

# Spotlight

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## Center on Innovation & Improvement Update

The Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) is one of five content centers serving as resources for the 16 regional U.S. Department of Education Comprehensive Centers. CII supports regional centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

The CII Web site features several resources including the [Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants](#). This handbook, edited by CII, was developed by the five national content centers. Its purpose is to bolster the effective implementation of the intervention models and strategies outlined in the 2009 School Improvement Grant program in order to achieve the program's clear goal—rapid improvement of persistently low-performing schools.

Additionally, the Web site features a six-part [webinar series](#) (and accompanying presentations) for use by the regional centers and state education agencies to inform local education agencies. The series, prepared by CII, includes the following titles—Selecting the Intervention Model, Transformation Model, Turnaround Model, Restart Model, Closure Model, and Communicating about School Reform.

For more information, visit the CII Web site or contact Sam Redding, center director, at 217-732-6462, extension 11.

## Highlights of State Work

### Alabama

#### Program Evaluation Training

On April 12–13, 2010, SECC program associates Erin McCann, PhD, and Mary Lou Meadows, EdD, Alabama state liaison, met with the Alabama team—Brooke Blair, Mark Ward, Calvin Vance, and Sallye Longshore—to review the evaluation document used by the federal program coordinators to report progress on projects. The team plans to expand the document and develop training on it for presentation at the 2010 MEGA Conference, which takes place July 23–24 in Mobile.

#### Leadership Success Academy Summer Session

A telephone conference was held March 22 to discuss plans for the Alabama Leadership Success Academy Summer Session 2010. Catherliene Williamson, of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), and Celina Estrada Thomas, PhD, principal, Bastrop High School in Austin, Texas, participated in the meeting along with SECC program associates Sylvia Pirtle, MEd, and Alabama state liaison Meadows.

The leadership academy is scheduled July 7–8 in Montgomery. For Day 1 of the training, the group limited the focus to the topics of shared leadership and building cohesive teams. They felt that those topics are closely related and would ensure that participants receive training in the area deemed most important to their professional growth as instructional leaders. During a follow-up meeting, the group will discuss additional topics and event logistics.

#### ELL Academic Language for Grades K–12

In February 2010, SECC program associates Maggie Rivas, MA, Georgina Gonzalez, MA, and Meadows, Alabama state liaison, met with ALSDE staff members Heidi Goertzen, Christine Spear, and Ann Allison to discuss plans for a series of performance development sessions on English language learner academic language. The sessions are scheduled April 27–28 and May 24–25.

## Georgia

### Support for Thinking Maps® Implementation

On March 5, 2010, SECC program associate Kathleen Theodore, MA, met with Gwen Carter, state director, Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), and administrators at McNair Middle School. Theodore reports that English language arts teachers have taken the lead in implementation of Thinking Maps (TM) at the school.

SECC program associate Camille Chapman, MEd, met with state director Amy Wright at Glenn Hills Middle School March 2. They met with mathematics teachers to discuss implementation issues and to share TM strategies using released test items to prepare for upcoming Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). On March 15, Chapman met again with state director Wright and the math teachers. Each group shared mock CRCT data collected from their March 11 administration, reviewed the data to identify areas in which remediation is needed, and discussed how TM could be used as a strategy to prepare students for the CRCT administration in April.

On March 16, Chapman met with GaDOE state director Cindy Russell at Murphy Middle School to conduct classroom observations. Classes visited included an 8<sup>th</sup> grade science class and a 7<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics class. The teachers observed were using TM with their students, and student work using the strategy was evident throughout the school.

SECC program associate Sally Wade, EdD, met with GaDOE state director Judith Dorris at Washington Middle School March 9. They reviewed data from 26 State Director Thinking Maps Walk-Throughs. Dorris reported seeing students using TMs informally and formally in classroom instruction and observed a student reminding a teacher to add a frame of reference to a teacher-developed TM. TMs are included in peer observations, faculty meetings, and professional learning opportunities at the middle school. Besides observations, the team discussed target strategies for a subgroup of boys with low mathematics achievement.

