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## Increasing High School Graduation Rates and Improving College Enrollment for High-Need Students

By Beth Howard, EdD, SECC Program Associate; and Robyn Madison-Harris, EdD, SECC Program Associate

Across the nation, states are working to increase their high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates. According to the U.S. Department of Education (ED), the national graduation rate increased from 72% to 75% between 2001 and 2008 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). An additional 120,000 students earned a high school diploma in 2008 compared to 2001 (Balfanz et al., 2010). Still, as President Obama (2011) stated during his January 25 State of the Union Address, “the education race doesn’t end with a high school diploma. To compete, higher education must be within the reach of every American . . . —if we raise expectations for every child, and give them the best possible chance at an education, . . . we will reach the goal that I set 2 years ago: By the end of the decade, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.”

Over the past 10 years, college enrollment rates across the nation have shown a steady increase, as reported by ED. The total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased from 7.4 million students in 1970 to 13.2 million in 2000 and to 16.4 million in 2008 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009). In addition, data on high school graduation rates for a number of states shows improvement.

### High School Graduation Rates

States served by the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) on average have shown a steady increase in their high school graduation rates, as indicated in reports by the National Center for Education Statistics and summarized in Table 1.

In spite of general growth in graduation rates in this time frame, increasing high school graduation rates for all students remains a challenge. The gap has begun to close with minority students, but the fact remains that there still is a gap. In Education Week’s *Diplomas Count 2010*, a closer look at the 2007 national graduation statistics shows that each major racial and ethnic group reflects a marginal gain in graduation rates from year to year. This rise can be attributed to shifting demographic patterns. Over time, the public school population has come to consist of proportionately fewer traditionally higher-performing White students and of more members of historically underserved groups, most notably Latinos (Education Week, 2010). Ninety-one percent of Asian, 81% of White, 64% of Hispanic, 64% of Native American, and 62% of African

**Table 1. Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates of Public High School Students by Southeastern States**

State	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
Alabama	62.1	64.7	65.0	65.9	66.2	67.1	69.0
Georgia	61.1	60.8	61.2	61.7	62.4	64.1	65.4
Louisiana	64.4	64.1	69.4	63.9	59.5	61.3	63.5
Mississippi	61.2	62.7	62.7	63.3	63.5	63.5	63.9
South Carolina	57.9	59.7	60.6	60.1	NA <sup>a</sup>	58.9	NA <sup>a</sup>

Note. Adapted from *Digest of education statistics 2010 (NCES 2011-015)* by T. D. Snyder and S. A. Dillow, 2011; *Digest of education statistics 2009 (NCES 2010-013)* by T. D. Snyder and S. A. Dillow, 2010; and *Digest of education statistics 2008 (NCES 2009-020)* by T. D. Snyder, S. A. Dillow, and C. M. Hoffman, 2009, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

<sup>a</sup>Figures for South Carolina in 2005–2006 and 2007–2008 were projected.

**Table 2. Subgroup Graduation Rates of Public High School Students, as Reported to ED (2010) by Southeastern States: School Year 2008–2009**

Student Group	Alabama	Georgia	Louisiana	Mississippi <sup>a</sup>	South Carolina
All	85.5	75.4	65.0	86.8	74.9
White	87.9	80.2	73.0		79.0
Black, Non-Hispanic	81.0	69.2	56.0		70.4
Hispanic	80.2	65.5	65.0		66.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	95.0	88.7	81.0		80.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	91.8	77.1	63.0		46.7
Economically Disadvantaged	81.1	67.0	58.0		66.6
Students with Disabilities	60.9	37.7	35.0		46.1
Limited English Proficient	79.1	50.2	57.0		61.7

Note. Adapted from *Summer 2010 ED Facts state profiles*, U.S. Department of Education, 2010.  
<sup>a</sup>Figures were not reported for subgroups of students in Mississippi.

American students in the nation graduated in 2008, according to ED. Subsequently, recent data submitted by southeastern states—summarized in Table 2. Subgroup Graduation Rates of Public High School Students, as Reported to ED (2010) by Southeastern States: School Year 2008–2009—further confirm the continuity of the gap between these groups of students. It is imperative for stakeholders to work diligently to close these unacceptable gaps.

