators at least mentioned that subject areas are aligned across grade levels and/or content areas so that there is a flow from one grade to the next. This understanding of vertical alignment is apparent in the following educator responses.

The skills build on each other and students have to learn each level's skills to advance to the next. Across levels means that the first grade teacher has to know what the fourth grade expects so that she can do her part. The curriculum has to be aligned from one grade level to another. I think that's where you will find a lot of the embedded professional development. It takes a lot of work to figure out how they fit together for the successful completion of the [state achievement exam] (Athens district administrator)

There should be alignment of performance with standards and benchmarks. You must make certain there is clear articulation with the grades before and after, and that alignment is realistic. Assessment helps to know where each student is. (Desert Hills district administrator)

At the beginning of the school year, every teacher was not only given his or her grade level standards, but they also received the standards for the grade behind and the grade ahead to perpetuate that alignment. With an understanding and knowledge alignment is more likely going to happen. So your standards are aligned. Same thing with the curriculum. For example, the vocabulary. We're all on the same page with this vocabulary—that's what we decided to start with on our

reading curriculum. We all are planning together; we're using the same format. Like our words - all the words per grade level are the same. (Brooksville school administrator)

A higher proportion of district-level educators (64.5%) than school-level educators (40.0%) demonstrated a basic understanding of vertical alignment within a school. Fisher exact analyses indicate that there is a significant difference ($p = .02$) between these proportions. Thus, a significantly greater proportion of district level educators have at least a basic understanding of within school vertical alignment compared to school level educators.

The question about alignment between schools was phrased as follows: how do you define alignment between schools? Only 36.9% of all educators had a basic understanding of between school alignment meaning that educators at least mentioned that there is coordination across campuses about what is taught. The educator responses below emphasize coordination across campuses with particular emphasis on transition from one school and/or grade to the next.

This is very important in transitional years. Students need to be prepared with a base of knowledge so that the teachers do not have to re-teach things that have already been taught. The schools need to meet together by subject area and review the content standards for each grade, so they know what is being taught in each grade and so that the progression is smooth. There needs to be meetings at the beginning of the year when the teachers plan so they know where to start in terms of content and what they need to do to prepare the students for the next grade. (Farmville school staff)

There again, we have our state objectives, the PASS, and as long as we're covering our [Priority Academic Student Skills Exam], if a student transfers to another school in the district, we're basically covering the same material, so they're consistent. And as far as I know, most of the district has adopted the same books that are used. So, if they leave one school and go to another, they're familiar with the program. For instance, we have Saxon math. I believe all our schools have Saxon math, so it's not a new concept for the students if

they were to change to a new school and be thrown into something they're not familiar with. (Wrightsville school staff)

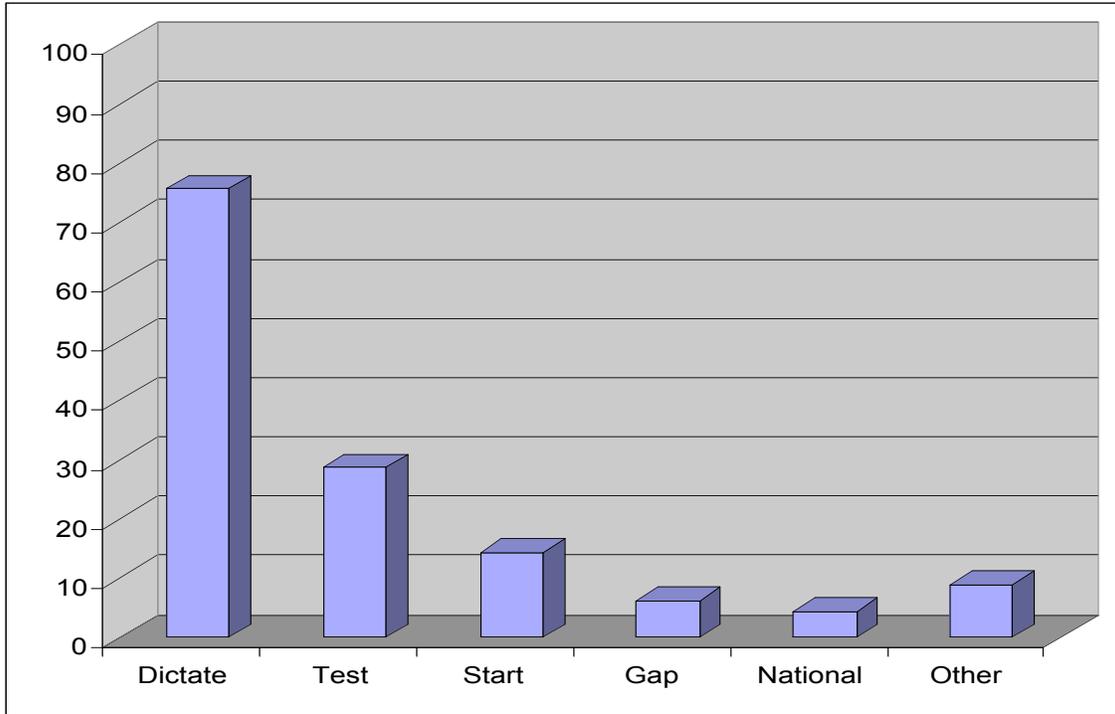
Alignment among the schools is a non-negotiable mandatory objective in our schools. Hopefully everyone leaving sixth grade going to the junior high schools will have been exposed to the same material no matter what school they are coming from. There is vertical teaming in staff development where, for example, the fifth and sixth grade teachers meet with the junior high school teachers, so that all of the teachers will understand the requirements. Everyone should be on the same page no matter what grade you are in and that is national trend. It has to be to meet the standards. Every teacher needs to be meeting the scope and sequence within the recommended time line no matter what school or grade the teachers are teaching. This helps as students move from one school to the other. (River City district administrator)

A little more than half (54.8%) of district-level educators and 30% of school-level educator responses demonstrated a basic understanding school alignment. Fisher exact analyses indicate that there is a significant difference ($p = .01$). Thus, a significantly greater proportion of district-level educators have at least a basic understanding of between school alignment compared to school-level educators.

Do Educators Understand the Alignment of Curriculum with State Standards?

Educators were asked to explain what it means for curriculum to be aligned with the state standards. Their answers were grouped into the five themes which are listed below. Together these themes accounted for 93.5% of the responses. A chi-square analysis determined that no significant differences existed between the responses of district- and school-level respondents, $X^2(5) = 3.55, p < .50$, and so the responses were combined. Figure 4 presents the percentage of responses by theme. Note that percentages do not sum to 100 as responses frequently included more than one theme.

Figure 4
Percentage of Responses : How Educators View Alignment of Curriculum with State Standards



1. Standards dictate the curriculum, tell the teacher what is to be taught. (Dictate)
2. Standards define what teachers have to cover (i.e., the curriculum) so that students will be successful on the state test. (Test)
3. Standards provide a starting point for defining the school's curriculum. (Start)
4. There is usually a gap between the state standards and textbooks, teachers have to use other resources to make sure that the school curriculum matches the standards. (Gap)
5. Standards lay out what is important to be included in the curriculum, especially when they are based on guidance from professional associations. (National)
6. Other miscellaneous responses. (Other)

Three fourths of the respondents (75.7%) noted that state standards dictate the school's curriculum, the content that teachers are expected to cover in their classrooms. They used

such words as “rule book”, “expect”, and “required” to convey the role standards played.

Accountability was an important aspect of their responses.

State standards are our rule book. We have to fit our curriculum to those standards, in terms of timelines, content coverage, and the scope and sequence. We are held accountable for those standards. (Grisham district administrator)

We have to use the frameworks; it is real important. Every teacher on this campus should have a copy in their classrooms, I copied them and gave them out so they would have it. We expect them to teach what is in the frameworks for their grade, their courses. (Roydale teacher)

That there are certain standards that are set by the state that all students are required to know and teachers are required to teach. So in your lesson plans, those are the things you need to make sure that the students are taught. (Brooksville teacher)

Slightly more than one-fourth (28.8%) noted that standards define what teachers have to cover (i.e., the curriculum) so that students will be successful on the state test. This point of view reflects the high-stakes nature of the state tests in all five of the states in the SEDL region. Accountability again was an important theme, but accountability was tied specifically to the state test.

If we meet the state guidelines, the kids should be able to pass that test with good test scores. (River City teacher)

The state has standards and you have to know what they are, and the state test and the criterion reference test will test these and your students need to know this material. You have to teach what is expected. (Bricktown district staff)

When a teacher goes into the classroom, she has to teach the standards. When they give the standardized tests, or norm-referenced test, that student will not be able to do the items. They will have missed out if you don't teach the standards. The teacher has to teach those frameworks so that the student can master the content and be ready to do well. (Delta Village school administrator)

Approximately 14% of the responses described how standards provide a starting point for educators to come together to develop more specific objectives, scope and sequence charts, or lesson plans, or to frame what they teach each day. These respondents did not focus on accountability, instead they underscored the professionalism required to translate standards into daily classroom lessons.

We took the state PASS skills that were mandated by the state. We took them as a district and had committees of teachers to rewrite those skills in our terminology in our own language to meet our needs. Where it was maybe more teacher-friendly to use at times with more examples and resources. So those curriculum guides can be used, and probably should be used more than they are at this point, to guide instruction.
(Wrightsville school administrator)

The state standards are relatively broad and not easily measured. So for teachers to know and assess, we have to refine the standards into measurable objectives. But then what we do develop must be aligned with the expectations of the state. It's interpreting the standards into a measurable objective. (Mesa district administrator)

Well the simple answer would be are you teaching what the state frameworks require? The more complicated issue becomes "what do the frameworks mean?" They are so broad and general. Some are so vague that in reality the teacher continues to teach what they are interested in and what they thought was important. But the important thing is for teachers to get together as a department or as a grade and discuss "what are they looking for? What do they want taught?". . . It's important that teachers decide among themselves about what the framework is saying, what we need to be teaching, how to teach it, and follow-up with assessment. How can we teach that better? Review it each year? Were we successful? (Forked River district administrator)

Fewer respondents (6.3%) talked about the gap between the standards and the textbooks used in their classrooms. They noted that in the past, teachers were able to rely on the textbooks. Now, given the emphasis on standards-based instruction, gaps invariably exist between the

standards and the textbook, so teachers must carefully choose sections from the textbooks that align with standards and supplement the text with other materials as necessary.

Too often you will get a textbook and use that textbook as your bible. Salesmen will tell you that this book is aligned with your state standards, but they are not. The standards are in the book, but they are not presented in a way that emphasizes the standards. Teachers have to look at the standards and the textbooks and see if this is something that I should be teaching or introducing. (Grisham school administrator)

Our state has got some good standards, they have what they want each kid to do. Our curriculum has to match up with those. In the old days, it was driven by the textbooks. Now you have to go find the resources, can't just use the textbook. (Delta Village district administrator)

A few respondents (4.5%) pointed to the importance of connecting the school's curriculum to standards, especially if the standards were endorsed not only by the state, but also by national professional associations. They felt that the latter endorsements gave credibility and importance to their state standards.

And they should look at national standards, and these provide good support. It's not just the state department that says it's important, but the professional groups as well. (Bricktown school administrator)

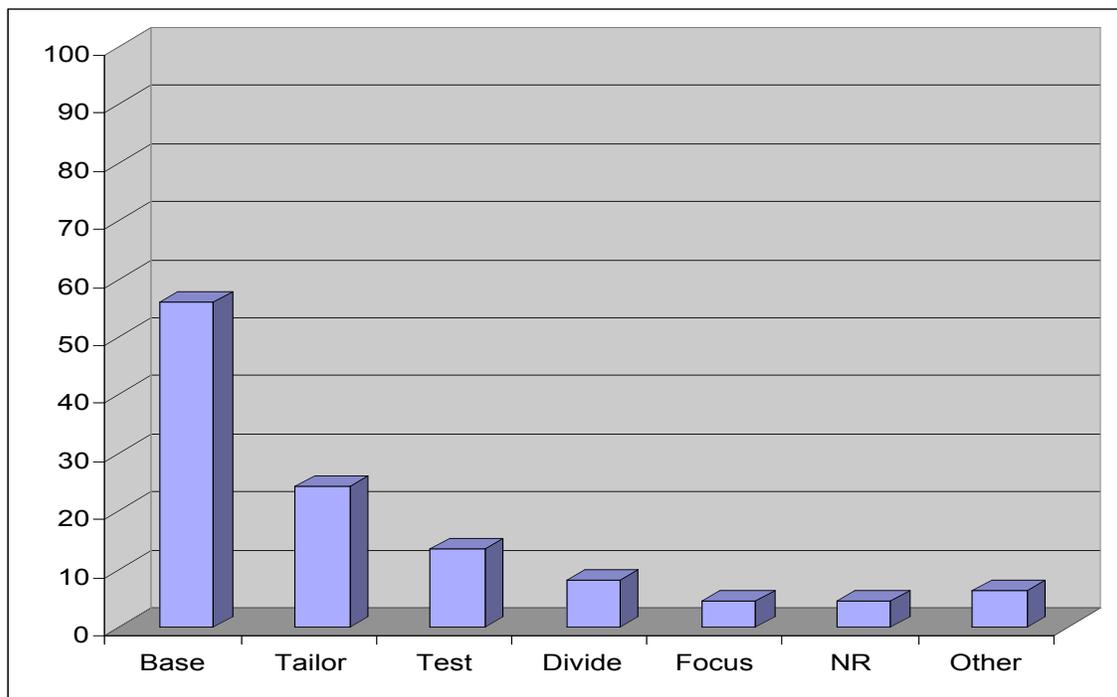
It means nothing unless your state standards are aligned with the national standards. You need to align with the national standards. If your state standards are based on the national, then you're going to be okay. It means that you are teaching what you're supposed to be teaching. (Bayou City school staff)

Approximately 9% of the responses did not fall into any of the above categories. These responses reported that standards describe minimum expectations for the curriculum; that standards help districts and schools select instructional material; that standards limit teachers' autonomy, professional judgment, and creativity; and that alignment of standards and curriculum is an unrealistic goal.

Do Educators Understand the Alignment of Curriculum with Instruction?

Educators also were asked what it meant to align curriculum with instruction. Their responses grouped into six themes; these themes accounted for 92.3% of the responses. A chi-square analysis revealed that no significant differences existed between the responses of district- and school-level respondents, $\chi^2(5) = 4.26, p > .50$, and so the responses were combined. Figure 6 presents the percentage of responses by theme. Note that percentages do not sum to 100 as responses frequently included more than one theme.

Figure 5
Percentage of Responses: How Educators View Alignment of Curriculum and Instruction



1. Teachers should base their instruction on the standards. (Base)
2. Instruction should be tailored to make sure that all students are able to learn the expected curriculum. (Tailor)
3. Instruction prepares students for the standards-based assessment. (Test)

4. Instruction is how teachers divide up the curriculum over the course of the year.

(Divide)

5. Instruction should reflect the standard focus. (Focus)

6. No response – unable to answer the question. (NR)

7. Other miscellaneous responses. (Other)

Many of the educators confused curriculum (i.e., what is taught) with instruction (i.e., how it is taught) in answering this question. For example, slightly over half of the respondents (55.9%) answered that instruction means that you teach the required standards. Curriculum is what you are supposed to teach; instruction is whether you teach it.

Instruction is teaching them what you are supposed to teach them... Your instructional time needs to cover what the objectives say you are supposed to cover. (Roydale school administrator)

That is just that the teachers are teaching what they are supposed to be teaching—that they are following the course syllabus. (Farmville teacher)

You do what you said you would do in your plans. There are benchmarks for the content areas; then there is curriculum on this, and then skills are taught. You ask yourself: Do I teach them what I'm supposed to teach? (Desert Hills teacher)

Nearly one fourth of the respondents (24.3%) talked about selecting instructional strategies to meet the needs of students so that they would learn the expected curriculum. Although teachers must cover the required curriculum, their instruction must be tailored so that students are engaged and learn.

Well, that's when the teacher sets up lesson plans based on objectives that he is supposed to be teaching for the subject area. It encompasses different learning styles for different students. It's setting up, it's making sure that the concept can be presented in a variety of ways that it meets the needs of all students. (Bayou City teacher)

The curriculum drives the instruction in the classroom here. They look at the curriculum to find out what should be taught. But then the instruction that is used in the classroom is according to the needs of the individual students because of the different learning styles that students learn by. So they have different types of instruction in all of the classrooms. They use different strategies on the same topic. (Highway Junction school administrator)

Well hopefully, whatever you planned . . . if you have an activity planned, you may need to adjust it to fit the needs of your own children. It doesn't mean that just because I have it down in black and white I have to stick with it. I have to monitor to fit the needs of my children. Also being aligned with the level of the skill of the children. (Forked River teacher)

About 14% of the respondents noted that instruction prepares students for the standards-based assessment. Instruction must follow the state standards so that students learn the expected curriculum and they are able to do well on the test. This set of responses, like the first set above, signals a confusion between curriculum and instruction. The responses emphasize what is taught, not how it is taught.

You start with the frameworks at the beginning of the year and teach the skills that are relevant to the test and pace yourself, so you don't have to cram everything in at the last moment. (Grisham teacher)

Again, instruction is not only what is written, but it has to follow the standards, and to be taught, so when you do the test, you get good results. If you don't follow the curriculum and the curriculum is not aligned with the standards, then the students will not do well on the exams which test on the standards. (Farmville teacher)

If the kids have never heard it, they won't be able to get it on the test. We need to make sure that the teachers are teaching the standards in the classroom and that they are able to use those skills to complete the test. (River City school administrator)

Approximately 8% described instruction as the process used to divide up the curriculum over

the course of the year. Often, educators refer to this as a scope and sequence chart, describing what has to be taught by what grade level by what time of the year. Respondents did not discuss how it is to be taught, nor how to adapt their pedagogy to meet students' needs.

The frameworks are broken down, so they know what part of the framework they are supposed to focus on. The teacher has to know how much they have to present in each grade and how thorough they have to cover it. (Grisham school staff)

For instruction to be aligned with the curriculum, it would mean that everyone is being taught what should be taught and when it should be taught. (River City teacher)

Well, I like curriculum mapping, that's something we need to work on. Pacing is another word. Teachers are looking at the whole span, and what they have to teach. (Bricktown school administrator)

Other respondents (4.5%) talked about the necessity of matching instruction to the intent of the standard. Teachers must thoroughly understand what is meant by each standard so that instruction covers the right content at the appropriate level of difficulty. These responses suggest a deeper consideration of the curriculum than simply covering the state standards, but do not go far enough to consider how pedagogy interplays with curriculum.

The teachers have to understand what the standards actually mean and they have to focus their instruction specifically on that. (River City school staff)

This is how I understand it. And why it gets tricky. Teachers sometimes think they are using instruction to teach a benchmark, but they are not teaching at the right level. They're teaching at a low level and it should be at a higher level conceptually. We have a real problem with that; we make the curriculum simpler than it should be. Instruction should align with the cognitive level of performance of that expectation. (Athens district staff)

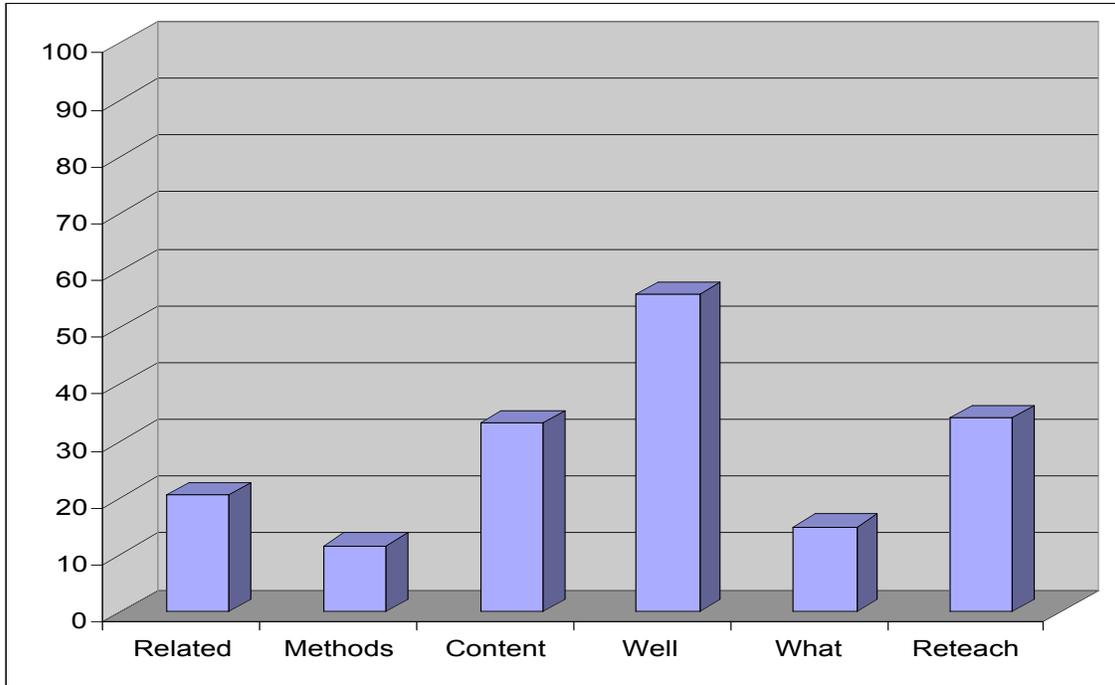
Instruction, this is where, this is our biggest problem. So many times teachers write beautiful objectives. And then the activity is not okay. If you want students to analyze, then you must have students analyze. (Athens school staff)

The remaining responses were divided into two groups. About 5% were unable to answer the question. Another 6% answered in other ways, such as instruction is the delivery of curriculum to achieve the desired results or that instruction means not teaching only from the textbook.

What is educators' understanding of the relationship between instruction and assessment?

Educators were asked to describe the relationship between instruction and assessment. All of their responses clustered into six themes. A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if significant differences existed between the responses of district- and school-level respondents; no significant differences were found, $\chi^2(5) = 3.93, p > .50$, and so the responses were combined. Figure 6 presents the percentage of responses for each theme. Note that the percentages do not sum to 100 as responses frequently included more than one theme.

Figure 6
Percentage of Responses: The Relationship Between Instruction and Assessment



1. Instruction and assessment are interrelated. (Related)
2. Instruction and assessment methods ought to match each other. (Methods)
3. Instruction and assessment content ought to match. (Content)
4. Assessment tells teachers how well they have taught or how well students have learned. (How Well)
5. Assessment tells teachers what students know and do not know, what to teach. (What)
6. Assessment informs teachers about what they need to reteach. (Reteach)

Slightly more than one fifth of the administrators and teachers in SEDL's intensive sites (20.7%) responded that instruction and assessment were interrelated—that you could not have one without the other.

I think they are closely related. One cannot function without the other. (Grisham district staff)

Intertwined. You can't have one without the other.

(Brooksville district administrator)

I think they are hand-in-hand. (Bricktown teacher)

Almost half of the responses talked about coherence between instruction and assessment. The fewest responses clustered around the concept that instructional and assessment methods should match (11.7%). For example, if assessment uses constructed responses, then instruction should include activities where students have to write their answers in similar formats.

Instructional activities have to match how you are going to assess. (Bayou City district administrator)

You should be testing what you're teaching in the same way. (Highway Junction teacher)

They look at the tests that all the students take. And they look at the types of questions that they are being asked. And they are asking us to use those types of questions in our lessons, so that the students are prepared for those types of questions. (Mesa teacher)

One third (33.3%) noted that instruction and assessment must cover the same content.

Instruction and assessment, making sure that you are assessing what you are supposed to teach . . . you need to make sure that your menu matches, that you're teaching what you're testing. (Athens school administrator)

You're not going to test on something you don't teach the kids. (Pineland teacher)

A lot of time teachers will test them on things that they have never talked about. They'll make tests with an objective in mind, and then not teach that. [They] might have planned to do it, but didn't. I like teachers to go back and see if a lot of students missed an item, go back and look to see what happened. Maybe [they] didn't teach it. And that's not fair. (Roydale school administrator)

Other responses stressed what assessment tells teachers and administrators about

instruction. More than half of the interviewed administrators and teachers in SEDL's intensive sites (55.9%) reported that assessment was used to determine the effectiveness of teaching or learning.

I analyze my [assessment] data. I determine areas in which instruction was not effective, because students were unsuccessful. I determine areas in which instruction was effective, because students performed well on those particular items. It lets me know as an instructor what I need to improve to make sure that my students master skills. And what instruction I'm delivering that is being effective in student mastering skills. (Mesa district administrator)

The assessment is going to tell you whether you did what you were supposed to do. There are assessments everyday, it plays hand-in-hand. It tells you whether you were successful or not . . . they tell you whether you did what you were supposed to do, whether they learned or not. (Athens teacher)

The assessment shows the teacher what the student has learned. (Delta Village school staff)

Assessment is your indicator of how well you have delivered the message. Did they learn the material? Do they understand? Can they apply the skills? (River City teacher)

Another third (34.2%) indicated that assessment tells teachers what they need to reteach.

Because you have to make sure that you have taught the skills, you need to have an assessment so that you can go back and reteach or know that you can move on. (Highway Junction teacher)

Did they get what I taught them. If not, I have to reteach in a different way. (Desert Hills teacher)

You've got to be able to teach to the kids and they have got to be able to be successful with that learning so that you can go back, review, and reteach before you go on. (Wrightsville teacher)

The remaining respondents, approximately 15%, answered that assessment helps drive instruction. Assessment serves as a pretest, informing the teacher what the students know or

do not know. Teachers use the results of these assessments to plan instruction.

So the assessment should be a planning tool . . . it should be used to guide instruction on a day-to-day basis. (Forked River school administrator)

Assessment is the destination and how you're going to get there is instruction. (Bricktown teacher)

Within our district, we pretest. You are doing that pretest to learn what your kids don't know. Or what they do know. That is just for that teacher to know where she starts. Or if he has to back up or if he has to go ahead. (Wrightsville teacher)

Assessment drives instruction. It's ridiculous to teach kids something they already know . . . You should assess and then design your instruction. It gives you purpose. (Delta Village school staff)

Educators who responded that “assessment tells teachers how well they have taught” or “how well students have learned” and “assessment tells teachers what students know and do not know, what to teach” demonstrated that they understand that instruction and assessment are a cyclical process; one feeds the other. Assessment prior to instruction guides the teacher's lesson, and assessment after instruction tells the teacher how well s/he has taught and how well students have learned. Although 20.7% of the respondents reported that instruction and assessment are interrelated, only 3.6% described the cyclical relationship explicitly. This may be an artifact of the educators' responding to open-ended questions. However, it also probably reflects the limited practice of these districts and schools in using periodic benchmarks tests to modify instruction.

These interviews revealed that educators in these sites have a basic understanding of alignment. Many can describe horizontal and vertical alignment and some of the simpler relationships between state standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. However, many lack a deep understanding of how instruction should be tailored to cover the required

standards and curriculum to meet student needs. In addition, few discussed the cyclical interplay between instruction and assessment.

Research Question 1, Part B: Has educators' capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards changed over time?

Recent work has shown the positive gains in student achievement made from aligning standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment (e.g., Moss-Mitchell, 1998, as cited in English & Steffy, 2001). As is evident from the qualitative data reported above, educators are still developing a deep understanding of alignment and its complexities. Beyond their basic understanding, however, SEDL is also interested in whether the actions required to improve alignment are occurring. Research question 1, Part B asks whether educators' capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards has changed over time. To determine whether their capacity has changed, SEDL asked educators 1) to rate the current understanding and processes of alignment in their school and district, and whether short-term changes have occurred, 2) to report on the processes that indicate alignment is occurring, and 3) to report on strategies used to support the alignment process over time.

How do educators rate the current understanding and processes of alignment in their school and district, and have they perceived short-term changes in these areas of alignment?

As part of the spring 2004 interviews (see Appendix B), educators answered six questions⁶ on the current status of alignment understanding and process using a 6-point Likert scale.

⁶ There were two additional questions, 3a and 4a, related to the role of leadership in alignment. These will be discussed in Research Question 1, Part C.

As demonstrated in Table 6, educators provided a relatively positive response to five of the six questions regarding the current status of alignment. The average response to each question suggests a level of agreement between “Well” and “Very Well” on the six-point scale. Only question 5a provided a lower mean response, indicating educators believed that their schools were between “somewhat” and “well” aligned along feeder patterns. Overall, responses indicate a positive view of current alignment status in the field.

Table 6
Educators’ Perceptions of the Current Status of Alignment

| Scale Rating Questions | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 1a. To what extent do educators in this school/district understand alignment? | 4.10 | .85 |
| 2a. To what extent is the curriculum aligned with state standards? | 4.55 | 1.18 |
| 5a. To what extent is the curriculum aligned along feeder patterns? | 3.47 | .99 |
| 6a. To what extent is instruction aligned with the curriculum at the school level? | 4.27 | 1.02 |
| 7a. To what extent is the instruction aligned within grades? | 4.23 | 1.09 |
| 8a. To what extent is assessment used to guide instruction at the school level? | 4.40 | 1.08 |

Note: Ratings were made on a six-point Likert scale, 1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = somewhat; 4 = well; 5 = very well; 6 = extremely well.

The SEDL research team analyzed the alignment status questions further as a way to explore educators’ perceptions of the varied efforts involved in the alignment process. A repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated that there was a significant difference between educators’ responses for the scale-rating questions, $F(5, 104) = 27.404, p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons were conducted using paired-samples t tests to examine whether educators’ lowest and highest ratings differed significantly from the remaining questions regarding alignment.

