

Spotlight

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In this issue:	Page:
SECC Annual Regional Forum—The Turnaround Schools' Journey	1
Highlights of State Work	1
Assessment and Accountability Center	3
Calendar of Events	4

- Lessons learned from charter school authorizing
- Lessons learned from turnaround initiatives

Electronic files of the presentations from the forum are available on the SECC Web site (<http://secc.sedl.org/resources/index.html>) along with podcasts of the keynote address by William Guenther, President, Mass Insight Education & Research Institute Inc.; and the closing address by Paul Vallas, Superintendent, Recovery School District, New Orleans, Louisiana.

SECC Annual Regional Forum—The Turnaround Schools' Journey

Across the United States, a growing number of schools are being identified as low-performing and needing improvement. According to a recently released report, *The Turnaround Challenge*, by Mass Insight Education & Research Institute Inc., 5,000 of the nation's schools are on a path to falling into the most extreme federal designation for failure by 2009–10. This report was featured during the SECC's Annual Regional Forum, *The Turnaround Schools' Journey: Insights, Initiatives, and Implications*, which was held May 21–23, 2008, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

During the forum, 148 state department of education staff and other stakeholders from the five states served by the SECC attended presentations on the challenges facing low-performing schools as well as steps that can be taken to improve academic achievement. In addition, participants attended state networking sessions, state showcase presentations, and state implementation sessions in which they identified areas of concern in their states and developed plans to address these issues.

Forum presenters were state and district leaders as well as experts in education research and dissemination from 10 states—Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia. The speakers discussed strategies and initiatives for improving achievement in low-performing schools, including the following topics

- Developing leadership for turnaround schools
- Restructuring schools
- Supporting school and district improvement
- Implementing changes to build quality schools

Highlights of State Work

Alabama

Response to Intervention Work Session

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Response to Intervention (RtI) Work Session was held September 18, 2008, at the department in Montgomery, Alabama. Lou Meadows, Alabama State Liaison for the SECC; Ada Muoneke, SECC Program Associate; and Robin Jarvis, SECC Program Manager; attended the work session along with department staff. The SECC staff worked with the department's RtI team to plan professional development (PD) training for implementation of the RtI approach in the state's schools and districts.

LEA Support Roundtable Meeting

The SECC state liaison attended the monthly LEA Support Roundtable Meeting on September 19. These monthly meetings are designed to plan and implement a seamless system of technical assistance and support to schools in the areas of curricula, instruction, fiscal responsibility, management, and leadership.

Technical Assistance Work Session

On September 22–23, the SECC sponsored a 2-day Technical Assistance (TA) Work Session for the Alabama Instructional Services Steering Committee of the ALSDE. Ed Tobia, SECC Program Associate, led the group in reviewing strategies for dynamic team development. This work session was held in Opelika, Alabama.

Georgia

School Improvement Activities

Glenda Copeland, Georgia State Liaison for the SECC, attended the Georgia Department of Education's School and Leader Quality meetings on August 13—15, 2008. During the meetings, participants revised documentation for the department's CLASS Keys (a professional growth model and evaluation process). Once finalized, the documentation will be used in a field study that will include over 172 schools and districts.

The state liaison also attended the department's State Monitor Planning Session and Workshop on August 18 and 20. Under the new Differentiated Accountability System that is being implemented in Georgia, State Monitors will be available in NI (Needs Improvement)-5 and above schools to support the improvement of these designated schools. The schools also will receive the services of school improvement specialists.

On August 19, the state liaison participated in the Collaborative for School Improvement State Meeting along with staff from regional educational service agencies and technology centers. Participants learned about the Differentiated Accountability Plan and chose from breakout sessions to learn specific strategies for working with schools in their regions.

Technical Assistance and Professional Development Services

SECC staff members, Glenda Copeland and Ada Muoneke, as well as state taskforce members will provide feedback to the state department on the RtI guidance document that is in development.