Not only are children of color, students of poverty, and those with disabilities still lagging behind their peers in graduating from high school, but also rural students are experiencing this deficit. In fact, rural students have a much greater chance of not graduating from high school as compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. On average, 69.27% of U.S. rural students received a high school diploma in 2007, as reported by ED. In southeastern states, rural student graduation is as follows Alabama 62.4%, Georgia 56.2%, Mississippi 63.4%, Louisiana 64.9%, and South Carolina 52.3%. The Rural Trust

(2009) found that in South Carolina and Georgia, 4 out of 10 rural students that live in poverty make it through high school and receive a diploma. In Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, less than 60% of their rural students in poverty will graduate (Johnson & Strange, 2009).

### College Enrollment and Readiness

Every year in the U.S., nearly 60% of first-year college students discover that, despite being fully eligible to attend college, they are not academically ready for postsecondary studies (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education [NCPPE] & Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2010). Although colleges have shown increases in their enrollment rates, as shown in Table 3, stakeholders are finding that earning a high school diploma does not mean a student is ready for college (Achieve, 2010; NCPPE & SREB, 2010).

**Table 3. Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions, by Southeastern State**

State	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	Fall 2007
Alabama	246,414	253,846	255,826	256,389	258,408	268,183
Georgia	397,604	411,102	434,283	426,650	435,403	453,711
Louisiana	232,140	244,537	246,301	197,713	224,147	224,754
Mississippi	147,077	148,584	152,115	150,457	151,137	155,232
South Carolina	202,007	207,601	208,910	210,444	212,422	217,755

Note. Adapted from *Digest of education statistics 2008 (NCES 2009-020)* by T. D. Snyder, S. A. Dillow, and C. M. Hoffman, 2009, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

To better prepare students for college and/or careers, many states have moved toward the adoption of college and career ready agendas. The college and career readiness movement began gaining momentum when Achieve Inc. launched the American Diploma Project Network at the National Education Summit on High Schools in 2005 (Achieve, 2010). Achieve annually surveys all 50 states and the District of Columbia on their implementation of college and career readiness policies. Since 2005, 31 states have implemented college and career readiness standards, 20 states require that students complete graduation requirements that will make them college and career ready, only 14 states administer assessments that measure college readiness, and 16 states have P–20 longitudinal data systems in place (Achieve, 2010). With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the focus on college and career readiness policies may begin to have deeper impact for high-need students. Most recently, ED (2011) released a [College Completion Toolkit](#), which offers strategies and models to address college readiness and completion.

Despite increases in college enrollment, research shows that college pathways are not accessible to all students. ACT (2010) found that there are substantial gaps in college enrollment rates across racial/ethnic groups and annual family income ranges. Students from racial/ethnic minority groups are historically underrepresented in higher education (ACT, 2010; National Governors Association [NGA], 2010.) These students are also less likely to complete their college education due to a lack of preparation during their high school career. In [Helping Students Navigate the Path to College](#), effective practices are provided that will prepare students academically for college, assist them in completing the steps to college entry, and improve their likelihood of enrolling in college (Tiernery, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). Young people need support to not only help them complete high school but also to be prepared for success in postsecondary education and careers. In [Success at Every Step](#), 23 programs are described that have been proven to provide a broad range of interventions for schools, school districts, and communities to consider for supporting all students.

## Considerations

The research speaks to key factors that can aid high-need students in their quest for a high school diploma and gaining access to higher education. Those factors, which are considered most important, are support systems, rigorous curriculums, teacher preparation, and effective teachers. All stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels must work to provide the necessary support systems for these students. Support systems must begin with the implementation of rigorous state and local curriculums—to include classroom instruction and state and local

assessments—and the provision of individualized interventions and education alternatives, based on student need.