Educators provided a significantly lower rating for whether the curriculum was aligned along feeder patterns (question 5a) than across the remaining questions combined (questions 1a, 2a, 6-8a), $t(108) = -50.56, p < .001$. Educators' lower ratings regarding alignment along feeder patterns may be indicative of greater attention being given to within-grade alignment at this stage of the project. The educators' higher mean rating of alignment within grades supports this interpretation. In a reform effort which has a goal for the entire district to work systemically, this finding may illuminate an area in need of greater attention.

Educators rated the extent to which curriculum and standards are aligned (question 2a) significantly higher than for the remaining questions combined (questions 1a, 6-8a), $t(108) = 3.39, p = .001$. This analysis lends context to the previously reported findings that more than 70% of educators believed that the standards dictate the curriculum. One interpretation of these findings is that educators viewed the alignment of curriculum with standards as proceeding successfully because they had a rather basic description of their interrelationship. Therefore, because their understanding was rather basic, their ratings may be inflated because they would not recognize if alignment was not occurring. Another interpretation could be that their description of the interrelationship, while basic, was accurate for their districts and therefore more easily improved. In other words, curriculum alignment with standards may be more successful because the relationship is "dictated" and therefore more easily attained.

Educators also rated whether each of these elements of alignment had changed from the previous year. For example, after rating "to what extent educators in this school/ district understand alignment" (question 1a), respondents rated whether educators' understanding of alignment had changed since the same time last year (question 1b). Respondents answered

these questions by indicating a level of agreement along a 5-point Likert scale. 1 = much worse; 2 = somewhat worse; 3 = hasn't changed; 4 = somewhat better; 5 = much better.

The pattern of responses to the follow-up “change” questions presented in Table 7 resembles the pattern of responses to the initial “current status” questions listed in Table 6. In this case, mean responses to five of the six questions suggest that understanding and implementation of alignment principles is “Somewhat Better” than at the same time last year. As in the “current status” questions, the mean response to question 5b was lower, indicating less change was perceived along feeder patterns than in other areas of alignment. Overall, the results indicate that educators have perceived a positive change in alignment since the previous year.

Table 7
Educators’ Perceptions of Change in Alignment Since This Time Last Year

| Scale Rating Questions | Mean | SD |
|---|------|------|
| 1b. How has (educators’) understanding of alignment changed? | 4.26 | 0.60 |
| 2b. How has this alignment changed (curriculum aligned with state standards)? | 4.16 | 0.68 |
| 5b. How has alignment along feeder patterns changed? | 3.88 | 0.73 |
| 6b. How has the alignment between instruction and curriculum changed? | 4.12 | 0.62 |
| 7b. How has within-grade alignment changed? | 4.02 | 0.66 |
| 8b. How has the use of assessment to guide instruction changed? | 4.12 | 0.74 |

Note: Responses were made on a five-point Likert scale, 1 = much worse; 2 = somewhat worse; 3 = hasn't changed; 4 = somewhat better; 5 = much better.

Have educators’ reports of the processes of alignment changed over the course of SEDL’s work in the sites?

In this section, the SEDL research team will build upon the analyses reported above by examining indicators of alignment status from the Working Systemically Survey across

multiple years. As the Working Systemically Survey is an instrument in development, items were added, rephrased, or eliminated during the refinement process based on results from factor, item, and other analyses (e.g., multicollinearity). Thus, the analyses examine response data for items that were consistent across 2 years (2003-2004) and, separately, three years (2002-2004) of the survey.

To examine change in alignment from 2002 to 2004, the SEDL research team analyzed four items from the Working Systemically Survey that addressed processes such as the alignment of instruction and assessment, use of assessments, vertical alignment, and the alignment of district curriculum with state standards.

Questions consistent from 2003 to 2004:⁷

- When students are promoted from one grade to the next, they have the prerequisite skills necessary to succeed at the next grade. (Students Have Skills to Succeed at Next Grade)
- Our school's curriculum is closely aligned with the state standards. (Curriculum Aligned with Standards)

Questions consistent from 2002 to 2004:⁸

- Connections are clear and consistent between what we teach and what we assess. (Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections)
- Student assessments are used at all grade levels to improve instruction. (Using Data to Improve Instruction)

⁷ The items "Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections" and "Using Data to Improve Instruction" were significantly correlated at $r(2602) = .60, p < .001$.

⁸ The items "Students Have Skills to Succeed at Next Grade" and "Curriculum Aligned with Standards" were significantly correlated at $r(1737) = .42, p < .001$.

As is shown in the analyses in Table 8, educators' ratings generally indicate that alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment has improved over time. As the questions within each year range are significantly correlated, two one-way between-subjects multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted. The analyses indicated a significant difference over time for the multivariate combination of dependent variables assessing alignment. The results reflect a small association between time and alignment for both 3- and 2-year data; 2002-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .003$, 2003-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .015$.

Table 8
Analyses of 2-Year (2003-2004) and 3-Year (2002-2004) Indicators of Alignment Status

| Analysis | | Items included | Statistic | df between | df within | Sig. |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|---|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| MANOVA | 2-year data | a) Students Have Skills to Succeed at Next Grade b) Curriculum Aligned with Standards | $F = 13.38^a$ | 2 | 1734 | .000 |
| | 3-year data | c) Using Data to Improve Instruction d) Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections | $F = 3.83^a$ | 4 | 5210 | .000 |
| Univariate ANOVA follow-ups | 2-year data | a) Students Have Skills to Succeed at Next Grade ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.23 (1.41) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 3.55 (1.16) | $F = 26.09^b$ | 1 | 1746 | .000 |
| | | b) Curriculum Aligned with Standards ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.74 (1.20) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.89 (1.07) | $F = 7.93^b$ | 1 | 1743 | .005 |
| | 3-year data | c) Using Data to Improve Instruction ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 4.37 (1.29) ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.44 (1.28) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.45 (1.22) | $F = .98$ | 2 | 2617 | .377 |
| | | d) Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections | $F = 6.91^b$ | 2 | 2629 | .001 |
| Tahmane's T2 Pairwise Comparisons | 3-year data | d) Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 4.03 (1.20) ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.15 (1.25) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.24 (1.17) | <u>Mean Differences</u> 2003 – 2002 = .12 2004 – 2002 = .21 ^c 2004 – 2003 = .09 | 1 1 1 | 1722 1775 1761 | .104 .001 .367 |

Note. Significance values adjusted for multiple comparisons: ^a $p < .025$, ^b $p < .0125$, ^c $p < .017$.

Note. Responses were on a six-point Likert scale: 1=Never True; 2=Rarely True; 3=Sometimes True; 4=Usually True; 5=Often True; 6=Always True

Note. Six univariate within-cell outliers were identified at $p = .001$ for the 2004 ratings of “Curriculum Aligned with Standards” and were deleted from the analyses. No additional univariate or multivariate within-cell outliers were detected.

When exploring univariate effects of the individual dependent variables across time, experiment-wise error rate was set at .05 for a univariate alpha = .0125. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) indicated that there was a significant difference over time for three of the four indicators of alignment. For the 2-year data, the analyses indicate a significant improvement from 2003 to 2004 in educators' perceptions that "Students Have Skills to Succeed at Next Grade" and that the "Curriculum is Aligned with Standards." For the 3-year data, the ANOVA revealed that there was no significant change in educators' ratings of "Using Data to Improve Instruction" over time. Although the change is not statistically significant, the means are in the right direction for improvement over time. Further, when examining individual means for each of the years (see Table 8), educators were generally positive in their perceptions, indicating that it was between "usually true" and "often true" that student assessments were used at all grade levels to improve instruction.

For the remaining 3-year indicator of alignment, Tamhane's T2 pairwise comparisons, with Bonferroni correction, were conducted to identify where changes in educators' ratings occurred over time. As can be seen when examining the means in Table 8, there was a significant improvement in educators' ratings of "Clear Teaching and Assessment Connections" from 2002 to 2004, but not between any of the remaining year combinations.

In summary, the results indicate a positive change in alignment over the course of SEDL's work in the districts from 2002 to 2004. Specifically, educators' ratings of whether the connections were clear and consistent between what is taught and what is assessed improved significantly in 2004 over their ratings in 2002. In addition, educators' ratings that students have the prerequisite skills necessary to succeed when they are promoted from one

grade to the next and that their school's curriculum was closely aligned with the state standards improved significantly from 2003 to 2004.

Have educators' reports of strategies used to support the alignment process changed over time?

For schools and districts to evidence gains in student achievement, educators across levels of the system must develop a shared vision for student achievement, a common instructional focus, and have the time and opportunities necessary for creating instructional coherence (Edge, Mascall, Rolheiser, Bower, & Fullan, 2004). Without a common understanding of the educational goals within and across levels of the system, or the opportunities to work toward that common understanding, alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment would be unattainable.

In this section, SEDL will focus its analyses on items from the Working Systemically Survey that have been identified as indicators of practice that support the alignment process, specifically in regards to creating instructional coherence within and between teachers and administrators⁹. To examine change in alignment practices from 2002 to 2004, the SEDL research team analyzed four items from the Working Systemically Survey that addressed processes essential to alignment, such as common understandings and expectations for the instructional program and collaborative work.

Questions consistent from 2003 to 2004:¹⁰

- The staff work collaboratively to maintain the alignment of instruction across grades.

(Collaboration Toward Horizontal Alignment)

⁹ As a reminder, the Working Systemically Survey is an instrument in development. Items were added, rephrased, or eliminated during the refinement process based on results from factor, item, and other analyses (e.g., multicollinearity). Thus, the analyses examine response data for items that were consistent across two years (2003-2004) and, separately, three years (2002-2004) of the survey.

¹⁰ The items "Collaboration Toward Horizontal Alignment" and "Regular Meetings on Instructions Issues" were significantly correlated at $r(1744) = .52, p < .001$.

- Teachers at each school meet regularly in grade-level or content area meetings to discuss instructional issues. (Regular Meetings on Instructional Issues)

Questions consistent from 2002 to 2004:¹¹

- What teachers are doing in the classroom matches administrators' expectations for instruction. (Instruction Matches Administrators' Expectations)
- Administrators and teachers work together to develop a shared vision of how the school should best meet the needs of all students. (Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision)

As shown in the analyses in Table 9, educators' ratings generally indicate that alignment practices have improved over time. As the questions within each year range were significantly correlated, two one-way between subjects MANOVAs were conducted. The analyses indicated a significant difference over time for the multivariate combination of dependent variables assessing alignment practices. The results reflect a small association between time and alignment for both 3- and 2-year data; 2002-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .02$, 2003-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .015$.

¹¹ The items "Instruction Matches Administrators' Expectations" and "Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Visions" were significantly correlated at $r(2608) = .57, p < .001$.

Table 9
Analyses of 2-Year (2003-2004) and 3-Year (2002-2004) Indicators of Instructional Coherence Strategies

| Analysis | | Items included | Statistic | df between | df within | Sig. |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|---|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| MANOVA | 2-year data | a) Collaboration Toward Horizontal Alignment b) Regular Meetings on Instructional Issues | $F = 17.54^a$ | 2 | 1741 | .000 |
| | 3-year data | c) Instruction Matches Administrators' Expectations d) Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision | $F = 20.34^a$ | 4 | 5210 | .000 |
| Univariate ANOVA Follow-ups | 2-year data | a) Collaboration Toward Horizontal Alignment ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.75 (1.36) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.10 (1.13) | $F = 35.08^b$ | 1 | 1760 | .000 |
| | | b) Regular Meetings on Instructional Issues ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.90 (1.54) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.12 (1.44) | $F = 8.57^b$ | 1 | 1750 | .003 |
| | 3-year data | c) Instruction Matches Administrators' Expectations ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 4.21 (1.18) ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.16 (1.27) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.30 (1.09) | $F = 2.91$ | 2 | 2623 | .055 |
| | | d) Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision | $F = 36.90^b$ | 2 | 2618 | .025 |
| Tahmane's T2 Pairwise Comparisons | 3-year data | d) Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 3.76 (1.35) ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.56 (1.40) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.11 (1.31) | <u>Mean Differences</u> 2003 – 2002 = $-.19^c$ 2004 – 2002 = $.36^c$ 2004 – 2003 = $.55^c$ | 1 1 1 | 1712 1766 1758 | .013 .000 .000 |

Note. Significance values adjusted for multiple comparisons: ^a $p < .025$, ^b $p < .0125$, ^c $p < .017$.

Note. Responses were on a six-point Likert scale: 1=Never True; 2=Rarely True; 3=Sometimes True; 4=Usually True; 5=Often True; 6=Always True

Note. No univariate or multivariate within-cell outliers were identified for these analyses

Univariate ANOVAs indicated that alignment practices improved across time for three of the four indicators. For 2-year data, there was a significant increase in educators' perception that there was "Collaboration Toward Horizontal Alignment" and that there were "Regular Meetings on Instructional Issues" from 2003 to 2004. For 3-year data, the ANOVA revealed that educators' perceptions that "Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision" improved over time. Although moving in a positive direction in 2004, educators' ratings of whether "Instruction Matches Administrators' Expectations" did not change significantly over time. However, when examining the means from 2002 to 2004 in Table 9, their perceptions generally were positive, reporting that it was "usually true" that teachers' classroom instruction matches administrators' expectations.

For the remaining 3-year indicator, Tamhane's T2 pairwise comparisons, with Bonferroni correction, were conducted to identify where changes in educators' ratings occurred over time. As can be seen when examining the means in Table 9, there was a significant decline in the perception that "Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision" from 2002 to 2003. Their perception of whether "Administrators and Teachers Develop a Shared Vision" increased significantly in 2004 over their ratings for both 2002 and 2003.

Educators' responses for both the interview and the Working Systemically Survey indicated improvement over time in the status of alignment in their schools and districts. Further, educators' reports on the behaviors necessary to support the alignment process, such as collaborating to achieve horizontal alignment, also showed improvement over time. It is worth noting, however, that educators' ratings on the Working Systemically Survey regarding whether students had the necessary skills to succeed at the next grade were lower

than for ratings of both the alignment of instruction with assessment and curriculum with standards. Thus the finding from the interviews is reiterated, providing further support for the need of increased attention on vertical alignment. The consistency of educators' responses, particularly given the much larger population who completed the Working Systemically Survey, provides convergent validity (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) for these methods of assessing the progress of alignment at SEDL's intensive sites.

Research Question 1, Part C: What leadership roles are perceived as necessary to promote alignment, and has leadership capacity changed over time?

School improvement depends on strong leadership (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Effective leaders need a "clear and coherent strategy" (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). SEDL field staff have focused on helping district and school administrators become more effective leaders in guiding the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards. More effective leadership is essential if the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to state standards is to improve low-performing districts and schools. This section thus focuses on 1) district and school leadership roles necessary to guide alignment and 2) changes in leadership capacity over time.

What leadership roles should district and school leaders play to promote alignment?

During the spring 2004 interviews, the SEDL research team asked a total of 111 educators—31 from district offices and 80 from schools—what roles district and school leaders should play to promote alignment. Based on a content analysis of educator responses, SEDL research staff identified 10 leadership roles that are listed in Table 10 along with the percentages of educator responses for each of the district and school leadership roles.

Table 10
Percentage of Educators that Identified Leadership Role as School- and/or District-Level Role

| Leadership Role Categories | District Leadership Role Percent | School Leadership Role Percent |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Set expectations | 37.8 | 13.5 |
| Monitor | 31.5 | 36.0 |
| Provide resources and time | 28.8 | 11.7 |
| Understand data and alignment | 18.0 | 20.7 |
| Create a vision for alignment | 12.6 | 0 |
| Facilitate collaboration | 10.8 | 10.8 |
| Support cttaff | 9.9 | 10.8 |
| Be involved in classrooms | 9.0 | 25.2 |
| Be an instructional leader | 0 | 10.8 |
| Develop a plan for district goals | 0 | 7.2 |
| Other Roles | 14.4 | 14.4 |

Note: Total Educators = 111. Percentages do not add to 100 as educators were allowed to specify more than one leadership role category.

In the next subsections, these roles are described in more detail. The order of presentation of the 10 leadership roles in the following section does not follow the table order which is based on percent, but rather, is presented as a logical flow of leadership responsibilities.

Understand Data and Alignment. Educators indicated that understanding data and the alignment process is both a district (37.8%) and school (13.5%) leadership role. In terms of understanding achievement data, educators more often described district leaders as having the responsibility of disaggregating the data and providing it to the schools.

District leaders need to see that it [alignment] happens, to facilitate, to take the data that you receive and disperse it,

disaggregate it, and get all the stories you can from it. (Mesa school administrator)

Our role is to look at the district's test scores and see where the deficits are, and look at the schools' test scores, and assist them in areas of need. (Bayou City district administrator)

District leaders also must be knowledgeable about the process and make informed decisions about the process.

The district leadership needs to have expertise in the process – regardless of the subject area. The district leadership needs to be current on process, on theory, on the major issues that are out there like assessment and accountability. (Grisham district administrator)

The central office personnel needs to make informed decisions— they need to be certified and qualified to make decisions regarding alignment. (River City district administrator)

School leaders also must be knowledgeable about the alignment process. Their responsibility, however is to make sure that plans are being implemented based on the assessment data.

The principal must be knowledgeable and attend the meetings about the process of alignment. The school leaders need to read books on effective schools and be able to make changes. (River City district administrator)

[School leaders] make sure that we are adequately providing the educational needs of every child on our campus, make sure that we are in touch with what we learn from our assessments. (Pineland school staff)

The principal has to be the leader for the planning and alignment activities and has to have an understanding of what alignment is and an understanding of how to produce a curriculum that is going to be useable. (Grisham district administrator)

Create a Vision for Alignment. According to educators, creating a vision for alignment is a role reserved for district leadership (12.6%), as no one mentioned this as a school leadership role. Some educator remarks emphasized creating a vision for alignment.

I think the district leadership provides the philosophy and the direction, the stimulus for the alignment. (Pineland district administrator)

If you do not know what you are looking for, then how can you tell people how to get there? You have to have the vision of what should be happening. (Athens school administrator)

Other educators took this a step further and also focused on communicating the vision.

The central office leadership has the primary responsibility to communicate the vision. It has to become part of what you do over a period of time. The central leadership is responsible for the buy-in. (River City district administrator)

If you have a strong superintendent who believes in that [alignment], then you have strong teachers that are going to believe in that too. And it just trickles down. (Wrightsville school staff)

Set Expectations. District- and school-level educators described setting expectations as a district (37.8%) and school (13.5%) leadership role. In terms of setting expectations, educators described leadership tasks at both the district and school level very similarly. Expectation-setting activities for district and school leaders differed only in terms of audience. Educators generally described principals as setting expectations for teachers; the implication for district leaders is that the audience is the entire district.

I think that school leaders need to let teachers know exactly what's expected of them. Many teachers don't know what's expected of them, especially young teachers. (Forked River school staff)

The district sets forth the standard to which the schools within that district must follow. (Brooksville school staff)

At the most basic level, setting expectations is simply determining a direction for the improvement process, providing information about how the work will take place, and delegating responsibility. However, educators highlighted the more subtle aspects of setting expectations for alignment of standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment that makes the process more effective such as communication and commitment to expectations.

The principal's role is to let the staff know that he is committed to alignment, and then hold them accountable, and doing it in a positive way to make sure they do it. (Delta Village school administrator)

Communication, what are we going to do, who is going to do it, what are the results that we want and what results did we get, what are we going to do with these results, and what adjustments are going to be needed. (Bricktown school staff)

It's the role of the principal to set the expectations. (Pineland school administrator)

Develop a Plan to Meet District Goals. Once the district has established the vision and direction for the alignment of standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the school (7.2%) leadership is responsible for developing a plan to achieve the district goals, as no one mentioned this as a district leadership role.

I think the school leadership is very important in that they take what is set by the district and they implement it in their building. (Brooksville school administrator)

School leadership creates policies to help the alignment. (River City school staff)

Educators described planning as a process that includes more than simply putting something on paper. Planning involves implementation, follow-through, and assessment.

Basically, to take what the district philosophy and direction is and to make sure it is carried forth, and to make sure it is

completed, implemented, and assessed and followed on their particular campus. (Pineland school administrator)

The [school leaders] have to determine the individual interventions and strategies for the individual instructors. They need to put together a time line that can be worked within the calendar. They have to identify the resources that they will use to implement the strategies. (Farmville district administrator)

Provide Resources and Time for Alignment. Educators mentioned providing resources and time for alignment as a role for both district (28.8%) and school (11.7%) leadership in promoting alignment of standards with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Educators tended to describe district leadership responsibility in terms of providing and managing resources (both financial and material).

The most essential and critical strategy that we can use is to provide ongoing training for our teachers in acceptable instructional techniques and to help them understand what the expectations are and what determines proficiency at each level. (Farmville district administrator)

The role of the district leadership is number one, because we could not align without the resources, the time, and the money. (Grisham district administrator)

School leadership was primarily referred to as providing planning periods and job-embedded professional development time for teachers to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards.

School leadership must provide the opportunity for job-embedded professional development, and to share strategies, and to share students' work to determine the progress of the students. (Athens district administrator)

They must make sure that teachers have release time to meet to become familiar with the standards. This can work by hiring subs, or paying teachers for the meetings. (Desert Hills school administrator)

Facilitate Collaboration. While educators describe facilitating collaboration as both a district (10.8%) and school (10.8%) leadership role, the functions of district and school leaders in facilitating collaboration were defined differently. District leaders provide both monetary and informational resources to facilitate collaboration.

I think the [district leaders'] role is to provide the framework for professional dialogue and to present effective research. (Bricktown district administrator)

They [district leaders] facilitate it by giving us a time and a place. (Forked River school staff)

They [district leaders] should provide funding for the principals and the teachers to do the alignment. (River City district administrator)

School leaders provide more organizational and social support for collaboration.

I believe that there is an atmosphere of collegiality which needs to be fostered in the departments between department heads. I think that there needs to be leadership with the department heads. (Mesa school staff)

They [school leaders] need to provide the opportunity for teachers to meet and confer, to discuss what they are doing. We've got to communicate, and the administration has to provide the means for that communication for it to be successful. (Wrightsville school staff)

Support Staff. To support staff means that both district and school leaders are a source of knowledge, encouragement, and moral support for educators. Educators described both district-level (9.9%) and school-level (10.8%) level leadership actions similarly in terms of supporting staff.

The district leaders need to provide the encouragement to get the work done—to support the work. (River City school administrator)

Our [district leadership] role is to help them. We are not to dictate; we are a source of resources, guidance, and one of monitoring and feedback. (Bayou City district administrator)

We (school leaders) are also there to support the teachers, to be a resource, to listen to their needs and to work together with the teachers. (Farmville school administrator)

Be Involved in Classrooms. Both district (9.0%) and school (25.2%) leaders are expected to be involved in the classroom. While both district and school leaders are expected to conduct walk throughs and classroom visits, educators expect a more detailed and regular level of involvement from school leaders.

You [school leaders] have to make time, observe in the classroom, look at student work, and talk to the students. There has to be articulation between the building leadership and the staff. (Grisham school administrator)

School leaders need to be in the classrooms, to sit down with the teachers and review test scores, to look at the student work. The school leaders have a much larger role in alignment than most think they do. (River City district staff)

District leaders are expected to be involved in the classrooms to facilitate informed decision making and monitoring, not to provide instructional leadership.

There is no way for the district personnel to make decisions about curriculum and instruction if they have not been in the classroom and have not been observing what is going on in the classrooms. (River City district administrator)

We have to conduct walk throughs, and with the results of meaningful walk throughs, we can then all come to the table and discuss, what did we see, what do we need to do. (Bayou City district administrator)

Be an Instructional Leader. Educators identified being an instructional leader as a school (10.8%) leadership role rather than a district leadership role. Instructional leaders

make sure that classroom instruction is effective through modeling instructional techniques and reviewing student work.

The instructional leader is the principal at the school. He or she has that primary responsibility to make sure that there is an effective instructional program at that school and that students are learning and teaching is effective. (Highway Junction district administrator)

The principal has to role model instructional techniques, to try to change the school into a professional learning community, talk about student work, curriculum, and so on. (Bricktown school administrator)

Monitor the Implementation of Alignment. Both district-level (31.5%) and school-level (36.0%) educators identified monitoring as a district and as a school leadership role. Based on educator descriptions, monitoring is viewed as a proactive role in which district and school leaders are closely involved in school level work and are constantly checking to make sure that improvement is being made in all levels of the system. The main difference educators identified between monitoring functions at the district and school levels is the scope of what is to be monitored. School leaders are responsible to see that the day-to-day goals and expectations are being met.

School leadership is constantly working with vertical teams in the building, with grade level teams, with the departments, to ensure that the curriculum is being taught, and making sure that the students are learning. (Bricktown district administrator)

Probably, more so, [school leaders] are going into the classrooms, picking up the syllabus lesson plans when they enter, seeing what objectives are on the plan for that day - watching to see that the teacher is covering that. (Wrightsville district administrator)

District leaders are focused on the larger picture while still being a visible presence on the campuses.

They [district leaders] are the main. They are in charge of seeing that it follows through. That is their job is to see that the curriculum is aligned across the district. They have to, themselves, or their representative, go into the classroom. That's my opinion. Anybody can turn in a paper that says they are doing anything, they have to go look. Test scores can tell you, but you don't want to wait for that. (Bayou City school staff)

The main focus for the district personnel is to know what's happening on those campuses. We need, as district personnel, you need to know during the year how the students are doing until waiting until the very last after they've taken the [state achievement test] to know what happened. (Pineland district administrator)

Based on the descriptions of both district and school leadership roles discussed in the previous section, district and school leadership share similar responsibilities for monitoring, setting expectations, and providing resources and time, although the actual activities that define these role categories differ based on whether or not the leader is at the district or school level. The general pattern is one where both district and school leaders are expected to be visible on the campuses and in the classrooms on a regular basis. However, school leaders are described as more “hands-on” and more involved in daily details; district leaders are more involved in bigger issues such as how school level activities effect the larger goals of the campuses and the district.

Being a school leader is a complex job. Given the large number of responsibilities school leaders must manage, having a clear vision for school improvement and a clear vision of their own role in making that improvement a reality is essential. Likewise, *all educators* within the system must have a common understanding of district and school leadership roles. “Like distributed leadership at the school level, large-scale reform requires pluralized

leadership, with teams of people creating and driving a clear, coherent strategy” (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004).

Has Leadership Capacity to Support Alignment Changed Over Time?

In a standards-driven educational system, a critical component for achieving the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the standards is strong leadership capacity within the system. Effective educational leaders’ set expectations, provide needed resources and support to achieve system goals, use data to inform practice, and engage in monitoring feedback and reflection with their instructional staff (Lambert, 1998, Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As demonstrated from the interview data discussed above, educators in SEDL’s intensive sites reinforce the importance of these roles for leaders, particularly when the goal is to increase student achievement through alignment.

In this section, the role of leaders is examined further by examining 1) the involvement of district and school leaders in the alignment process and changes in their involvement over time, and 2) strategies used by leaders to support the alignment process and changes in the use of those strategies over time.

How do educators rate the current involvement of district and school leaders in the alignment process and have they perceived a change in their involvement over time?

As leaders work to build their capacity to implement and support change within the system, this increased capacity should be reflected in their behaviors toward achieving systemic change. When organizational change is implemented in a system, leaders demonstrate the importance of the reform effort through their participation in the process (Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Senge, 1990). Beyond the behaviors alone, however, it is educators’ perceptions of leaders’ involvement (see also Blase & Blase, 1999; Immegart, 1988) that help to identify where their attentions should be directed within a larger reform

effort (Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Senge, 1990). In this section, the research team will explore educators' perceptions of leadership involvement in the alignment process and whether educators perceived an improvement in leaders' involvement over time.

In addition to six questions directly addressing alignment issues from the spring 2004 interview discussed in Research Question 1, Part B, two questions also were included in the scale rating measure to gauge perception of the role of leadership with regard to alignment. The structure of these questions was identical to the alignment questions discussed previously in that there was a "current status" question and a follow-up question addressing perceived change since the previous year. Educators rated leaders' involvement in the alignment process using a 6-point Likert scale.

As shown in Table 11, educators provided relatively positive ratings in terms of both district and school leaders' involvement in the alignment process. A paired-samples *t* test indicated that educators' ratings of district and school leaders' involvement did not differ significantly from each other, $t(109) = -.768, p = .44$. Further, a MANOVA revealed that ratings of district and school leaders' involvement by district- and school-level educators did not differ significantly from one another, $F(2, 107) = 1.32, p = .27$. These findings indicate educators perceived that leaders were performing "well" to "very well" in their level of involvement with the alignment process. Educators' agreed on this point regardless of whether they worked at the district- or school-level, or whether they were evaluating a district or school leader.

Table 11
Educators' Perceptions of Leaders' Current Involvement in the Alignment Process

| Scale Rating Questions | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 3a. How involved are the district leaders in working toward alignment? | 4.61 | 1.08 |
| 4a. How involved are the school leaders in working toward alignment? | 4.68 | 0.90 |

Note: 1 = not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = somewhat; 4 = well; 5 = very well; 6 = extremely well (see Appendix B for complete spring 2004 interview questionnaire).

Educators also rated whether district and school leaders' involvement in the alignment process had improved since this time the previous year using a 5-point Likert scale. Table 12 presents mean responses for each of the "current status" follow-up questions addressing perceptions of change from the previous year. In both instances, responses suggest that involvement by district and school leaders is "Somewhat Better" than in the previous year at the same time.

