

# Spotlight

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## Information Dissemination— Resources to Build State Capacity

Getting the right information, to the right people, at the right time is the chief focus of information dissemination. As one of 16 regional centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) helps build state capacity to assist districts and schools in meeting their student achievement goals.

Through professional development, technical assistance, and information dissemination, the SECC helps equip the state departments of education (SDEs) in its region to

- implement and administer programs authorized under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act;
- use scientifically valid instructional methods, interventions, and assessment tools in reading and language arts, mathematics, science, English language acquisition, and educational technology; and
- facilitate communication between education experts, teachers, school administrators, policymakers, parents, community members, and others.

To provide quick access to current information on education issues and topics, the SECC has redesigned the Resources section of its Web site (<http://secc.sedl.org/resources/>). This page (shown in graphic) features SECC newsletters, events (including podcasts and presentations), the NCLB Scanning Service (descriptions and hyperlinks to resources on federal regulations and guidance), and a topic search tool. By clicking on the “content area topics” button, users can browse resources on the following topics: curriculum, instruction, and assessment; school improvement

and accountability; high school reform; family and community involvement; teacher quality; and leadership and professional development.



To learn more about SECC work and resources, visit the Web site at <http://secc.sedl.org/>, call 800-644-8671, or contact Robin Jarvis, SECC program director, or an SECC state liaison.

## Highlights of State Work

### Alabama

#### Response to Intervention Activities

The SECC continues to work with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Response to Intervention (Rtl) team through telephone conferences and meetings to discuss the needs of the state's districts and schools and to develop a plan for implementing the Rtl process.

#### LEA Support Roundtable Leadership Retreat

Members of the Instructional Services Steering Committee explored the key issue of building trust during the LEA Support Roundtable Leadership Retreat, December 18–19, 2008, in Birmingham. Presenter Sandra Lindsay, SECC South Carolina

state liaison, led participants in review of a case study, tools for building trust, and development of personal action plans and a global plan for building trust within the ALSDE and with constituencies of the roundtable.



Instructional Services Steering Committee members of the LEA Support Roundtable participate in a trust building activity during the leadership retreat, December 18–19, in Birmingham.

Feedback on the retreat was overwhelmingly positive, with many participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to address this important issue. One participant said that the best thing about the professional development activity was Sandy: “She facilitated in a way that allowed us to think deeply and dialogue. Thanks, SEDL!!! Always relevant!”

### Supplemental Education Services

The ALSDE and SECC staff held a conference call on January 9, 2009, to discuss the findings of state models for supplemental education services (SES). SECC staff participating included program associates Chris Ferguson, Sally Wade, and Mary Lou Meadows. ALSDE participants were Cyndi Townley, Jean Pride, Dr. Deann Stone, and Judy Bohannon.

The SECC was requested to work with SES in the Alabama Federal Programs section to look critically at other state department Web sites and to 1) identify models that the state might use to track student attendance; 2) determine how many sessions of SES tutoring lead to improvement in student achievement; 3) provide more timely notification of SES eligibility to parents; 4) provide a “record of effectiveness” sooner and in a more efficient manner; 5) collect consumer satisfaction data—track opinions, complaints, and comments concerning program effectiveness and business management that are reported to the ALSDE; 6) increase participation by using an established database to store contact information; and 7) increase efficiency of administering the SES program at the district and state levels.

## Georgia

### Parental Engagement Technical Assistance Plans

Glenda Copeland, SECC Georgia state liaison, and Sally Wade, SECC program associate, met with representatives of the Georgia Department of Education (GDE) and reviewed the technical assistance plans for parental engagement. Wade followed up by sending URLs for information on materials currently being used in the state and on free middle and high school parental engagement resources. In addition, Wade will assist with planning the roundtable discussion session at the upcoming Georgia parental engagement summit scheduled for February 25–26, 2009.

### Bridge Advisory Board Meeting

Copeland attended the first meeting of the Bridge Advisory Board, whose members represent the Professional Standards Commission, Georgia Department of Education, Master Teachers, University System of Georgia, Teacher Educators and their Organizations, and SEDL. The advisory board identified and prioritized strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the success of its efforts. The board is scheduled to meet again in February.