The success of students depends greatly on the effectiveness of their teachers. The critical areas in which today's effective teachers must show competency are the ability to work with diverse learners, including special education students and English learners; the capacity to teach adolescent literacy skills regardless of the content area; the ability to effectively use assessment and data to impact teaching and learning; the ability to teach in specialized teaching environments, including urban and rural settings; and the ability to convey content knowledge to students in an understandable manner, tailored to the academic discipline (Miller, 2009). Traditionally, teacher effectiveness was determined based on inputs; however, according to Miller (2009), a shift needs to take place from teacher inputs to teacher performance (outputs), measurable skills of effective teaching based on the academic successes of students. Teachers play an influential role in determining students' success.

Additionally, to ensure that U.S. students are college and career ready, all teachers, no matter their content area, need to be able to incorporate literacy instruction within their classrooms (Miller, 2009). Far too often, teachers specialize in content without having a grasp on pedagogy or how to teach the content. Literacy instruction should be integrated across all content areas as a means for student mastery of any content.

Teachers also need specialized training for working with high-need students. To date, such programs are limited, but a few defining characteristics make their approaches cutting edge. One example of such a training program for teachers is the Urban Teacher Residency program, which offers a unique approach to teacher preparation that attracts high-caliber, committed candidates and prepares them to help students excel in high-need, urban schools (Miller, 2009). Teacher candidates, or residents, are selected according to districts' needs. Residents are immediately placed in urban classrooms with experienced mentor teachers, and they take master's-level coursework, ultimately resulting in licensure and a master's degree, while teaching. When residents become teachers, they continue to receive intensive mentoring. Residents also commit to teach in the school district for 3 to 4 additional years after the residency year. A key incentive in exchange for such a commitment is student loan repayment. Programs such as these could potentially foster a constant pool of teachers who are equipped to teach high-need students.

It is also key for teachers to know how to analyze and use multiple sources of information to inform their instruction, including students' daily work, informal quizzes, surveys detailing students' background information, end-of-course exams, and state-

mandated tests (Miller, 2009). Teachers should use data contained therein to standardize and differentiate instruction to match students' needs and abilities. Also, teachers must use such data to assess whether their students have learned course material and how to fill gaps when students have not.

## Recommendations

### National-Level Recommendations

Two important foci of the federal government should be on continued investment in teacher effectiveness and in longitudinal data systems that link students from school to career. The federal government should continue to support statewide longitudinal data systems that require teacher performance data to be linked to and shared with teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, these data need to be made accessible to preparation programs so they can track the effectiveness of their candidates and improve their preservice preparation (Miller, 2009).

According to Miller (2009), the federal government currently invests a total of \$50 million in teacher preparation through the Higher Education Act. He indicated that more should be invested to help increase the supply of effective teachers to the most needy students. Additionally, resources should be provided to existing teacher education programs that want to recruit and prepare more and higher-quality candidates.

In order to measure fairly and accurately the effectiveness of individual candidates as well as their teacher preparation programs, the federal government should support the collaborative effort of groups to develop secondary teacher performance assessments that measure teaching skill aligned to college and career ready instruction. Congress should also provide incentives to states to incorporate these assessments into their licensing practices (National Academy of Education, 2005).

### State-Level Recommendations

States must be encouraged to partner with preparation programs in the development of teacher preparation systems so that their institutions of higher education can compare student performance, teaching practices, and preparation program characteristics (Miller, 2009). The partnership should result in statewide longitudinal data systems with the following types of information on each high school student:

- The student's achievement level in each core academic subject on entry into high school, measured relative to college and career readiness as well as relative to state standards;
- Courses taken by the student and the grade earned in each course;
- The student's performance on end-of-course exams in each core high school course;
- Student scores on college entrance exams such as the SAT or ACT, and Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams; and
- A set of codes to describe the extra help that the student received related to each core high school course (Dougherty, 2010).

Beginning with such a data collection/retention system would make a connection between how well students and teachers performed, informing what improvements need to be made for both.

At the state-level, models such as GEAR UP that begin with middle-level learners—offering tutoring and mentoring; informing students' college and vocational decision making by setting goals and monitoring progress; providing access to print and online college information; monitoring individual college preparation; providing financial planning for college; encouraging parent involvement; coordinating efforts with source schools; and strengthening curriculums, particularly in math and science (Heisel, 2005)—could also be considered when attempting to strengthen the preparedness of students for college and careers.

