

# Spotlight

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## SEDL Regional Forum—Turning Around Low-Achieving Schools

On July 21–22, 2010, the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) and Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at SEDL hosted a regional forum—Turning Around Low-Achieving Schools: A Blueprint for Reform—for state department of education staff from the six states they serve and other stakeholders. About 100 participants gathered to learn more about the [ESEA Blueprint](#)



from a presentation and discussion by Carl Harris, EdD, deputy assistant secretary for policy and strategic initiatives in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE),

and Kandace Jones, MBA, special assistant for school turnaround, OESE of the U.S. Department of Education. Pictured (l to r) are Jones; Dr. Harris; Wes Hoover, PhD, president and CEO, SEDL; and Vicki Dimock, PhD, TXCC director.

In addition, attendees participated in interactive events targeted to the priority areas of the blueprint as well as research on and strategies for turning around chronically low-performing schools. Presenters included practitioners from schools and school districts, leaders from education agencies, as well as representatives from the Center for Applied Linguistics; Consortium on Chicago School Research; Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin; National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and

Student Testing; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality; and the National High School Center. SEDL staff served as facilitators. Pictured are turnaround school practitioner



panelists (l to r) Annessa Thompson, MEd, superintendent, Marked Tree School District in Marked Tree, Arkansas; Celina Estrada-Thomas, PhD, principal, Bastrop High School, Bastrop, Texas; Tony Recasner, PhD, president, FirstLine Schools, New Orleans, Louisiana; and Rayne Martin, chief of innovation, Louisiana Department of Education.

The forum, held at SEDL headquarters in Austin, included a live video stream of the morning sessions on Day 1. To access the agenda and learn more about the event, visit [Blueprint Forum Resources](#).



## NCLB Scanning Service Update

The [NCLB Scanning Service](#) of the Southeast Comprehensive Center features timely resources from the U.S. Department of Education as well as education research and dissemination organizations. Several resources are highlighted below

[Excerpts from Approved School Improvement Grant Applications](#)

[Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program](#)

[The Condition of Education](#)

## Highlights of State Work

### Alabama

#### Program Evaluation Training

On June 29–30, 2010, SECC program associates Erin McCann, PhD, and Mary Lou Meadows, EdD, Alabama state liaison, participated in a work session with Brooke Blair, Mark Ward, and Fran Stewart of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). The team finalized a workshop session for local educational agency (LEA) staff, which took place July 22 at the Mega Conference.

#### ELL Academic Language Events

Maggie Rivas, MA, and Georgina Gonzalez, MA, SECC program associates, presented the second session of “English Language Learner Academic Language with a Focus on Grades K–12” May 24 at the Autauga County Chapter One Center in Prattville and May 25 at the Gordon Persons Building in Montgomery, Alabama. Twenty-five participants who work with LEAs and schools in the state attended the session.

During the 1½-day session, Rivas and Gonzalez focused activities on linguistic accommodations, academic task strategies, and research-based differences between English speakers and ELLs. State liaison Meadows served as the facilitator.

As part of the ELL academic language work with ALSDE, SECC staff participated in “Beyond Borders Summer Extravaganza,” a summer enrichment program for ELL students at Daniel Pratt Elementary School in Prattville on June 22. Rivas, Gonzalez, and Meadows demonstrated research-based strategies to integrate English language development in lessons taught to ELL children ranging from kindergarten through 4th grade.

The integrated lessons included reading/language arts/writing and science/math/technology/art. ALSDE staff and local teachers observed the demonstration lessons in addition to teaching lessons to the ELL students.

#### Regional Support Coordinators Meeting

The Regional Support Coordinators group met June 18 at the AIDT center in Montgomery. Participants discussed celebrations, accomplishments, and other topics.

Also, section representatives shared updates on support, and participants developed suggestions to share with the ALSDE Steering Committee about next year’s meeting structure and focus. State liaison Meadows reported on progress of SECC projects for 2009–2010.

#### Leadership Success Academy Summer Session

Planning is continuing between SEDL program associates Sylvia Pirtle, MEd, and Ann Neeley, EdD; Celina Estrada-Thomas, PhD, Bastrop High School principal; and Catherliene Williamson and Angela Mangum of ALSDE for the Alabama Leadership Success Academy Session 2010. The training dates for the session have been rescheduled for September and will take place in Montgomery.