Table 12
Educators' Perceptions of Change in Leaders' Involvement in the Alignment Process

| Scale Rating Questions | Mean | SD |
|--|------|------|
| 3a. How has (district leaders') involvement changed? | 4.07 | 0.75 |
| 4a. How has (school leaders') involvement changed? | 4.14 | 0.71 |

Note: 1 = much worse; 2 = somewhat worse; 3 = hasn't changed; 4 = somewhat better; 5 = much better.

A paired-samples t test demonstrated that educators reported equivalent increase in involvement from district- and school-level leaders, $t(95) = -.52, p = .60$. As with their ratings of leaders' involvement in alignment, a MANOVA revealed that school-level and district-level educators also did not differ in their perceptions of change in leaders' involvement over time, $F(2, 93) = 1.10, p = .34$. Thus, educators agreed on the increase in

leaders' involvement regardless of whether they worked at the district- or school-level, or whether they were evaluating a district or school leader.

Have educators' reports of strategies used by leaders to support the alignment process changed over time?

As leaders build their capacity to implement change, they increasingly engage in behaviors and establish structures that support the change process (Copland, 2003; Fullan, 2003). Leadership behaviors to support change may occur in many ways, including modeling the expected behaviors, promoting conversations about the reform effort, collaborating with teachers to solve problems, or providing the necessary resources to institute change (Blase & Blase, 1999; Lambert, 1998).

To assess whether leaders' capacity to support the alignment process has changed over time, indicators of leadership capacity from the Working Systemically Survey will be examined across multiple years. Using the leadership roles in alignment identified from the spring 2004 interview data above, the SEDL research team identified five items from the Working Systemically Survey¹² that address the strategies leaders use that can enhance the alignment process through monitoring, providing resources, setting expectations, attempting to understand student data, and being involved in the classrooms.

Questions consistent from 2003 to 2004:¹³

¹² As the Working Systemically Survey is an instrument in development, items were added, rephrased, or eliminated during the refinement process based on results from factor, items and other analyses (e.g., multicollinearity). Thus, the analyses examine response data for items that were consistent across three years (2002-2004) and, separately, two years (2003-2004) of the survey.

¹³ Correlations for two-year data: "Leaders Provide Time" with "Principal Monitors Instruction" $r(1750) = .46$; "Leaders Provide Time" with "Receive Help to Interpret Data" $r(1749) = .63$, "Principal Monitors Instruction" with "Receive Help to Interpret Data" $r(1747) = .47$, all p 's < .001.

- District and school leaders create the time necessary for staff to use data to solve problems and plan collaboratively. (Leaders Provide Time for Planning and Collaboration)
- The principal visits each classroom in our school to monitor instruction. (Principal Monitors Instruction)
- Both administrators and teachers receive help to interpret student data. (Receive Help to Interpret Data)

Questions consistent from 2002 to 2004:¹⁴

- Administrators ensure that teachers have the necessary resources to deliver high quality instruction. (Instructional Resources Are Available)
- Administrators' actions demonstrate their commitment to improving student learning. (Actions Demonstrate Commitment)

As can be seen from the analyses in Table 13, educators generally perceived that leadership capacity to support alignment has improved in SEDL's intensive sites over time. Given that the questions within each year range are significantly correlated, two one-way between-subjects MANOVAs¹⁵ indicated a significant difference in the combined dependent variables assessing leadership capacity to support alignment from 2002 to 2004. The results reflect a small association between time and leadership capacity for both 3- and 2-year data; 2002-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .01$, 2003-2004 partial $\eta^2 = .03$.

¹⁴ The items "Instructional Resources Are Available" and "Actions Demonstrate Commitment" were significantly correlated at $r(2603) = .61, p < .001$.

¹⁵ No univariate within-cell outliers were detected for either the 3- or 2-year analyses. Twenty-one multivariate within-cell outliers (5 in 2002, 10 in 2003, 6 in 2004) were identified for the 3-year analyses using Mahalanobis Distance values at $p = .001$. As no interpretation differences were identified in analyses run with and without the outliers, all outliers were retained. No multivariate outliers were identified for the 2-year analyses.

Table 13
Analyses of 2-Year (2003-2004) and 3-Year (2002-2004) Indicators of Leadership Capacity to Support Alignment

| Analysis | | Items included | Statistic | <i>df</i> between | <i>df</i> within | Sig. |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|------|
| MANOVA | 2-year data | a) Leaders Provide Time for Planning and Collaboration b) Principal Monitors Instruction c) Receive Help to Interpret Data | $F = 31.16^a$ | 2 | 1737 | .000 |
| | 3-year data | d) Instructional Resources Are Available e) Actions Demonstrate Commitment | $F = 16.77^a$ | 4 | 5204 | .000 |
| Univariate ANOVA Follow-ups | 2-year data | a) Leaders Provide Time for Planning and Collaboration ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.39 (1.49) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 3.84 (1.35) | $F = 40.75^b$ | 1 | 1757 | .000 |
| | | b) Principal Monitors Instruction ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.00 (1.71) ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.51 (1.40) | $F = 46.56^b$ | 1 | 1759 | .000 |
| | | c) Receive Help to Interpret Data ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.65 (1.46) ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.27 (1.31) | $F = 84.88^b$ | 1 | 1754 | .000 |
| | 3-year data | d) Instructional Resources Are Available | $F = 22.93^b$ | 2 | 2629 | .000 |
| | | e) Actions Demonstrate Commitment | $F = 27.71^b$ | 2 | 2620 | .000 |

Table 13 (continued)
Analyses of 2-Year (2003-2004) and 3-Year (2002-2004) Indicators of Leadership Capacity to Support Alignment

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|--------------------------------|---|------|------|
| Tahmane's T2 Pairwise Comparisons | 3-year data | d) Instructional Resources Are Available | <u>Mean Differences</u> | | | |
| | | ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 3.84 (1.34) | 2003 – 2002 = 08 | | | |
| | | ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 3.92 (1.41) | 2004 – 2002 = 41 ^c | 1 | 1719 | .547 |
| | | ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.25 (1.28) | 2004 – 2003 = 33 ^c | 1 | 1774 | .000 |
| | | | | 1 | 1765 | .000 |
| | | | | | | |
| | | e) Actions Demonstrate Commitment | <u>Mean Differences</u> | | | |
| | | ○ 2002 Mean (SD) = 4.06 (1.33) | 2003 – 2002 = -.06 | 1 | 1716 | .816 |
| | | ○ 2003 Mean (SD) = 4.00 (1.55) | 2004 – 2002 = .39 ^c | 1 | 1766 | .000 |
| | | ○ 2004 Mean (SD) = 4.45 (1.27) | 2004 – 2003 = .45 ^c | 1 | 1758 | .000 |

Note. Significance values adjusted for multiple comparisons: ^a $p < .025$, ^b $p < .0125$, ^c $p < .008$.

Note. Responses were on a six-point Likert scale: 1=Never True; 2=Rarely True; 3=Sometimes True; 4=Usually True; 5=Often True; 6=Always True

Note. No univariate or multivariate within-cell outliers were identified for these analyses.

Univariate analyses support the multivariate findings, demonstrating significant improvement over time in all individual indicators of leadership capacity to support the alignment process. For 2-year data, there was a significant increase from 2003 to 2004 in educators' perception that "Leaders Provide Time for Planning and Collaboration," that the "Principal Monitors Instruction," and that administrators do "Receive Help to Interpret Data." For 3-year data, educators' indicated that administrators ensure that "Instructional Resources Are Available" and that their "Actions Demonstrate Commitment" to student learning had significantly changed over time.

To determine between which years change had occurred for the 3-year data, Tamhane's T2 pairwise comparisons were conducted. As demonstrated by the means for each of the 3-year indicators of leadership capacity in Table 13, educators' ratings of whether administrators ensured that "Instructional Resources Are Available" and that their "Actions Demonstrate Commitment" to student learning had significantly increased in 2004 over their ratings in both 2002 and 2003. No significant changes occurred between 2002 and 2003 on these items.

In summary, not only have educators indicated that it is important for district and school leaders to monitor, set expectations, provide resources and time, be involved in the classrooms, and understand data when promoting alignment, but they perceive that their leaders are actively involved and improving in those skills necessary for achieving alignment in their district and school. These findings lend positive support for SEDL's work to help districts work systemically by increasing leaders' capacity to align standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

SECTION V: RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Research question 2 identifies the strategies SEDL field staff have used to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to align their curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards. Particular attention will be given to strategies used to increase 1) the district's and school's understanding of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state standards and 2) leadership capacity. The field staff engaged in two sets of strategies to address both these aspects of capacity. One set, which grew out of the Working Systemically Model's focus on curriculum, was to offer professional development. The second set relates to the model's focus on the organization. It encompasses various strategies to organize teams and their work.

Finally, the differing roles of the site coordinators and site specialists will be explored. In theory, the site coordinator manages all site activities, training leaders to take over these processes so as to ensure sustainability. The site specialist's role is to provide technical assistance related to how alignment will be expressed in classroom practice. In practice, the SEDL partners assigned to an individual site helped each other out and so the function of their activities overlapped.

Analytical approaches

In order to target analyses, the research staff selected certain site contact records of particular relevance to research question 2 and the time frame this report covers. These were converted to text files and organized for coding within the qualitative data analysis software program Atlas.ti. The following information gives an idea of patterns within this "slice" of the site contact records that research staff used to identify the strategies. Some general characteristics of this data set are:

- It includes data from all 16 sites with which SEDL worked between August 1, 2003 and May 31, 2004.
- Each of the 55 text files research staff included in the Atlas.ti database represents activity for one site during a quarter of the calendar years 2003 and 2004, as they fit into the period August 1, 2003 to May 31, 2004. (Given that only records for the academic year are represented, the third quarter of 2003 includes only records from August and September, 2003. For the same reason, the second quarter of 2004 includes records only from April and May 2004.)
- It reports on a total of 206 formal gatherings. Roughly one quarter of these were workshops or formal professional development, and the rest were other kinds of meetings. The most commonly reported meeting was with a district leadership team. The data set does not include reports written up after informal conversations, telephone calls or e-mails and letters, unless the site contact record author happened to include them in a report of a formal gathering.
- The number of formal gatherings reported per each of the 13 sites active in the project throughout the entire academic year ranged from 5 to 24. (3 of the 16 sites were active for only part of the year; 1 withdrew and 2 were added.)
- The number of formal gatherings reported per site visit ranged from one to six.
- The number of formal gatherings reported per month was 17 to 27. Activity was lower at the beginning of the academic year and over the winter holidays; intensity was highest in late spring 2004 [April (n=23) and May (n=26)].
- Nineteen individuals contributed to the site contact records. The writing varies stylistically from author to author. Since field staff enter the notes into the

structured fields of a Filemaker Pro database, however, topical variation is constrained. Where the fields request a narrative entry, one sees the most divergent responses. Taken together, the entries fit the genre of field journal writing, but that means a reader can find throughout the database quick jottings; concise summaries of meetings, totaling one to two pages; or almost verbatim transcripts of meetings, where individuals' utterances are paraphrased as they occur and then included in the report of the meeting.

Research staff developed the two sets of strategies via multiple analytic approaches. First, they held a roundtable discussion in August 2004, during which research and field staffs identified strategies that field staff used to build coherent understandings of alignment and leadership capacity. To begin exploring patterns in the site contact records, research staff used the list developed during the roundtable as a basis for a coding system. They read and simultaneously coded a randomly selected subset of the portion of site contact records analyzed for this report, representing approximately 20% of the Atlas.ti database (11 of 55 site-specific text files).

During the coding process, research staff learned more about site activity. Consequently, they added some strategies, and collapsed others into a single strategy. Text searches throughout all of the 55 documents supplemented the coding, to investigate cross-site variation in strategy use. As will be evident, though analytically distinct, the categories of action that fall into each strategy often occur simultaneously. Research staff marked a textual passage with as many codes as applicable. In Appendix C are two extended vignettes that illustrate further this convergence during particular events.

Description of the Strategies

To move forward in the Taking Actions/Monitoring Results stage, SEDL field staff used two sets of strategies to build leadership capacity and to build coherent understandings of alignment.

- The first set of strategies describes how the field staff facilitated professional development to build educators' leadership capacity, and deepen their understandings of how aligning their district's curriculum, instruction and assessment with state standards could bring about district-wide improvement in student achievement.
- The second set of strategies encompasses actions pertaining to managing teamwork, the settings in which it took place and the interim outcomes of these processes of change. Field staff helped team members to implement and monitor plans developed during prior stages of the model.

Both of these are described in more detail below. Research staff chose the examples from sites other than the two highlighted in Appendix C so as to give the reader more information about cross-site variation. Cuts in the quotes from the site contact records are indicated by "...", and if a site contact record writer used this punctuation in the original text, it was changed to a comma or period. In addition, research staff corrected spelling and spelled out abbreviations. Individuals are identified by role titles instead of their names. Otherwise, selections are verbatim presentations of field staff observations with changes indicated by brackets, such as deletions of identifying information.

Professional development

SEDL field staff strategies for educators' professional development ranged from formal, bounded work sessions to one-on-one informal coaching. This set of strategies

encompassed activities that targeted improving educators' understandings of concepts related to alignment and to working systemically overall, as well as strengthening leaders' abilities to direct this process and ensure its sustainability.

While technically not related to the time period Section V covers, it is important to note that field staff invited district leaders to attend SEDL's leadership institutes, held in summer 2003 and 2004. Leaders from the sites gathered for 2 to 3 days in SEDL's Austin offices for formal training. In June 2003, the institute focused on preparing the district and school administrators to act as instructional leaders. Dr. Jean Rutherford from the National Center for Educational Accountability trained the group on the practices of high-performing school districts. The June 2004 leadership institute taught attendees about leaders' roles in promoting instructional coherence in their schools and districts.

- The most explicitly didactic form of professional development that field staff provided was giving formal presentations.

Throughout the 2003-2004 academic year, just attending the SEDL meetings offered educators the opportunity for formal training on alignment as indicated by one of the site coordinators in the passage below.

I then displayed the Working Systemically Model on the overhead and asked the group what we have addressed thus far. They immediately went to standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. I emphasized the importance of alignment of these components, not just the components alone. I also mentioned that we were building the capacity of the professional staff as we were teaching the new vocabulary strategies. I then displayed the Stages of Work flowchart slide and provided a brief description of what we have done at each stage. (Brooksville, OK, reading test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

- Modeling involves demonstrating various techniques and behaviors for the subsequent adaptation of observing educators.

This strategy includes ongoing demonstrations of leadership capacity provided by field staff in their interactions with the educators; the scope of this activity does not lend itself to pithy examples. More bounded and explicit forms of modeling are when site specialists demonstrated instructional techniques, as described below.

[SEDL math specialist] models classroom instructional processes that incorporate informal and formal assessments and a variety of teaching strategies to self-selected district math teachers that include all of the [name of school deleted] Middle School math teachers . . . Each lesson has a specific content focus, but the lessons are ones that can be adjusted for all the teachers attending. So far, no teacher has had a problem in integrating the strategies into classroom use. (Athens, LA, math development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

The district in this case officially acknowledged this SEDL modeling as professional development and awarded CLU credit for participation in these sessions. Perhaps due to district sanction of the sessions, the site specialist noted that district content leaders determined the topics on which she would focus.

- Field staff promoted hands-on learning, sometimes during formal professional development sessions, but also in supporting educators as they learned new ways to exercise leadership during meetings.

In addition to modeling instruction, field staff helped educators to use data (most often, student achievement data) to improve their districts' alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the state standards. In some instances the field staff directly analyzed the data for educators. When possible, they also tried to teach leaders how to do it for themselves.

This session was the first in a series of sessions we have planned to teach the principals of Mesa, NM to organize their data in an Excel spreadsheet. My hope was that they could learn a few Excel basics, and that we could start to identify principals who can help other principals learn these skills when I'm not there.

This site specialist noted that attendees initially appeared reluctant to participate. After he explained how to use Excel, though, he let them work with the program doing a few exercise on their own, and got more engagement.

As the session unfolded, though, they actually got a lot more engaged and seemed much more enthusiastic about learning what I was showing them. Several of the principals wanted me to come to their school and work one-on-one with them to set up a student management system, and some . . . started enjoying examining and disaggregating their own student data and talking about setting goals for the teachers. And they loved making graphs. (Mesa, NM, reading development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

Across the sites, field staff met with teachers and cross-level teams and, in the process of doing work necessary for alignment, taught educators specific skills, such as how to study their state standards, to map their curriculums within and across grade levels, to develop lesson plans and assessments to cohere with them, and how to use assessment data to modify instruction so that the needs of those students who performed below task would be met.

These activities, then, had elements of both formal and embedded professional development, a combination advocated by field staff when coaching districts on how to select professional development activities for their staff members. As the site coordinator in Brooksville, OK, noted, when teachers were involved in the curriculum and instruction meetings, they were simultaneously learning to collaborate, an example of embedded professional development, since skills were reinforced as part and parcel of ongoing job responsibilities.

[A teacher] brought up a good point that those conversations with your colleagues are the valuable part. It sounds like that didn't happen everywhere . . . But it's vital. It's easier for the elementary staff because grade levels have a common planning time. It's a challenge for the secondary staff, but let's figure it out. The high school team in the other district that we work with [she is referring to Roydale, AR] figured out options to get people together at same time. (Brooksville, OK, reading test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

The site coordinator, during the same meeting, pointed out that participation in the SEDL activities (in this instance, learning how to do classroom walk-throughs) also developed leaders' skills.

This IS the work of high performing leaders/principals. This is what high-performing principals do. They're no longer considered managers and disciplinarians. They are instructional leaders. We will have to come to feel safe with principals in and out of the classrooms—not as evaluators, but to see how teaching and learning are progressing. (Brooksville, OK, reading test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

- SEDL field staff often distributed professional literature to educators on a variety of topics related to working systemically. Readings were used in subsequent discussions.

When research staff reviewed the list of readings that field staff used during the Taking Action/Monitoring Results stage, they found that the list of readings that treated systemic reform was shorter than the reading lists for other topics, although broadly distributed. In contrast, project-wide, field staff collectively distributed a wider variety of readings on alignment issues, but the choice to recommend a particular reading depended on a site's individual needs. For example, math- and reading-focused sites had readings suited to those respective content areas. Additionally, readings addressed different grade levels, according to grade levels of the schools (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school). Site specialists also took into account student demographics (e.g., English language learners).

Educators did not always have the time to read the literature in-between meetings, so site coordinators sometimes gave them time to review the article or book chapter during the meeting itself, or distributed very short passages for immediate discussion.

The article [SEDL reading specialist] found . . . was very effective with this small group. It's only two pages but it has a great deal of information and got

the teachers to really think about how they organize for instruction and how they teach concepts and measure progress. It's a wonderful resource for introducing the idea of alignment. (Highway Junction, LA, reading development site, 3rd quarter, 2003).

In another site, again to save educators' time, the site coordinator summarized a reading for the team. In addition, to help educators grasp quickly a reading's gist, he drew their attention to good graphics in the book.

I pulled two sections from Marzano's book, *What Works In Schools*, to encourage discussion and affirm the right direction. The first section was on the identified factors at the school level that were researched based improvement factors. The second section was the critical role of leadership. I also pulled a chart that showed the effect of teachers and schools on student achievement. (Wrightsville, OK, reading development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

The following excerpt illustrates an especially rich discussion of professional literature; it appears that members of the group were familiar with the material, perhaps because of its direct relevance to their jobs.

I [site coordinator] then asked [SEDL reading specialist] to lead the discussion on McKeown/Beck article. She began by asking if everyone was clear about the distinction between Tier 1, 2, and 3 words. She clarified that Tier 2 words were comparatively high frequency words that were concept-laden and critical to understanding text. She mentioned that Wednesday PD [professional development] day would focus, in part, on research-based instructional strategies for teaching Tier 2 and 3 words. [SEDL Reading specialist] then asked if anyone found anything particularly interesting or surprising in the article.

[School's reading specialist] said she found it surprising that it was difficult to pick up the meaning of words from context. [SEDL reading specialist] confirmed this saying that Marie Carbo found that meanings of only 2% of words can be ascertained through context. ELL [English language learners] and speakers of non-standard English would have even more trouble. . . . [another school's reading specialist] stated that in using novel units, context clues are much harder to find. [SEDL reading specialist] stated that this was exactly why deep, rich vocabulary knowledge is so important to proficient reading. . . . [SEDL reading specialist said] it takes repetition in different forms, particularly when it is necessary to distinguish between different meanings for the same word. . . . [SEDL reading specialist] then mentioned the

importance of playing with words with students. (Roydale, AR, reading test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

- In the most informal form of professional development, field staff gave critique while on- and even off-site, via calls and e-mails. They reviewed plans and other documents the teams generated, as well as asked guiding questions during conversations. Broadly construed, as one site coordinator has described it, as informal coaches they were not “in the game,” but offered ongoing support “from the side.”

In this example, the site specialist has enlisted a teacher to do part of a presentation on an instructional technique, use of graphic organizers, giving the educator an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Then, via some constructive comments, the field staff member clarified how to use a graphic organizer in a way that would promote alignment better than suggestions the teacher made.

After the break, [teacher] gave her samples of the graphic organizers. Hers were not vocabulary related, however, so I had to tactfully caution the staff on using other types of graphic organizers. I explained and modeled the remaining strategies. (Brooksville, OK, test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

In Athens, LA, where the math specialist modeled instruction, research staff also found that she followed up previous modeling with giving critique during subsequent sessions. Each meeting began “with a sharing of how learnings from the previous meeting/s were applied to classroom activities by the teachers.” The math specialist also coached a content specialist, building this educator’s leadership capacity and assisting her to help the teachers more effectively in-between SEDL visits to the field.

In between meetings, [content specialist] observes these teachers in the classroom and debriefs their efforts to enact the strategies. If more assistance is needed, she models the same strategies in the classroom and then debriefs

with the teacher again. [SEDL math specialist] also coaches [content specialist] in strategies to assist the teachers when appropriate. (Athens, LA, math development site, 4th quarter 2003).

This kind of follow-up often occurred as part of one-on-one interaction outside the context of a meeting, professional development session or workshop. Field staff frequently included the content of the informal communication that went on in-between site visits in their reports of collective gatherings. Had the analysis of data for this report included site contact records written up after e-mail and telephone contact, there would likely be even more examples of this kind of coaching. For example, the site coordinator for Forked River, AR, a reading development site, scheduled conference calls with educators there every two to three weeks between August 12, 2003, and November 3, 2003, continuing with monthly calls between January 4, 2004, to March 29, 2004. This practice was unusual, but bears mentioning since it was extensive and yet reports of it were not coded since these were not face-to-face meetings. General kinds of opportunities for giving critique were likely to have taken place during the 39 in-person conversations, 43 telephone conversations and 24 e-mails documented in the complete site contact records for activity between August 1, 2003, and May 31, 2004, but to be efficient in selecting the records with the richest data on all of the strategies, the text of these records were not coded for this report's analyses.

Managing teamwork

Field staff helped educators develop the leadership skills and knowledge of alignment during meetings of leadership- and content-focused teams. Organizing these gatherings involved another subset of strategies. SEDL field staff provided educators assistance to help

them create environments where they could collaborate productively on alignment work. As part of this work, SEDL field staff helped build trusting relationships, conduct productive meetings, assign tasks to meet goals set out in existing plans, maintain focus on stated priorities, and develop tools to monitor implementation.

- SEDL field staff built relationships with and among educators, encouraging them to forge trusting professional teams and informal networks.

Relationship building usually involved a mix of socializing and business conversation, either in the “chit-chat” before and after meetings, or during meals. As one site coordinator noted below, the style of forging alliances varied from district to district. One can infer that difference was in part because SEDL staff were visiting different states that incorporate diverse cultures.

These are informal meetings over lunch. These are not agenda planned meetings. I am never sure who will attend. The core usually is [district data specialist], and [district mathematics specialist]. At this particular lunch, [district official], joined us. I am interested in an update on the system and look for opportunities to stress program support and coherence . . . This lunch meeting is becoming fairly routine. I never know who will attend. It is a nice opportunity to reengage with the system and locate any areas of concern . . . These informal meetings involving food are critical to the work in River City [actual site name deleted, pseudonym inserted]. Personal business and school business are intertwined. This is not at all like Wrightsville [actual site name deleted, pseudonym inserted], Oklahoma. Informal meetings are still important, but they do not include eating nor very much personal information. (River City, LA, a math development site, 1st quarter, 2003).

Of course, professional networks also emerged from more business-like interactions in district offices and the schools. The following narrative exemplifies this kind of relationship-building as well as providing an example of how, when field staff turned over, the new SEDL representative had to rebuild trust. Six of the 16 sites had field staff turnover during the past academic year. In the process, educators might take the opportunity to express concerns

regarding how the project had progressed thus far. Changes in who staffed a site was the consequence of factors independent of planned site work (such as changes in SEDL employees' personal and professional goals). Turnover posed challenges to the relationship building, but also opportunities for site work to correct course, where and if necessary.

Below the site coordinator for High Meadows, NM, a reading development site, described how she introduced educators there to a newly assigned reading specialist. Earning the trust of one particular district official was more difficult than forging relationships with the teachers. The district official wanted to know more about the reading specialist's qualifications as well as express dissatisfaction with the SEDL staff turnover. The site coordinator facilitated a meeting between the site specialist and her. Skeptical of the reading specialist's expertise, she was satisfied to learn that he, like all other SEDL content specialists, had classroom experience.

She does ask [SEDL reading specialist] about his teaching background and he tells her. She seems satisfied to hear it from him and I think I detect that she is beginning to listen to him with interest. [SEDL reading specialist] asks her if there is anything she would like for him to do and she replies she would like to know how well the teachers are utilizing their leveled readers. He says he will find out when he visits them this morning and we agree that he can debrief her the next day. (High Meadows, NM, reading development site, 1st quarter 2004).

During the meeting, the district official made "strong and repeated comment about two of SEDL staff having left" High Meadows, NM. The site coordinator mused, "it looks like when staff left, they took it harder than I had known," pointing out that this loss was exacerbated by the additional adjustments necessary after "losing their former [district official] and also their [deleted name of software program] TA [technical assistance] person. Quite a bit of change and loss to have occurred at one time." The site coordinator began to think through how to continue building a good relationship with this district official. Given

the recent erosion of trust, the strength of the professional network had even higher import than usual. Like the site coordinator in River City, she wanted to think about the specific relational needs of the educators in this particular site.

I think they are taking to him [new SEDL reading specialist] rather well but if he should also leave, adios amigo [meaning that the site is likely to withdraw from the SEDL project]. Surely the psychology of working with school personnel varies with each site. The smallness and relative closeness of this faculty make for different dynamics and social interactions as well as personal interactions than I have found at other sites, perhaps more intensity and greater trust . . . I think we took a few more steps towards earning her trust and support. I believe it will take ongoing efforts like this to get her more involved. If all goes as she has outlined for next year, then she will have more time and will be more focused on curriculum and instruction. She is a woman who likes to run the show and we will need to continue to ensure that she sees us as supporting what she wants to do.

This observation that small sites' needs differ from those of large sites was the topic of one of this year's roundtable and will be explored further in the project's final report.

The reading specialist's introduction to High Meadows included direct interactions with teachers, because the site coordinator opined, "There is often nothing more powerful than one-on-one interactions, especially for relationship and trust building." They were also following up on this district official's suggestion.

During our meeting with the High Meadows, NM school improvement leadership team, we broached the idea of [SEDL reading specialist] meeting with individual teachers during their planning periods in order to look over their reading assessment data and instructional methods. Prior to this, [SEDL reading specialist] and I had discussed this as a good strategy for him to become acquainted with the teachers and the student data. While a little time was spent at the last meeting, it was evident that more intensive time was necessary in order to gain the information needed as quickly as possible. The teachers responded very favorably to [SEDL reading specialist] discussion with them and were agreeable to having him come to work with them during their planning periods. (High Meadows, NM, reading development site, 1st quarter 2004).

Forging these alliances was utilitarian, with the goal being to raise the professional caliber of how educators interacted, so as to get them to improve the quality of their schools. The attention SEDL staff paid to accomplishing something tangible with these newly developing networks was seen during hands-on learning professional development sessions, where teachers worked on studying the standards and developing lesson plans, instructional techniques and assessments to correspond. But, during meetings, there were also explicit discussions about the importance of educators' collaboration. The passage below describes such an occasion.

We shifted to discussing issues around building rapport and buy in. [It was] noted that one of the principals said that his teachers had had a bad experience in the past with the junior high teachers talking down to them. The group agreed that this had to be avoided. They decided that they needed to act as colleagues and work professionally to address key issues. They anticipate that there will be some difficulty, particularly in regard to teachers choosing to teach what is best known and favorite, but that difficulty needs to be handled with diplomacy not a hammer. They decided that they wanted to talk through some strategies to address this as the work progresses. (Athens, LA, math development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

- SEDL field staff organized meetings. This work included helping to write agendas, to schedule meetings, and to create comfortable working environments so as to enhance productivity.

Successful meetings depended on the site coordinators' attention to detail. This planning also had to be communicated to leaders in the sites. Thus, it was common to have agendas for meetings included in the site contact records, and to see that an educator in the site having given it them prior approval:

I worked up a tentative agenda and sent it to [curriculum director] agenda to review. She reviewed the agenda and scheduled our planning committee to meet on Tuesday at 8:30 before the Wednesday district leadership team. My agenda is: . . .