The California Linked Learning Approach is another state-based model explored by Hoachlander, Stearns, and Studier (2008) that fosters preparation for college and careers, honing in on high-need students. The model has four core components: a challenging academic component designed to prepare students for success without remediation in all postsecondary options; a demanding technical component that delivers concrete knowledge and skills through a cluster of four or more technical courses, preparing youth for high-skill, high-wage employment by emphasizing industry-related knowledge and skills, as well as academic principles and authentic applications that bring learning to life; a work-based learning component that offers opportunities to learn through real-world experiences such as internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing, so students relate what they are learning in the classroom to the real world; and supplemental services that provide counseling and academic support to help students through their challenging program of study.

## District-Level Recommendations

According to Quint, Thompson, and Bald (2008) reform measures that districts have adopted, or should consider, in response to college and career readiness challenges cluster into three categories: personalization—supplying individualized attention and customized options that respond to student needs and choices; academic rigor—delivering demanding yet accessible curriculums that involve critical thinking and content knowledge; and postsecondary preparation—affording a smooth transition from high school to higher education and work by providing students the guidance and understanding they need to be admitted to and succeed in college. The authors also specified levers for improvement that were frequently cited by school districts (see chart).

## School-Level Recommendations

Radcliffe and Stephens (2008) recommend four key components in which to engage middle school students to prepare them for college and careers. Mentoring, the first key component, involves pairing middle school students with preservice teachers and engaging them in a variety of educational activities that help create a college culture. The second component in building a college culture is the use of technology. The ability to read and write in multimodal and digital forms as well as being able to communicate online are particularly critical skills for college-bound students. The third key component is college visits in which touring middle school students attend and participate in college classes and engage in written reflection as they explore campuses. The fourth component, parent involvement is a key element for motivating and helping students develop positive perceptions about college and college-bound study habits.

In addition to the recommendations above, Bottoms, Young, and Han (2009) have similarly noted six proven ideas to get more students ready for college and 21st-century careers:

1. Provide students in every program of study with a rigorous academic core curriculum.
2. Insist on high-quality career/technical course sequences that blend academic and technical content through challenging, authentic assignments.
3. Equip all students with 21st-century skills through high-quality career/technical programs.
4. Expect every student to strive to meet standards in academic and career/technical classrooms.
5. Guarantee that students have the support needed to meet readiness standards for college and career training.
6. Connect every student to an adult adviser or mentor who has the time and skills to provide guidance and support.

## District-Level Levers For Improvement

- Raising standards and implementing higher, uniform standards for curriculums
- Providing service and work-based learning, college preparation, and graduation requirements
- Expanding high school options, increasing the number and types of secondary schools, creating new stand-alone small schools or restructuring comprehensive high schools into campuses of small schools, and providing more alternative pathways for students who are not thriving within a regular high school setting
- Improving the quality of teaching and leadership through targeted recruitment and incentive programs that reward students' gains or encourage teachers to work in underperforming schools, along with investing in principal training programs and school-based efforts to engage staff in instructional improvement activities
- Developing better assessment and tracking tools for teachers, increasing the capacity for data management and analysis at the school and district levels, and implementing data systems capable of measuring growth, progress, and ultimate outcomes
- Forging linkages with youth development and community organizations to support the emotional, physical, and social development of students
- Creating college and business partnerships to strengthen the path to college, careers, and beyond

Source: Quint, Thompson, and Bald (2008)

[Doing What Works](#) also has a vast listing of information on high schools that have implemented practices that address reform efforts to improve graduation rates.

In summary, it is imperative on all levels to increase high school graduation rates and improve college enrollment rates, particularly for high-need students. The U.S. must fast track various approaches including proper data use and data warehousing, teacher preparedness, individualized student support, family and community involvement, advance planning, as well as college and career curriculum integration to produce young people who are prepared to take on society, and more importantly, the world.

