

# Spotlight

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## Guidance on Using ARRA Funds

Now that states have begun receiving federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), decision makers may have questions regarding use of these funds. SECC's [NCLB Scanning Service](#) features resources on ARRA and other topics related to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). One noteworthy resource from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), [Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funds to Drive School Reform and Improvement](#), provides examples of uses of funds and strategies for each of the core reform goals—(a) adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments, (b) increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers, (c) establishing data systems and using data for improvement, and (d) turning around the lowest-performing schools.

For instance, multiple strategies for increasing teacher effectiveness emphasize professional development (PD):

- Redesign teacher PD and school schedules to ensure that teachers' learning opportunities are sustained, job-embedded, collaborative, data-driven, and focused on students' instructional needs
- Assist teachers in mastering relevant content knowledge, especially for middle and high school teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas, such as mathematics and science
- Provide intense PD over 2 years and more training to highly effective teachers who will be able to serve as expert instructional leaders and coaches
- Support new teachers during their first 2 years on the job through induction programs that include mentoring, teacher networks, and extensive PD
- Provide PD for special education and general education teachers on evidence-based schoolwide strategies in reading, mathematics, writing, science, and other subject areas

- Upgrade school leader recruitment efforts and create a 2-year program of PD and coaching, with special attention to new principals, to increase principals' success in raising school performance.

In a May 1, 2009, press release, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) indicated support for ED guidelines for using stimulus funds for PD. "We are pleased that the federal guidelines recognize the importance of strengthening professional learning as a strategy to bolster student achievement," says Stephanie Hirsh, NSDC executive director.

In the 2001 publication, [National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development](#), the NSDC recommends 12 standards for staff development, which it indicates were revised to reflect what students are expected to know and be able to do, what teachers must know and do to ensure student success, and where staff development should focus to meet these two goals. SEDL, coauthor of this publication, incorporates the standards into its work with state education agencies, school districts, schools, and other stakeholders. Moreover, SECC is working closely with the states in its region to help them ensure that stimulus funds received by their districts are used in ways that have the greatest impact on student learning. Additionally, SEDL offers 1- to 2-year technical assistance plans that focus on selected content areas as well as customizable professional development sessions. For more information, visit <http://www.sedl.org/recovery/index.html>

Prior to spending ARRA funds, ED advises states to assess the needs in their schools and school systems: "The first step is a careful examination of student achievement data to determine where to focus improvement efforts. Ultimately, if educators and community leaders focus on a small number of related and reinforcing strategies that apply these substantial one-time resources consistent with their overall plan for increasing student achievement, they are more likely to improve results than with a diffuse or scattershot approach."

## Highlights of State Work

### Alabama

#### LEA Support Roundtable Meeting

The LEA Support Roundtable met on April 17 and May 22, 2009, to discuss plans for providing technical assistance and support to schools in the areas of curriculum, instruction, fiscal responsibility, management, and leadership. Upcoming meetings are on June 19 and July 17.

#### Response to Intervention (RtI) Meeting

On April 7, SECC program associates Ada Muoneke and Dale Lewis met with Christine Spear, RtI coordinator, Alabama State Department of Education, and Dr. Amanda VanDerHeyden, SEDL consultant, via teleconference to review materials for a professional development session for the LEA Support Roundtable on April 17.

### Georgia

#### Connecting Research to Practice Workshop

SECC sponsored participation of Dr. Diane Bradford and Dr. Veta New of the Georgia Department of Education (GDE) at the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality/REL Midwest workshop, Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: A Workshop Connecting Research to Policy and Practice, April 28–29, 2009. During the workshop, participants learned about potential ARRA funding; research, methods, and measures related to teacher evaluation; as well as experiences of three states that are at various stages of creating and implementing quality evaluation systems.

In addition, attendees participated in roundtable discussions about factors that comprise teacher effectiveness and had hands-on experience using classroom observation to gauge teacher effectiveness and build sustainable teacher accountability systems.