Wade also met with GaDOE state director Anne Hobby at Stewart High School, where they reviewed data from 12 Thinking Maps walk-throughs. The leadership team used the data to develop implementation goals that included (a) increasing the use of the academic language on the maps, (b) increasing the use of frames of reference, and (c) having students take the thinking “off the map.” TMs are included in peer observations, faculty meetings, and professional learning opportunities at the high school.

### Evaluation Tool Development for Thinking Maps

On March 17–18, SECC program associates Erin McCann and Glenda Copeland, MA, Georgia state liaison, met with GaDOE staff Kathy Carrollton and Kristy Kueber to complete online surveys

and focus group protocols for implementation of Thinking Maps in 12 schools. The team also developed a plan for conducting the survey and preparing interviewers.

## Louisiana

### Response to Intervention (RtI) Task Force

Ada Muoneke, PhD, SECC program associate, attended the fourth RtI Task Force work session at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) on March 12, 2010. The task force met to continue the following actions: (a) reach a consensus on the department’s draft RtI implementation plan, (b) refine the *RtI Process Guide* for local education agencies, (c) develop actions for the development and dissemination of state RtI supporting resources, and (d) discuss plans for possible submission of an application to the Office of Special Education Programs to receive intensive technical assistance from the National Center on Response to Intervention.

### Title I Online Self-Assessment Tool

The LDE is currently working on development of an online self-assessment compliance tool. LDE requested SECC’s assistance in facilitating a presentation of a planning and monitoring tool developed by WestEd. The Planning and Monitoring Tracker is a web-based support system that offers both state education agencies and local education agencies a streamlined, organized, and useful process for monitoring the implementation of categorical programs and tracking the progress of district and school improvement plans.

On March 12, Darlene Morgan Brown, PhD, SECC Louisiana state liaison, facilitated a teleconference between LDE and WestEd to discuss presentation of the planning and monitoring tool on April 15 to more than 40 participants, representative of all No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 programs.

### Migrant Education Comprehensive Needs Assessment Update Committee

SECC’s Brown attended the second meeting of the Louisiana Migrant Education Program (MEP) Comprehensive Needs Assessment Update Committee on March 10–11. The committee met to gain consensus on the areas of concern, align the concern statements with solutions, and brainstorm on the state’s data profile. The committee will begin development of Louisiana’s MEP Service Delivery Plan May 5–6.

### School Improvement Division Work

The school improvement division has completed the first draft of Louisiana's School Support Team Training. On March 9–11, the LDE school improvement staff conducted a practice run of this training with volunteers from various divisions in the department, distinguished educators, and regional service center staff. Participants provided valuable feedback that will assist LDE in revising the training before officially rolling it out for implementation. Darlene Brown, Louisiana state liaison, will continue to assist the state department in building capacity for school improvement.

## Mississippi

### Consolidated Federal Programs Application

Debra Meibaum, MAT, SECC Mississippi state liaison, facilitated the Mississippi Department of Education's Consolidated Federal Programs Application (CFPA) Task Force meetings March 11 and March 22. The purpose of the meetings was to identify challenging areas of the CFPA and to provide suggested solutions to make the application user friendly. The group identified areas of concern and potential solutions regarding application content and budgetary worksheets and developed a model CFPA timeline. Mississippi CFPA Statewide Training was held April 16.

### Response to Intervention Initiative

On March 4, SECC staff continued the technical assistance provided to MDE in its statewide Rtl implementation initiative. No additional Rtl collaborative work sessions were scheduled because it was decided that MDE would monitor the progress of the implementation plans through the Rtl Coordinating Council meetings. SECC will continue to provide support as determined by MDE's Rtl Coordinating Council.

SECC program associates Muoneke and Meibaum, Mississippi state liaison, participated in a face-to-face meeting on March 5 with MDE's Rtl funding subcommittee staff to continue work on the *Funding Rtl in Mississippi Schools: A Needs-Based Approach* resource. Dale Lewis, PhD, SECC program associate, joined the meeting via telephone. The meeting outcome was that development of the funding resource is now on hold while MDE explores other options.