### Georgia

#### Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Parent Outreach Training

On June 24, 2010, Sally Wade, EdD, SECC program associate; Michelle Tarbutton and Brenda Williams, of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE); and Julie Hollis, Georgia Parent Information and Resource Center, hosted SES Parent Outreach Project Training for several Georgia school districts—Chatham County-Savannah, Valdosta, and Ware County—and their community partners.

Reatha Owen, SES and parent involvement coordinator for the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII), conducted the training and provided participant materials in partnership with this effort.

Data from the implementation will be collected to determine the effectiveness of the strategy in increasing awareness of the availability and participation in the free tutoring program.

#### Thinking Maps Training

Glenda Copeland, MA, SECC Georgia state liaison, attended the Thinking Maps (TM) training for 10 schools held at the University of Georgia Continuing Education Center June 21–22. TM staff conducted Day 1 overview training and assisted GaDOE staff in conducting the content specific sessions for mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science, social studies, and other content teachers on Day 2. Later in the summer, two more sessions will be conducted for additional schools wishing to implement the strategy in their classrooms to increase student learning.

#### Summer Leadership Academy

On June 14–17, state liaison Copeland attended the second Leadership Academy of the GaDOE for participants from 32 schools with approximately 320 leadership team members. At least 72 school leadership teams participated in three different sessions during July. In addition to contract schools, new School Improvement Grant (SIG) grantees and other schools are participating in this school improvement process training.

Sessions conducted over 4 days take teams through the School Improvement Planning Process that focuses on collecting and analyzing data; determining root causes; establishing smart goals; identifying actions, strategies and interventions; determining artifacts and evidence for monitoring; compiling the school improvement plan; implementing the plan; and monitoring the plan. Then, data from the implementation is analyzed, and the cycle repeated. The fifth day of the academy is completed on the school campus by the leadership team.

### Interview on Thinking Maps Implementation

On May 27, Kathy Carrollton and Kristy Kueber of GaDOE conducted an interview with state directors from the 12 schools implementing TM with SECC support. SECC program associates Copeland, Dale Lewis, PhD, and Camille Chapman, MEd, recorded the group's responses and provided the transcript for GaDOE staff to use in analyzing the data. The interview protocol, constructed in a previous work session with SECC's Copeland and McCann, is part of the overall evaluation design.

### School Improvement Training Conference

State liaison Copeland attended the school improvement training on Scheduling for Student Success in the Standards-Based Classroom presented by Janet Peeler, consultant on special education, at the Central Georgia Conference Center in Forsyth on May 26. Peeler provided guidance on ensuring an environment for successful co-teaching and scheduling to ensure the most effective use of resources in support of student learning.

## Louisiana

### School Improvement Plan Inter-Rater Reliability Training

Darlene Morgan Brown, PhD, SECC Louisiana state liaison, developed and facilitated School Improvement Plan Inter-rater Reliability Training for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) on June 23, 2010. More than 38 participants representing school improvement, distinguished educators, regional service centers, and the Louisiana State Improvement Grant attended the session at the Louisiana School for the Deaf in Baton Rouge.

The objectives were to increase reviewers' working knowledge of the school improvement plan (SIP), help them gain a clear understanding of the review process and expectations, as well as to help them become familiar with rating the Louisiana SIP. Participants reviewed and rated plans June 23–25.

### Congratulations! State Completes Pacesetter Year

On June 19–24, 2009, Louisiana was one of nine states that participated in the Center on Innovation & Improvement's Academy of Pacesetter States, which was held in Princeton, New Jersey. The Louisiana Pacesetter Team was comprised of LDE staff Donna Nola-Ganey, Tasha Anthony, Ralph Thibodeaux, Janet Langlois, Brenda Jeans, and SECC state liaison Brown.

The objectives of the academy were to develop bold plans of action to elevate the effectiveness of the statewide system of support (SSOS), build local capacity to initiate and sustain rapid improvement, and create change agents and instructional specialists to serve as catalytic teams to rapidly improve districts and schools in ways that show substantial effects in classroom instruction and student learning. The Louisiana Pacesetter Team worked diligently on improving and augmenting its SSOS.

The Louisiana Pacesetter Team attended part two of the academy at Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho June 14–17, 2010. Camille Chapman, SECC CII liaison, joined the team and attended the academy. Each state team reflected on the objectives and discussed their progress over the past 11 months.



Participants from the eight teams in attendance (pictured) depicted their journeys through a song, dance, story and/or skit.