#### Thinking Maps® Evaluation Plan

On April 29–30, Erin McCann, SECC program associate, led a work session for GDE School and Leader Quality staff and Glenda Copeland, SECC Georgia state liaison. The group continued development of an evaluation plan for implementation of the strategy in 26 schools in the coming school year. They have completed the program description and will soon begin work on evaluation questions, data sources, collection methods, assignments, and a timeline.

#### Technical Assistance for Literacy Plan Development

On May 15, SECC program associates Ramona Chauvin and Kathleen Theodore met with the Georgia Literacy Task Force to review the draft of the literacy plan. The SECC team also is developing a recommendations document that will be presented to the task force committees this summer. In addition, the state department's reading division is exploring assessment tools that focus primarily on adolescent literacy.

### Louisiana

#### School Improvement Plan Revision Project

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is in the final stages of revising its school improvement plan template. On April 30, 2009, the subcommittees submitted their recommendations. On May 4–7 and 11–12, a 12–15 member team began developing a revised template and a school support team trainer-of-trainer module. SECC staff Darlene Brown, Louisiana state liaison, and Robyn Madison-Harris, program associate, served as the facilitative team. SECC also hosted a webinar for LDE on May 27 to solicit and share feedback on the document.

#### English Language Acquisition Grant Recipient Meeting

The LDE hosted a meeting of Title III, English Language Acquisition grant recipients on April 22 in New Orleans to share the proposed changes in the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). More than 65% of the district grant recipients attended the meeting. The LDE will offer professional development to these districts during Summer 2009.

#### Regional Delivery Model for Parents of Students with Disabilities Subgroup

On May 12, SECC staff, Robin Jarvis, program manager, and Sally Wade, program associate, met with Parent Involvement staff at the LDE to discuss technical assistance for developing a regional delivery model. This partnership will expand the work that SECC is doing to support the LDE in building its capacity to support districts and schools in implementing NCLB and other federal requirements.

### Mississippi

#### RtI Coordinating Council Meeting

Debra Meibaum, SECC Mississippi state liaison, participated in the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) RtI Coordinating Council meeting on April 28, 2009. The group discussed a number of topics including the statewide system of support, staff

training/speakers bureau, technical assistance network training, Principals' Institutes update, institutions of higher learning relations, and the Rtl Funding Guide. The next council meeting will be held June 30.

### Overview Training for Coaches

The MDE Office of Leadership and Professional Development in partnership with SEDL conducted final overview training for the Coaches of Coaches on April 16 (northern location) and April 17 (central location). The purpose of the training was to obtain feedback about the 2008–2009 coaches program. SECC program associates Ed Tobia, Camille Chapman, and Debra Meibaum assisted with the training sessions.

### Dropout Prevention Survey Findings

In April, SECC program associate Erin McCann collaborated with Sheril Smith, director of the MDE's Dropout Prevention Program, on a report of findings from a survey administered in February and focus groups conducted in March. The report discusses district dropout prevention coordinator perceptions of the strengths and challenges to developing and implementing district dropout prevention plans.

### Coaches Academy Evaluation Surveys

SECC staff member McCann collaborated with Office of Leadership and Professional Development staff to develop a set of parallel surveys for the Coaches Academy Program. The group administered the surveys in May to coaches who received training at the academy in Summer 2008 and to school-based coaches, administrators, and instructional staff at schools that received coaching support from September–December 2008.

### Dropout Prevention Training and Technical Assistance

On April 8, SECC staff provided a training session for college coaches and community organizers for the Office of Dropout Prevention. The session was designed to deepen the background knowledge of the participants in effective strategies for dropout prevention and prepare them to assist school districts in refining their dropout prevention plans. This was a follow-up from a March 20 meeting in preparation for the April 16 statewide Dropout Prevention Conference.

