



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

SECC/TXCC Regional Institute

Promoting Equitable Access at the State and Local Levels

**Atlanta, Georgia
November 3–5, 2015**

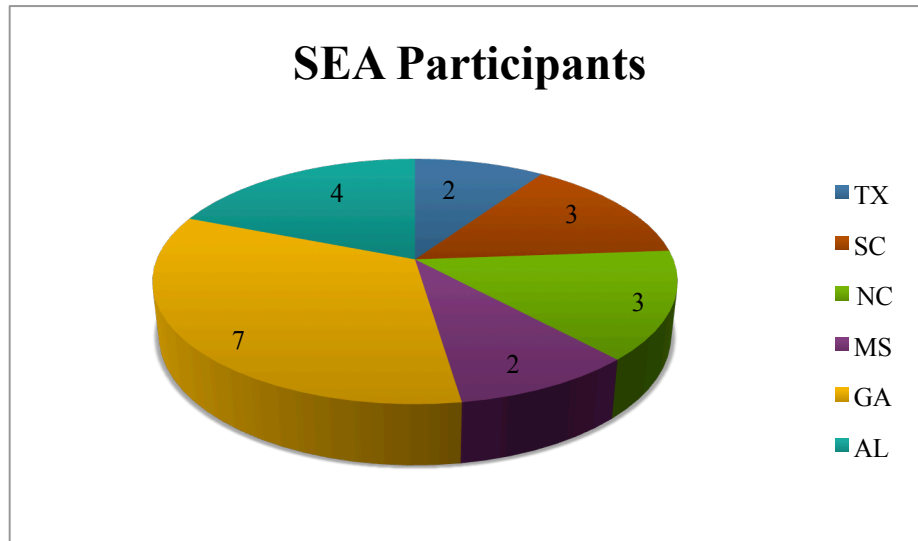
The Southeast and Texas Comprehensive Centers (SECC/TXCC), affiliates of American Institutes for Research (AIR), jointly held a regional institute in November 2015. The title of the institute was *Promoting Equitable Access at the State and Local Levels*. The institute was held in Atlanta, Georgia, and state education agency (SEA) staff from the six states represented by SECC and TXCC were invited to attend. The institute kicked off with a “meet-and-greet” session from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. during the afternoon of November 3. Participants were offered early registration for the institute and an opportunity to network with other participants, SECC and TXCC staff, and presenters and facilitators who arrived during that time.

The institute consisted of plenary and keynote sessions. Topics included moving states forward with their equity initiatives, strategies for recruiting and retaining effective teachers, and equitable access implementation resources from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. Also presented was a panel of SEA staff discussing the support they provide to local education agencies (LEAs) as they implement their equity initiatives. Finally, two blocks of concurrent sessions were offered. The first block addressed strategies for promoting equity with diverse student populations including high-poverty students, students of color, rural students, special education students, and English language learners. The second concurrent block focused on SEA strategies for promoting equity. Sessions included the topics of induction and mentoring; using data to improve equity; collaboration on teacher preparation; reward, recognition, and career advancement; and cultural competence and awareness. Institute participants also had an opportunity to reflect on the activities at the conclusion of the first full session day, discussing and responding to two questions about the day’s topics and the structure of the institute sessions. At the end of the institute, state teams gathered for a session to reflect on the information they had gained during the institute. The institute then adjourned at mid-day of November 5.

This report includes information gathered from the Day 1 reflections session, a short feedback survey conducted at the conclusion of the institute.

Twenty-one SEA representatives across the six states served by the SECC and TXCC attended the regional institute. Also participating in the institute were individuals from the RMC Research Corporation (2), the Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) (3), invited speakers (8), and SECC/TXCC session facilitators and other staff (14), for a total number of individuals attending the institute of 48. Figure 1 shows the break down on attendance for SEA representatives.

Figure 1: State Education Agency Participants at Regional Institute



To gauge the effectiveness of the institute and to promote the success of future institutes, participants were asked to complete reflections of their experiences from Day 1 and to provide feedback about the entire institute on a short feedback survey at the conclusion of the institute. The following sections report findings from these feedback methods.