### Georgia Literacy Task Force

Ramona Chauvin, SECC program associate, attended the December 4, 2008, meeting of the Georgia Literacy Task Force. She assisted GDE staff in reviewing the state’s literacy plans and generating a draft of topics that should be included in the plans. In addition, representatives from grade-level groups presented recommendations that will be used by small-group writing teams—each composed of 10–12 members—to develop the grade specific content of the plans. Kathleen Theodore, SECC program associate, also works with the task force, which meets on a monthly basis.

The main purpose of the Georgia Literacy Task Force is to develop a plan to promote K–12 literacy in the state. 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 evidence-based, best practices in reading in the content area, professional learning, funding sources, as well as data and assessment. A critical component of the task force’s work is establishing collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR), REL SE, and SEDL, for technical assistance and expertise in addressing key issues related to advancing literacy.

## Louisiana

### Response to Intervention Literacy Model

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has successfully piloted and launched a three-tiered RtI literacy model throughout the state. The LDE also is in the process of fostering effective leadership in RtI design and implementation across general, remedial, and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction.

On January 16, 2009, the LDE cabinet members and division heads participated in an off-site, full-day planning session that was hosted by the department's Division of Educational Improvement and Assistance, Office of Student and School Support and supported and organized by the SECC. Dr. Marilyn Crocker of Crocker & Associates Inc. facilitated the session. Additional presenters included Dr. Kris Kaase, deputy superintendent of instructional programs, Mississippi Department of Education, and Dr. Tessie Rose, liaison, National Response to Intervention Center. The objectives were to

- provide an in-depth overview of RtI and its relationship to the LDE's goals for education excellence;
- develop departmental support for a statewide RtI planning and implementation initiative; and
- outline a process for launching this initiative.

### School Improvement Committee

School Improvement is a continuous process that is essential to providing increased student performance and quality results in public schools. The LDE is making a conscious effort to enhance systems designed to support schools and districts in providing a quality education for all students in the state. The department's Division of Educational Improvement and Assistance has formulated a school improvement committee for the purpose of strengthening and refining the existing school improvement process. To ensure input and collaboration among all stakeholders, the LDE has solicited nominations from each division or program for membership on this committee. Additionally, Darlene Morgan Brown, SECC Louisiana state liaison, has been asked to serve as a member of the committee.

The first collaborative effort took place on January 23, 2009, during which committee members were charged with

- reviewing current board policies and programs and best practices for developing effective school improvement plans in all schools, especially low-performing schools;
- reviewing current school improvement processes and training documents, including needs assessments, templates, implementation guides, and rubrics;
- formulating recommendations for changes to processes, programs, and practices to make them more effective and efficient; and

- preparing documents that outline current laws, programs, policies, and practices; making recommendations on how to address changes.

The committee also will develop an implementation plan, based on a review of the current state of the school improvement process, to guide the work of the subcommittees. In addition to facilitating collaboration among LDE staff across departments, the SECC will provide committee members with current research-based resources to inform and enhance decision-making skills.

## Mississippi

### Alignment of English Language Proficiency Standards

On November 15–17, 2008, SECC staff participated in a meeting with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Title III staff and representatives from World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium to discuss alignment of the department's English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards for development of English language learner assessments to the WIDA ELP standards.

### Follow-up Blue Ribbon Commission Work Session

Debra Meibaum, SECC Mississippi state liaison, and other SECC staff facilitated a follow-up work session for MDE staff to continue reviewing the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) recommendations for the Redesign of Administrator Preparation Programs. The following BRC task force reports were reviewed for accuracy and alignment to state board of education policy and procedures as well as for implementation feasibility: 1) Mississippi Standards for Instructional Leaders, 2) Selection and Preparation of Instructional Leaders, 3) Licensure of Instructional Leaders, and 4) Working Conditions of Instructional Leaders.

### Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act Work Session

In preparation for the Critical Teacher Shortage Act (CTSA) work session on January 13, 2009, SECC staff participated in a conference call with MDE staff. SECC staff also developed an agenda for the work session and disseminated it to the conference call participants for their review and comments. The purpose of the work session was to provide technical assistance in facilitating the review of the department's critical shortage geographical designation process and the impact of the CTSA.

### Planning for Alternative Education Meeting

During a conference call held earlier in the month, SECC staff and MDE staff members reviewed the expanded agenda for the January 27 follow-up alternative education meeting. Participants discussed the roles of the MDE, SECC, and the SECC consultant for the meeting.