### Statewide System of Support Work Sessions

On March 3, SECC staff members Meibaum, Robin Jarvis, PhD, program manager; Robyn Madison-Harris, EdD; Jack Lumbley; and consultant Michael Davis, EdS, participated in the MDE Statewide System of Support (SSOS) Work Session #9. Outcomes

for the meeting included reports and reflection on development and implementation efforts, continued discussion on framework refinement and broad strategy, and detailed implementation plans for priority actions for March–May. No follow-up work sessions are scheduled at this time.

### Blue Ribbon Commission Report

On February 22, Debra Meibaum, Mississippi state liaison, met with Paula Vanderford and Bill Welch, of the MDE. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare a final summary of the work of the December 15, 2008, MDE Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) internal vetting committee. Summaries of the recommended changes, strengths, and areas of concerns were developed for the review process and for the individual BRC task force reports.

## South Carolina

### Palmetto Priority Schools

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has designated Palmetto Priority Schools (PPS) for intensive service. David Rawlinson, director, Special Projects, and his staff are responsible for providing direct services to schools that have not made expected progress.

Each month, SECC staff Sandra Lindsay, EdD, South Carolina state liaison; and Dale Lewis, program associate; meet with Rawlinson, Dr. Beth Howard, Willie Frazier and Paula Harris of the PPS staff to refine program activities. On March 16, 2010, the planning meeting focused on PPS sessions to be held during the Summer Leadership Institute in Myrtle Beach in June 2010. Teams of five key leaders from PPS schools will attend the institute. The planning team developed a draft agenda for an afternoon session on June 22 and discussed a luncheon on June 23 that will be dedicated to PPS attendees.

The last of three spring regional collaboration meetings was held March 9 in Florence for the Pee Dee region. David Rawlinson gave a legislative update for attendees and set the stage for program requirements for the remainder of the school year.

In addition, SECC's Lindsay facilitated a session on the importance of relationships and a healthy school culture. Cindy McIntee and Joy Mordica, EdD, of the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, presented research on stereotype threat. Participants were also given an overview of i-Coach, a coaching initiative supported by the Office of Curriculum and Standards for on-site coaches in the state's schools, including PPS schools.

As plans are made for the 2010–2011 academic year, Rawlinson and Howard requested that SECC’s Lewis review several key documents used in the PPS process, to include: the memorandum of agreement between the SCDE and PPS districts and job descriptions for liaisons and coaches. Lewis completed a review of the documents suggesting revisions and clarifications that were well received by the Special Projects staff. He also suggested the use of an innovation configuration to guide PPS principals, liaisons, and coaches in determining roles and responsibilities and measuring growth in their work. Some reviews have been concluded, and other key documents will be reviewed and revised in coming months.

### Accreditation Project

Maria Boggs and a team of education associates from SCDE have been charged with rethinking and revising the roles and responsibilities of the former accreditation office. Specifically, the team is responsible for aligning the accreditation process to newer accountability measures required of schools and developing a rubric and process to implement the new plan.

SECC staff Robyn Madison-Harris, Dale Lewis, and Robin Jarvis have assisted the team in developing rubrics that allow for a different and improved look at accrediting schools. During March, SECC staff and the SCDE team worked collaboratively to refine rubrics and work out possible concerns. In addition, they produced mock ratings and reviewed them for inconsistencies.

## Calendar of Events

### ELL Academic Language Training with a Focus on Grades K–12 Session 1

April 27–28, 2010  
Chapter One Center (27<sup>th</sup>) and  
Gordon Persons Building (28<sup>th</sup>)  
Prattville and Montgomery, AL

The goal of this training session is to increase participants’ awareness, knowledge, and use of research-based practices for meeting the needs of English language learners (ELLs).

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### Enhancing Teacher Evaluation: A Critical Lever for Improving Teaching and Learning

May 10–11, 2010  
Doubletree Hotel Washington DC-Crystal City  
Arlington, VA

This workshop, hosted by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center), will follow the April 14 TQ Center webcast titled, *Expanding Teacher Evaluation: Effective Practices for Evaluating Teachers of All Students*, as part of a webcast/workshop series on the topic of teacher evaluation. The topics covered will include the following: using teacher evaluation results to improve teaching and learning, building a quality teacher evaluation system, evaluating teachers of at-risk populations, connecting evaluation to teacher tenure and dismissal, and engaging stakeholders in systemic reform.

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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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