During the conference, SECC's Ed Tobia presented a session entitled, Putting Your Dropout Plan into Action: A Leader's Guide to Implementation. Fifty-two school district personnel from across the state attended the session, which focused on six effective strategies that leaders use to support the implementation of new initiatives.

### Statewide System of Support (SSOS) Work Sessions

On April 7, Mississippi state liaison Meibaum facilitated the SSOS subcommittee work session that was a follow-up to the whole group work session held on February 13. During the work session, the group identified the services that are available from the MDE for Mississippi's three Rtl tiers as well as services that require new resources. The next subcommittee work session took place on May 12. In addition, Meibaum and Robin Jarvis, SECC program manager, participated in a teleconference with Kris Kaase, MDE, and Marilyn Crocker, SECC consultant, on April 8 to discuss work session #6, which was held May 21.

### American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Webinar

SECC staff member Debra Meibaum participated as part of the Mississippi team in ED's ARRA Title I funds teleconference on April 6. The facilitator addressed questions related to the April 1 ARRA guidance and provided information on targeted Title I fund amounts. ED will provide additional guidance on the procedure for waiver requests and proper uses of the funds.

## South Carolina

### Curriculum Review Project

During May, SECC continued work with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) on development of the Standards Support System (S<sup>3</sup>) curriculum project. S<sup>3</sup> contains multiple tools and resources to assist teachers in effectively using the state's academic standards. SECC staff are conducting on-site reviews of the curriculum documents—Concepcion Molina and Camille Chapman are concentrating on the mathematics components, Glenda Copeland is providing expertise in social studies, and Ramona Chauvin is focusing on English-language arts.

### Services for Palmetto Priority Schools

The SCDE has designated the Palmetto Priority Schools (PPS) to receive intensive services. The state department's David Rawlinson has requested the support of SECC in building the capacity of SCDE interventionists as they plan and deliver professional development services to district and school leadership in priority schools and districts during the 2009–2010 school year. Sandra Lindsay, SECC South Carolina liaison, will lead strategic planning activities with PPS staff to deliver training to PPS liaisons and to plan regional meetings for the PPS principals, district superintendents, and board members. SECC also will assist with program and process evaluations.

## Rtl Statewide Awareness Meeting

SECC and the South Carolina Rtl State Leadership Team are planning an initial statewide awareness meeting. District teams will include the district superintendent or assistant superintendent, Title I director, special education director, and a principal. SECC program associate Dale Lewis is working with Pam Huxford, SCDE Rtl coordinator, to develop the agenda and handle logistics for the June 9, 2009, meeting, which will be held at the Brookland Conference Center in Columbia, SC.

## Calendar of Events

### GDE Thinking Maps® Summer Training June 15–25, 2009

Augusta, Milledgeville, Pelham, Columbus, and Atlanta, GA

Contact: Glenda Copeland, SECC program associate  
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SECC staff will provide technical assistance to GDE staff and presenters during five sessions for approximately 1,300 teachers in 26 schools. Participation is by invitation only.

### Beyond “Good Teaching”: Recognizing Deep Mathematical Learning July 20–22, 2009

SEDL Headquarters, Austin, TX

Contact: Laura Shankland, SEDL communications associate  
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A deep understanding of key fundamental mathematics topics is essential to effectively support high-quality mathematics instruction in the classroom. This professional learning opportunity will focus on instructional leadership for

mathematics by middle school administrators. Materials will include tools and resources for participants to use with teachers on their individual campuses. The registration deadline is June 8, 2009.

### Constructing Foundations for Success: Implications of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel Report July 28–30, 2009

Atlanta Marriott Airport Hotel  
Atlanta, GA

Contact: Maria Torres, SECC program associate  
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The purpose of this institute is to build capacity through timely, high-quality presentations and provide access to professional expertise and resources in mathematics based on the recommendations of the [National Mathematics Advisory Panel Report](#). The institute is open to eight-member teams from each state department by invitation only.

#### 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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