Day 1 Reflections

Reflections were solicited by institute participants on what they viewed as key equity related takeaways from the sessions they attended throughout the first full day of the institute. Many mentioned the need for ongoing conversations about equity issues and the opportunities to hear the thinking of others on those issues, as everyone is working toward the same common goal of providing the best education possible for our children. Others areas commented on included capacity building and creating a common understanding at all levels (state and local), planning/monitoring of implementation, “homegrown” teachers, and the fact that equitable support does not always mean “equal” support.

A second question asked participants to remark on the structure of the institute—responding as to whether one or another of the session types was more effective in providing support to their equity work. Most participants indicated that they found benefit from all of the types of sessions, gaining broad information from some and more detailed information from others. They also mentioned enjoying the interactive aspects of the small-groups sessions, being able to discuss and hear about issues in common with other state staffs. As one person stated, “valuable information was acquired in all sessions.” Table 1 below shows the responses of institute participants to the two reflection questions (responses were reprinted as submitted by participants).

Table 1: Day 1 Reflections

| What do you view as the key equity related takeaways from today’s sessions? | Of the 3 types of conference sessions offered (e.g., plenary, concurrent, reflections), which did you find most effective in supporting and benefiting your work? Please explain. |
|--|--|
| I takeaway for me is the appreciation of the synthesis we will need as we move our plan through the implementation stage. I clearly see the need and means to align the items in the plan to the ends desired! | I found the concurrent sessions to be the most beneficial based on the size of the group and the intensity of the interchanges and the diverse perspectives on issues that can be inflammatory and divisive. |
| Community and family engagement Homegrown teachers Novice reduction | Concurrent – small group discussion; opportunity to share |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable support for districts does mean the “same” support. In our equity plan, we have some common goals and strategies, but we will need differentiated action steps to make it work and to achieve the goals. • All states are struggling with teacher recruitment, development, and retention. We need to share specific strategies that are working with one another. (Good start today) | I found benefit in all 3. The plenary session offered broad-based ideas; the concurrent session drilled down on specifics; the state reflection and local reflection was beneficial for state planning. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building at the local level around principal/teacher effectiveness. • Effectiveness feedback driving continuous instructional leadership improvement. • Grown your own – Educators Rising; EE Systems; Culture/Community School | Like variety. |
| Common understanding and commitment to the issues. It is also beneficial to hear the perspectives and experiences of other states. | Current topics of relevance and choice, and small group discussions made them more interactive. |
| Developing the plan is only the first step. The keys to success are implementation, monitoring, and making appropriate adjustments. | I found value in all three types. If everything were plenary it would have been torture! Having the different sessions kept me more involved, engaged, and educated. |
| The equity gap is larger than most people know. | Enjoyed plenary sessions as more information was shared. Concurrent sessions were more of cross-state sharing – conducive to knowing what others are doing, but did not add to knowledge base. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity ≠ equal. • Impact of ineffective teachers increases the urgency/importance of teacher induction/effectiveness endeavors. • Continue connections/relationships with universities. • Must examine our core beliefs about equity. | Concurrent – really enjoy learning from my peers in other states. The problem of practice consultancy was especially helpful. |