1. Check-in, what's happening?
2. Sharing, what have you learned recently?

3. My role
4. NCEA research
 - Compare to Wrightsville
 - Select priorities.
 - What is missing in Wrightsville
5. Problem solving
6. Example
7. Work at [district leadership team]
(Wrightsville, OK, reading development site, 3rd quarter, 2003).

Site coordinators often made sure that participants would be comfortable, for example, that there was food and coffee available. Some even gave thought to how the furniture arrangement would affect the meeting participants' interaction. Below is an example as applied to a venue for the site specialist's work.

The site coordinator had asked the room to be set-up with the tables in a chevron formation. This was done, but the tables were slanted at the wrong angle so there were people with their backs to the presenter, rather than their sides. During a morning break, we asked the teachers to reverse the slant and they did so rather easily. (Brooksville, OK, reading test site, 1st quarter, 2004).

- SEDL field staff helped leaders to define specific responsibilities that would accomplish broader goals, and to assign tasks to people and time periods.

Reviewing district leadership teams' action plans often resulted in more specific assignment of tasks necessary to address what the team had identified as "critical elements" during earlier stages of implementing the Working Systemically Model.

We reviewed the action plan—letting the group individually look through the action steps and asking for their comments, questions or concerns. For now everyone felt okay about the action steps. (Farmville, NM, reading development site, 1st quarter, 2004).

The team in Farmville had general discussion about their plan's first critical element, (assessment) without assigning any specific tasks. The second critical element was the standards and the third critical element, to create the vocabulary lists. Field staff were able to assign specific tasks related to addressed the second and third critical elements:

We reviewed the action steps for this critical element and decided to create a timeline for the work to be done . . . We spent a majority of the time getting clear on the timeline and the roles that everyone would be responsible for. We did this timeline specifically for critical elements 2 and 3. (Farmville, NM, reading development site, 1st quarter, 2004).

Assigned tasks also occurred outside of meetings as part of the on-going communication described previously.

I e-mailed [teacher] upon my return to the office after the site visit and thanked him for the planning he and I did on Tuesday afternoon. Also, I asked him if he would let me know how Thursday and Friday's assessments went in grades two and three and what grades are signed up for the assessment the first full week in September. I will be sending this e-mail as an attachment to [district official] to let her know what needs to be happening with [name of data analysis software program deleted]. I will be e-mailing [teacher] on Friday to get her opinion of the assessments too. (High Meadows, NM, development site, 3rd quarter, 2003).

- SEDL field staff members helped leaders to maintain their focus on alignment-related issues during work sessions.

Field staff kept educators' discussions on-track, bringing them back to the goals they had set out for themselves in the action plans. These aims always related to promoting systemic work that would bring about greater alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the state standards, and hence, it was hoped, raise student achievement. Despite these written, explicit agreements, attentions wandered during meetings and at times other priorities competed. A popular concern that could take up the lion's share of a meeting was student discipline.

Discussion turned to discipline issues. Members wanted to discuss the backtalk problem and what could be done. [Site coordinator] tried to redirect by saying the issue was that principal couldn't be out supporting instructional issues if tied up with discipline issues. Discussion returned to discipline issues of dress code violations, students wandering halls, absences, signing out to go home without getting word from teachers that kids are missing. [Principal] wanted to talk about these issues so that everyone could "get on the same page." (Roydale, AR, reading test site, 2nd quarter, 2004).

Other distractions were similar, in that they related to putting the blame for poor student performance on the students themselves, such as discussing how some students were unable to achieve (this contention was most often applied to special education students and English language learners). Educators in the sites were not consistently convinced that the SEDL initiative was the only way to help their districts, and so at times brought in other programs, especially where these were funded by grants, and these additional curricular projects sapped educators' energies for SEDL-sponsored reforms. Districts might suffer from other kinds of turmoil that drew attention away from systemic work, such as new construction, school reorganizations, or leadership turnover. Other challenges to maintaining focus grew out of personal issues in the lives of SEDL staff and/or the educators in the sites. The field staff had to deal with all of this competition for attention, even as the protocols for the work itself shifted, as to be expected with a research/development model.

- SEDL field staff encouraged educators to monitor progress and ensure that all people assigned tasks actually accomplished them. Toward that end, they developed monitoring tools that leaders could use while assessing various aspects of alignment-related activities.

As the site coordinator discussed in the passage below, developing plans was much easier than accomplishing their goals. The site coordinators therefore offered various tools to educators in the sites to motivate pertinent parties with well-delineated projects that leaders could easily oversee. Leaders, in turn, were to report back on progress during the appropriate meeting structure, and in effect, to monitor their own monitoring, so that the work would be sustainable.

[Site coordinator] then told the group that they had an excellent plan that would indeed improve student achievement. However, research did highlight

one critical reason why plans don't get the intended results. The plans are never implemented. I provided a list of things that were needed for a plan to be implemented: clear expectations, system wide monitoring, professional collaboration, intervention strategies. Each part was discussed. I discussed the tools developed to help (district plan, curriculum documents, assessment items, data system, IC [innovation configuration, a tool used to monitor change]) and the structures available (the district leadership team, faculty meetings, department meetings, principal meetings with directors). I then introduced the "Campus Administrator's Daily Reflective Log" and the corresponding "District-Level Administrator's Daily Reflective Log." The overriding question is: What Did I Do Today to Improve Student Achievement?. The form is set up as a weekly calendar with six areas to be reviewed at the end of every day. We asked that 3 to 5 minutes be used at the end of every day for the appropriate administrator to complete the form. (River City, LA, math development site, 3rd quarter, 2003).

Another primary tool that teams used to assess progress was the "Action Plan Implementation Review" form, used by some though not all site coordinators. Some sites were in effect still modifying plans as they took action and had not yet engaged in enough implementation to begin assessing progress. Other sites had existing methods of monitoring, so the field staff did not introduce the action plan implementation review SEDL developed. The site coordinator in Highway Junction, however, did find the Action Plan Implementation Review useful.

I then showed them the Action Plan Implementation Review form and we talked about how they could complete this form once they had a more specific action plan to accomplish the one or two key activities in the district improvement plan. I took some time to explain what was meant by evidence of implementation and evidence of impact. They looked at the district plan and saw that they already had some potential ways of looking at evidence of implementation but there was nothing that looked at evidence of impact. I talked to them about walk-throughs as a means of getting information about impact of staff development on teacher behavior and student learning. (Highway Junction, LA, reading development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

As mentioned in the quote above, walk-throughs were a primary way that field staff tried to encourage cross-level cooperation, as well as sustainability for the work. They helped

district and school leaders learn what to observe when visiting classrooms. District officials and especially principals needed to know what criteria to look for as signs of quality instruction. The field staff developed checklists to monitor progress or modified existing versions used in the districts already. SEDL field staff also observed classrooms themselves, alone or accompanying educators during walk-throughs. Field staff hoped district and school officials might begin to understand themselves as instructional leaders, not only as administrators.

We discussed the classroom walk-throughs. He didn't have much to say. I know this is new for him. I shared that I had told [teacher] 4 positive things:

- 1) the students were well behaved,
- 2) the classrooms were clean and attractive,
- 3) teachers were interacting with students,
- 4) most students appeared to be working.

[Site coordinator] and [district official] had gone for a short walkthrough in the high school classrooms while I was working with [teachers], and she brought up those walk-throughs now. She asked [district official] how much time he saw teachers talking versus students talking. [He] said the teachers were doing all the talking. [Site coordinator] said that research has found that a typical classroom is about 80% teacher talking. (Forked River, AR, reading development site, 4th quarter, 2003).

One ongoing challenge with walk-throughs was alleviating teachers' anxiety and assuring them that the purpose of walk-throughs was to collect data about progress toward alignment goals, not to evaluate their individual instructional performance. Note then, in the excerpt above, the emphasis on students' behavior (three of four criteria).

Research staff have attempted via these descriptions to illustrate the strategies used by SEDL field staff one-by-one. As seen in the descriptions, a given event might exemplify several strategies simultaneously. To illustrate how the strategies overlapped in practice, and often bolstered leadership capacity and understandings of alignment in concert, research staff decided to present two extended narratives that illustrate the field staff activities in process

(See Appendix C for these narratives). During the process of writing the vignettes, and as part of ongoing discussions among the research team as they wrote up the report findings, research staff noted the somewhat distinct roles of the site coordinator and the site specialist. The final part of Section V explores cross-site patterns of site coordinators' use of strategies compared to those used by the site specialists.

SEDL Field Staff Assistance

It is not always apparent in the descriptions of the strategies as discrete entities that SEDL field staff members worked in pairs, one pair per site. Each partner was primarily responsible for a different aspect of the work, but site coordinators and site specialists worked closely with each other. Usually, they traveled together to sites. They supported each other as they carried out the strategies described above. In addition, as seen in the description of the strategies, many of them overlapped or pertained to all of the work; none were the purview of only site coordinators or site specialists.

Since research staff had not built a comparison of site coordinators versus site specialists into the existing coding scheme, the team went back to the site contact records for Taking Action/Monitoring results, and re-read all 55 text files in the Atlas.ti database to determine how the partnering worked across the sites. As a first pass, research staff noted, for the purposes of building Table 14, whenever a site coordinator or site specialist utilized one of the strategies at least once in a particular site. Table 14, then, builds foundational understanding of how partnering worked cross-site, though research staff did not intend to determine the strategies' frequency, intensity nor efficacy. These topics will be revisited in the project's final report next year.

Table 14
Cross-site Strategies to Promote Leadership Capacity (L) and Coherent Understandings of Alignment (A): Number of Sites Using Strategies¹⁶

| Field Staff Role: | Site Coordinator | | Site Specialist | |
|---|------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|
| | L | A | L | A |
| <i>Subquestion area of focus:</i> | | | | |
| STRATEGY SETS | | | | |
| Professional Development | | | | |
| <i>Giving formal presentations</i> | | 7 | 9 | 4 |
| <i>Modeling</i> | | 13 | 6 | 8 |
| <i>Promoting hands-on learning</i> | | 14 | 12 | 10 |
| <i>Distributing professional literature</i> | | 10 | 9 | 4 |
| <i>Giving critique</i> | | 12 | 11 | 6 |
| Average # of sites where strategy was used | | 11.2 | 9.4 | 6.4 |
| | | | | |
| Managing Teamwork | | | | |
| <i>Building relationships</i> | | 15 | 15 | 13 |
| <i>Organizing meetings</i> | | 15 | 10 | 8 |
| <i>Assigning tasks</i> | | 14 | 9 | 3 |
| <i>Maintaining focus</i> | | 12 | 11 | 5 |
| <i>Developing monitoring tools</i> | | 12 | 12 | 4 |
| Average # of sites where strategy was used | | 13.6 | 11.4 | 6.6 |

Table 14 presents several general patterns of practice that confirm the distinct roles of the site coordinators and site specialists. All strategies were used by a site specialist or site coordinator in at least three of the sites during the past academic year. For both roles, the most common strategy used was building relationships, with promoting hands-on learning as another typical practice. Yet, it is clear that site coordinators and site specialists had different emphases in their work. Site coordinators tended to focus more on leadership capacity. On average, site coordinators used strategies to build leadership capacity as they offered professional development (in 11.2 sites) and managed teamwork (in 13.6 sites). Site specialists conducted less work on leadership capacity (6.4 and 6.6 sites, respectively). Site

¹⁶ Note: In Wrightsville, OK, there were reports only of site coordinator activity; in Washington City, TX, there is only one meeting reported for the entire academic year, which a site specialist documented. Therefore, the highest total in any cell is only 15, although the chart as a whole reports on 16 sites' activities.

specialists were more central than site coordinators in strengthening educators' understandings of alignment; they provided professional development related to alignment more commonly (in an average of 12 sites) while fewer site coordinators (in 9.4 sites) did so.

Interestingly, when managing teamwork is considered, site coordinators were more commonly involved in alignment work (in 11.4 sites) than the site specialists (9.6 sites). Since their responsibilities included coordinating all site activities, including those of the site specialists, there was frequent cross-over of site coordinator activities into alignment-related meetings, at least as seen during Taking Action/Monitoring Results. For example, when site coordinators helped to develop monitoring tools for official leaders to use, leaders' understanding of the instructional change grew that they were to monitor, and so inherently promoted their understandings of alignment.

Site specialists did build leadership capacity. The most common way they did that was to promote hands-on learning via educators' collaboration. This work on alignment required teachers to take on some leadership qualities as they "owned" the action plans in implementing them. As educators cooperated, used student assessment data to monitor their own instruction, and developed tools to assess the competence of their content teams, they built their own leadership skills while learning about alignment in practice. As seen in the pattern within the columns of Table 14 associated with managing teamwork, the number of sites tends to decline as one reads down, since the strategies are roughly sequential as the Working Systemically model progresses through its stages. This pattern may change as the alignment work progresses further in all of the sites; during the current 2004-2005 academic year, field staff are emphasizing site specialists' alignment work with teacher teams, and the numbers seen in this chart might appear more balanced were research staff to analyze the

current year's site contact records. During the past academic year, one also finds most site specialists using most of the professional development strategies; it is possible that they will rely less, for example, on formal presentations as the educators' understanding of alignment deepens.

As a final note: these counts of strategy use are not statistically related to the project's desired outcomes, so it would be inaccurate to conclude that the site coordinators' apparently more central role (if one relies on total counts of strategy use) means their work is more significant than that done by site specialists.

SECTION VI: RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How has student achievement data changed in SEDL's intensive sites over time?

The intent of this section is to investigate student achievement patterns in schools where SEDL's Working Systemically Model has been implemented. As student achievement improves, there should be fewer students represented in the lowest test performance levels as defined by each state. Insofar as the model proposes to help improve achievement levels by increasing capacity for learning, positive trends in student performance provide support for the model—especially when combined with other data sources. Analysis in this section includes comparisons along two dimensions: 1) school-to-school comparisons within a state and 2) comparisons between schools and state-level results. In each case, achievement patterns are examined for several years.

Although SEDL negotiated with individual state departments of education for access to individual student-level achievement data for the purpose of analysis, changes in federal education policy prompted a shift in the analytical design. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Education has advised states that releasing individual student achievement data would be a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This restriction on student-level data precludes complex statistical analyses. In addition, cohort analyses are difficult since we do not know whether the students remained part of the same cohort within a school from year to year. As a result, the analysis in this section relies on school grade-level and state-level achievement data collected from state department of education Web sites to examine aggregate patterns of achievement over time.

The data collected reports student achievement in terms of the percentage of students scoring at a specific performance level defined by the state. For example, the Texas

Education Agency releases student test information as a passing rate (i.e., students either passed or failed the test). Other states have more specific performance categories (e.g., advanced, basic, unsatisfactory). In each case, student results represent percentage outcomes from a state-mandated test. While the reporting of performance category percentages restricts the complexity of analyses, the data still provide a picture of school-level student achievement trends.¹⁷ The specific test(s) for each state is listed below.

- The Arkansas Benchmark Tests (ABT)
- The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) and Graduate Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21)
- New Mexico Articulated Assessment Program (NMSAAP)
- The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)
- The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

Table 15 provides a brief description of the data collected for each test by state including years of data used in the analysis, grades tested, subjects tested, and number of performance categories.

¹⁷ In their review of Chicago school-based reform of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bryk, Kerbow, & Rollow (1997) suggest student data be disaggregated by school when trying to assess the impact of reform efforts on student achievement. The reasoning is that improvements in student achievement are likely to occur at the classroom level first.

Table 15
Overview of Student Data

| State | Test | Years Included in Analysis | Analysis Grades | Subjects | Performance Categories |
|------------|-------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | ABT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001-2002 • 2003-2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Grade • 6th Grade • 8th Grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature • Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Proficient • Basic • Below Basic |
| Louisiana | LEAP 21 GEE 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2000-2001 • 2001-2002 • 2002-2003 • 2003-2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Grade • 8th Grade • 10th Grade (GEE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English/ Language Arts • Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Mastery • Basic • Approaching Basic • Unsatisfactory |
| New Mexico | NMSAAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002-2003 • 2003-2004 • 1999-2003 (Terra Nova) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Grade • 8th Grade • 9th Grade (Terra Nova) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math • Language Arts • Reading (Terra Nova) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Proficiency • Nearing Proficiency • Beginning Step |
| Oklahoma | OCCT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2000-2001 • 2001-2002 • 2002-2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th Grade • 8th Grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced • Satisfactory • Limited Knowledge • Unsatisfactory |
| Texas | TAAS TAKS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2000-2001 TAAS • 2001-2002 TAAS • 2002-2003 TAKS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Grade • 4th Grade • 5th Grade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing / Failing |

The testing systems and performance categories for each state are described in more detail later in this section.

Table 15 describes the most complete data available for each state that allows for comparisons between school- and state-level results. In three states, the data supports analysis over several consecutive years. However, the results reported by Arkansas prompted analysis for 2 non-consecutive years.

Although the Arkansas Department of Education does provide several years of data on its Web site, results do not always reflect the same student populations. Arkansas defines two broad categories of student results: general and combined. General population results highlight regular education students. Combined population results combine regular education Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

and special populations (e.g., special education). General population results are only available at the state level in 2002-2003. At the school level, combined data are only available in 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. For this reason, the analysis for Arkansas data occurs for 2001-2002 and 2003-2004, using the combined data.

The remainder of this section is divided into five parts corresponding to Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Within each of these sections, the research team organized student test results by grade and site-specific academic focus. The term “site-specific academic focus” refers to the subject (reading or math) being addressed by the SEDL model at each site. Therefore, results in this section present achievement data related to the site specific focus—either reading or math. For example, if the SEDL model at a school concentrates on reading, then student achievement data are shown solely for reading, English/language arts, or reading tests, depending on the requirements of the state accountability system. This approach more accurately reflects the areas being addressed by the SEDL model at a particular school or site. The site-specific academic focus for each school is noted in each state section.

Data are illustrated graphically to investigate achievement patterns and to compare among schools and between schools and aggregate state-level data.¹⁸ Although each state has different performance levels, the goal of each accountability system is to reduce the number of students performing at the lowest academic levels—as defined by the state. Therefore, student achievement in each section is structured by the percentage of students categorized as low performing/failing according to performance-level criteria for the state. When

¹⁸ It is important to note that student achievement tends to fluctuate at the start of most educational reform programs due to the nature of systemic change. It may take several years before a program becomes systemic enough to begin noticing consistent positive trends in aggregate student achievement (Bryk, Kerbow, & Rollow, 1997).

interpreting the graphs, positive trends are represented by percentage *decreases* in the “Below Basic” category over time.

Arkansas

The Arkansas Benchmark Tests are criterion-referenced exams developed around the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks by teacher committees, the Arkansas Department of Education, and a test contractor. There are three tests administered to students at grades 4, 6, and 8 assessing literacy and mathematics achievement.

Table 16 provides the schools working with SEDL on the school improvement model in Arkansas and the tested grade level(s) at each school.

Table 16
SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Arkansas

| District | School | 4 th | 6 th | 8 th |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Delta Village | Elementary School A (R) | X | X | X |
| Forked River | Elementary School B (R) | X | X | |
| Grisham | Elementary School C (M) | X | | |
| Grisham | Middle School A (M) | | X | |
| Forked River | High School B (R) | | | X |

Note. (M) = Math; (R) = Reading

The Arkansas Department of Education has defined four levels of student achievement for the benchmark exams. These achievement levels are described below (Arkansas Department of Education, 2004).

- **Advanced:** Advanced students demonstrate superior performance well beyond proficient grade-level performance. They can apply established reading, writing and mathematics skills to solve complex problems and complete demanding tasks on their own. They can make insightful connections between abstract and concrete ideas and provide well-supported explanations and arguments.
- **Proficient:** Proficient students demonstrate solid academic performance for the grade tested and are well-prepared for the next level of schooling. They can use established reading, writing, and mathematics skills and knowledge to solve problems and complete tasks on their own. Students can tie ideas together and explain the ways their ideas are connected.

- **Basic:** Basic students show substantial skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; however, they only partially demonstrate the abilities to apply these skills.
- **Below Basic:** Below basic students fail to show sufficient mastering of skills in reading, writing, and mathematics to attain the basic level.

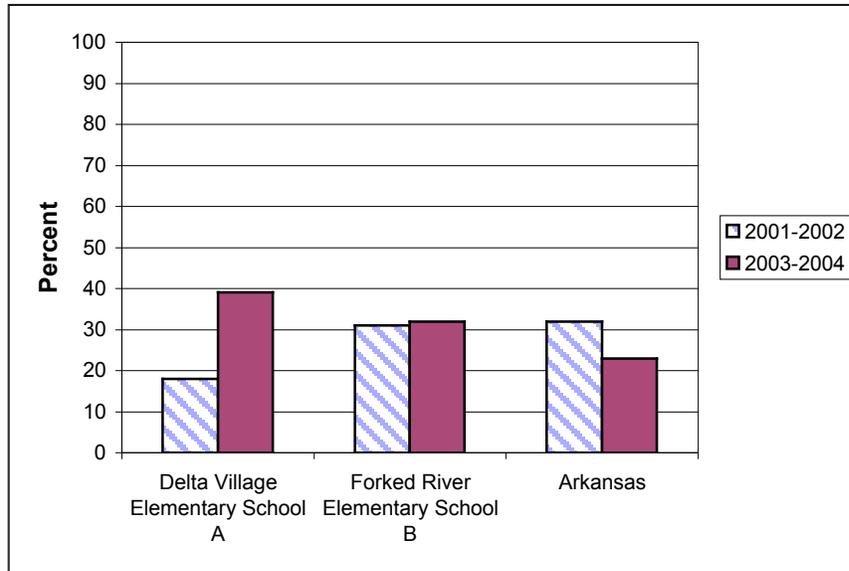
For the purposes of analysis, results have been organized by percentage of students at or below the “Below Basic” performance threshold. Therefore, as student achievement increases, the percentage of students in the “Below Basic” category should decrease. It is important to remember that Arkansas achievement data reflect two *non-consecutive* years of data, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004.

Fourth-Grade Results

As discussed previously, comparisons between school- and state-level Arkansas benchmark results are only possible for 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. The graphs for Arkansas at each grade level and subject area depict the percentage of students at the “Below Basic” level for the benchmark tests.

Figure 7 highlights literacy benchmark test results for fourth graders in two schools as well as results for fourth graders at the state level. From 2001-2002 to 2003-2004, the percentage of students in the “Below Basic” category drops nearly 10 percentage points from just over 30% to slightly over 20% at the state level.

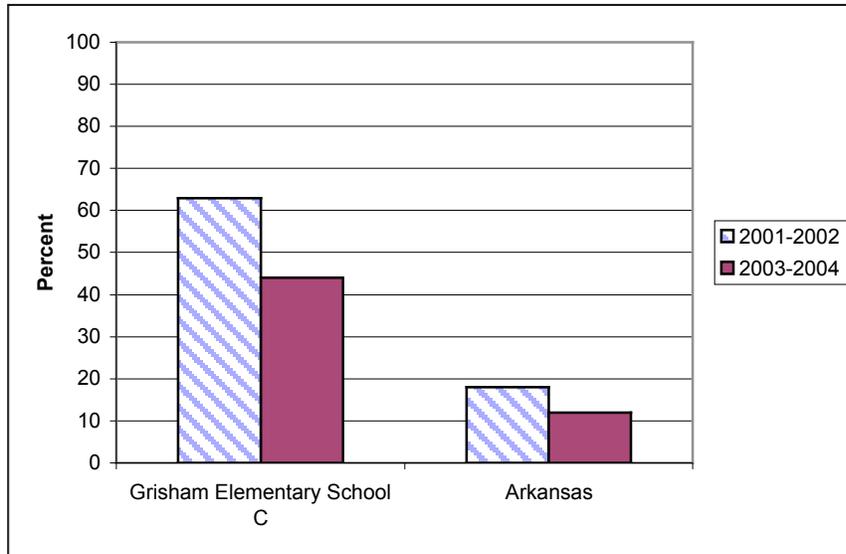
Figure 7
Fourth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004



During the same period, students at Delta Village Elementary School A show a 20% increase from 2001-2002 to 2003-2004 while Forked River Elementary School B shows little change. Both schools had higher percentages of students in the “Below Basic” category relative to the state.

Fourth-grade students taking the mathematics test at Grisham Elementary School C had a slightly different result. Although the percent of students in the “Below Basic” category was generally much higher than in the literacy test results, Grisham Elementary School C students showed double-digit percentage point decreases in this performance category (see Figure 8).

Figure 8
Fourth-Grade Arkansas Math Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004



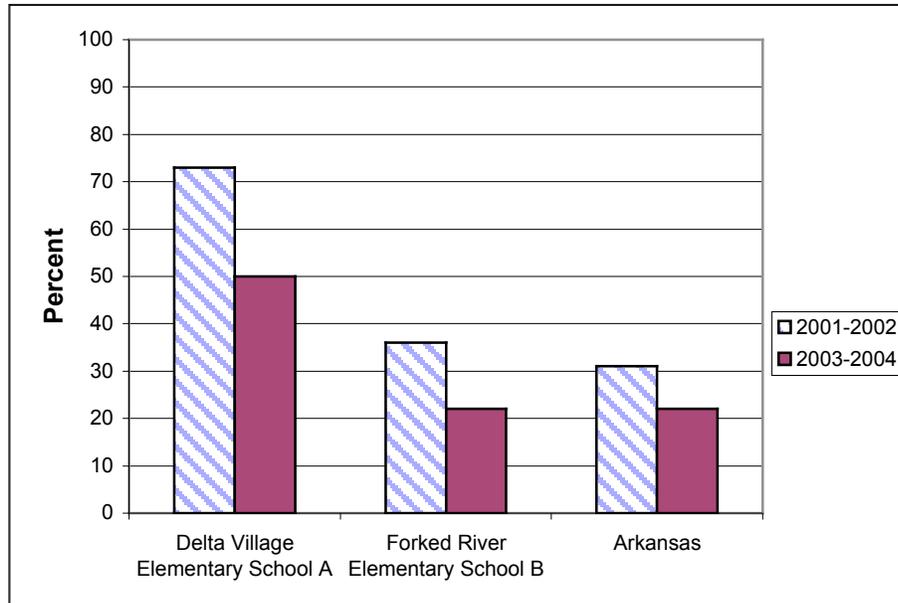
State results indicated a small decline during the same period, although the overall percentage of students in the “Below Basic” category was already substantially lower than that of the schools with which SEDL worked.

The percentage increase at Delta Village Elementary School A is a concern since the focus of the SEDL model at the school is on reading improvement. Therefore, we would expect to see a decline or at least a stable level of achievement in literacy. However, student results in math at Grisham Elementary School C indicated positive changes. Overall, achievement levels tended to be below that of the state as a whole.

Sixth-Grade Results

Figure 9 depicts positive results for SEDL schools on the sixth-grade literacy benchmark test.

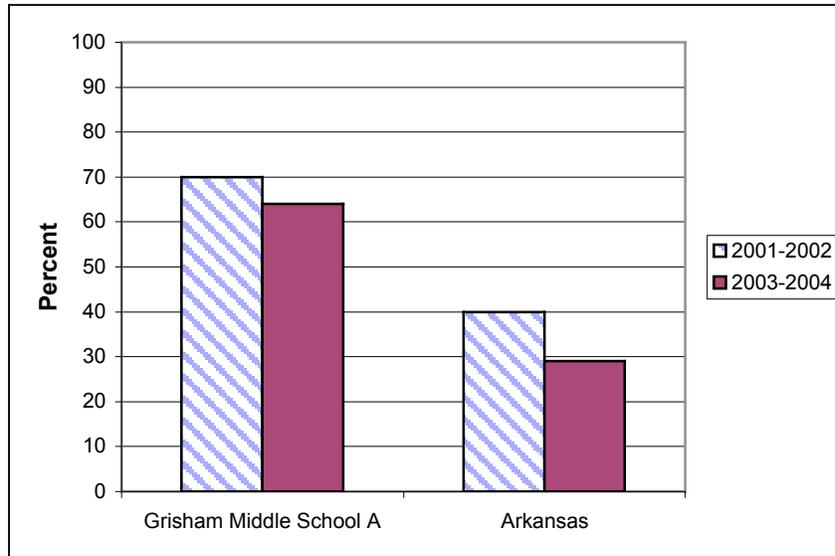
Figure 9
Sixth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004



Sixth graders at each of the schools demonstrate percentage decreases in the “Below Basic” category. Delta Village Elementary School A in particular sees a percentage decrease of approximately 20% from more than 70% to 50%. Forked River Elementary School B also saw a decline that placed the percentage of students at or below the “Below Basic” level on even terms relative to state results for sixth-grade literacy.

Figure 10 shows a decrease in the percentage of students scoring at the “Below Basic” level on the math benchmark test among sixth-grade students at Grisham Middle School A.

Figure 10
Sixth-Grade Arkansas Math Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004



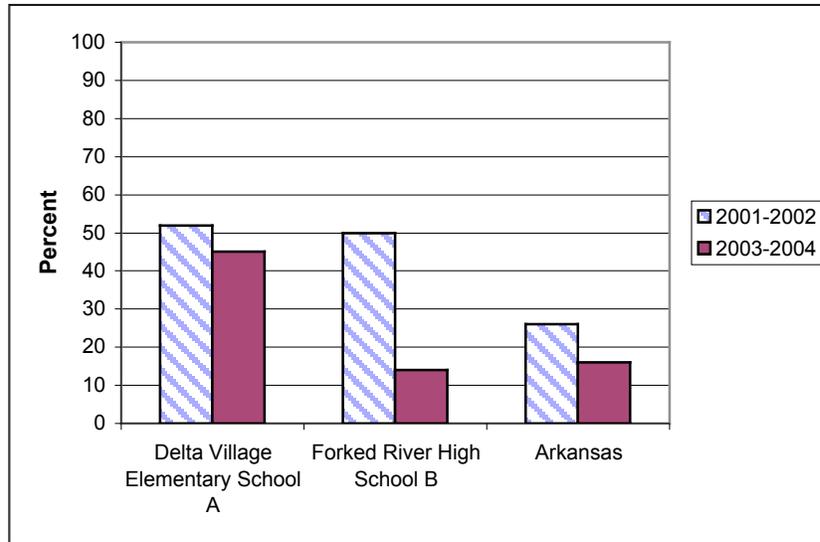
The graph indicates state-level achievement on the math benchmark test is still superior to the level at Grisham Middle School A.