In addition, SECC staff are working with state department staff to coordinate Thinking Maps® Training sessions. Thinking Maps® are visual teaching tools that focus on enhancing students' thinking skills and encouraging teachers to employ consistent visual tools across all grade levels and content areas. These training sessions are being held for state department staff to build their capacity to support improvement efforts in Needs Improvement schools throughout the state. About 100 participants will attend the training and upon completion will incorporate the strategies into their work. In addition, school improvement specialists will work with students in classrooms of their assigned schools to develop model lessons and to prepare to become trainers of NI school staff members in the summer 2009.

Georgia Literacy Task Force

SECC staff members, Ramona Chauvin and Kathleen Theodore, attended the Georgia Department of Education's Literacy Task Force meeting on September 18, 2008. The task force included staff from the department and other stakeholders, such as REL SE, district administrators, teachers, and university personnel.

The main focus of the task force is to develop a plan to promote K–12 literacy in Georgia. The scope of work for the task force addresses literacy for all populations, an in-depth look at secondary literacy, RtI, literacy models that are grounded in research, best practices in reading in the content area, professional learning, funding sources, as well as data and assessment. Establishing collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), REL SE, and SEDL was also defined as a critical component of the scope of work. During the meeting, task force members discussed Georgia's current data and looked at Florida's K-12 Literacy Plan. The task force will continue to meet on a monthly basis with the next meeting scheduled for October 15, 2008. The group's current assignment for the next meeting is to determine a common definition of literacy.

Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is focusing on several key issues and initiatives—RtI, school improvement, parental involvement, and English Language Learners (ELLs)—for which SECC staff are collaborating and providing technical assistance.

Response to Intervention

Building on the first statewide RtI awareness session (held in June 2008) and the Ensuring Literacy For All three-tier literacy model that was piloted throughout the state, the LDE has begun the process of developing a statewide RtI implementation plan. On September 19, Darlene Brown, the Louisiana State Liaison for SECC, met with special education and literacy and numeracy staff to define the RtI process in Louisiana schools.

School Improvement

SECC staff will continue to work with the LDE's School Improvement Division to provide recommendations for streamlining the state's school improvement template. The SECC state liaison has met with division staff on several occasions to review model school improvement templates and to address document-formatting issues.

Corrective Action Plan

To provide technical assistance to the department's Division of Dropout Prevention, Adult, and Family Services, the SECC state liaison has participated in a series of meetings to assist in the development of a plan to address findings in the areas of ELLs and parental involvement, which were detailed in a monitoring report. With assistance from the SECC and the Assessment and Accountability Content Center, the LDE has developed a corrective action plan and timeline for resolving the findings.

To assist the state in addressing the ELL findings, the Assessment and Accountability Content Center will conduct data analyses and help LDE staff reset Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). Additionally, ongoing meetings are scheduled to develop a long-term plan to include the creation of professional development modules to address academic learning. Also, eight staff members from various divisions of the LDE are registered to attend the Southeast Comprehensive Center's ELL Symposium in November 2008. In preparation for the monitoring visit in February 2009, the SECC is assisting the LDE in developing a state parental involvement plan. In addition, the SECC is assisting with the revision of the Title I Part A, Parental Involvement Checklist, the identification of parental notification issues, and development of professional development activities.

Mississippi

Focus on Staff Development, RtI, and Other Issues

Debra Meibaum, Mississippi State Liaison for SECC, and other Southeast CC staff collaborated with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to provide a broad range of professional development and technical assistance activities during August and September. A few activities are highlighted below.

The MDE and SECC staff members, Ramona Chauvin and Kathleen Theodore, jointly conducted a reading professional development activity for the Office of Innovative Support School Support Team members. Also, SECC staff member, Ed Tobia, facilitated a planning retreat for the Office of Quality Professionals and Special Schools.