## South Carolina

### Plans for Responding to Growing Number of Low-Performing Schools

In January, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the SECC focused on addressing one central question: How will the SCDE respond to the increasing number of low-performing schools identified by federal and state guidelines? This continuing joint venture includes follow-up work on the development of a plan for a statewide system of support (SSOS) for low-performing schools. SECC staff provided technical assistance and support to a cross-divisional planning team during development of an initial plan that was drafted in June 2008. Sandra Lindsay, SECC South Carolina state liaison, continues to facilitate follow-up planning sessions for state superintendent Dr. Jim Rex and his senior staff to implement a strong, coherent SSOS for the state's schools.

Key issues for South Carolina and other states in the SECC's region are the growing budget cuts to state education agencies (SEAs) at a time when increasing numbers of schools are being identified as needing intensive service. Dr. Rex has already announced the necessity of mandatory 5-day furloughs for all employees and the reduction of staff by not filling vacancies and not replacing retiring staff members. Other mandatory reductions in force will likely be necessary. The budget landscape looks grim and is impacting the decisions about services to schools.

Planning discussions of the SCDE and the SECC have revolved around the best ways to tier the services provided to schools. Within the tiered services will be some intense, targeted assistance for a limited number of schools. Consequently, the group has discussed ways to identify and serve these "fast-lane" schools and has delineated the following tasks

- selecting schools from the larger identified population of those needing assistance;
- determining what combination of programs, support, and services to be provided and how the plan for intervention will be conceptualized and staffed;
- rolling out the plan to schools and the larger community (it will include an assessment of the public will and a strategy for ensuring support from district leadership and the broader community served by the school); and
- developing an evaluation plan and targets for determining success.

## Alliance for Excellent Education

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy and advocacy organization that works to ensure that every child has the opportunity to graduate from high school and is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace. The organization participates in meetings and conferences across the nation; develops reports, briefs, newsletters, and other publications; and issues national- and state-level data and information related to improving educational achievement and attainment levels for secondary school students. The Alliance features several notable school improvement resources on its Web site, some of which are highlighted below.

### Is Your Local High School Making the Grade? 10 Elements of a Successful High School

[http://www.all4ed.org/files/Elements\\_Brch.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/Elements_Brch.pdf)

This brochure describes 10 elements that every high school should have in place to successfully educate and prepare its students for postsecondary education, careers, and life, in general. It addresses the need for challenging academics, strong leadership, and a safe environment, among other factors.

### Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High School Improvement

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/LitCon.pdf>

This report emphasizes the need for student proficiency in reading and writing as well as in advanced literacy skills that are required to master the academic content areas of English, mathematics, science, and history. The authors recommend the integration of reading and writing instruction into the academic disciplines. They also indicate that policymakers must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of content area teachers, give teachers positive incentives, and provide adequate resources.

### Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf>

The authors of this report emphasize that poor writing proficiency should be recognized as a critical part of the nation's literacy crisis. In addition, they provide a number of specific instructional techniques that research suggests will help 4th–12th graders.

For more information about the Alliance for Excellent Education, its publications, and events, visit <http://www.all4ed.org/> or call 202-828-0828.

## Calendar of Events

### Alabama LEA Support Roundtable Meetings January 23–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; the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Alabama Reading Initiative; Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative; and the state's RtI Team. Monthly meetings are intended for roundtable members. The scheduled meetings for the first half of 2009 are on January 23, February 20, March 20, April 17, May 22, June 19, and July 17.

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### Mississippi Department of Education Response to Intervention Work Session #6 February 3–4, 2009

Jackson Marriott, Jackson, MS

This activity is the sixth follow-up work session to continue planning the collaborative technical assistance for the MDE in its statewide RtI implementation initiative. Participants will include the MDE, the Southeast Regional Resource Center, the Southeast Equity Center, and the SECC.

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### Response to Intervention Regional Summit on Funding Models February 25–26, 2009

Renaissance Atlanta Airport Concourse Hotel, Atlanta, GA

The SECC is hosting an RtI Regional Summit on Funding Models that is designed to build the capacity of SEAs to implement RtI using various funding methods. The SECC has invited participants from SEA staff within its region to attend the summit.

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#### Southeast Comprehensive Center Spotlight

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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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