The sixth-grade literacy results at Delta Village Elementary School A and Forked River Elementary School B are particularly encouraging in terms of SEDL’s involvement. Although the decline of the sixth-grade math series for Grisham Middle School A (another SEDL site) is small, the change is a positive indicator of student progress.

Eighth-Grade Results

Only two Arkansas schools with eighth-grade students are working with SEDL on its Working Systemically Model. The focus in both schools is on reading. Figure 11 illustrates results for the eighth-grade literacy benchmark exam. Across 2 years, each school experiences a decrease in the percentage of students performing at the “Below Basic” level.

Figure 11
Eighth-Grade Arkansas Literacy Benchmark Test: Percent At or Below “Below Basic” Level, 2001-2002 and 2003-2004



While Delta Village Elementary School A evidenced a relatively small decrease, Forked River High School B eighth graders experienced an approximately 35% decrease between 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. This decline by Forked River High School B places it at a slightly higher achievement level than the state in 2003-2004 (i.e., fewer students at Forked River High School B are in the lowest performance category relative to the state results). No eighth-grade math results are shown here since SEDL did not focus on math at grade 8 in any school.

Although there were some areas for further investigation in specific schools (e.g., Delta Village Elementary School A fourth-grade literacy results), there are notable reductions in terms of the number of students at the lower performance levels on the state test. These drops are evident across grades and subjects.

Louisiana

The LEAP 21 and GEE 21 benchmark exams are criterion-referenced tests developed by the state to assess how well students have mastered the state content standards. The LEAP 21 tests are administered at grades 4 and 8 in mathematics, English/language arts, science, and social studies. The Graduate Exit Examination is administered in grades 10 (English/language arts and math) and 11 (science and social studies). Since SEDL's work concentrates on reading and math development, student achievement data have been collected solely for the math and English/language arts exams.

Table 17 highlights the schools working with SEDL on the school improvement model in Louisiana and tested grade levels at each school in math and English/language arts.

Table 17
SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Louisiana

| District | School | 4 th | 8 th | 10 th |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Highway Junction | Elementary School A (R) | X | | |
| Highway Junction | Elementary School B (R) | X | | |
| River City | Elementary School C (M) | X | | |
| River City | Elementary School D (M) | X | | |
| Athens | Middle School A (M) | | X | |
| Bayou City | Middle School B (M) | | X | |
| Bayou City | High School A (M) | | | X |

Note. (M) = Math; (R) = Reading

The Louisiana Department of Education has identified five levels of achievement linked to the LEAP 21 and GEE 21 benchmark exams (Louisiana Department of Education, 2004). These achievement levels are:

- **Advanced:** A student at this level has demonstrated superior performance beyond the proficient level of mastery.
- **Mastery:** A student at this level has demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter and is well-prepared for the next level schooling.

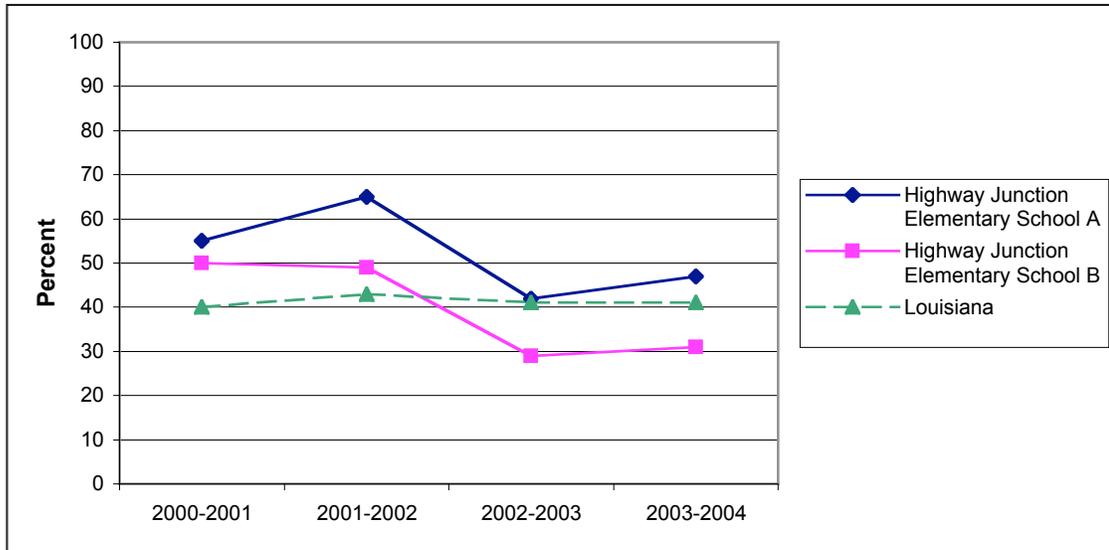
- **Basic:** A student at this level has demonstrated only the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.
- **Approaching Basic:** A student at this level has only partially demonstrated the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.
- **Unsatisfactory:** A student at this level has not demonstrated the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling.

For this analysis, results have been organized by percentage of students at or below the “Approaching Basic” level for fourth graders and percentage of students at or below the “Unsatisfactory” level for eighth and tenth graders. The reason for this difference is that currently, fourth-grade students must achieve “Basic” level status on at least one of the exams (math or English/language arts) in order to qualify for promotion in Louisiana schools. In eighth grade, students must attain “Approaching Basic” status on both exams in order to be eligible for promotion. Tenth-grade students must attain "Approaching Basic" status to pass a particular test. Graphs depict the percentage of students at or below “Approaching Basic” level for fourth graders and percentage of students at or below “Unsatisfactory” level for eighth and tenth graders. School results are plotted by year relative to state results as well as each other.

Fourth-Grade Results

Figure 12 illustrates the percentage of students scoring at or below the “Approaching Basic” level on the fourth-grade LEAP 21 English/language arts test. Highway Junction Elementary Schools A and B show fluctuations in the percentage of students at or below the “Approaching Basic” category across all 4 years.

Figure 12
Fourth-Grade LEAP 21 English/Language Arts Test: Percent At or Below
“Approaching Basic” Level, 2000-2004

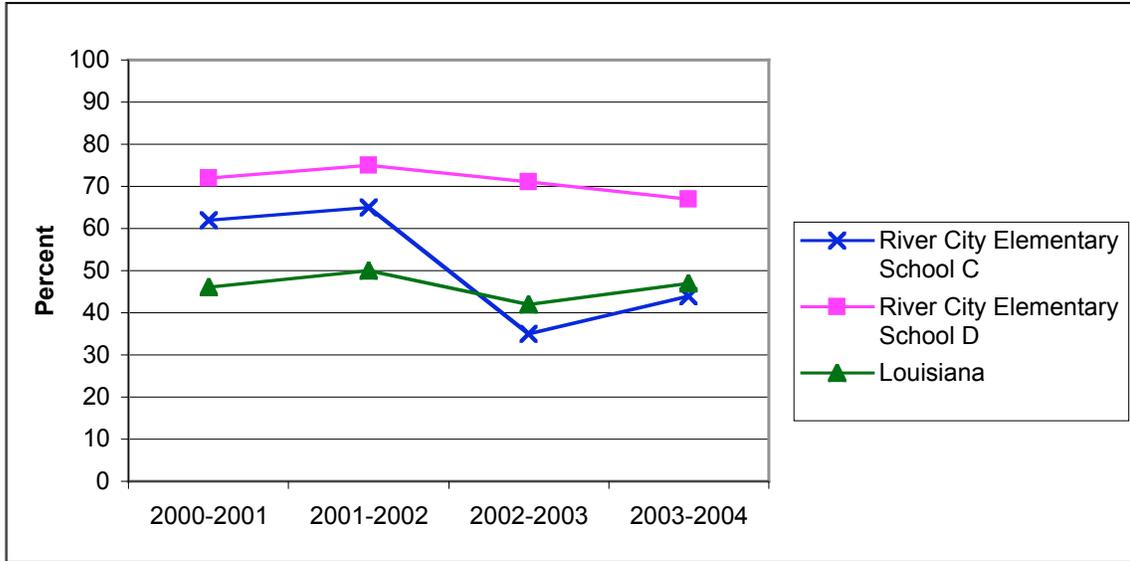


From 2002-2003 to 2003-2004 Highway Junction Elementary Schools A and B have shown growth in the percentage of students performing poorly. However, over four school testing periods, both schools ended with a smaller proportion of students at or below the “Approaching Basic” level than where they began in 2000-2001.

In addition, the increases at Highway Junction Elementary Schools A and B have been less pronounced from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004 than the declines from 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. The state-level results show little to no fluctuation across 4 years.

In Figure 13, River City Elementary Schools C and D and Bayou City Middle School B represent schools where SEDL provides math support. Results for the fourth-grade LEAP 21 math test indicate River City Elementary School D had the highest overall percentage of students at or below “Approaching Basic” and showed small changes over time. Bayou City Middle School B also showed few changes.

Figure 13
Fourth-Grade LEAP 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below “Approaching Basic” Level, 2000-2004



Among these schools, River City Elementary School C had the largest overall reduction, dropping from 62% in the lowest performance category in 2000-2001 to 44% in 2003-2004. River City Elementary School D displayed relatively little change over time. Like the fluctuations in English/language arts data, the percentage decrease for River City Elementary School C tends to be larger than the percentage increases. More data for subsequent years is needed to determine the nature of the pattern. State percentages did not vary substantially over time.

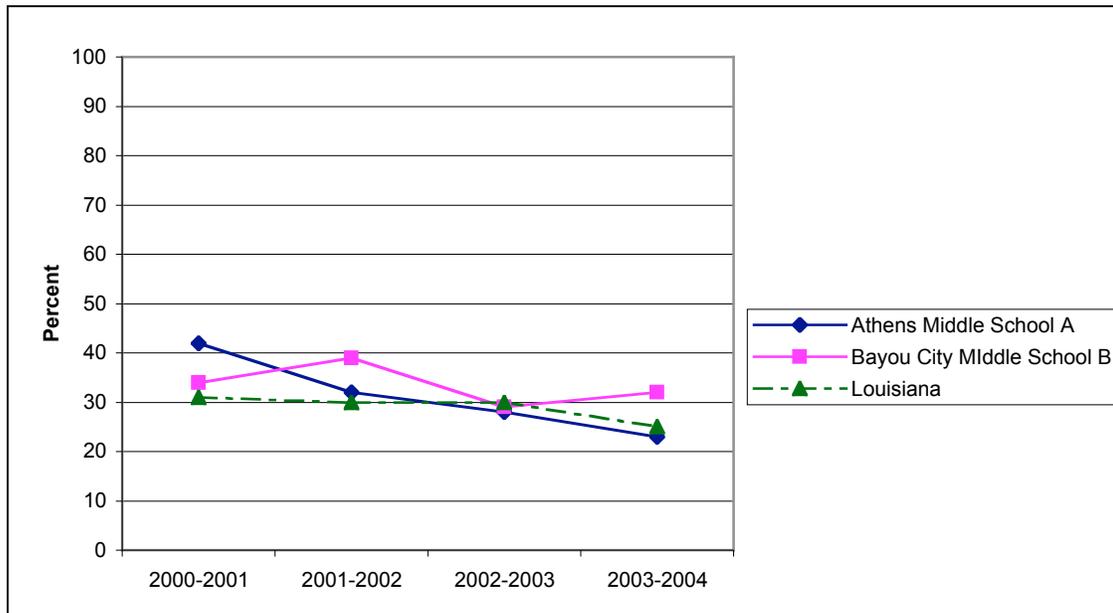
Eighth-Grade Results

Results in this section focus on math achievement since SEDL did not collaborate with schools on eighth-grade reading.

Figure 14 illustrates the proportion of students categorized at or below the “Unsatisfactory” Level on the eighth-grade LEAP 21 math test. Although the results for Bayou City Middle School B fluctuate to a certain degree, ultimately, they demonstrate little

change over time. Athens Middle School A, however, experiences a noticeable decrease in the percentage of student outcomes labeled as “Unsatisfactory.”

Figure 14
Eighth-Grade LEAP 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below “Unsatisfactory” Level, 2000-2004

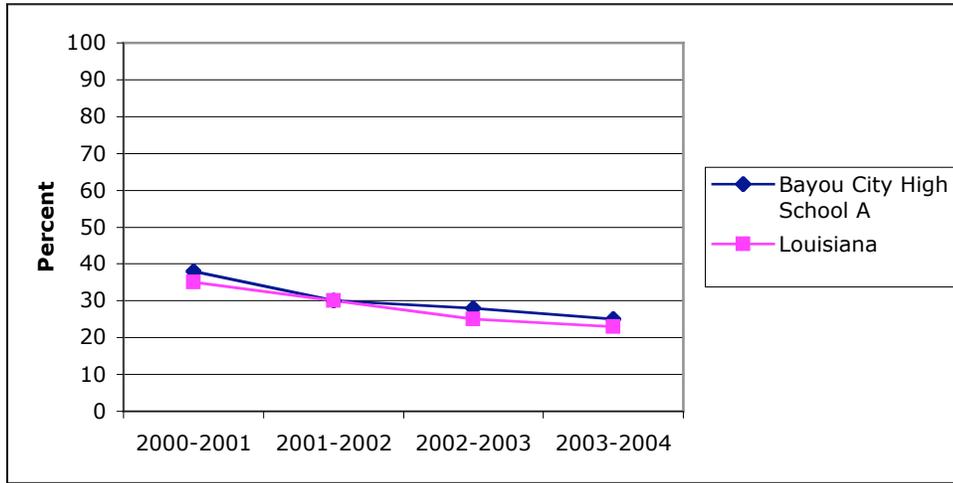


From 2000-2001 to 2003-2004, eighth graders at Athens Middle School A demonstrate a nearly 20% drop in the “Unsatisfactory” category. This decline mirrors a more gradual percentage decline statewide.

Tenth-Grade Results

Figure 15 depicts 10th-grade mathematics results for Bayou City High School A.

Figure 15
Tenth-Grade GEE 21 Math Test: Percent At or Below "Unsatisfactory" Level, 2000-2004



Over time, 10th graders in Bayou City High School A exhibit a nearly 15% decrease in the proportion of students categorized as “Unsatisfactory.” This represents a steady decline in the lowest performance category. In addition, the decline in Bayou City High School A reflects a similar pattern at the state level. This drop-off in the percentage of students classified as performing unsatisfactorily represents a positive development since it suggests that more students are meeting the state criteria for passing the GEE 21 in math.

Fourth-grade results in Louisiana depict a very modest downward trend in the percentage of students at or below “Approaching Basic.” Although the data fluctuate over time there is an overall decline in the percentage of children in the lowest performance categories. More data are needed to determine whether the fluctuations show a stabilizing downward trend.

Among eighth-grade results, the SEDL-linked schools illustrated different achievement trends. While Athens Middle School A showed decreases, student outcomes at Bayou City Middle School B were more static. Overall, there are encouraging signs that the

percentage of students categorized at the lowest achievement levels is declining. Further longitudinal data would help determine whether there are any long-term patterns emerging.

New Mexico

The New Mexico Statewide Articulated Assessment Program (NMSAAP) reflects a collection of criterion- and norm-referenced exams used by the state to measure student achievement. These tests include:

- The New Mexico High School Competency Examination (NMHSCE)
- The New Mexico Standards-based Assessment (NMSA)
- The New Mexico Achievement Assessment Program (NMAAP)

The high school competency examination is a criterion-referenced test designed “to assess student performance in six content areas defined by the New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks” (New Mexico Department of Education, 2003). The test is administered in 10th grade across six subject areas including reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, and composition. Students must pass each section of the high school competency examination to receive a diploma (New Mexico Department of Education, 2003).

The New Mexico Standards-based Assessment is a set of criterion-referenced exams that also reflect New Mexico benchmarks and standards. These exams are administered at fourth and eighth grade in language arts and mathematics (New Mexico Department of Education, 2004). This component of the state assessment program has only been implemented in the last 2 years.

The New Mexico Achievement Assessment Program consists of a norm-referenced exam, the TerraNova, administered to students from grade three to grade nine (New Mexico

Department of Education, 2003). The complete battery of exams includes reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies.

This section of the report utilizes available data from the standards-based assessment in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. Standards-based assessment data are used because the information parallels SEDL's work to improve alignment between content, curriculum and instruction, and assessment. Since the focus of SEDL's work is on reading content, data are presented for the standards-based assessment in reading.

Although standards-based assessment data are used for elementary and middle schools in New Mexico, the best available data for Mesa High School A are from the TerraNova exam administered in ninth grade. Results are from the reading and language arts test. Currently, we only have 1 year of data for Farmville High School B; therefore, results for this school are not presented in this analysis.

Table 18 provides the schools working with SEDL on the school improvement model in New Mexico and the tested grade level(s) at each school on the standards-based assessment.

Table 18
SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: New Mexico

| District | School | 4 th | 8 th | 9 th |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Desert Hills | Elementary School A (R) | X | | |
| Desert Hills | Middle School A (R) | | X | |
| Mesa | Middle School B (R) | | X | |
| Farmville | Middle School C (R) | | X | |
| Mesa | High School A (R) | | | X |

Note. (M) = Math. (R) = Reading

The New Mexico Public Department of Education has identified four performance-level categories for the standards-based assessment: advanced, proficient, nearing proficiency, and beginning step.

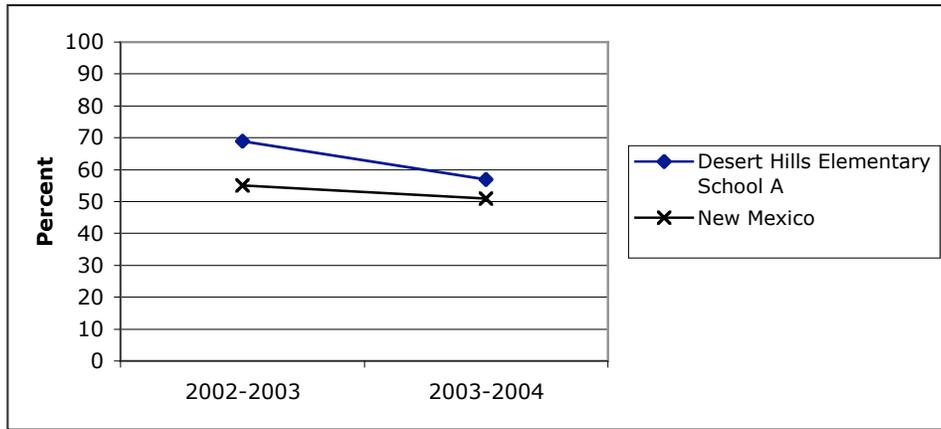
Consistent with previous sections, data for the New Mexico Standards-based Assessment are organized by the percentage of students categorized at or below the “nearing proficiency” level from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004. This presentation structure applies to elementary and middle school data.

Results for the ninth-grade TerraNova exams in language arts and reading are not reported by state performance categories. Instead, results are expressed in terms of median national percentiles. The median national percentile is determined by calculating the national percentile for each student in a test group and then ranking the group from high to low. The median national percentile is the national percentile for the student in the middle of the group (New Mexico Department of Education, 2003). “The median national percentile shows how the middle student of the group compares to the middle student in the nationwide norming group that took the TerraNova (New Mexico Department of Education, 2003, p. 19).” Consequently, positive changes are represented by *increases* in the percentile figure over time.

Fourth-Grade Results

Figure 16 displays standards-based assessment reading results for Desert Hills Elementary School A and aggregate state-level data.

Figure 16: Fourth-Grade New Mexico Standards-based Language Arts Assessment: Percent At or Below "Nearing Proficient" Level, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004

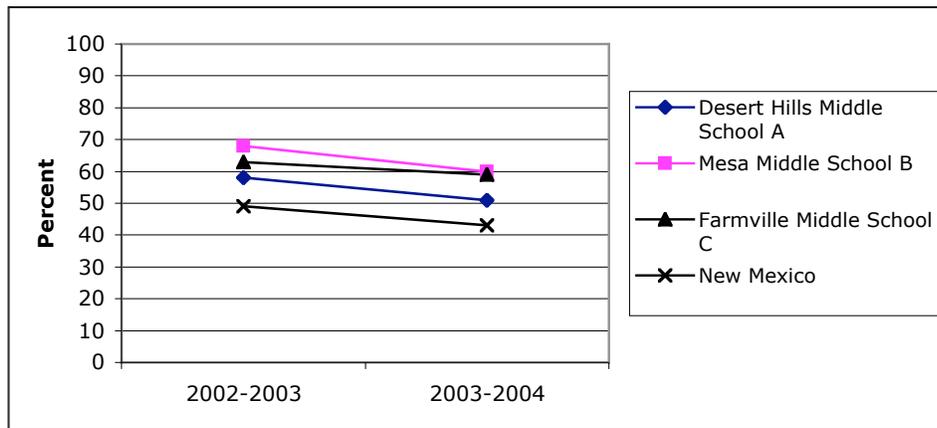


From 2002-2003 to 2003 -2004, fourth grade students at Desert Hills Elementary School A experienced a reduction in the percentage of students categorized at or below the “Nearing Proficient” performance level. In 2003-2004, the proportion of students in the lowest level categories was nearly equal to the statewide percentage category. Since the goal of the state assessment system is to move students out from the lower performance categories, this decline among Desert Hills Elementary School A is a positive development.

Eighth-Grade Results

Figure 17 illustrates data results for three New Mexico middle schools working with SEDL.

Figure 17: Eighth-Grade New Mexico Standards-based Language Arts Assessment: Percent At or Below "Nearing Proficient" Level, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004



The data for each school indicate the percentage of low-performing students has fallen from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004. Desert Hills Middle School A had the smallest ratio of students identified as low-performing in 2002-2003, and this scenario continued in 2003-2004. Mesa Middle School B and Farmville Middle School C had a higher percentage of students classified as low-performing compared to Desert Hills Middle School A. Desert Hills Middle School A and Mesa Middle School B demonstrated almost parallel decreases over time, while Farmville Middle School C showed a smaller decline over the same period. All three schools had a higher percentage of low-performing students relative to the state.

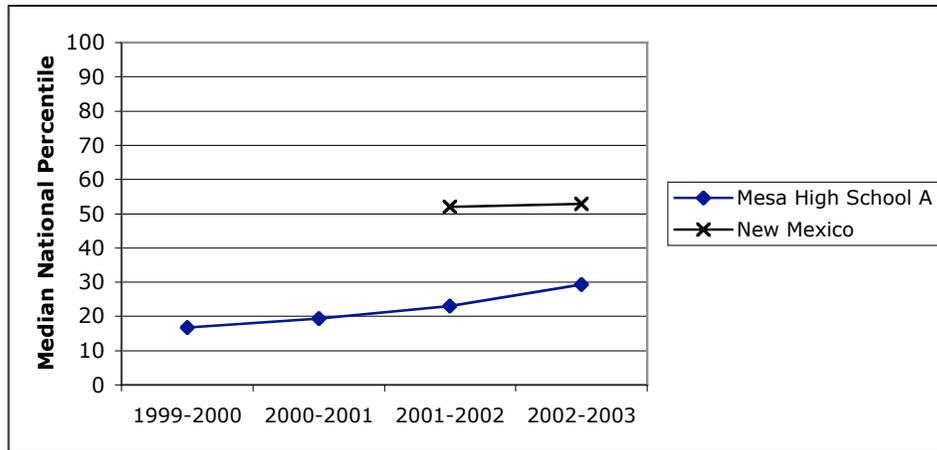
Ninth-Grade Results

The following set of graphics highlight different exam results than the previous figures in this section. New Mexico does not use a standards-based exam in ninth grade. However, it does employ norm-referenced TerraNova reading and language arts exams that are part of the state accountability system. Unlike results for the standards-based assessments, performance for these exams is expressed in terms of median national

percentiles. *Increases* in the median national percentile over time suggest a positive change in achievement scores for a particular group of students.

Figure 18 presents TerraNova reading results for Mesa High School A from 1999 to 2003 as well as aggregate results for the state for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years.

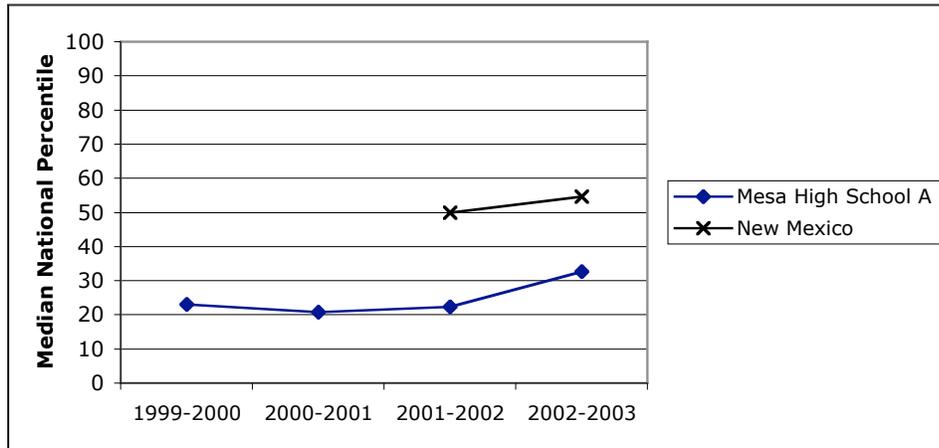
Figure 18: Ninth-Grade TerraNova Reading Exam: Median National Percentile, 1999-2003



The data indicate a continuous increase in the median national percentile for ninth grade students at Mesa High School A. From 1999-2000 to 2002-2003, the median national percentile increased from approximately 17 to 28. Although the value of the high school median national percentile is more than 20 points below the state value, the pattern indicates a gradual improvement in reading.

Figure 19 illustrates TerraNova results for ninth-grade language arts at Mesa High School A.

Figure 19: Ninth-Grade Terra Nova Language Arts: Median National Percentile, 1999-2003



As indicated by the graph, the percentile pattern is relatively static from 1999 through 2002 and then increases by approximately 10% between the school years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003.

Similar to the ninth-grade reading results, the median national percentile in language arts at the state level exceeds the percentile for Mesa High School A in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. However, ninth-grade students also experience improvement over time.

Each school presented in this section exhibits an improvement in academic levels over time on the standards-based assessments as well as the TerraNova. Overall, student results in New Mexico suggest positive changes in student achievement.

Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) are criterion-referenced exams linked to the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) or state curriculum. Currently, multiple choice tests are administered at grades 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 in mathematics, reading, science, social studies, geography, U.S. history, and Constitution and government. It should be noted that not all subjects are tested at each grade and the math tests in third and fourth grade are only field tests.

Test data for this section focus on fifth- and eighth-grade reading achievement.¹⁹

Table 19 describes the schools working with SEDL on the school improvement model in Oklahoma and the tested grade level(s) at each school. Data for High Meadows Elementary School C are not available; therefore, the school is not included in this analysis.

Table 19
SEDL Schools and Tested Grade Levels: Oklahoma

| District | School | 5 th | 8 th |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Wrightsville | Elementary School A (R) | X | |
| High Meadows | Elementary School B (R) | X | X |
| Brookesville | Elementary School D (R) | X | |
| Bricktown | Middle School A (R) | | X |
| Brookesville | Middle School B (R) | | X |

Note. (M) = Math; (R) = Reading

The Oklahoma Department of Education has defined four levels of student achievement for the benchmark exams for each subject and at each grade level. These performance descriptions are provided here by grade and subject.

Oklahoma Fifth-Grade Reading Performance Descriptors

- **Advanced.** Students consistently demonstrate a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. These skills are broadly demonstrated in reading processes, response to text, and acquisition of information through research. In addition to demonstrating a broad and in-depth understanding and application of all skills at the satisfactory performance level, students scoring at the advanced level typically use a wide range of strategies to interpret and evaluate text; regularly demonstrate a thorough and comprehensive understanding of literary forms; and consistently apply many different strategies for assessing, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and paraphrasing information.
- **Satisfactory.** Students demonstrate a general understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the satisfactory level typically read and comprehend grade-level reading material using the following skills:
 - identify new words and use word meaning resources;
 - identify major elements of story structure;

¹⁹ The use of the literacy exam reflects the fact that SEDL's focus among these schools is solely on reading. Therefore, an examination of math results would be superfluous since SEDL has not been involved in any math activities.