Table 1: Day 1 Reflections

| What do you view as the key equity related takeaways from today’s sessions? | Of the 3 types of conference sessions offered (e.g., plenary, concurrent, reflections), which did you find most effective in supporting and benefiting your work? Please explain. |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help is available. • The same problem can be addressed and solved in different ways. • States face similar problems. • Policymakers have a narrow view of diversity. | I cannot differentiate among the three types – valuable information was acquired in all sessions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing similar philosophies from other states – felt connected to Texas. • Scouting partners in different aspects of implementation. | Concurrent – I like small group discussions. Need more state time – we don’t often meet as a group in different departments. |
| Planning for implementation. | Students in high poverty communities – I enjoyed the data presented. |
| Attention to core values related to equity as a starting point for building awareness and buy-in. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary #1 – laid foundation. • Concurrent #2 – sharing experiences, perspectives, successes. • Panel #3 – opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, responses to challenges, strategies for “leveraging not layering.” |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for internal collaboration. • The networking. | Concurrent sessions were the most effective as they provided the opportunity to view our plan in greater depth as it relates to specific subgroups. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to research Advance Ed Assist for a collaborative – combined effort with all plans. • The implementation tool will provide guidance to implement strategies, etc. | Plenary and panel; small group allowed for detailed discussion. |
| The first plenary provided multiple areas of consideration to contemplate in the area of teacher quality and direct effect on student achievement. | I do not think the “type” made it effective, rather the information provided in each. The combination was most powerful. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a collaborative effort. • There are lots of resources/supports. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrent for sharing state level ideas. • Plenary for research, tools, resources. |
| <p>MTSS – use as framework (students with disabilities session – Lynn H.)</p> <p>Implementation resources – GTL Center</p> | All serve a valuable part in today’s learning – well planned, well communicated outcomes/ expectations. |
| Everyone is working toward a common goal: to give children the best education that we can give them and because it is what they deserve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary I – Dr. Holliday presented thorough and thoughtful information concerning equity plans as well as data from his state and others. • Plenary II – Dan Brown – He was able to give great ideas on how to reach potential educators in high schools (Ed. Rising). |

Table 1: Day 1 Reflections

| <p>What do you view as the key equity related takeaways from today’s sessions?</p> | <p>Of the 3 types of conference sessions offered (e.g., plenary, concurrent, reflections), which did you find most effective in supporting and benefiting your work? Please explain.</p> |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Table – Great meeting of the minds on suggestions and processes for completing the goals of our equity plan. |
| <p>Equity not equal is a conversation that needs to continue</p> | <p>Concurrent – richer more intimate conversations.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey not destination • Leverage not layer • All of us have similar struggles • Collaboration is key • GA is doing some things right • Communication plans are issues for all of us • Advance-Ed planning tool | <p>I arrived for concurrent due to my schedule so I can’t respond with certainty.</p> |
| <p>Equity is a valuable conversation that needs to occur within each level of education (LEA, SEA, IHE, etc.) and that can allow for deliberate thinking. But solutions aren’t easy to come by nor will one or two things solve the issue. It’ll have to be iterative, ongoing, and it will take more than educators to make significant gains.</p> | <p>Each was effective in its own way. With concurrent – it can equally be most beneficial and least beneficial; a good one is great, but you can get trapped in a less effective one (which means you missed something else).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonality, alignment of equity issues facing southeastern states. • Complexity of the issue but equally encouraging responses for “early stage” of this work. | <p>All have been beneficial because of the size of the group. I have benefited most from the plenary sessions because of the energy/exchange in the room.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELs were not targeted/mentioned specifically in the equity plans. • Educators Rising – plans to “grow” teachers begin in secondary schools. • TA support availability for states. | <p>Each session touched on valuable, applicable information.</p> |

Feedback Survey

A total of 16 institute feedback surveys were completed at the conclusion of the institute. Findings from the feedback survey data are summarized and discussed below.

Overall Institute Evaluation Items

Four items on the survey addressed the participants’ perceptions of the overall quality, relevance, and usefulness of the regional institute. Items were rated on a 4-point scale (*Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1*). As can be seen from responses in Table 2, participants rated the institute highly on all statements, perceiving the quality of the institute as meeting their expectations.

Table 2: Summary of Overall Perceptions of the Regional Institute**1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

| 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree | | # of Responses | | | | Mean |
|--|--|----------------|---|---|----|------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| 1. | The information presented during the institute is relevant to my current professional responsibilities focused on furthering equity. | 0 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 3.6 |
| 2. | I have a good understanding of how to use the equity-related information from the institute in my work. | 0 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 3.6 |
| 3. | Information from the institute will help me provide resources and technical assistance for the advancement of equity to my stakeholders. | 0 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 3.6 |
| 4. | Overall, the quality of the institute met my expectations. | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 3.8 |

N = 16.

