

# Spotlight

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## NCLB Scanning Service—Final Title I Regulations Published

With the Southeast Comprehensive Center's NCLB Scanning Service, resources for informed decision-making are just a few clicks away. From this site (<http://secc.sedl.org/>), state education agencies (SEAs), policymakers, and other stakeholders can access current information on goals, requirements, flexibility provisions, and updated federal guidance for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. To maintain the scanning service, SECC staff work with SEAs, other comprehensive centers, content centers, and regional service providers to identify reliable, relevant sources of information.

Most recently, SECC staff has posted information on the site regarding final Title I regulations from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). These new regulations—published in the *Federal Register* on October 29, 2008—focus on 1) improved accountability and transparency, 2) uniform and disaggregated graduation rates, and 3) improved parental notification for supplemental educational services (SES) and public school choice. In an October 28 press release, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings indicated that the new Title I regulations reflect lessons learned in the 6 years since NCLB was enacted and build on progress that states have made with their assessment and accountability systems. She also noted that there is broad public consensus on the need for a uniform graduation rate. Major takeaways from the final regulations include the following:

- States will use the same formula to calculate how many students graduate from high school on time and how many drop out. The

regulations define the 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate as the number of students who graduate in 4 years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school 4 years earlier, which is adjusted for transfers, students who emigrate, and deceased students. Also, the data will be made public so that educators and parents can compare performance of students of every race, background, and income level.

- States and districts will publish reading and mathematics results from the Nation's Report Card with data from their own tests for students and include participation rates for students with disabilities and those who are limited English proficient.
- States will be required to provide parents with clear, timely notification of public school choice and SES options. This includes information about tutoring service providers, how these providers are approved and monitored, and most importantly, how effective they are in helping students improve academic performance.

For additional highlights of the new regulations, refer to *No Child Left Behind—2008 Summary of Final Title I Regulations*, which is available on the ED Web site at the following link: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/reg/title1/summary.pdf>

## Southeast Comprehensive Center English as a Second Language Institute

To assist states in building capacity to improve education for English language



### Jazzin' It Up:

A Medley of Notes for Creating a Culture That Supports English Language Learners

learner (ELL) students, the SECC hosted an English as a Second Language (ESL) Institute on November 5–7. Held in the historic French Quarter of New Orleans, the institute featured a jazz-inspired program designed to hit all the right notes. Interactive sessions focused on timely topics such as SEA considerations for emerging ELL communities, academic language across grade levels and content areas, a framework for developing high-quality English language proficiency, and implications for state systems regarding assessment and instruction for mathematics proficiency.

Staff from the five states served by the SECC attended the event and participated in intense planning sessions to address the academic needs of ELL populations in their respective states. This included six attendees from Alabama, four staff from Georgia, eight Louisiana staff members, a four-person team from Mississippi, and four staff from South Carolina, representing the areas of NCLB accountability, school improvement, Title I, Title II, Title III, literacy and numeracy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition, four staff members from the Texas Education Agency attended the event, which promoted the exchange of ideas and discussion of research-based instructional strategies to improve achievement of ELL students.

An attendee from the Alabama delegation said, "I just wanted to thank you again for giving me the opportunity to participate in the ELL workshop. It was by far one of the most informative workshops that I have ever attended in the nature of awareness and strategies for English Language Learners. I gathered valuable information, which is practical, non-threatening, and applicable to all content areas . . . Your staff was very helpful, knowledgeable, and friendly. I would like to extend my thanks to them as well. Continue to be an advocate for our students who need additional assistance acquiring a quality education in our country. I will do my best to ensure that it happens through our program."

## Highlights of State Work

### Alabama

#### Support for English Language Learner Staff

On November 17, 2008, SECC staff members met with Alabama English Language Learner team members in the Alabama State Department of Education to plan technical assistance and coordinate support to department staff who will work with districts that are not making their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.

#### Regional Support Roundtable Meeting

The Regional Support Roundtable (RSRT) met on November 19 at various locations across the state. As part of the state's seamless system of support for student achievement, the RSRT provides a venue for field staff to discuss ideas, collaborate on initiatives, and determine strategies for meeting the needs of individual schools and school systems.

