

Spotlight

A publication of the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL

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In this issue:	Page:
NCLB Scanning Service	1
Highlights of State Work	1
National High School Center	3
Calendar of Events	4

Welcome to the first issue of the Southeast CC Spotlight! Each issue will highlight resources, materials, technical assistance, and professional development services offered by the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC). The newsletter also will focus on the work that SECC does with the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina to build their capacity to implement the programs and goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). We hope that you enjoy this issue and that it enhances collaborative efforts to improve school performance and student achievement.

NCLB Scanning Service

What are the latest updates to NCLB requirements and provisions? Is there any new guidance for the states on key issues? How are other states implementing NCLB? Answers to these questions and more may be found via SECC's NCLB Scanning Service. This service maintains the most current information on NCLB goals, requirements, flexibility provisions, and updated federal guidance to ensure consistency of information for state education agencies (SEAs) and other stakeholders. Information provided by the scanning service regarding NCLB includes

- Specific statutory requirements, U.S. Department of Education (ED) regulations, and the most recent departmental guidance
- Public statements and messages from ED regarding goals, provisions, and outcomes
- Information regarding the states' requirements, plans, models, and materials
- Media coverage of each state's implementation and outcomes

SECC staff work with SEAs, other regional comprehensive centers, content centers, and other regional service providers to identify reliable and relevant sources of information. SECC staff review materials and post scanning results, with links to sources, on the center's Web site. Recent scanning service results include the provision of information on proposed regulations for Title I, implementation of public school choice and supplemental educational services (SES), plans to establish a uniform way for states to calculate and report graduation rates, and a pilot program to allow eligible states to differentiate between schools that barely missed meeting the goals of the NCLB Act. For more information on the NCLB Scanning Service, visit the SECC Web site at <http://secc.sedl.org/>.

Highlights of State Work

Alabama

Technical Assistance and Support for Schools

SECC staff continues to work with the Alabama Roundtable (ART) to provide services to the statewide system of school support, which includes the area of technical assistance. The provision of technical assistance to schools in Alabama, as defined by the 1995 State Accountability Legislation, is coordinated through ART and provided by the state support team. ART is composed of representatives from each section within the Instructional Services Division and includes representatives from the Office of Technology Initiatives, Career Technical Education Services, Teacher Education and Certification, and the Regional Inservice Center. Also represented on the roundtable are members of SEDL and SERVE. The mission of ART is to provide a seamless system of technical assistance and support to schools in the areas of curriculum, instruction, fiscal responsibility, management, and leadership.

The state support team (SST) is composed of the state department of education staff of the Instructional Services Division as well as the Alabama Math and Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI) site directors, math and science specialists, Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) regional partners, regional reading coaches, regional school improvement coaches, and peer mentors. The SST provides technical assistance and support

to all schools with focused assistance to local education agencies and schools that do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in accordance with the NCLB Act.

Georgia

Accountability and Improvement

The Georgia Department of Education (GDE) is focusing on several key issues—Response to Intervention (RtI), accountability, and school improvement—for which SECC staff are providing technical assistance and professional development services.

Response to Intervention. SECC staff attended the July session of the RtI design group and provided an overview of this work from a national perspective. The design group is helping to define the RtI process for Georgia schools and contribute to the development of a manual on this topic.

Accountability. The SECC state liaison met with School and Leader Quality staff to learn about the new Differentiated Accountability System, which ED has approved for immediate implementation. A subgroup continues to revise rubrics for use in the Leader Keys, an evaluative and professional growth tool for the state. A field test with a cohort of approximately 50 members will begin in August 2008. SECC staff are reviewing the materials and offering ideas for clarifying and strengthening the rubrics.

School Improvement. The SECC state liaison met with program managers to reflect on the recent Raising Standards workshops for language arts, math, and science teachers from Needs Improvement schools. The group identified areas for inclusion that will make the work stronger and more effective in improving teacher practice and student learning.