- recognize and interpret relationships in narrative and expository text;
 - determine central purpose, theme, or key concept/main idea and important details;
 - make inferences and draw conclusions/generalizations;
 - interpret figurative language and characteristics of poetry;
 - identify and analyze characteristics of a variety of genres;
 - distinguish among fact, supported inferences, and opinion in expository text;
 - determine author's purpose and point of view;
 - identify similarities and differences between reading selections; and
 - demonstrate use of functional print, informational resources, charts, and diagrams.
- **Limited Knowledge.** Students demonstrate a partial understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the limited knowledge level are inconsistent in demonstrating satisfactory level competencies and typically demonstrate reading skills within more explicit and concrete contexts.
 - **Unsatisfactory.** Students do not demonstrate at least a limited knowledge level of the skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the unsatisfactory level should be given comprehensive reading instruction. (Oklahoma Department of Education, 2004)

Oklahoma Eighth-Grade Reading Performance Descriptors

- **Advanced.** Students consistently demonstrate a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. These skills are broadly demonstrated in reading processes, response to text, and acquisition of information through research. In addition to demonstrating a broad and in-depth understanding and application of all skills at the satisfactory performance level, students scoring at the advanced level typically use a wide range of strategies to interpret and evaluate text; regularly demonstrate a thorough and comprehensive understanding of literary forms; and consistently apply many different strategies for assessing, organizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and paraphrasing information.
- **Satisfactory.** Students demonstrate a general understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the satisfactory level typically read and comprehend grade-level reading material using the following skills:
 - determine literal and non-literal word meanings using a variety of strategies;
 - analyze informational text, poetry, short stories, novels, and dramas;
 - determine main idea and themes (stated or implied) and recognize relevance of details;
 - interpret figurative language and elements of poetry;
 - infer, predict, and generalize ideas;

- judge author's purpose/point of view, accuracy of text, and fact/opinion; and
 - use appropriate strategies to organize and summarize information.
- **Limited Knowledge.** Students demonstrate a partial understanding of the reading knowledge and skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the limited knowledge level are inconsistent in demonstrating the satisfactory level competencies and typically demonstrate reading skills within more explicit and concrete contexts.
 - **Unsatisfactory.** Students do not demonstrate at least a limited knowledge level of the skills expected of all students at this grade level. Students scoring at the unsatisfactory level should be given comprehensive reading instruction. (Oklahoma Department of Education, 2004)

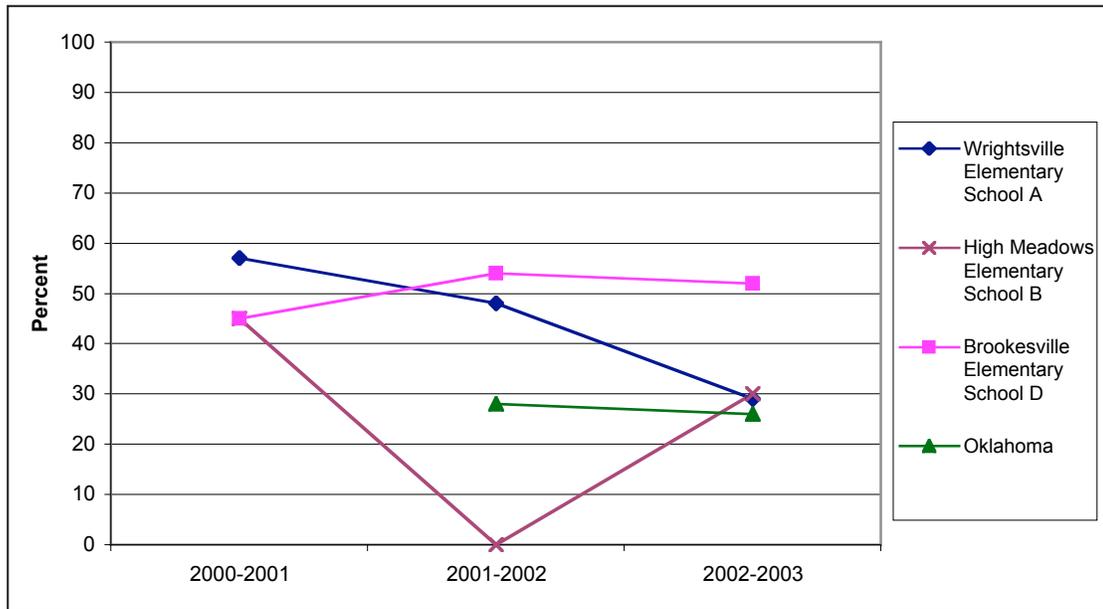
For this analysis, results have been organized by percentage of students at or below the “Limited Knowledge” category in literacy. This approach combines the percentage of student outcomes labeled as “Limited Knowledge” and “Unsatisfactory.”²⁰ As students attain higher levels of performance, there should be a corresponding drop in the percentage of students present in the two lowest achievement categories. State-level data are available only for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, while school-level data exist for 2000-2001 through 2002-2003. This is the case in each of the subsequent graphs pertaining to Oklahoma achievement data.

Fifth-Grade Results

Figure 20 presents the percentage of students performing at or below the “Limited Knowledge” level on the fifth-grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Reading Test across three schools. Each school exhibits a very different pattern.

²⁰ These two categories represent a broader “Unsatisfactory” category used by the state.
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Figure 20: Fifth-Grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Reading Test: Percent At or Below “Limited Knowledge” Level, 2000-2003



High Meadows Elementary School B experiences an apparent dramatic decrease and increase in the percentage of its fifth graders performing at or below the “Limited Knowledge” level. Although the data for High Meadows Elementary School B reflect the reported results, there have been some issues raised regarding the quality of the data. Ultimately, the results for this school were invalidated by the state. Therefore, this particular information should be viewed with caution.

Brookesville Elementary School D posts a small percentage point increase from 2000-2001 to 2002-2003. Wrightsville Elementary School A, however, demonstrates a nearly 30% decrease during the same period. This is an encouraging figure since these data reflect two performance categories. Consequently, a greater proportion of students reached the satisfactory and/or advanced level for this exam.

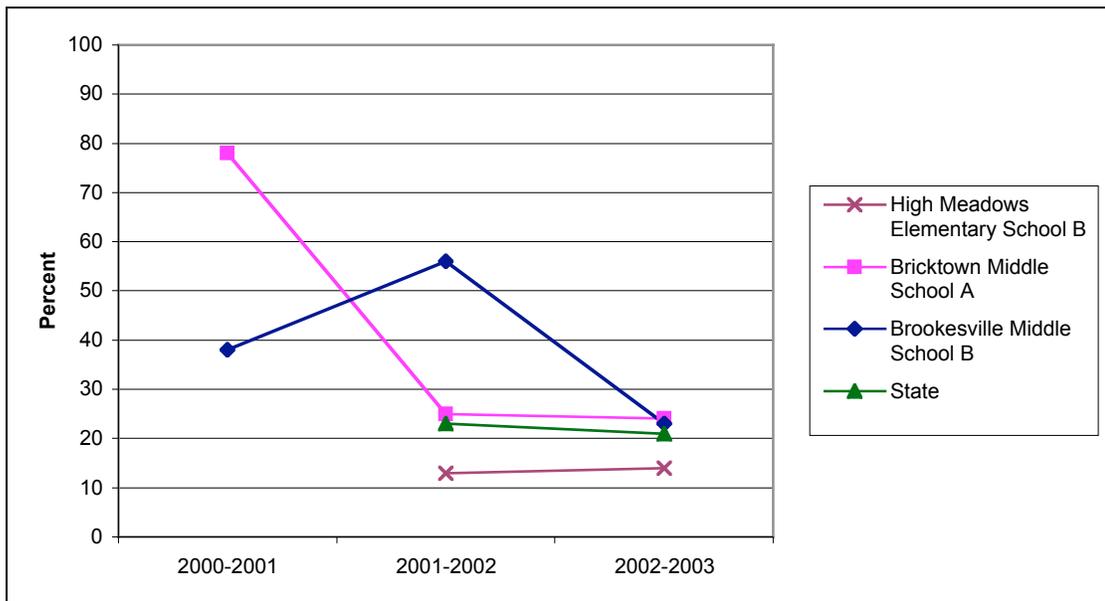
In summary, patterns are disparate for fifth-grade test results. Statewide, nearly one third of students are positioned at or below the “Limited Knowledge” level. Wrightsville

Elementary School A experienced improvements. Although results for High Meadows Elementary School B were invalidated, data indicate an overall 15% decrease from 2000-2001 to 2002-2003.

Eighth-Grade Results

Eighth-grade OCCT reading results depict two declining patterns. The first trend is a substantial drop-off in the percentage of students performing at or below “Limited Knowledge” among eighth graders at Bricktown Middle School A. Between 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, the percentage of students in the lower performance categories falls from 80% to nearly 20%. Once this occurs, however, the percentage stabilizes (2001-2002 to 2002-2003).

Figure 21: Eighth-Grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Reading Test: Percent At or Below “Limited Knowledge” Level, 2000-2003



The second pattern is presented by Brookesville Middle School B. The eighth-grade students at this school post a nearly 20% increase in their “at or below Limited Knowledge” level from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002. The next year, eighth graders at the school experience an even larger decrease in their representation at the same level. In the end, these two schools

finish 2002-2003 at nearly the same percentage level as the state. Data for High Meadows Elementary School B was available for only 2 years and remains unchanged from one year to the next.

The data from Wrightsville Elementary School A (fourth-grade reading), Bricktown Middle School A (eighth-grade reading), and Brookesville Middle School B (eighth-grade reading) highlight positive trends in student achievement over time in SEDL schools. However, Brookesville Elementary School D should examine its test data in more detail to identify problematic areas in its instructional program. The erratic patterns in data from High Meadows Elementary School B (also evidenced in Figure E9) are cause for review.

Texas

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is actually an extension of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) system immediately preceding it. Like the previous state testing systems discussed in this section, these tests are criterion-referenced and are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) state curriculum. The TAKS was generally believed to be a more difficult test than the TAAS. As indicated below, the initial round of results statewide supported this expectation.

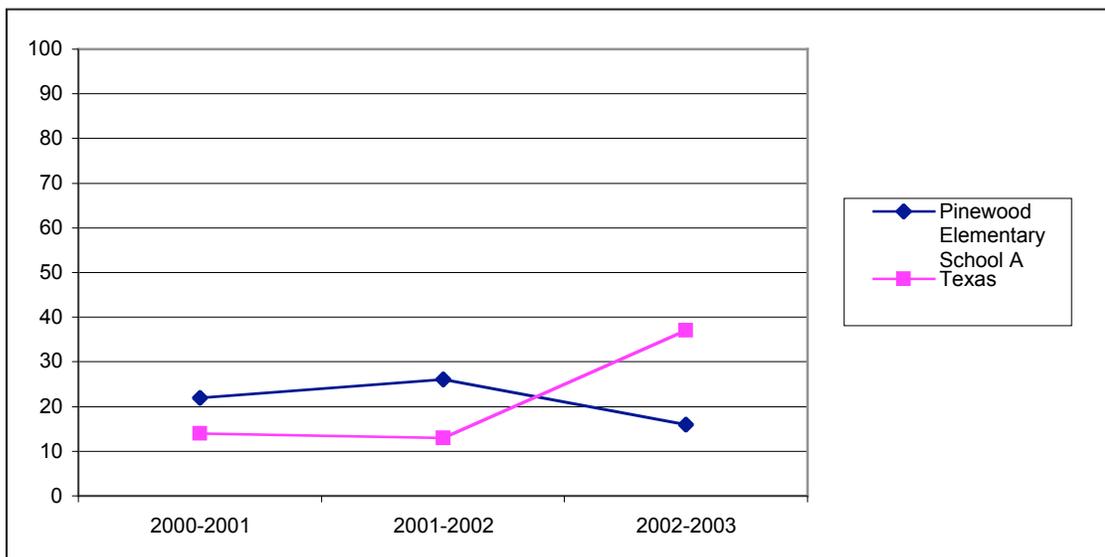
At the elementary school level, the TAAS test was administered from grade 3 through grade 5 in reading and mathematics through spring 2002. In spring 2003, Texas administered the TAKS test for the first time also in grades 3, 4, and 5. In addition to reading and math tests, fourth graders received a writing test. In fifth grade, a new science test was also administered. Due to the focus of the SEDL model on reading, the analysis in this section focuses on reading achievement for third, fourth, and fifth graders at Elementary School A in the Pineland District.

The Texas State Board of Education has defined the performance standards for the TAAS and TAKS tests in terms of satisfactory and non-satisfactory performance (i.e., passing or failing). These results are reported for schools and for the state. Results in this section are presented in terms of percentage of students not meeting the minimum passing standard. School results are also compared to the corresponding state results across 3 years. It should be noted that the percentages for the first 2 years depict TAAS results while the third year refers to the TAKS exam.

Third-Grade Results

Figure 22 depicts a comparison between Pinewood Elementary School A and statewide performance on the state-mandated reading test. The graph indicates that students failed at a higher percentage at Elementary School A than at the state level on the TAAS exam. However, when the new TAKS exam was introduced, the percentage of students failing the exam statewide increased from approximately 14% to 38% while the percentage of Pinewood Elementary School A failures dropped to 16%.

Figure 22: Third-Grade State-Mandated Reading Test Percent Failing: 2000-2003

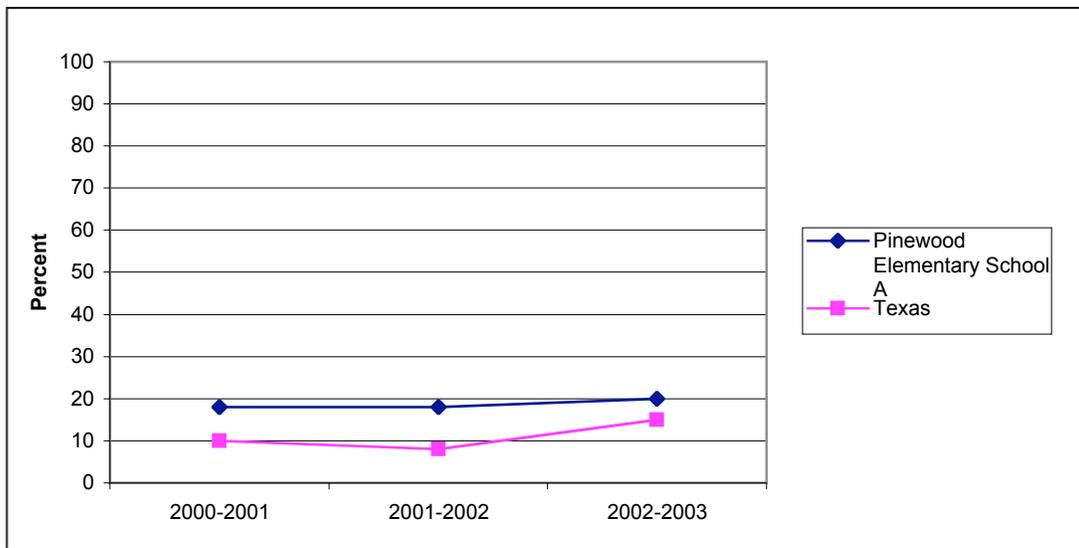


The large increase in state elementary reading failures in 2002-2003 is cause for concern. However, Pinewood Elementary School A data are encouraging in terms of school improvement expectations.

Fourth-Grade Results

The introduction of a new reading test in fourth grade did not have an appreciable impact on Pinewood Elementary School A students.

Figure 23: Fourth-Grade State Mandated Reading Test: Percent Failing, 2002-2003

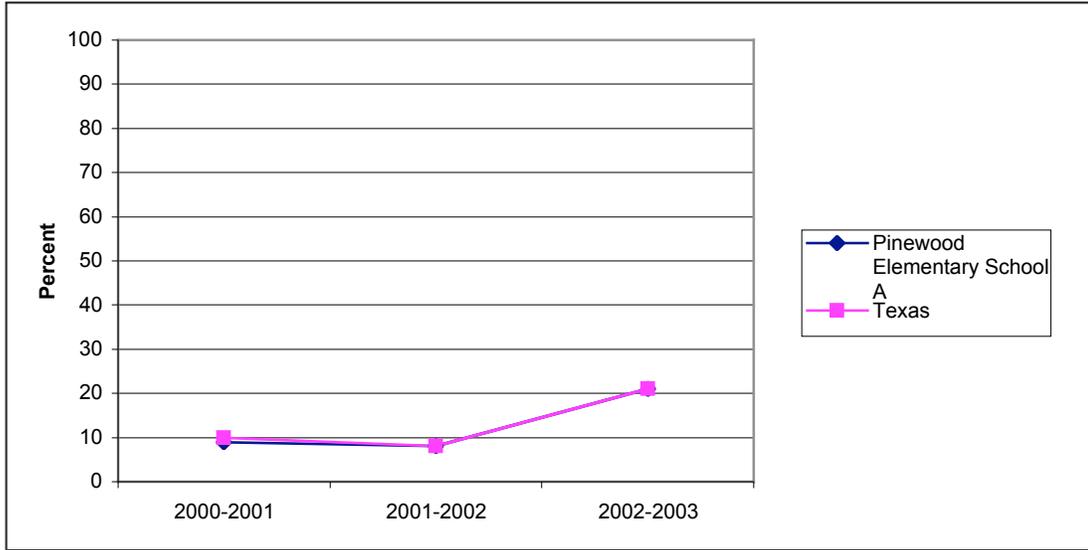


As demonstrated by Figure 23, the percentage of students categorized as “Failing” remained flat at 20%. Among state results, there was another slight increase in the failure rate upon the introduction of the new test.

Fifth-Grade Results

Statewide, fifth-grade reading results reveal a similar pattern to the one depicted in Figure 23. The difference is, in this case, the rise in failure rates is virtually identical for both groups. Incidentally, this similarity makes the lines difficult to read on the graph (Figure 24) since they almost completely overlap. However, there are two lines represented in the figure.

Figure 24: Fifth-Grade State-Mandated Reading Test: Percent Failing, 2000-2003



This is cause for concern because fifth-grade performance dropped to single-digit failure rates on the reading test in 2001-2002. A possible explanation is that the new test introduced a new format that presented students with difficulty, but further investigation is necessary to identify the specific circumstances that may have contributed to this increase.

Student achievement data for Pinewood Elementary School A reveals increases in failure rates upon the introduction of the new TAKS test in 2002-2003. Latest-year data is needed to determine whether this is a long-term pattern. Educators at this school should discuss possible reasons for this increase and how they can be addressed in the short and long run.

Regional Summary

Although many of the schools throughout the five-state region in which SEDL is working have high percentages of students in low-performing categories, the intent of the SEDL model was to help low-performing districts and schools increase student achievement. Therefore, a high percentage of low-performing students (by state standards) would be

expected at each school. The more immediate concern is whether there are any patterns of improvement over time.

The data suggest several positive trends in student achievement. There have been only a few instances across the sites where the percentage of students in the lowest performance categories consistently increased over time. Several schools across subjects and grades demonstrated overall declines in the percentage of students categorized at the lowest performance levels.

Some schools also exhibit relatively static achievement levels over the last 2 years (e.g., Louisiana's Bayou City Middle School B). However, even static patterns in the immediate past can also be viewed as positive in the context of implementation. Since these schools had a history of low performance, the first goal of any school reform model must be to arrest the pattern of failure. The program can then continue building capacity for effective teaching and learning.

SECTION VII: DISCUSSION

The research questions that guide this report underscore the importance of alignment in SEDL's Working Systemically Model. A fundamental assumption of the model is that helping school systems improve their capacity for alignment between standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment will have a positive impact on student learning. Each of the questions attempts to examine different aspects of this central assumption. This section presents overall findings organized around the three research questions.

Research Question 1: To what extent are low-performing districts and schools building their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards?

Standards-based accountability systems have prompted schools to concentrate on increasing student achievement as measured by state-mandated exams (Hamilton, Stecher, and Klein, 2002). The National Research Council (1999) has indicated that the rationale for these accountability systems is to promote changes in teaching and learning for the benefit of students. Alignment between curriculum, instruction, and assessment is a vital component of these systems because this supports a cohesive strategy for improving student learning (O'Day and Smith, 1993). This relationship is exemplified by the SEDL model “cube” presented in Section I.

From a systems perspective, alignment fosters a commonality of purpose that allows organizations to pursue goals more efficiently and cohesively (Senge, 1990). As Corallo and McDonald (2002) indicate, “Schools that are successful in a standards-based accountability environment have a strong focus on aligning curriculum with the standards on which the accountability system is based” (p. 2). Fullan (2001) highlights the use of state standards to design curriculum and instruction as characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty

schools. Muijs, et. al. (2004) point to studies that suggest disadvantaged schools benefit from focusing on a goal of improving student achievement.

A primary goal of the SEDL Working Systemically Model has been to build alignment capacity in low-performing districts and schools for the purpose of improving student learning. Overall, reported data indicate that low-performing districts and schools are building their capacity to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards; however, educators need to develop a clearer understanding of the concept of alignment so that this progress will deepen and be sustained.

Educator survey and interview data suggest that alignment capacity has improved over time. Educators have a positive view of their colleagues' understandings of alignment status in their schools. Interview and survey data illustrate positive changes in alignment between instruction and assessment, curriculum and standards, and vertical alignment.

Underscoring the positive views of alignment status are indicators that leadership capacity related to promoting alignment has increased over time. For example, educators differentiate leadership responsibilities based on whether a leader is at the district or school level. Overall, educators describe setting expectations, monitoring, and providing resources as the top leadership roles for district-level educators. Monitoring, classroom involvement, and understanding data and alignment are depicted as the top roles for leaders at the school-level. Generally, responses to scale-rating questions examining leadership status suggest that leadership around alignment has improved somewhat from the previous year.

One part of SEDL's work is to support the development of leadership capacity around alignment issues. SEDL found that educators' perceptions of leadership are consistent with research on effective leadership practice. Liethwood and Riehl (2002) point to the

importance of leaders, fostering acceptance of group goals, monitoring organizational performance, and building communication among stakeholders (e.g. faculty, staff, community members). Corallo and McDonald (2002) cite the importance of leadership in monitoring alignment practices around curriculum and instruction, encouraging communication among staff, and helping staff focus on data analysis. Fullan (2001) also places emphasis on monitoring school performance and communication. Above all else, school and district leaders are models for their faculty and staff. Referring to effective learning organizations, Senge (1990) believes that "what matters most is the visible behavior of people in leadership positions in sharing their own personal visions" (p. 344).

While the perception of alignment status and leadership capacity around alignment is generally positive, the data also point to a discrepancy between what educators report and what SEDL has observed regarding this perception. As suggested earlier, educators do not have a clear understanding of the concept of alignment. Specific examples of this lack of understanding include the following:

- Only half of the educators were able to demonstrate a basic understanding of horizontal alignment.
- Slightly less than half of the educators (46.8%) have a basic understanding of vertical alignment with a school, and even fewer educators (36.9%) have a basic understanding of alignment between schools.
- Educators tended to confuse curriculum (what is taught) with instruction (how it is taught).
- Slightly more than one-fifth (20.7%) of educators reported that instruction and assessment are interrelated. Of these, only 3.6% of educators described the relationship between instruction and assessment explicitly
- Only 3.6% of educators understood that instruction and assessment are interrelated.

It should be noted that the lack of understanding illustrated by the previous observations occurred more frequently among school-level educators than district-level educators.

The lack of understanding evident in educator responses begs the question of whether survey responses regarding alignment status are inconsistent with the information presented in interviews. In other words, if educators do not fully understand the targeted components, how can they evaluate their alignment? While the data appear contradictory, the design and intent of the Working Systemically Model and the characteristics of the school sites provide at least some explanation for this discrepancy.

SEDL originally selected low-performing schools with the intent of transforming them to high-performing schools. The status of these schools highlights a struggle to meet academic expectations for reasons that include lack of resources, supports, or consistent strategies for addressing student learning needs. It is not surprising that educators in these schools have difficulty identifying and articulating specific concepts around the issue of alignment. Their lack of insight reflects the context and multiple-challenges in these schools.

A low degree of understanding should not be interpreted as a lack of progress. While an educator may not have a thorough comprehension of alignment concepts, the level of knowledge and practice may represent a substantial improvement over previous years. In this scenario, the apparent contradiction presented by the survey and interview data may simply reflect the reality of the school.

As stated previously, an important part of SEDL's work is helping educators increase their capacity for alignment with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. As

educators at the district and school level improve their capacity for alignment, they will also have more opportunities to increase their level of understanding of these alignment concepts.

Research Question 2: What strategies are SEDL field staff using to build the capacity of low-performing districts and schools to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with standards?

Given the importance of alignment in pursuing an objective of increased student achievement, it is necessary to examine the practical aspects of promoting alignment in districts and schools. Research question two investigates the strategies used by SEDL staff in support of building alignment capacity by examining site contact records that document SEDL activities at the various sites.

An analysis of site contact records suggests two general observations. First, field staff strategies generally fell into two subsets: 1) providing professional development in different forms, ranging from formal presentations to one-on-one coaching, and 2) organizing teams and supporting team leaders as they brought their districts' curriculum, instruction, and assessment into alignment with state standards. Second, the SEDL site coordinators' role is distinct from and somewhat broader than the role of site specialists, even though site coordinators and site specialists work as partners and are often present at the same meetings.

The intent of the site coordinator strategies is to help district and school leaders become adept at thinking and working systemically to lead improvement. This approach is supported by educational research that underscores the importance of school and district leadership in building effective learning communities (Fullan, 2001; Corallo and McDonald, 2002). By helping school and district leaders develop good habits, site coordinators directly impact the capacity of a school system to promote and support cohesive change.

While site coordinators work to build leadership capacity for alignment, site specialists support specific alignment activities and practice in specific content areas (reading or math). Site specialists generally directed strategies at the school- and classroom-level. Part of the process is helping teachers grasp the meaning of alignment concepts. Site specialists also help educators apply these concepts toward integrating their instructional and assessment practices with the curriculum and state standards.

It is important to remember that the activities of coordinators and specialists are not mutually exclusive. Intrinsic to the Working Systemically Model is the notion that school reform is best served by fostering a commonality of purpose at the organizational level. Site coordinators help establish a positive context for change by developing school and district leadership capacity. Supportive leadership, in turn, creates a fertile environment for teaching and learning strategies provided by site specialists in reading and math. In this way, coordinators and specialists work in concert to establish a foundation for sustainable school reform by engaging school and district personnel in a change process based on shared goals and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Research Question 3: How has student achievement data changed in these sites over time?

While the objective of SEDL's Working Systemically Model is to help schools develop a coherent system of alignment for the purpose of improving student achievement, the nature of this work presents challenges in terms of assessing student progress. A fundamental issue is the fact that the Working Systemically Model is a structural program and not a student intervention program. In other words, the model is not directly linked to students in the classroom, unlike a math or reading instruction program. Consequently, it is

difficult to make causal statements about the impact of the SEDL program on student achievement.

Bryk, Kerbow and Rollow (1997) discuss the issue of assessing the school level impact of non-direct interventions in their work on Chicago school reform. The authors suggest that structural/process oriented educational reform is carried out with the goal of improving student learning. This logical progression implies that if the structural reform is effective there should be a positive impact on student learning and achievement. The same principle applies to the SEDL model.

Rogers (2000) advocates building a research-based "program theory" to guide evaluation design and interpretation of results. This theory-based approach is useful for thinking about the link between SEDL's work and student achievement. By building alignment capacity in schools and districts, the Working Systemically Model seeks to change behavior and practices among educators that will lead to improved student learning.

Although we are prevented from making causal statements regarding the impact of the SEDL model, some useful observations can be made as long as limitations are recognized. Researchers acknowledge that investigation in education presents unique challenges in terms of research design (Walsh & Taylor, 2003; Pedhazur, 1997; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1996). However, Pedhazur (1997) advises:

The more one knows about the causes for the patterns of relations among the variables under study, the sounder the theoretical formulation, the better one will be able not only to select the most appropriate analytic approach but also to interpret the results thus obtained (p. 497).

The findings for the previous research questions reflect the theoretical framework for SEDL's activities. The remaining issue is whether there have been any changes in student achievement in the schools working with SEDL.

Besides the lack of a direct student-level intervention, there are two primary research limitations intrinsic to our use of student achievement data. First, structural interventions tend to exhibit changes gradually over a period of years. Indeed, implementation of structural reforms can lead to fluctuations in outcomes as the system adjusts to changes (Bryk, Kerbow, Rollow, 1997). Second, federal restrictions around the use of student data prevent detailed analyses. Therefore, the report was limited to examining aggregate data at the school and grade level. With these limitations in mind we turn our attention to student achievement.

Among participating schools, student achievement results have exhibited a general positive trend in terms of the percentage of students categorized as low performing on state mandated standards-based tests in SEDL-focus areas (reading or math). For example:

- In 18 of 22 SEDL schools discussed in this report, student results in one or more grade levels have showed decreases in the percentage of students categorized at the lowest performance categories or showed positive changes in other test results.²¹
- Out of 27 sets of test results, 21 sets of results suggested a decrease of greater than 5% in the percentage of students categorized at the lowest performance levels on the state exam.²²

Although there were several positive trends in the data, there were three sets of test results—one each in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas—that highlighted an increase (greater than 5%) in the percentage of students who either failed or were categorized at the lowest performance level(s) as defined by the state. All three of these increases reflect reading results among fourth and fifth graders in schools where reading was a content priority. Further investigation by schools is necessary 1) to determine the nature of the decline and 2) if feasible, formulate a strategy for addressing the issue.

²¹ One school in Oklahoma was not included in this count due to invalid data.

²² Although there were 29 sets of results in the reported data, two sets of results in Oklahoma were invalidated and are not included in the count here.

If the rationale underlying the SEDL school improvement model is sound, we expect to see a corresponding increase in student academic performance as the model becomes integrated into the everyday life of the schools. While we cannot make causal inferences regarding the SEDL school improvement model and current patterns, the positive changes in student achievement are encouraging especially when considered together with the larger body of data in this report. Additional longitudinal data on student achievement will provide further insight regarding the nature of the trends.