#### LEA Support Roundtable Meeting

On November 21, the LEA Support Roundtable held its monthly meeting to plan and implement a seamless system of technical assistance and support to schools. The roundtable focuses on the areas of curricula, instruction, fiscal responsibility, management, and leadership.

### Response to Intervention

The SECC continued to work with the department's Response to Intervention (RtI) Team and consultant Amanda VanDerHayden to plan modules for professional development and implementation of the RtI approach in the state's schools and districts. In addition, SECC staff is developing a summary document on progress-monitoring tools in elementary, middle, and high schools for reading, writing, and mathematics through the center's Rapid Response Request service.

### Georgia

#### Thinking Maps® Training

In October, approximately 100 Georgia Department of Education (GDE) staff members completed Thinking Maps® (TM) professional development training, consisting of a series of train-the-trainer workshops. Participants have begun using the strategies of the mapping process in their work to help students deepen thinking skills and improve understanding of subject matter. In June 2009, these newly trained staff members will begin training colleagues serving in schools that are in needs improvement status on the use of TM strategies. As a follow-up, Glenda Copeland, SECC Georgia state liaison, and Robin Jarvis, SECC program director, will meet with leadership at the department to plan strategies and support for summer implementation of the process.

#### Literacy Task Force

SECC program associates Ramona Chauvin and Kathleen Theodore participated in a planning meeting on November 12 with GDE staff members Sue Snow, associate superintendent, standards-based learning, and Pam Smith, director, standards and policy. During this meeting, they reviewed definitions of literacy that were developed by the Literacy Task Force, reviewed literacy indicators for the state's high school graduates, and discussed a proposal for enhancing the Lexile Framework® for Reading (which provides a common scale for matching reader ability and text difficulty), including the possibility of integrating the framework with the AcceleratedReader program. On November 13, the task force met to review research on K–12 literacy. In preparation for this activity, Chauvin and Theodore developed a list of key research terms to guide the review process. Mary Stout and Julie Morrill, GDE staff members, serve as co-chairpersons of the task force.

## Louisiana

### High School Redesign Dropout Summit—Louisiana’s Promise: Community Teams Tackling the Dropout Problem

On October 28, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) and America’s Promise Alliance—in concert with a cast of community partners—hosted its first summit to discuss the dropout crisis in the state of Louisiana. More than 1,000 participants attended the summit, representing law enforcement, the judicial system, community and faith-based organizations, the business community, higher education, district superintendents, state department staff, and K–12 educators from all regions of the state. Darlene Morgan Brown, SECC Louisiana state liaison, also attended the summit. Participants were organized into regional community teams, and the teams received state and district dropout data as well as a dropout prevention action-planning guide. These tools were used to facilitate discussions on early detection, parent and community support, truancy and attendance, as well as ways to connect high schools to the future. Community teams left the summit with the makings of strong action plans that were data-driven and designed to identify dropout prevention issues and strategies for their particular regions.

### Math Conference

Student achievement of mathematics proficiency is critical to the prosperity of the United States as well as its safety and quality of life according to the National Mathematics Advisory Panel. In the 2008 *Foundations for Success: Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel*, the authors discuss findings that show “American students achieve in mathematics at a mediocre level by comparison to peers worldwide.” For example, the final report indicates that significant progress was made in the scores of students in grades 4 and 8 but also indicates that 32% of U.S. students are at or above the proficient level in grade 8, but only 23% are proficient in grade 12. In the report, the authors also discuss a number of recommendations for making improvements in mathematics education, one of which states that, “the mathematics curriculum in grades PreK–8 should be streamlined and should emphasize a well-defined set of the most critical topics in early grades.”