Thinking Maps Workshops. Preparation is underway for a series of workshops on Thinking Maps that will be provided for approximately 100 GDE staff and academic coaches in October 2008. Use of this approach in classrooms will help improve student learning when implemented in Needs Improvement schools. The program will be made available to other schools and districts in the following school year.

Louisiana

Support for High-Needs Districts and Schools

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is striving to create a world-class education system for all its students by promoting higher academic achievement, closing the achievement gap between race and class, and preparing students to be effective citizens in a global market. In an effort to build capacity to provide sustained support to high-needs districts and schools, the state engaged SECC to assist with implementing an infrastructure that will support the development and delivery

of ongoing, research-based professional development focused on literacy skills. With the assistance of SECC, Dr. Katherine Mitchell, and Dr. Reid Lyons, the LDE staff participated in a series of meetings to address this goal. This initiative required the development of literacy and PD training modules. Through these efforts, the “Ensuring Literacy for All” initiative was developed. This summer, with the assistance of SECC staff, LDE provided extensive PD to more than 4,000 teachers representing 180 schools. Additional training is scheduled.

The LDE also has embraced the need to develop an RtI implementation plan. Through a collaborative effort between SECC and IDEA Partnership at NASDSE, the department was able to spread the RtI message to its constituents and build stakeholder buy-in. The LDE staff participated in a series of planning meetings and conference calls that involved various national educational organizations and their local Louisiana affiliates to plan the work.

In addition, through the collaborative efforts of SECC, IDEA Partnership at NASDSE, National Association of Elementary School principals (NAESP), and the National Center on Response to Intervention, the LDE hosted its first statewide RtI awareness session in June 2008 for more than 150 teachers and principals.

Mississippi

School Support Teams and Leadership Development

From May through August 2008, SECC staff collaborated with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide the following ongoing professional development and technical assistance activities.

Response to Intervention. To provide assistance for the department’s RtI initiatives, SECC staff participated in coordinating council meetings, co-presented an RtI overview at the Mississippi Rising 2008 Summer Conference and at the MDE Statewide Vocational Education Summer Conference, facilitated an RtI work session with MDE staff, compiled an RtI Dialogue-Discussion Guide for MDE management staff, and provided technical assistance in reviewing the MDE’s RtI manual.

School Support Teams. The MDE’s statewide system of support consists of school support teams with members selected from department staff, independent contractors, service providers, lead teachers, classroom teachers, principals, administrators, parents, regional service center staff, and institution of higher learning (IHL) representatives. The department’s goals include providing training for SSTs in developing, implementing, and monitoring school improvement plans. The MDE also plans to evaluate the effectiveness of its school support teams. In support of these efforts, SECC staff conducted a principal mentorship PD activity, assisted with development of an evaluation plan for the SST process, conducted an NCLB Act PD activity, and participated

in meetings for development of a PD activity on reading, which is scheduled to be held in September 2008.

Leadership and Professional Development. SECC staff planned and jointly conducted several coaching PD activities for MDE staff to enhance leadership skills and abilities. They also presented two sessions on program evaluation and fidelity of program implementation at the Mississippi Association of Federal Education Program Directors Conference.

South Carolina

Parental Involvement Initiative

On August 4, 2008, the South Carolina (SC) Department of Education, SECC, and the SC Parental Involvement and Resource Center jointly sponsored a collaboration meeting around the issue of parental involvement. Participants included representatives from public and private institutions as well as agencies that focus their efforts on addressing this important issue.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity to connect key people in the state who share the goal of increasing parental involvement in the education of children. The agenda included time for participants to speak briefly about their work. The information shared from participants led to productive discussions of ways to collaborate and coordinate activities to better serve children in South Carolina.

Intended outcomes from the meeting included the following 1) participants will identify and interact with other partners who share common goals for parental involvement, 2) participants will develop five concrete goals for parental involvement to promote and share with the larger SC community, and 3) participants will identify ways to link with each other for collaboration and coordination efforts as well as for access to resources.