Open-Ended Questions

Two open-ended questions on the evaluation survey asked participants (1) to describe strategies and/or practices they learned about that might be beneficial to improving equitable access in their states and (2) about their overall impression of the regional institute, including both successes and challenges. With respect to the first question, several respondents reported that the discussion by Educators Rising on “homegrown” teachers might be a strategy for improving equitable access. Other responses included the sessions discussing data, and the quality of induction among others. In response to the question on their overall impression of the institute, comments touched on finding the institute *informative, exceptional, very well done, beneficial*, and as a *good use of time*. The participants mentioned enjoying the keynote presentations, the opportunity for networking and building relationships, both formal and informal modes of sharing with others, and the time for reflection as well as discussion.

Challenges that were offered from respondents included suggesting fewer breakout session since some were quite small, a map of the breakout session rooms; and that the institute span two days instead of one full day and two partial days. Overall, however, respondents perceived the institute positively, commenting that the institute provided an “invaluable opportunity.” Responses to these questions are show in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Open-Ended Questions on Institute Feedback Survey

| 2. Please describe the strategies and/or practices you learned about that might be beneficial for improving equitable access in your state. | 3. What is your overall impression of the regional institute (e.g., successes, challenges)? |
|--|--|
| | We need more sharing across states. |
| Using data; multi-tiered system. | It was informative. |
| Educators Rising – great idea! | Keynoters were good, especially T. Holliday. Breakout sessions were too small in many cases – suggest fewer breakouts. <u>One negative</u> : the camera in your face constantly! A few pictures are ok, but this was very intrusive and distracting. |
| The information on data from the state plans and the plenary session from the former commissioner of Kentucky were quite helpful. | The regional institute was exceptional. The information will greatly assist my work. Please consider less photography. Several people found it disruptive. |
| The expansion of data acquisition and application will greatly support my work. Also, keeping cultural competencies in the forefront of all that we do is important. | The level of professionalism is refreshing as always. I am leaving rejuvenated and knowing that others are also doing the same work. |
| Focus on homegrown for teacher recruitment; involve IHE’s in school districts – reach out to them; cultural competence. | Very positive – the opportunity to rethink with fellow states was very beneficial. |
| Educators Rising; Opportunity culture. | Travel could be reduced or reorganized so that we have a day 1 start and day 2 end to allow for only 2 days out of office when possible. Limited attendance on day 2 (maybe related to issue above). |
| Enjoyed especially the data analysis sessions – gave me some good ideas of additional analyses. | Very well done with the various session formats. Could have been a 2-day conference though. |
| Coordination and partnering with legislators; deeper understanding of equity with students, families, and colleagues. | It provides an opportunity to hear and connect with other state agencies and people. The partnership with AIR/SEDL, etc. helps to see and understand the challenges the states face. |
| Grow your own programs (especially for rurals); special education certificate requirements (tightening – requiring content). | Beneficial – required us to think through what we’re doing next. Still a very complex issue, but have a reinforced sense of what we can do well. |
| How grow your own can help increase potential educators. How data is vital to providing information and assistance to educators. | I have a wonderful impression! The only things I would suggest is a map of the rooms that the sessions are conducted in. |
| Quality of induction; collaboration. | This institute provided an invaluable opportunity for networking, relationship building, and learning! |
| More deliberate induction; possible collaboration with Texas on SLOs; issues surrounding equity. | Well put-together; good use of time. |

Table 3: Summary of Open-Ended Questions on Institute Feedback Survey

| 2. Please describe the strategies and/or practices you learned about that might be beneficial for improving equitable access in your state. | 3. What is your overall impression of the regional institute (e.g., successes, challenges)? |
|--|---|
| Taking a broader view of diversity is essential to preparing effective teachers. | Good size group. Agenda provided good variety of sessions and facilitated both formal and informal sharing of concerns and solutions. |
| Information on GaDOE site about induction; continuum of cultural competence; problem of practice protocol; examining core beliefs about color. | Enjoyed the format: time for discussion, time for reflection, length of sessions and session content (very timely). |