On November 5–7, the Louisiana Association of Teachers of Math sponsored a Fall Conference that addressed key implications for teaching math from the Math Panel Report as well as specific strategies for improving mathematics education. SECC program associate Como Molina presented during the conference, which was held in Baton Rouge. Approximately 50 elementary, middle, and high school teachers attended Molina’s session, which focused on laying conceptual mathematics foundations at the elementary level. An online version of the entire Math Panel Report is available at [www.ed.gov/MathPanel](http://www.ed.gov/MathPanel)

### Teacher Quality

To assist in building the state’s capacity to improve teacher quality, the SECC provided the department with research in the area of alternative teacher certification. The SECC also offered department staff the opportunity to participate in the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality Conference entitled, “Building Capacity for a Systems Approach to Improving Educator Quality,” November 10–12, in Washington, DC. Janice Zube, LDE director of Title II, and Danny Martinez, SECC teacher quality liaison, participated in an executive forum that discussed strategies used to shift from technical compliance to policy levers for change. In addition, LDE staff member Andrew Vaughn along with SECC staff members Robin Jarvis, Darlene Morgan Brown, and Glenda Copeland attended the conference.

On December 1–2, SECC staff members, Darlene Morgan Brown and Ed Tobia, will conduct Concerns-Based Adoption Model training for Distinguished Educators in Louisiana. According to information on its Web site, the LDE established the Distinguished Educator Program in 1999 with the primary goal of assisting struggling schools with reaching and surpassing their growth targets in its school and district accountability system. Of the 13 schools that have participated in the program since inception, four have achieved exemplary academic growth and six have achieved recognized academic growth, based on 2001 accountability results.

### Response to Intervention

The SECC and the LDE held a planning meeting on November 14 to finalize an agenda and formulate a committee to address the development of the Louisiana Response to Intervention (RtI) Statewide Implementation Plan.

### Statewide System of Support

On November 19, Darlene Morgan Brown met with the LDE’s deputy superintendent, associate superintendents, and division leaders to discuss the statewide system of support.

## Mississippi

During November, the SECC collaborated with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) in providing a number of professional development and technical assistance activities for staff members and other stakeholders.

### Work Sessions, Professional Development, and Presentations

SECC staff facilitated the MDE’s Response to Intervention (RtI) Work Session #5 and the Statewide System of Support (SSOS) Self-Assessment team interview work session. The SECC assisted the MDE with the planning and facilitation of follow-up dropout

prevention professional development activities for the Office of Dropout Prevention. SECC staff also presented concurrent sessions on school improvement and on ESL academic language instructional strategies at the MDE's School Improvement Symposium.

### Review of Charter Schools Law

SECC staff participated in follow-up technical assistance activities, including the review and feedback of Mississippi's charter schools law. SECC staff also served on the Rtl Coordinating Council.

### Additional Technical Assistance for Key Areas

To plan for future needs, Debra Meibaum, SECC Mississippi state liaison, and other SECC staff members worked closely with the department to coordinate additional technical assistance in several key areas—the newly formed MDE Rtl Speakers Bureau, alternative education, Mississippi's Critical Shortage Act of 1988, and the Blue Ribbon Commission for the Redesign of Administrator Preparation Programs.

## South Carolina

The SECC and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) were involved in several joint ventures during November.

### Parental Involvement Focus

SECC and SCDE staff members continued refinement work in the area of parental involvement. Chris Ferguson, SECC program associate, met with department staff on October 8–9 and in a follow-up session on November 14 to enhance guiding documents for SCDE use. The documents will focus the department's work on parental involvement efforts and will guide the work of school districts as they seek to more effectively involve parents in the lives of their students. The documents include definitions of meaningful engagement and capacity building for the SCDE, research-informed rubrics that allow the agency and districts to measure their efforts in parental involvement, and an evaluation tool for use in local school districts for self-assessment and feedback purposes.

### Training for Staff at Schools in Corrective Action Status

On November 19–20, a professional development session was held for SCDE staff and representatives of schools in corrective action status. The focus of the session was SEDL's Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle. SECC program associates Ed Tobia and Como Molina along with SCDE staff Kathy Mason and Marsha Johnson conducted the 2-day session in Columbia, South Carolina.