Content Center Focus: National High School Center

State representatives from Mississippi and Alabama joined SECC staff at the National High School Center's Summer Institute, which was held June 18–20, 2008, in Washington, DC. The institute, entitled *Navigating the High School Improvement Landscape: States' Roles in Building Better High Schools*, focused on systemic improvement on the high school level with a concentrated focus on high school literacy; dropout prevention; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); tiered intervention; and transitions out of high school. All sessions were structured around the National High School Center (NHSC) Mapping Framework as a tool for thinking systemically about the broad range of initiatives that make up

the high school improvement landscape. The framework, which is based on eight common elements of systemic school reform, provides a structure for understanding, aligning, and prioritizing these initiatives in order to develop coherent and contextually appropriate approaches to high school improvement at both state and local levels. An agenda for the event with links to videos of the sessions, some with accompanying presentations, is available on the center's Web site at <http://www.betterhighschools.org/SI08/agenda.asp>.

NHSC, part of a national network of content and regional comprehensive centers funded by ED, serves as a clearinghouse for research-supported improvement programs and tools. One of five content centers, NHSC provides products and technical assistance services to improve secondary education and promotes the use of research-based approaches that help students learn and obtain the skills required to succeed in college, work, and life. NHSC is located at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), which maintains partnerships with Learning Point Associates, MDRC, the National Center for Educational Accountability, and WestEd.

The NHSC Web site provides access to the latest research on educational interventions that help improve outcomes for high school students. This includes research briefs and reports, literature summaries, issue and policy briefs, case studies, toolkits, Webinars, online presentations, and fact sheets. Topics addressed include dropout prevention, transitions to high school, restructuring high schools, high school literacy, high school curriculum and instruction, and best practices in high school improvement. For additional information on NHSC, visit the center's Web site at www.betterhighschools.org or contact the center at 800-634-0503.

Calendar of Events

School Support Team Training September 3–4

Jackson Marriott Hotel, Jackson, MS

Reading professional development activity for Mississippi Department of Education School Support Team (SST) members to increase their capacity to assist local education agencies in the implementation of their School Improvement plans.

Contact: Debra L. Meibaum, SECC Program Associate and Mississippi State Liaison

Phone: 601-991-9525
E-mail: debra.meibaum@sedl.org

Thinking Maps Training of Trainers September 29–October 1

Wyndham Peachtree City, Peachtree City, GA

Members of the Georgia Department of Education will learn to use the Thinking Maps process and develop the knowledge and skills needed to train others in the use of this process.

Contact: Glenda Copeland, SECC Program Associate and Georgia State Liaison

Phone: 770-432-7675
E-mail: glenda.copeland@sedl.org

CREATE 2nd Annual Conference Math, Science, and Social Studies: A Focus on English Language Learners in Middle School October 6–7

Millennium Hotel, Minneapolis, MN

Featured speakers at the conference include Okhee Lee, University of Miami; William Schmidt, Michigan State University, as well as several CREATE researchers.

Contact: Ann Brown
Phone: 832-842-7018
E-mail: ann.brown@times.uh.edu

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Wesley A. Hoover, PhD, SEDL President and CEO
Robin Jarvis, PhD, SECC Program Director
Chris Times, MBA, SECC Communications Associate and Publication Editor

Alabama State Liaison: Lou Meadows (lou.meadows@sedl.org)
Georgia State Liaison: Glenda Copeland (glenda.copeland@sedl.org)
Louisiana State Liaison: Darlene Brown (darlene.brown@sedl.org)
Mississippi State Liaison: Debra Meibaum (debra.meibaum@sedl.org)
South Carolina State Liaison: Sandra Lindsay (sandra.lindsay@sedl.org)

The Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) is one of 16 regional centers established by the U.S. Department of Education. The primary goal of the regional centers is to build the capacity of the state education agencies and statewide systems of support to implement NCLB. Links to the other regional centers, the content centers, and the U.S. Department of Education may be found on the SECC Web site (secc.sedl.org).

SEDL
4700 Mueller Blvd., Austin, TX 78723, 800-476-6861, www.sedl.org

SOUTHEAST COMPREHENSIVE CENTER at SEDL
3501 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 700, Metairie, LA 70002, 800-644-8671, secc.sedl.org

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