In addition, each team received a commendation plaque; Louisiana's plaque read as follows:

Commendation from the Center on  
Innovation & Improvement and  
Southeast Comprehensive Center for the  
pacesetter work of the  
Louisiana Department of Education as a member of  
the Academy of Pacesetter States

*Seeing change through to the classroom*

### DIBELS Intervention Team Meeting

During June, Kathleen Theodore, MA, SECC program associate, continued to work with LDE's literacy staff to develop an intervention presentation for the new DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) Next assessment. Theodore also

attended the department's train-the-trainer two-day data study workshop to better understand the state's literacy plan and goals.

## Mississippi

### Teacher Quality and Parental Involvement Resources

On June 21–24, 2010, SECC program associates Chris Ferguson, PhD, and Debra Meibaum, MAT, Mississippi state liaison, identified resources for the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Quality Professionals and Special Schools. This included current research and best practices on parental involvement in the schools and relevant professional development for educators. The research will be used to inform members of an upcoming House Bill 1047 task force.

### Common Core State Standards and Mississippi Framework Alignment Analysis

Kathleen Theodore and Robyn Madison-Harris, EdD, SECC program associates, are working with MDE to conduct an alignment analysis of the Mississippi LA Framework, Revised, with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA. The team held conference calls on June 1 and 7 to establish a timeline and format for the alignment and to prioritize review of the tested grades.

In addition, SECC is providing technical assistance to MDE in the area of mathematics for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. SECC program associates Camille Chapman and Maria Torres, MA, are conducting an alignment analysis of the CCSS for Mathematics with the Mississippi Mathematics Framework, Revised. The focus of the analysis will be the tested mathematics grade levels; future work will include the untested grade levels.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices published the Common Core State Standards for ELA as well as mathematics on June 2.

### Bias Review Committee Meeting

On June 6–10, Maggie Rivas, SECC program associate, participated in Mississippi's Bias Review Committee Meeting. The committee reviewed test items for Algebra I, Biology, U.S. History, and English. The purpose of the committee is to ensure that test items are not biased in the content areas regarding student subgroups taking the test. Guidelines used in the bias review were based on such principles as ethnicity, culture, language, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and item structure.

## South Carolina

### Corrective Action School Districts

Ongoing work continues with the Title I Office of the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) around services for Corrective Action School Districts. On July 14–15, 2010, a direct service initiative for schools and districts in improvement status was held at the Best Practices Conference in North Charleston.

During the conference, Sandra Lindsay, EdD, SECC South Carolina state liaison, presented a session titled "What Can We Do About District Improvement?" Lindsay partnered with Belinda Snow from Spartanburg 5 School District to share how targeted professional development and leadership strategies can move a district forward and out of improvement status.

### School Improvement Grants

State liaison Lindsay serves on the School Improvement Grants (SIG) Project 180 Council for SCDE. The council's primary responsibility is to serve as central oversight for SIG applicants and to monitor progress in designated schools. The state department has awarded grants, and professional development activities for the newly named SIG schools were held July 12–13 at the Embassy Suites in North Charleston.

### Palmetto Priority Schools

SCDE developed the Palmetto Priority Schools (PPS) initiative to provide intensive service to a number of schools that have not made expected progress. David Rawlinson, director, Special Projects, and his staff are responsible for providing direct services to these schools.

Recently, PPS sent five-member teams to the joint Summer Leadership Institute/Palmetto Priority Schools Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, June 20–25. Specific sessions within the institute were designated for attendees, and a special luncheon meeting was held June 23. During the luncheon, state superintendent Jim Rex and director Rawlinson recognized schools that had made expected progress.

During June, work also continued on an innovation configuration for PPS liaisons and principals to use to guide their work in 2010–2011. SECC's Dale Lewis worked with Beth Howard of SCDE and designated PPS staff and principals on refining the document, which was used as part of the liaison training held in July in Columbia, South Carolina.

## Calendar of Events

### Alabama Federal Programs New Coordinators Orientation

August 30–September 1, 2010

Capstone Conference Center, Tuscaloosa, AL

Southeast Comprehensive Center staff Erin McCann, PhD, and Mary Lou Meadows, EdD, will assist state department staff Brooke Blair and Mark Ward in a session that will provide guidance to federal programs coordinators in meeting the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 expectations of program evaluations. Activities will include critiquing sample program evaluations and exploring possible templates for use in evaluations. Participation is by invitation only.

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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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