### Statewide System of Support for Low-performing Schools

A final joint venture includes follow-up work on the development of a plan for a statewide system of support for low-performing schools. The SECC provided technical assistance and support to a cross-divisional planning team at the SCDE during development of an initial plan that was drafted in June 2008. On November 17, Sandra Lindsay, SECC South Carolina state liaison, facilitated a follow-up planning session for Jim Rex, state superintendent, and his senior staff to implement a strong, coherent, statewide system of support for all South Carolina schools.

## National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

"Teachers are the fundamental resource of education, the essential element of any successful long-term strategy to help students learn."

*The Education Trust*

The need for high-quality teachers for all students is widely seen as crucial to improving student achievement. In a 2004 article in *Thinking K–16* entitled "The Real Value of Teachers: Using New Information About Teacher Effectiveness to Close the Achievement Gap," author Kevin Carey cites research findings that underscore this belief

The central importance of teachers was confirmed by recent findings from Texas. Using a massive database of student test scores from thousands of schools and hundreds of thousands of students, researchers analyzed the math performance of individual students over time, calculating the effect of individual teachers on how much students learn. The conclusion: teacher effectiveness varied dramatically and had a major impact on student performance, so much so that "...having a high quality teacher throughout elementary school can substantially offset or even eliminate the disadvantage of low socio-economic background."

Helping to improve teacher quality for high-poverty, low-performing, hard-to-staff schools is the primary objective of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center). Established in 2005 by the ED, the TQ Center is a collaborative effort of the Education Commission of the States, ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University. One of five content centers administered by the ED, the TQ Center serves as a national resource for the regional comprehensive centers and other education stakeholders. The TQ Center's dissemination and outreach efforts include provision of online resources, print and electronic products, meetings and networking venues, as well as technical assistance resources. The online resources web page features a number of interactive data tools and databases that allow users to access information on teacher and leadership quality. In addition, the center's Web site features a number of

noteworthy resources on teacher quality, including the following two of which were published in 2008:

**Approaches to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: A Research Synthesis**

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/EvaluatingTeachEffectiveness.pdf>

In this synthesis, the authors propose a comprehensive definition of teacher effectiveness, discuss how teacher effectiveness is currently measured, and describe various measurement instruments. They also explain why specific measures are more appropriate for certain purposes and provide policy recommendations and implications.

**Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts**

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2008Brief.pdf>

In this research brief, the authors discuss the strengths and limitations of measures used in teacher evaluation; the aspects of evaluation policies that are currently aligned with best practices; and opportunities for policymakers to improve evaluation rules, regulations, and implementation to enhance teacher instruction and student performance.

To learn more about the latest resources, practices, and tools for improving teacher quality, visit the TQ Center's Web site at <http://www.tqsource.org/> or contact the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality at 877-322-8700.

## Calendar of Events

**Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Follow-up Work Session  
December 15, 2008**

Hilton Garden Inn Pearl, Pearl, MS

The SECC will facilitate a follow-up work session for MDE staff to

continue the review of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission for the Redesign of Administrator Preparation Programs.

Contact: Paula Means  
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**MDE Response to Intervention (Rtl) Speakers Bureau Planning Session  
December 17, 2008**

Northwest Rankin High School Career Center, Flowood, MS

The SECC will facilitate a follow-up work session for the newly formed MDE Rtl Speakers Bureau.

Contact: Jean Massey  
Phone: 601-359-3764  
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**Alabama Monthly LEA Support Roundtable Meetings  
December 19, 2008–July 17, 2009**

Gordon Persons Building, Montgomery, AL

The LEA Support Roundtable is composed of representatives from each section within the Alabama Instructional Services Division and other participants including the SECC Alabama state liaison; SERVE; Alabama Reading Initiative; Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative; and the state's Rtl Team. Monthly meetings are intended for roundtable members. The remaining scheduled meetings for 2008–2009 are as follows: December 19, 2008; January 23, 2009; February 20, 2009; March 20, 2009; April 17, 2009; May 22, 2009; June 19, 2009; July 17, 2009.

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**Southeast Comprehensive Center Spotlight**

*A publication of SEDL's Southeast Comprehensive Center*

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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](http://secc.sedl.org)).

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