In addition, SECC staff member, Ada Muoneke, provided technical assistance during the development of the department's RtI Dialogue-Discussion Guide, which was recently completed. SECC staff served on the RtI manual subcommittee and the RtI Coordinating Council as well. SECC staff also participated in follow-up technical assistance planning meetings on a number of key education topics:

- Migrant education identification/recruitment and implementation planning
- Dropout prevention
- Charter schools
- Healthy schools
- Leadership development
- Coaching of Coaches

South Carolina

Follow-up Activities for Parental Involvement

During September, Sandy Lindsay, South Carolina State Liaison for SECC, worked closely with state department staff and others, resulting in productive planning efforts for work in South Carolina. Initiatives to improve parental involvement are underway and will continue in upcoming months. The Parental Involvement Collaboration meeting, held in early August, was a great success and has engendered interest within the South Carolina Department of Education (SCSDE) and within agencies throughout the state to plan more effectively for involving parents in the education of the state's children. Several follow-up meetings are scheduled in October.

Chris Ferguson, SECC Program Associate, will participate in a statewide meeting sponsored by the SCSDE on October 10, 2008. Representatives from Title I schools who are responsible for increasing parental engagement are invited to the meeting, which will take place in Columbia, South Carolina. Two days of strategic planning will precede the October 10 meeting. Key leaders in parental engagement from the SCSDE will meet on October 8 and 9 to address crucial issues to guide future efforts in parental involvement. The team will attempt to define "meaningful" engagement and capacity building for the department. Team members will thoroughly review research provided by the SECC to develop rubrics that will allow schools, districts, and organizations to measure their efforts in parental involvement against those of others. Team members also will develop an evaluation tool for use in local school districts.

In addition, collaborative meetings have enhanced the partnership with the South Carolina Parental Involvement Resource Center (SCPIRC). Heidi Vaughn, SCPIRC representative, is included in all SCSDE meetings and has invited the newly formed network of leaders from public and private organizations to attend all SCPIRC-sponsored meetings. The first meeting, the ABC's of Parent Leadership, was held on September 24. Topics of discussion included 1) A National Perspective on Parent Leadership, 2) Literature and Research, 3) Listening to a Parent's Voice, 4) A Look at Parent Leadership in South Carolina, and 5) A Look at South Carolina Partners.

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center

The Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC) is a partnership of WestEd and the National Center for Research on Evaluation Standards and Student Testing (CRESST). The AACC is part of a federal technical assistance system consisting of four other comprehensive centers, regional education laboratories, and research and TA centers that focus

on the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. The primary purpose of the AACC is to provide states and districts with the knowledge and skills required to implement, evaluate, and improve their assessment and accountability systems to meet the academic proficiency goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Consequently, the AACC identifies and evaluates research studies and other TA resources, provides summaries of research findings, evaluates and identifies best practices, as well as disseminates knowledge and applicable materials.

The AACC Web site provides access to resources, information on NCLB, and events. One such event is a webinar sponsored by WestEd, SchoolsMovingUp, titled, "English Learner Literacy Development Through Formative Assessment of Oral Language." The event takes place October 8, 2008, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. During the webinar, Alison Bailey, UCLA Associate Professor, and Margaret Heritage, AACC, will discuss an approach to literacy development for ELLs that stresses the kinds of oral language that are critical for reading. They also will provide examples of how formative assessment can be used in the classroom. For more information on the event, access the Online Events page on the SchoolsMovingUp Web site.

For additional information on the AACC, contact Stanley Rabinowitz, Director, Assessment and Standards Development Services, at 415-615-3154 or access the center's Web site at <http://www.aacompcenter.org/cs/aacc/print/htdocs/aacc/home.htm>.

Calendar of Events

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.

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Mississippi Department of Education (MDE): Response to Intervention (RtI): Work Session 5 October 21-22

Hilton Garden Inn, Pearl, MS

This activity is the fifth follow-up RtI work session to continue planning the collaborative technical assistance to be provided to the MDE in its statewide RtI implementation initiative. Participants in this event include the MDE, the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), the Southeast Equity Center, and the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC). Participation in this event is by invitation only from the MDE.

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Thinking Maps Training of Trainers Group I: Part A - September 29-October 1 Group I: Part B - October 14-15

Group II: Part A - October 2-3 Group II: Part B - October 16-17

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.

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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).

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