REFERENCES

- Airasian, P.W. (2004). *Classroom assessment: Concepts and applications*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- American Federation of Teachers (1999). *Making standards matter 1999: An update on state activity* (AFT Educational Issues Policy Brief, Number 11). Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation (1995). *Getting smart, getting real: Using research and evaluation information to improve programs and policies*. Retrieved October, 2004 from www.aecf.org/publications/data/getsmartgetreal.pdf.
- Arkansas Department of Education (2004). *Arkansas comprehensive testing, assessment, and accountability program: Definitions*. Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from http://arkedu.state.ar.us/actaap/definitions/definitions_p1.htm#Levels
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349-378.
- Blum, R., & Landis, S. (1998). *Scaling up continuous improvement: A case description of onward to excellence in Mississippi*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Bossert, S. T. (1985). Effective elementary schools. In R. M. J. Kyle (Ed.), *Reaching for excellence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Bryk, A., Kerbow, D., & Rollow, S. (1997). Chicago school reform. In Ratvitch, D. & Viteritti, J.P. (Eds) *New schools for a new century: The redesign of urban education*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Center for Mental Health in Schools (2001). *Organization facilitators: A change agent for systemic school and community changes*. Los Angeles: Author. Retrieved on November 1, 2004 from <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Report/orgfacrep.pdf>
- Cicchinelli, L. F. (1999, Summer). What we know about comprehensive school reform. In (Ed.). (1999). *Noteworthy perspectives on comprehensive school reform*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved September 2004 from http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/Noteworthy/5983IR_NW_CSR_99.pdf
- Copland, M. (2003). Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(4), 375-395.
- Corallo, C. & McDonald, D.H. (2002). *What works with low-performing schools: A review of research*. Charleston, West Virginia: Appalachia Education Laboratory (AEL).
- Corcoran, T., & Goertz, M. (1995). Instructional capacity and high performance schools. *Educational Researcher*, 12(9), 27-31.
- Creswell, John. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Datnow, A., Borman, G., & Stringfield, S. (2000). School reform through a highly specified curriculum: Implementation and effects of core knowledge sequence. *The Elementary School Journal*, 101(2), 167-192.
- Edge, K., Mascall, B., Rolheiser, C., Bower, B., & Fullan, M. (2004, April). *Creating coherence: A tale of two districts*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37(1), 15-23.

- Elmore, R. F., Abelman, C. H., & Furman, S. F. (1996). The new accountability in state education reform: From process to performance. In Helen Ladd (Ed.), *Holding schools accountable*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- English, F. W., & Steffy, B. E. (2001). *Deep curriculum alignment: Creating a level playing field for all children on high-stakes tests of educational accountability*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Erzberger, C., & Kelle, V. (2003). Making inferences in mixed methods: The rules of integration. In A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 457-488). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Finley, S. (2000). *Instructional coherence: The changing role of the teacher*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Firestone, W. A., & Corbett, H. D. (1988). Planned organizational change. In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (1st ed., pp. 321-340). New York: Longman.
- Ford Foundation (1972). *A foundation goes to school: The Ford Foundation Comprehensive School Improvement Program, 1960-1970*. New York: Author.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2003). *Change forces with a vengeance*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Fullan, M., Bertani, A., & Quinn, J. (2004). New lessons for districtwide reform. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7), 42-46.

- Greene, J. C., & Caracelli, V. J. (1997). *Advances in mixed-method evaluation: The challenges and benefits of integrating diverse paradigms* (pp. 5-18). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gronlund, N.E. (1996). *Assessment of student achievement*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986). The social context of the effective school. *American Journal of Education*, 94, 328-355.
- Hamilton, L.S., Stecher, B.M., & Klein, S.P (2002). Introduction. In Hamilton, L.S., Stecher, B.M. & Klein, S.P. (Eds.) *Making Sense of Test-Based Accountability Systems* (pp. 1-12). Santa Monica: RAND Education.
- House, E. (1974). *The politics of educational innovation*. Berkley, CA: McCutchan.
- Immegart, G. L. (1988). Leadership and leader behavior. In N. J. Boyan (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (pp. 259-277). New York: Longman.
- Jennings, J.F. (1997). School reform based on what is taught and learned. In Flinders, D.J. & Thornton, S.J. (Eds.). *The curriculum studies reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- LeCompte, M. D. & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Analyzing & interpreting ethnographic data*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Leithwood, K. A., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.
- Lezotte, L. W., & Jacoby, B. C. (1992). *Sustainable school reform: The district context for school improvement*. Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products.

- Louisiana Department of Education (2004). *What is LEAP 21?* Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/1703.pdf>
- Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Kay, K. & Milstein, B. (1998). Codebook development for team-based qualitative analysis. *Cultural Anthropology Methods, 10*(2), 31-136.
- McDonnell, L.M. (1989, September). *Restructuring American schools: The promise and the pitfalls*. Paper presented at Education and the Economy: Hard Questions, Hard Answers, a conference sponsored by the Institute on Education and Economy, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
- Mujis, D., Harris, A., Chapman, C., Stoll, L., & Russ, J. (2004). Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas: A review of research evidence. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*(2), 149-175.
- National Research Council (2002). *Scientific research in education*. R. J. Shavelson and L. Town (Eds.), Center for Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- National Research Council (1999). *High stakes: testing for tracking, promotion, and graduation*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- New Mexico Department of Education (2003). Executive summary report for the New Mexico Articulated Assessment Program. Retrieved on September 28, 2004 from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/dl/nm.exec.summary.2003.pdf>

New Mexico Department of Education (2004). Criterion referenced test descriptors.

Retrieved on September 28, 2004 from

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/ais/assess/dl/crt.descriptors.pdf>

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 USC § 6301. Retrieved on September 30, 2004

from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>.

O'Day, J., Goertz, M., & Floden, R. (1995). *Building capacity for education reform* (CPRE

Policy Brief, RB-18). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

O'Day, J.A. & Smith, M.S. (1993). Systemic reform and educational opportunity. In S.H.

Fuhrman (Ed.) *Designing coherent educational policy: Improving the system*. San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Odden, A. (1998). Creating school finance policies that facilitate new goals. *CPRE Policy*

Brief (RB-26). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of

Education, Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Oklahoma Department of Education (2004). *Office of accountability and assessment*

performance level descriptors. Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from

<http://www.sde.state.ok.us/home/defaultie.html>

Pedhazur, E. J. (1997) *Multiple regression in behavioral research: Explanation and*

prediction. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Pedhazur, E. J., & Schmelkin, L. P. (1991). *Measurement, design, and analysis: An*

integrated approach. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Puma, M., Raphael, J., Olson, K., & Hannaway, J. (2000). *Putting standards to the test: A*

design for evaluating the systemic reform of education. Washington, DC: Urban

Institute Press. Retrieved on October 20, 2004 from

http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410385_Standards.pdf

Reeves, D. B. (2002). *The daily disciplines of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rogers, P. J. (2000). Program theory: Not whether programs work but how they work. From Madaus, G. F., et al., (Eds.) *Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Rossman, G.B. Corbett, H.D., & Firestone, W.A.(1988). *Change and effectiveness in schools: A cultural perspective*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sashkin, M., & Egermeier, J. (1993). *School change models and processes: A review and synthesis of research and practice*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Sizer, T. R. (1996). *Horace's hope*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Slavin, R. E., Madden, N. A., Dolan, L. J., & Wasik, B. A., Ross, S., Smith, L., & Dianda, M. (1996). Success for All: A summary of research. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 1(1), 41-76.

Smith, M. and J. O'Day. (1991). *Putting the Pieces Together: Systemic School Reform*. CPRE Policy Brief. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2000). *Creating knowledge to build high-performing learning communities: A proposal to serve as the regional educational laboratory for the southwestern region*. Austin, TX: Author.

- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2002). *A description of SEDL's Intensive Sites: Working systemically to create high-performing learning communities*. Austin, TX: Author.
- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2003). *The development and refinement of SEDL's working systemically model*. Austin, TX: Author.
- Stein, M. K., & Nelson, B. S. (2003). Leadership content knowledge. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 25(4), 423-448.
- Stringfield, S. (1995). Attempts to enhance students' learning: A search for valid programs and highly reliable implementation techniques. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 6(1), 67-96.
- Teddlie, C., & Stringfield, S. (1993). *School matters: Lessons learned from a 10-year study of school effects*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2003). Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the social and behavioral sciences. In A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 3-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Texas Education Agency (2004). *Assessment/testing*. Retrieved on August 11, 2004 from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/assessment.html>
- Walsh, M.E & Taylor, J.P (2003). Comprehensive schooling and interprofessional collaboration: Theory, research, and practice. From Walsh, et al., (Eds.) *Meeting at the hyphen: Schools-universities-communities-professions in collaboration for student achievement and well being*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Waters, T.J., Marzano, R.J., and McNulty, B. (2004). Leadership that sparks learning.
Educational Leadership, 61(7), 48-51.

Appendix A

Table 1
Arkansas Development Sites

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Arkansas | General District Information | Name | Delta Village | | Forked River | |
| | | Type Location | Rural Inside MSA | | Urban Fringe of Mid-size City | |
| | | No. of Schools | 2 | | 2 | |
| | | No. of Teachers | 21 | | 53 | |
| | | No. of Students | 247 | | 733 | |
| | | Per Pupil Expenditure | \$6,925 | | \$6,236 | |
| | | Focus of SEDL's Work | Reading | | Reading | |
| | General School Information | Name | Elementary A | High School A | Elementary B | High School B |
| | | Grade Range | K-8 | 9-12 | PK-6 | 7-12 |
| | | Focus of SEDL Work | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading |
| | | No. of Teachers | 12 | 8 | 29 | 24 |
| | | No. of Students | 159 | 88 | 384 | 349 |
| | | Percent of Students Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch | 93.7 | 80.6 | 66.4 | 63.3 |
| | Race/Ethnicity of Students (percent) | African American | 84.3 | 85.2 | 34.1 | 35.5 |
| | | American Indian | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | | Asian American | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| | | Hispanic | 10.1 | 6.8 | 4.2 | 1.2 |
| | | White | 5.0 | 8.0 | 61.7 | 63.0 |

Table 2
Louisiana Development Sites

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Louisiana | General District Information | Name | Athens | Bayou City | Highway Junction | River City | | |
| | | Type Location | Rural-Outside MSA | Urban Fringe of Mid-size City | Small Town | Mid-size Central City | | |
| | | No. of Schools | 33 | 29 | 7 | 20 | | |
| | | No. of Teachers | 1,052 | 1,157 | 155 | 660 | | |
| | | No. of Students | 14,227 | 15,023 | 2,387 | 9,678 | | |
| | | Per Pupil Expenditure | \$6,808 | \$7,487 | \$5,760 | \$5,955 | | |
| | | Focus of SEDL's Work | Math | Math | Reading | Math | | |
| General School Information | Name | Middle School A | Middle School B | High School A | Elementary A | Elementary B | Elementary C | Elementary D |
| | Grade Range | 7-8 | 6-8 | 8-12 | PK-5 | PK-5 | PK-6 | PK-5 |
| | Focus of SEDL Work | Math | Math | Math | Reading | Reading | Math | Math |
| | No. of Teachers | 46 | 53 | 94 | 32 | 44 | 19 | 36 |
| | No. of Students | 543 | 758 | 1,609 | 543 | 774 | 278 | 531 |
| | Percent of Students Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch | 69.6 | 60.0 | 46.9 | 88.0 | 96.1 | 98.9 | 96.4 |
| Race/Ethnicity of Students (percent) | African American | 59.9 | 27.3 | 34.4 | 72.0 | 100.0 | 99.6 | 99.2 |
| | American Indian | 0.0 | 3.2 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | Asian American | 4.6 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | Hispanic | 0.5 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | White | 35.0 | 68.5 | 63.7 | 25.6 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 0.8 |

Table 3
New Mexico Development Sites

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| New Mexico | General District Information | | | | | | | Name | Desert Hills | Mesa | Farmville | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Type Location | Urban Fringe Large City | Urban Fringe of Mid-size City | Rural Inside MSA | | | |
| | | | | | | | | No. of Schools | 11 | 17 | 6 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | No. of Teachers | 250 | 493 | 101 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | No. of Students | 3,428 | 7,083 | 1,514 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Per Pupil Expenditure | \$9,643 | \$9,360 | \$7,990 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Focus of SEDL's Work | Reading | Reading | Reading | | | |
| | General School Information | | | | | | | Name | Elementary A | Middle School A | Middle School B | High School A | Middle School C | High School B |
| | | | | | | | | Grade Range | PK-5 | 6-8 | 6-8 | 9-12 | 6-8 | 9-12 |
| | | | | | | | | Focus of SEDL Work | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading |
| | | | | | | | | No. of Teachers | 13 | 43 | 19 | 33 | 24 | 30 |
| | | | | | | | | No. of Students | 150 | 620 | 243 | 387 | 390 | 409 |
| | | | | | | | | Percent of Students Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch | 88.0 | 74.0 | 95.4 | 88.3 | 80.8 | 78.0 |
| | Race/Ethnicity of Students (percent) | | | | | | | African American | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| | | | | | | | | American Indian | 57.3 | 30.5 | 100 | 99.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | | | | | | | | Asian American | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | | | | | | | | Hispanic | 37.3 | 59.8 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 91.8 | 86.6 |
| | | | | | | | | White | 5.3 | 9.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 7.9 | 13.4 |

Table 4
Oklahoma Development Sites

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Oklahoma | General District Information | Name | Wrightsville | High Meadows | | Bricktown | |
| | | Type Location | Small Town | Rural Outside MSA | | Large Central City | |
| | | No. of Schools | 9 | 2 | | 27 | |
| | | No. of Teachers | 295 | 17 | | 1,189 | |
| | | No. of Students | 4,309 | 191 | | 19,356 | |
| | | Per Pupil Expenditure | \$5,791 | \$6,954 | | \$5,539 | |
| | | Focus of SEDL's Work | Reading | Reading | | Reading | |
| General School Information | Name | Elementary A | Elementary B | High School A | Middle School A | High School B | |
| | Grade Range | PK-5 | PK-8 | 9-12 | 6-8 | 9-12 | |
| | Focus of SEDL Work | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | |
| | No. of Teachers | 17 | 10 | 6 | 48 | 101 | |
| | No. of Students | 283 | 136 | 55 | 682 | 1,747 | |
| | Percent of Students Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch | 98.5 | 81.6 | 78.0 | 50.7 | 29.7 | |
| Race/Ethnicity of Students (percent) | African American | 20.5 | 7.4 | 10.9 | 15.4 | 17.5 | |
| | American Indian | 2.1 | 33.8 | 29.1 | 7.6 | 4.7 | |
| | Asian American | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.8 | 3.4 | |
| | Hispanic | 42.4 | 2.2 | 1.8 | 7.6 | 9.9 | |
| | White | 33.6 | 56.6 | 58.2 | 66.6 | 64.5 | |

Table 5
Test Sites

| General District Information | Name | Grisham, AR | | Roydale, AR | | Brookesville, OK | | Pineland, TX | |
|---|---|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Type Location | Small Town | | Small Town | | Large Central City | | Small Town | |
| | No. of Schools | 7 | | 6 | | 4 | | 7 | |
| | No. of Teachers | 224 | | 118 | | 72 | | 258 | |
| | No. of Students | 3,386 | | 1,751 | | 1,015 | | 3,385 | |
| | Per Pupil Expenditure | \$6,532 | | \$6,485 | | \$6,575 | | \$6,719 | |
| | Focus of SEDL's Work | Math | | Reading | | Reading | | Reading | |
| General School Information | Name | Elementary C | Intermediate A | Elementary D | High School C | Elementary C | Elementary D | Primary A | Elementary B |
| | Grade Range | 3-4 | 5-6 | 1-3 | 10-12 | PK-1 | 2-5 | K-2 | 3-5 |
| | Focus of SEDL Work | Math | Math | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading | Reading |
| | No. of Teachers | 29 | 34 | 28 | 19 | 20 | 15 | 32 | 54 |
| | No. of Students | 542 | 558 | 418 | 338 | 228 | 312 | 386 | 772 |
| | Percent of Students Qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch | 81.5 | 81.0 | 83.0 | 76.0 | 92.1 | 81.7 | 64.0 | 64.9 |
| Race/Ethnicity of Students (percent) | African American | 76.6 | 78.0 | 74.4 | 73.1 | 21.9 | 33.0 | 30.3 | 32.0 |
| | American Indian | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 14.9 | 10.3 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| | Asian American | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 1.8 | 0.6 |
| | Hispanic | 2.4 | 1.1 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 29.8 | 30.4 | 26.2 | 26.8 |
| | White | 20.8 | 20.6 | 25.1 | 25.4 | 32.9 | 26.3 | 41.4 | 40.5 |

Appendix B

Working Systemically Questionnaire

General Instructions:

Please read each statement carefully and indicate the extent to which you believe it is true. Using a pencil or a black or blue pen, please score each item. Please be sure to fill in the bubble completely with a dark mark. It is important that you correctly bubble in your responses so they are accurately scanned. Below are examples of correct and incorrect markings:

| Correct | | | Incorrect | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 6 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input checked="" type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 | <input type="radio"/> 6 |

Instructions for Page 1:

On this page it is important that you respond to all of the items. Please be sure to mark all roles (positions) and certifications that you have. This will enable us to examine the responses by group and will help us develop a more complete understanding of the systemic environment in your district.

Instructions for Pages 2 – 4:

When responding to the items on pages 2 – 4 please be sure to only mark only one response per item; items with more than one response marked will be treated as a skipped item. Please score each item on a scale of 1 to 6, with “1” indicating “Never True” and 6 indicating “Always True.”

Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong responses for the statements. We are seeking **your** perception of how well these items describe your school/district. Please do not dwell on the items; your first instinct is probably your most accurate reflection.

Background Information

All responses are confidential. Please do not put your name on this survey.

Respondent information



Gender: M F

[Site Name]

What position do you currently have in this school or district? (Please check all of the following that apply.)

- A Teacher
 - Elementary school
 - Middle School / Junior High
 - Senior High School
- B Teacher's Aide or Educational Aide
- C School Volunteer
- D School Administrator
- E District Administrator
- F District Support staff
- G Member of district leadership team
- H Member of campus leadership team
- I Parent of child enrolled in this school district
- J Community Representative

How many years have you worked in education?

| | Number of Years | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | <1 | 1-3 | 4-6 | 7-10 | >10 |
| Number of years in current position in this school or district | <input type="radio"/> A | <input type="radio"/> B | <input type="radio"/> C | <input type="radio"/> D | <input type="radio"/> E |
| Number of years worked all positions in this school | <input type="radio"/> A | <input type="radio"/> B | <input type="radio"/> C | <input type="radio"/> D | <input type="radio"/> E |
| Number of years worked all positions in this district | <input type="radio"/> A | <input type="radio"/> B | <input type="radio"/> C | <input type="radio"/> D | <input type="radio"/> E |
| Total number of years teaching/administration experience | <input type="radio"/> A | <input type="radio"/> B | <input type="radio"/> C | <input type="radio"/> D | <input type="radio"/> E |

What is the highest degree you have earned?

- A Less than high school
- B High school diploma or GED
- C Associate's degree
- D Bachelor's degree
- E Master's degree
- F Doctorate

What certification(s) do you have?

- A Elementary
- B Secondary
 - A Math
 - B Science
 - C Reading
 - D Social Studies
 - E English
 - F Other Specify: _____

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Never True | Rarely True | Sometimes True | Usually True | Often True | Always True |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Working Systemically Questionnaire

| Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to your school / district | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The staff work collaboratively to maintain the alignment of instruction across grades. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 2 | Supplies essential for instruction are available in sufficient quantity. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 3 | Our school helps parents learn how to support their child's development of reading and mathematical skills. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 4 | Specific intervention plans are in place for students who do not meet expected proficiency levels. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 5 | Each student is expected to achieve high standards. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 6 | District and school leaders seek input from teachers to determine professional development plans. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 7 | Research-based instructional strategies are the focus of our professional development. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 8 | Our school creates an environment that encourages all students to learn. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 9 | Space exists in our school building for staff and others to work together. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 10 | Student assessment data are used to adjust school improvement plans. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 11 | The individuals responsible for implementing each part of the school plan are held accountable for seeing that those plans and objectives are carried out. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 12 | Both administrators and teachers receive help to interpret student assessment data. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 13 | Administrators ensure that teachers have necessary resources to deliver high quality instruction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 14 | What teachers are doing in the classroom matches administrators' expectations for instruction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 15 | District and school leaders create the time necessary for staff to use data to solve problems and plan collaboratively. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 16 | All children receive a high quality education in this school regardless of which teacher they have. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 17 | The purpose of professional development programs is to improve student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Never True | Rarely True | Sometimes True | Usually True | Often True | Always True |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Working Systemically Questionnaire

| Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to your school / district | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | There is a high level of trust among stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and parents) in our school that supports working together. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 19 | Our school provides each student what s/he needs to succeed. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 20 | Student assessments are used at all grade levels to improve instruction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 21 | Administrators and teachers work together to develop a shared vision of how the school should best meet the needs of all students. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 22 | Connections are clear and consistent between what we teach and what we assess. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 23 | Our school provides sufficient time for professional development. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 24 | Our community engages in discussions about education programs in the district. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 25 | All of the instructional resources in this school are aligned with the academic goals of the district. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 26 | All school personnel have the same access to resources to support student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 27 | Data are used to make decisions in our district and schools. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 28 | Teachers have the support they need to use student assessment data to plan instruction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 29 | The school budget directly supports the school's priorities. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 30 | Administrators hold teachers accountable for student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 31 | Administrators know what is to be taught and learned in each grade and subject area. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 32 | Our school's vision of high quality instruction is evident in our classrooms every day. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 33 | The principal visits each classroom in our school to monitor instruction. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 34 | Teachers have a voice in how resources are allocated | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 35 | Teachers and parents work together to improve student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Never True | Rarely True | Sometimes True | Usually True | Often True | Always True |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Working Systemically Questionnaire

| Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to your school / district | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36 | Our school has the necessary resources to support research-based practices that promote student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 37 | Teachers at each school meet regularly in grade-level or content-area meetings to discuss instructional issues. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 38 | Teachers know exactly what is to be taught and learned for each grade and subject area they teach. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 39 | Administrators expect teachers to participate in professional development programs to improve student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 40 | Our school's success depends on students from each racial/ethnic groups performing well. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 41 | Our school routinely disaggregates student data to assess how well we're doing. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 42 | Administrators' actions demonstrate their commitment to improving student learning. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 43 | When students are promoted from one grade to the next, they have the prerequisite skills necessary to succeed at the next grade. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 44 | Our school's curriculum is closely aligned with the state standards. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 45 | The roles and responsibilities for achieving the school's goals and objectives are clearly documented in school plans. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 46 | Resources are reallocated based on reviews of student needs. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 47 | Our professional development programs match our school's priorities. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 48 | Our school's plan to improve student learning is aligned with the district's plan. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 49 | Professional development programs improve overall school performance. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
| 50 | The community and school share a common vision for their children. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |

**SPRING 2004 INTERVIEW
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

1. When educators discuss alignment, what is included?
2. How do you define alignment within a single grade-level in a school?
3. How do you define alignment across grade levels in a school?
4. How do you define alignment between schools?
5. What does it mean for curriculum to be aligned with the state standards?
6. What does it mean for instruction to be aligned with the curriculum?
7. How are assessment and instruction related?
8. What is the role of district leadership in promoting alignment?
9. What is the role of school leadership in promoting alignment?

Research Staff: _____ Date: _____ Length of Interview: _____

Respondent: _____ Position: _____ District/School: _____

SPRING INTERVIEW 2004 – SCALE RATING QUESTIONS

Current Status

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|----------|----------|------|-----------|----------------|
| Not at All | A Little | Somewhat | Well | Very Well | Extremely Well |
| 1a. To what extent do educators in this district / school understand alignment? | | | | | |
| 2a. To what extent is the curriculum aligned with state standards | | | | | |
| 3a. How involved are the district leaders in working toward alignment? | | | | | |
| 4a. How involved are the school leaders in working toward alignment? | | | | | |
| 5a. To what extent is the curriculum aligned along feeder patterns? | | | | | |
| 6a. To what extent is instruction aligned with the curriculum at the school level? | | | | | |
| 7a. To what extent is the instruction aligned within grades? | | | | | |
| 8a. To what extent is assessment used to guide instruction at the school level? | | | | | |

Change Since This Time Last Year

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Much Worse | Somewhat Worse | Hasn't changed | Somewhat Better | Much Better |
| 1b. How has their understanding of alignment changed? | | | | |
| 2b. How has this alignment changed? | | | | |
| 3b. How has their involvement changed? | | | | |
| 4b. How has <i>their</i> involvement changed? | | | | |
| 5b. How has alignment along feeder patterns changed? | | | | |
| 6b. How has the alignment between instruction and curriculum changed? 7b. How has within grade alignment changed? | | | | |
| 7b. How has within grade alignment changed? | | | | |
| 8b. How has the use of assessment to guide instruction changed? | | | | |

Data Management System - Site Contact Record A

New SCR | Delete SCR | Print SCR | to LOG | User jwaisath

A CONTACT INFO
 Log ID: 2451
 Contact Date:
 Site: NM.Tohono
 Contact Type:
 Contact Location:

Recorder: jwaisath Title: ? ID: 2451
 Public Private

Source of Info. Time Spent: ? cumulative hrs. over ? day(s)

Resources Used During the Contact: N/A

Created on: 8/26/2004 Last Modified: 8/26/2004

B Itemized Resources Used (any resource specified above must be entered here)

| Category | Resource Title | Location | Description (optional) | Rsrc. Disseminated? | Quantity |
|----------|----------------|----------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

C Stage of Work

SITE ENTRY
 DATA SCAN
 SYSTEM EXP.
 PLANNING ACTION
 TAKING ACTION/MON. RESULTS
 RECYCLING FOR CONT. IMPROVEMENT
 OTHER

Framework Areas Addressed

| Levels | Competencies | Components | Principles |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting Interpreting and Using Data <input type="checkbox"/> Creating Coherence <input type="checkbox"/> Forging Alliances <input type="checkbox"/> Building Capacity <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum and Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Policy and Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Family and Community <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> Shared Vision <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive Organizational Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Challenging Curriculum and Engaged Student Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Culture of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitative Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive Rel. Btwn. System & Surroundings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |

Data Management System - Site Contact Record B

New SCR Delete SCR Print SCR to LOG User jwaisath

A CONTACT INFO
Log ID: 2451
Contact Date:
Site: NM.Tohono
Contact Type:
Contact Location:
Created on 8/26/2004 Last Modified 8/27/2004

B Recorder jwaisath **Title** ? ID 2451
Public Private

Text description of intended purpose ?

Plans & Anticipations Reset Text Formatting

Setting, Climate, Group Affect, & Context

Actual Event (Major Activities w/sufficient detail, Purposes, Resources, Groupings, Roles, & Content Focus)

Alignment in SEDL's Working Systemically Model

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Outcomes (in terms of Intended Purpose) | ? A≡ {a} |
| Outcomes (other than Intended Purpose; Unanticipated Outcomes, Positive or Negative) | A≡ {a} |
| Reflections/Insights on Event in Relation to Intended Purposes (including Resources Used) N/A | ? A≡ {a} |

Alignment in SEDL's Working Systemically Model

| | |
|---|-----|
| Reflections/Insights (in the larger, overall context of the work, SEDL Framework, Other Sites, etc.) | A |
| | {a} |
| To keep in mind for future contacts (anticipations, impressions, things to watch out for) | ? |
| | {a} |
| Participant Next Steps | |
| N/A | {a} |

| SEDL Next Steps/Additional Issues | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| N/A | |

| Data/Materials Collected (leave blank if "none") | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Date | Name/Type of materials collected |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| Use of Protocols | |
|--|--|
| 1. Which protocol did you use? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| 2. Did you follow the prescribed instructions when you used it? | |
| <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No (If yes, please skip to Item 6.) | |
| 3. What changes did you make either to the protocol itself or how it was used? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| 4. Why did you make those changes? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| 5. Did those changes address whatever concern(s) you have? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| 6. How well did the protocol help structure the activities you expected to accomplish during this recent contact? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| 7. What, if any, modifications would you recommend based on your use of the protocol during this recent contact with the site? Why? | |
| <input type="text"/> | |

Data Management System - Site Contact Record C

New SCR | Delete SCR | Print SCR | to LOG | User jwaisath

A **CONTACT INFO**
Log ID: 2451
Contact Date:
Site: NM, Tohono
Contact Type:
Contact Location:
Created on: 8/26/2004 | Last Modified: 8/27/2004

C Recorder: jwaisath | Title: ? | ID: 2451
Public Private

SECTION --

B **Knowledge and Skills Applied by TA Provider in this Contact**
N/A

SECTION --

TA Provider Outcomes/Effects of Actions/Next Steps
N/A

SECTION --

SEDL Next Steps/Additional Issues/Other Info.
N/A

Reflections/Insights
N/A

Data/Materials Collected
Date | Name/Type of materials collected | New

| Date | Name/Type of materials collected |
|------|----------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

TOP

Appendix C

Narrative Descriptions of Strategies Field Staff Used at the Taking Action/Monitoring Results Stage of the Working Systemically Model

In Appendix C, extensive selections from the site contact records from two sites, “Grisham”, AR, (a test math site) and “Bricktown”, OK, (a reading development site) are excerpted. These vignettes convey the complexity of the work and how, in practice, the strategies employed by site specialists and site coordinators overlapped. The focus of the vignettes is on strategies that relate to research question two’s discussion of how to build educators’ leadership capacity and understandings of alignment.

The two narratives represent only work done between August 1, 2003, and May 31, 2004 at meetings, professional development sessions, and workshops that were associated with the Taking Action/Monitoring Results stage of the Working Systemically Model. A detailed protocol for this stage of the model is being developed; rather than offer a fine-grained look at each step in the stage, the vignettes consider together the two basic activities essential to this stage: implementing plans and monitoring the results of actions taken.

Research staff selected one development site, Bricktown, OK, and one test site, Grisham, AR, with an eye toward doing a preliminary comparison that would be useful when developing the final project report. These two sites were selected for a number of reasons. First, they had both advanced sufficiently in the Taking Action/Monitoring results stage to have enough salient information about the associated events. Secondly, the SEDL field staff included an appropriate amount of detail for use of actual quotes from the site contact records themselves; (field staff write site contact records which range from very concise, summarizing a meeting in a couple of pages, to verging on verbatim transcript of meetings where almost all individuals’ utterances are paraphrased as they occur and then included in the record). Third, these two sites also included relatively balanced information about the roles of both the site coordinators and the site

specialists. (A few sites are unusual in that they are staffed by only one or the other partner for brief periods of time). These selection criteria contribute to the extended narratives being representative of what LeCompte and Schensul call “normative depictions” that describe typical events (1999, p. 181). This preliminary finding confirmed another reason to choose these two sites: the fact that the same individual served as site coordinator in one site (Bricktown, OK) and site specialist in another (Grisham, AR) meant that she was able to make explicit commentary on her differing roles in ways salient to larger arguments this report makes about the importance of this pairing of change agents in systemic reform efforts.

The two vignettes do not provide an evenly weighted overview of how work is done in all the sites; however, research staff did seek to include passages that describe the interaction of the various kinds of meetings held. Entries from district leadership team meetings appear frequently because this structure was the most commonly reported cross-site. Only two sites (one which dropped out of the project and has only one entry included for academic year 2003-2004) do not report on this kind of meeting. To represent more completely the site specialists’ work, narratives from content teams were also included.

As the two vignettes unfold, specific strategies are pointed out. To reduce redundancy in the text, they are also often identified by their corresponding number inserted near the text in parentheses to indicate when a given action relates to a particular strategy. When strategies explicitly target either building leadership capacity (L) or enhancing understandings of alignment (A), this link is indicated with the letter corresponding to that subquestion’s topic in parentheses. Table C1 below offers a ‘shorthand’ reference to use while reading to interpret the numbers included in these parentheses.

Table 20
Numbered List of Strategies and Substrategies

| | STRATEGY SETS |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Professional Development |
| 1.1 | <i>Giving formal presentations</i> |
| 1.2 | <i>Modeling</i> |
| 1.3 | <i>Promoting hands-on learning</i> |
| 1.4 | <i>Distributing professional literature</i> |
| 1.5 | <i>Giving critique</i> |
| | |
| 2 | Managing Teamwork |
| 2.1 | <i>Building relationships</i> |
| 2.2 | <i>Organizing meetings</i> |
| 2.3 | <i>Assigning tasks</i> |
| 2.4 | <i>Maintaining focus</i> |
| 2.5 | <i>Developing monitoring tools</i> |

Vignette 1: Grisham, AR, a math test site.

Grisham, Arkansas, can be distinguished in a few ways, if compared with the rest of the project sites. Since it is a test site, the field staff members were able to make more use of what has been learned at SEDL from experience developing the Working Systemically Model in the development sites. For this reason, its site contact records offer a chronology of events that illustrate, in a manner fairly close to the Working Systemically model, how implementation and monitoring looked over the course of the 2003-2004 academic year. Work progressed more quickly through the stages in Grisham as compared to the development site of Bricktown, OK.

Another advantage to the work in Grisham was that, out of the 16 active sites during the time period under analysis, it was one of four which had a district content-focused committee. This committee focused on math since Grisham was one of the four math sites among the 16. Grisham's site specialist also served as a site coordinator for Bricktown. Combined with the district-level content work that the district math committee structure enabled, this dual role she

played project-wide contributed to the high level of cooperation seen between her activities and those of Grisham's site specialist.

Grisham is a small town, and the school district included seven schools. SEDL was working in two of them: elementary school C, serving third and fourth graders, which fed into intermediate school A, attended by fifth and sixth graders. The ratio of African-American to white students in these schools was roughly 3:1. Further information about site specifics can be found in Appendix A.

Chronology

The first site contact record for Grisham is dated March 31, 2003, with the Site Entry stage. By June, 2003, field staff members reported that they had entered the Planning Action stage, which continued for almost all fall. The Grisham district leadership team was trying to finalize the action plan and figuring out how it would be monitored. Field staff visited the elementary school in November. They collaborated with the school's technical assistance provider (1.3, L, 2.1, 2.4, A) to introduce the teachers to SEDL, the Working Systemically Model, and began discussions about educators' campus-level instructional collaboration (2.1, L).

Work had progressed enough so that on December 2, 2003, the site coordinator for Grisham was able to facilitate a meeting with the district math committee with one goal being to "review research with math committee and assist them in prioritizing a list of effective instructional math strategies (critical element one of action plan)." Since Grisham had a district-level content committee, one sees the site coordinator and site specialist worked closely here to build understandings of alignment at the district level. Minus this structure, there would have been fewer opportunities to build this deep an understanding among district-level officials.

In Grisham, though, both the site coordinator and site specialist cooperated in offering professional development (1), here in the form of discussing professional literature (1.4). The site coordinator also set the more covert goal to “assist the district math team in developing as a cohesive committee.” He wanted to strengthen this organizational structure by building the relationships among committee members (2.1). At this meeting, then, one sees strategies applied that related to both building leadership capacity and understandings of alignment.

Prior to the meeting, the site coordinator and site specialist together compiled a list of resources; then, they narrowed it “so as to not overwhelm the committee.” In this choice to present only a small number of articles, one sees a demonstration of the field staff members’ anticipating the need to maintain focus (2.4, L). They were also protecting the relationships they had built already with the committee members (2.1, L) by avoiding overburdening them. This choice also modeled (2.2, L) good meeting organization, as did their next step: copies of the readings were distributed to committee members on November 19 for review.

At the December district math committee meeting, field staff members followed up (2.4, L) this distribution of materials as scheduled. During discussion of the readings, the committee developed a list of effective instructional mathematics strategies from research. While they had been assisted in their reading of the articles by the field staff members’ critical review (1.5, A), the exercise had the embedded strategy of building leadership capacity (1.3, L), since it was the committee members themselves who developed the list, rather than having one handed to them. Given that the articles were content-based, they also strengthened their understandings of alignment (1.4, A), with focus on the component of instruction.

The site specialist indicated that the next step (2.3, L) was to have the teachers from grades 4, 6, and 8 teach a lesson, using the strategies the district math committee had just

selected. She would review the lesson the teachers designed using these strategies (1.5, A), and use it to plan for the next meeting with them (2.2, L & A). Additionally, a representative from the district math committee was designated to share the selected strategies with the district leadership team. Here field staff built leadership capacity because they did not offer to present the strategies to the district leadership team themselves, but rather gave an educator the opportunity to speak (1.3, L). By encouraging content-based collaboration across committees, (2.1, L & A), field staff are also modeling (1.2, L) the organizational skill of assigning tasks (2.3, A) so as to ensure follow-up (1.3, L).

The district math committee met again on January 22, 2004, to review the lesson plans the teachers had designed in the interim. The site coordinator and site specialist co-facilitated this meeting, first reviewing its agenda (1.2, 1.3, 2.2 L). They then presented information about how to develop lesson plans that were aligned with the state standards, emphasizing that students' performance on an assessment of the lesson should be used to modify how it was instructed the next time, if necessary (1.1, A). Then, the professional development strategy shifted from a formal to an embedded style: a fourth grade lesson plan was selected for scrutiny. Committee members compared its "instruction, practice and materials with the standards to determine if what they had intended to use would help students to master the standard being taught" (1.3, A). The field staff then had the committee look at the state benchmark exam to see how that standard was tested (1.3, A).

We pointed out to the teachers that we had progressed to the implementation stage of . . . [what] they would do on their campuses. We informed them that we would like for them to bring back student work from these lessons (2.3, A) to the next Math Committee meeting next month.

On January 24, 2004, the district leadership team met again. Field staff modeled (1.2, A) the same lessons for the district leadership committee, using some of the "identified effective

instructional strategies (from action plan).” Keeping their example in line with the action plan is an example of maintaining focus (2.4, A). Field staff wanted the district leadership team to understand the framework teachers would be using: “allow administrators to see what effective mathematics instruction looks like so they would know what to look for when they monitor classroom instruction.” In this way, field staff fostered cross-level collaboration (2.1, A) and began to pave the way for developing a monitoring tool (2.5, A).

In addition, field staff wanted the district team members to understand that teachers would need time set aside in order to collaborate on implementing these lesson plans. They “began to consider what support structures need to be in place to allow for implementation” (1.5, L). Field staff also introduced the importance of monitoring: administrators were “asked to observe these lessons at their campuses so they can reflect with teachers at the next meeting” (2.5, L, A). This action built both leadership capacity and coherent understandings of alignment, because it encouraged the administrators to identify themselves as instructional leaders.

The next site visit was a month later, February 25-26, 2004. The field staff met with the district math committee again first. The purpose of the meeting was to review how implementation of the lesson plans had gone in the classrooms (2.4, 2.5, L & A); a district technology staff person had taken pictures of the actual instruction and compiled a Power Point presentation to convey “a sense of what occurred during these lessons and . . . provide a basis for guiding the reviewing/reflecting process.” Field staff reviewed the slide show with educators (1.5, A) as a means of monitoring (2.5, L & A). Field staff had also asked teachers to bring some student work to the meeting for analysis (2.3, 2.5, A), now that the lesson plans had been implemented. Additionally, “the three teachers that modeled the lessons for their campuses were

asked (2.3, L) to share their reflections on the process at this meeting and again at the district leadership team meeting” (1.3, 2.1, L, A).

The field staff first “reviewed the action plan with the committee” (1.5, L, A) most of whom were seeing the final copy for the first time; “however, they were aware that work had been done with a district leadership team prior to their committee forming” (2.1, A). After building capacity by making explicit this connection, and contributing to coherent understandings of alignment due to the content of the action plan, field staff turned to the work of embedded professional development. Here, they built capacity to assess student work; in that the site specialist modeled a specific instructional strategy (1.2, A), she also offered more formal professional development than that inherent in teachers working alone.

Next, we had samples of student work from each of the lessons to analyze. [Site specialist] presented the “D.I.E.T.” process as a tool for analyzing student work.

D = Describe what you see

I = Interpret student understanding

E = Evaluate or score the work

T = Teach based on what you learn from student work

(1.1, A).

The site specialist asked for reactions (1.2, 2.1, L). This request, as well as the field staff’s response to it, modeled relationship-building. Celebration of teachers’ implementation strengthened alliances with them, while modeling how to give staff positive feedback for leaders observing.

Teachers seemed relieved that it only took [ten minutes] but had concerns about doing this for every lesson with the limited time they currently have for planning/collaborating. We told the teachers that we would present their concerns to the DLT [district leadership team] as we discussed support structures for teachers. We ended the meeting by celebrating the successes the teachers had with implementing their lessons.

The next day, the site specialist met with teacher teams and modeled for them the lesson they had designed (1.2, 2.1, A).

Field staff invited the teachers who had modeled their lessons at the district math committee meeting to the district leadership team meeting (1.3, 2.1, L). This meeting took place on February 27, the last day of the site visit. The purpose of this meeting was to review the action plan and its implementation as well as to allow cross-level sharing of experiences between teachers (classroom) and administrators (district). Then the team would celebrate successes. This agenda was not completely accomplished because none of the administrators had begun the monitoring work of observing in the classrooms, so did not have anything to share. The site coordinator “did not push the issue with them” (2.1, L) but commented to the site specialist “that we would have to devise a strategy in the future to ensure that administrators observed the lessons.” (1.5, 2.5, L, A).

We began the meeting by reviewing the action plan (1.5, L, A) and discussing progress made. [Site specialist] drew a diagram of the stages of the work and reminded the group of what action had been taken (2.4, 2.5, A). She also used the cube (the Working Systemically Model) to review the levels, components and competencies of the system (1.1, 2.4, A). Progress made to this point from the action plan included: forming a district math committee (2.1, L, A); identifying effective instructional mathematics strategies (1.3, A); modeling of these strategies for math committee, DLT [district leadership team], and teachers in grades 4, 6, & 8 (1.2, 2.1, A); practicing the strategies in classrooms (1.3, A); informal observation of teachers modeling the strategies (2.5, A, B). [Site specialist] then pointed out next steps from the action plan which included: reflecting on practice (2.5, L, A); classroom walk-throughs and formal/informal observations (2.5, L, A); and creating support structures to foster implementation of these strategies (1.1, L).

The meeting ended with the field staff modeling how leaders should build relationships with each other, an embedded form of professional development to build leadership capacity that underlined the importance of educators’ collaboration:

We ended the meeting by thanking the teachers for sharing and thanking the principals . . . for helping to establish the support structures to allow teachers to collaborate. (1.2, 1.3, 2.1, L).

Despite the fact that the requested monitoring had not begun, the site coordinator was heartened by other progress made in building capacity and creating coherence for members of the district leadership committee: “[b]y reviewing the action plan and SEDL model frequently, I believe we have helped the DLT [district leadership team] members to make connections between the process and application, thereby increasing the likelihood that they could replicate this process in the future.” Since no meeting was scheduled for March, the site coordinator began to anticipate the agenda for the April meeting (1.1, 2.1, L), asking the committee members to begin thinking about how he and the site specialist might be useful over the summer.

The last site contact record for the academic year reported on the April meeting of the district math committee. The group did detailed work on aligning instruction with standards and assessment (1.3, A) related specifically to multiplication and division in grades K-8. They mapped related parts of the Arkansas frameworks. Working in eight pairs (2.1, A), team members examined a particular grade level’s standards, and when pertinent, compared those to benchmark assessment items (1.3, A). They also discussed a related text (“the Fosnot book”) (1.4, A), that morning in small groups (2.1, A) and spent the afternoon strategizing about which instructional strategies would be appropriate for different grade levels (1.3, 1.5, A). Monitoring this work was not covered at this particular meeting.

Vignette 2: Bricktown, OK, a reading development site

In contrast to Grisham, Bricktown is a development site, and it did not have a district-level content committee. Bricktown’s site coordinator served as the site specialist in Grisham, so she was unusually apt to make cross-site comparisons about the development of both leadership capacity and understandings of alignment. The narrative below is useful in other ways to

understand how working systemically emphasized individuals' functions, not particular personalities.

In this case, Bricktown's content-related needs were met by the skills of the site specialist originally assigned to it. Later, it became clear that the site specialist needed some back-up in helping Bricktown educators with their particular reading needs, and another site specialist occasionally visited the site to supplement her efforts. Since he was already active in several sites, SEDL hired a third site specialist for Bricktown, who in January 2004 replaced both individuals who had functioned in the site specialist role. This turnover was not Bricktown's first: over summer 2003, two of the middle school principals had been replaced and became new district leadership team members. The field staff here also struggled to ensure that the parallel professional development efforts initiated by the district remain aligned with the SEDL Working Systemically action plan.

As for site demographics, along with Bayou City, LA, Bricktown's school district is much larger than others where SEDL is working. Bricktown is a large central city, and its district includes 27 schools serving almost 20,000 students. As was typical cross-site, SEDL was active in two schools that together formed a feeder pattern. One was middle school A; the other was high school B. In both schools, about two thirds of the students were white. The remaining one third was comprised of about half African-American and the rest of mix of Hispanic, Native American, and Asian-American pupils. Further information about site specifics can be found in Appendix A.

Chronology

The first contact record for Bricktown is dated September 2001, and work did not relate to the planning action stage until June 2002. The first record associated with Taking

Action/Monitoring Results reports on a February 2003 contact, but the spring 2003 records report activity pertinent to both the stages Planning Action and Taking Action/Monitoring Results.

SEDL's work for the school year began in Bricktown on August 6, 2003. A district official called a meeting between field staff and two new principals. Since they were going to participate in district leadership team meetings, a district official "felt it was important to 'catch them up'" on the two years' work of work her district already had conducted with SEDL. The site coordinator credited her initiative to the application of skills learned at the Leadership Institute.

It was refreshing that [district official] initiated the meeting, and knew that bringing them "up to speed" was important for continued growth at the campus level. This was evidence of [her] thinking systemically, and the first time that this thinking translated into an initiated action. [Her] action revealed that changing leadership creates a need to build people's understanding of current district initiatives. Without this structure for support, coherence is difficult. One on one conversations and small group meetings ensure a continuance of focus.

The response field staff made also exemplified that building leadership capacity (L) to work systemically requires first establishing that leaders have coherent understandings of alignment (A). When there was turnover in participants, field staff needed to engage in actions that fit best into earlier stages of the model. This occurrence demonstrated how it was not always accurate to think about the model's stages as a purely sequential development. Especially when reviewing the work in development sites, the stages were conceptual ones that overlapped in real time.

As the field staff did in Grisham when compiling reading lists for the district math committee, an overriding concern field staff voiced in this Bricktown site contact record was to avoid overburdening educators. The field staff wanted to model good leadership (1.2), and build

relationships with the new principals (2.1) by presenting information in such a way that would allow the educators to maintain focus (2.4) as they learned about SEDL's work (A).

We asked the question, "How do you bring people 'up-to-speed' and help them understand the working systemically model, two years worth of work at the district and school levels, without overwhelming them?" We put together a packet of baseline information about the work—the cube, the stages with the district outcomes (their root cause and anchor), and a short history of the work.

Field staff also built leadership capacity in their choice to have existing district leadership team members explain the history of SEDL's work to the new staff (1.3, 2.1, L, A). In a similar spirit of trying to downplay their role as coaches, during the course of the year, the site specialist regularly attended formal professional development with educators rather than delivering it. Knowing the content of these sessions (both regarding the management and use of assessment data) enhanced field staff's ability to keep actions aligned (2.4, L, A).

Much of the work at Bricktown related to implementation. But, notes from the September 10, 2003, district leadership team meeting gave some sense of how "taking action" continually involved confronting potential setbacks. The development sites operated at first with no protocols for action, and field staff had to trouble-shoot continually. Cross-site experience and conversation among field staff grounded later codification of this problem-solving as part of the process of developing the Working Systemically Model itself.

At this meeting, the existing action plan for the year was reviewed. Knowing that they could then embark on implementation, the site specialist appeared jubilant in her exclamations—"So far we are on track finally with the action plan!" Later, summarizing the meeting, she noted that they "completed critical element 1 and moving to critical element 2 on the action plan—Yippee!" At the meeting, a successful discussion of professional literature on instructional strategies also took place (1.4., A).

This site specialist also commented upon how long it took to get them to this place of collaborative systemic work. She wondered what might happen after an expected change in a district official for this site (2.1, L, A).

I am sure that there are lessons here about why this has taken so long - one for sure is that we did not have the protocol to do this work nor the understanding that we now have. So that helps tremendously. We are moving them to take action which is good. But we are now hearing that [district official] is leaving sooner - like January. So that impacts our work.

As noted earlier, this site was also affected that year by turnover in the site specialist, which occurred in January, 2004. The district needed more focused attention to reading, and brought in a site specialist with stronger skills in this area.

Given that field staff often coach educators one-on-one, both to build leadership capacity and to create coherent understandings of alignment, some aspects of the work risked dependence on the relationships educators built with particular field staff members. To prevent too much disruption, at the January 2004 district leadership team meeting, the site coordinator addressed explicitly both the departure of the site specialist and the district official (2.1, L). At the same meeting, she wanted to ensure maintained focus (2.4, L) on the action plan: “we planned to officially deem the Action Plan FINISHED, and the official Taking Action stage launched. We have liftoff.”

This closure opened her own private critical review (1.5, L) with specific concern about aligning district-initiated professional development.

Implementation still plagues this district. Despite the loss of [site specialist], her official exit provides an opportunity for the group to think about the next steps in reading. The capacity to work systemically and operate as a learning community has been built. Can the district apply their systemic mindset and learning when reading content specialists enter the picture, or will they latch on and desire PD [professional development] sessions apart from the action plan?

Field staff members, all of whom are assigned to more than one site, were able to compare their experiences cross-site (1.5, L, A). Here, this site coordinator compared how the work in Bricktown, a development site, played out as compared to her experiences in the test site Grisham.

My Grisham experience causes me to ponder whether an accelerated process toward change develops that system capacity to support and sustain it. Does a more simplistic plan, completed in sequence, better serve implementation, especially with a district that stalls progress due to lack of implementation. How does change in leadership effect continuance of the work? In this case, [district official] served as a blocker, while the [other] district leaders were ready to take action toward growth. The group already had buy-in and ownership, so changing key leaders served as an asset rather than a deficit . . . Another uncertainty was how SEDL reading specialists would fit into the plan.

Her mood after the February district leadership team meeting was still one of concern.

She continued to review critically the site's progress (1.5, L, A): "the gorilla in the room has always been implementation—lots of ideas for these folks, little follow through, and little insight into long term effects." The challenge, of course, was how to convey these critical thoughts tactfully.

Her strategy was to engage them in follow-up (2.4) of their own plans from two months earlier. She reminded them of their earlier stated goals:

1) finalize a plan 2) improve students' reading achievement 3) improve teaching and learning 4) build relationships 5) work systemically . . . Working systemically requires all of us to think critically from multiple perspectives?

The new site specialist participated in the discussion, and people began to get off track, asking her to coach them in new ways that were not part of the action plan. In response to this "frenzy", the site coordinator redirected the conversation (1.2, 1.5, L) so that the group might maintain focus (2.4, A) and keep their requests for professional development aligned with the action plan.

I asked the group to remember what they had learned collectively about thinking systemically. "Listen to yourselves. What should be happening to promote coherence?"

The site coordinator introduced a bit of humor, modeling how to build relationships as she tried to offer critical review of their actions, pointing out the need to maintain focus: “[New site specialist] cannot just come in and do professional development. You have only known her one hour.’ They laughed.”

The site contact record the site specialist wrote up subsequent to this meeting demonstrated how they resolved the issue behind the scenes, and kept the implementation aligned with the action plan.

The site coordinator and I decided I should help the CLT [campus leadership teams] consider their options, but avoid coming to firm decisions immediately so that their work can be integrated within the district Action Plan.

While she was new to the site, she saw problems already that might interfere with implementation: lack of follow-through and technical skills (1.5, A).

The group is motivated and wants to do the right things for their students, but they do not seem very reliable in follow through. For example: they did not read their homework or even bring the article with them to the meeting; they do not discuss the readings that are shared; they could not gather [a form of student achievement data] in a week and a half even though the computer generates reports. I am, therefore, concerned about the implementation of any adopted intervention programs.

When they returned in late March, a primary strategy employed to integrate the new site specialist into the work in Bricktown was to have her offer formal professional development (1.1, A). During the spring visits, she presented a Power Point presentation on adolescent literacy to the district leadership team as well as at both the middle and high schools. The site specialist modeled how to organize a smooth presentation by sending it to district officials for their review two week’s prior to SEDL visit (1.2, 2.2, L). During the course of presenting the new information, the site specialist made repeated connections to a book study in which

Bricktown was engaged (of Robert Marzano's work²³ on instructional strategies, a book introduced in over half of the SEDL field sites) and to the Bricktown high school's work with an external literacy coach. She also used the presentation as an opportunity to introduce the professional teaching and learning cycle, "as a way to tie together these efforts and address the literacy concerns across the content areas and grade levels," structured around vocabulary instruction specifically (2.4, A).

The presentation was well-received at the March district leadership team meeting, "as evidenced by the applause," wrote the site coordinator. She was also pleased to see considerable initiative taken on the part of the district leaders to run the meeting, although simultaneously expressed concern about how to integrate six new district leadership team members. Their district leaders had asked to them to come to the meeting without explaining what their roles would be as part of the group. The site coordinator therefore took it upon herself to build relationships with them (2.1, L).

Before the meeting, people were talking and getting coffee/juice. I walked around, introduced myself to the new members, and asked what they knew of SEDL, the partnership, and this meeting. Their responses suggested they had little knowledge, and were present by request.

A district official took the hint, transforming the site coordinator's action into an implicit form of 'critical review' (1.5, L), since the new attendees' responses indicated a lack of good communication between themselves and their leaders. The site coordinator's strategy of having this lack of understanding become apparent to the leaders was successful, and prompted the desired response.

²³ Marzano (2001) advocates very basic instructional strategies such as: identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and note taking; reinforcing effort and providing recognition; homework and practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses; and questions, cues, and advance organizers.

[District official] overheard the comments, and said that she “might need to start the meeting to clarify purpose.” I told her that was a good idea, so she began (a first—a Bricktown person has never opened the meetings) . . . and stated the purpose for the meeting, as well as welcome new people.

The site coordinator reiterated other evidence of how leadership capacity was developing in this group: instead of SEDL field staff guiding the discussion, another member led an exercise that illuminated the group’s understanding of instruction (1.3, L, A), and “each member provided input at least twice.” With respect to their understanding of alignment, the site coordinator noted that during the meeting “the curriculum non-alignment issue was openly addressed by [a district leadership team member].” Their understanding of what ‘reading’ means “was expanded to literacy after [site specialist’s] presentation” (1.1, A). The field staff’s efforts were beginning to pay off, suggesting that SEDL’s work will be sustainable.

I am pleased with the group’s efforts and ownership of their work. It’s tapering off as the SEDL work. Conversations and actions hint at “tipping”, in Schmoker speak [reference to an article about systemic change frequently distributed by SEDL field staff]: We’ve learned from this work that this is about ownership. We own the process. I’ve learned patience through the SEDL process. It was painful at first. I expected them to come in and fix reading, but I learned that we have to fix reading.’

When field staff met that afternoon with the high school campus literacy team, the site specialist again made explicit connections between what the district was doing with an external literacy coach, and SEDL initiatives (2.4, A). She addressed specifically the needs of English Language Learners, and aligning work done to boost their literacy with the action plan “those students needed particular intervention plans that would supplement, not supplant, the regular curriculum.” The site specialist outlined her concerns, providing critical review (1.5, A):

The district is using the . . . assessment as a screening and progress monitoring tool, but there is no diagnostic assessment for secondary students. [A teacher] is planning to retire at the end of the year, so I emphasized that this was the time to start making decisions about the future direction of the program. I explained the difference between the general literacy support they were learning, with the help of [literacy coach], to provide in all content area classes and the type of targeted intervention necessary for ELL [English

Language Learners] and reading disabled students. I also stressed that interventions should be planned to supplement, not supplant, the regular curriculum aligned to the state standards.

Here, then, she was working on building an understanding of alignment district-wide by encouraging coordination of all literacy efforts, not just those actively promoted by SEDL.

Members “expressed an interest in pursuing the next steps” which the site specialist followed up by distributing a topically relevant professional article (1.4, A), which explained “intervention options for adolescents.” She also set a time to talk about possible intervention during the April meeting (2.2, L), and confirmed the meeting later by an e-mail to the principal, who was absent (2.1, L). She and the site coordinator met in the interim to make sure that the site specialist’s work would be aligned with the action plan and support its implementation (2.4, A). In particular, commented the site specialist, “analyzing student work engages the teachers in planning interventions for students not meeting the standards, so teachers need to be aware of appropriate, research-based interventions for adolescents.” When the meeting came, however, no one brought or had read the article.

They did accomplish outlining “the first steps for identifying students to be placed in a reading class for next year.” She reported that they “talked about intervention options, but we cannot take those discussions any further until we have more data on the students.” The site specialist also spent time explaining that if a testing procedure (like one the reading teacher was using “on a hit-and-miss basis”) was norm-referenced, than its procedures had to be “strictly adhered to” (1.5, A). The teacher was not requiring students to finish in the time limits set out in the test’s instructions. In contrast to the site coordinator’s praise of the leaders, the site specialist sounded frustrated as she wrote “although motivated and apparently eager to make changes, the group takes action very slowly.” Nonetheless, she planned to persist, to send job descriptions

and an article about literacy coaches to a district official to assist them in their plans to hire one (1.4, A). She also arranged to meet with the team again in May (1.3, L) to help them examine student achievement data (2.5, A) and to coach them in pursuing “the next steps in establishing an intervention program” for the ELL group (1.5, A).

At the May meeting, the site specialist explained what “looking at student work” meant, and how the activity could function “as an effective professional development strategy” (1.3, A).

[Site specialist] highlighted the parts of the process—Study, Select, etc.—and identified the Frayer model and Venn diagram for use in teacher planning. She distributed student work samples and explained the analysis process. Team members worked to sort the samples into below basic, basic, and proficient categories. This created discussion around student thinking. [Site specialist] elicited comments about the below basic samples and the role of students’ fine motor abilities as well as the validity of using the established rubric to assess the child’s content knowledge (1.3, A).

There was also talk about the new literacy coach, and hopes that the person in that position would be able to use the assessment tool to diagnose the needs of ELL and Special Education students. The group remained unclear as to which grades they thought were most important for inclusion in this testing, as well as knowing what kind of placement should result once they had the test results. As a strategy for aligning that person’s efforts with the Working Systemically Model, the site specialist offered to train him or her (1, L, A). Some members of the team planned to attend SEDL’s Leadership Institute in June, and the group planned for their next get-together in Austin (2.2, L).