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## Spotlight on SECC Work

### Alabama

By Mary Lou Meadows, EdD, SECC State Liaison

#### Resources on Turning Around Low-Achieving Schools

At the request of Sherrill Parris, assistant state superintendent of education, Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), SECC staff compiled information on statewide efforts for turning around persistently low-achieving schools. They reviewed resources and queried the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII), Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast–SERVE Center, and state departments of education (SDEs) in the southeast region. Based on the information obtained, SECC staff developed a summary report on the topic, which they submitted to Parris on April 28, 2011.

#### Collaboration Efforts for Implementation of Statewide Literacy Plans

On April 8 and 22, the SECC team working on an information request on how SDEs collaborate with external partners for implementation of state literacy plans met via conference call with ALSDE staff to discuss the project. Ramona Chauvin, PhD, program associate, led the team, which reviewed literacy plans and documents for six states—California, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina, and Wyoming. The information request detailing collaboration efforts for implementation of the birth to 3-year-old portion of statewide literacy plans was completed and disseminated to ALSDE on June 20.

#### Research-Based Instructional Strategies for Diverse Learners

This two-phase project seeks to identify research-based instructional strategies in core content areas and assist ALSDE staff in developing professional learning modules for classroom teachers aimed at improving instruction for all learners, including children who are struggling with mastery of grade level expectations. On March 24, SECC staff Darlene Brown, PhD, project director, and Dale Lewis, PhD, program associate, participated in a conference call with a team from ALSDE led by Mabrey Whetstone, PhD, director of Special Education Services. The team—composed of members of the Alabama Reading Initiative and the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI)—discussed instructional strategies in adolescent literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies, which were identified by SECC program associates Georgina González, MA; Ada Muoneke, PhD; Blanca Quiroz, PhD; and Lewis. The ALSDE team shared a matrix offered by AMSTI staff as a tool for organizing and conceptualizing specific instructional

strategies within a hierarchy of methods and approaches to instruction. ALSDE staff are reviewing the instructional strategies, and once specific strategies are chosen, training modules will be developed for strategies that are applicable across multiple content areas.

## Concerns-Based Adoption Model Training

At the request of Ann Allison, an administrator in the School Improvement Office of the federal programs section at ALSDE, SECC program associates Ed Tobia, EdD (pictured); Erin McCann, PhD; Dale Lewis; and Mary Lou Meadows,



EdD, Alabama state liaison; provided a follow-up professional development session on the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) for SDE staff including grant coaches and representatives from the school districts they support. During the session, held on February 17 at ALSDE offices, participants:

- Reviewed the steps in developing an innovation configuration (IC)
- Shared the ICs that have been developed
- Reviewed the process for completing a Stages of Concern (SoC) Questionnaire
- Reviewed the analysis of SoC results and appropriate interventions

## Needs-Sensing Meetings With Key Staff

Meadows, SECC state liaison, met with Ann Allison, of ALSDE, on March 18 to discuss technical assistance (TA) and professional development (PD) provided by SECC on CBAM work, including upcoming sessions and timelines to complete the project. She also met with Mabrey Whetstone to discuss previous support for instructional strategies for diverse learners as well as changes to Alabama's leadership. In addition, Meadows met with Tony Thacker, coordinator, Governor's Commission on Quality Teaching, to discuss selection of the Alabama team and presenters for SEDL's Designing and Implementing Teacher Evaluation Systems regional institute, scheduled for July 27–28 in New Orleans.

## Regional Support Coordinators Group Meeting

The Regional Support Coordinators met on March 18 in Montgomery. During the meeting, SECC's Meadows gave an update on several projects including CBAM support and research-based instructional strategies for diverse learners.

## Teacher Effectiveness Information Request Update

On March 8, Sherrill Parris, of ALSDE, and Debra Meibaum, MAT, SECC program associate, participated in a conference call to discuss the status of an information request on several topics related to teacher effectiveness. During the meeting, they determined that SECC would continue to collaborate with ALSDE as future needs are identified. Meibaum shared information on new resources from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center). In addition, SECC staff submitted the report on various processes used to evaluate teacher effectiveness to Parris on April 25.

## Georgia

*By Glenda Copeland, MA, SECC State Liaison*

### Thinking Maps Implementation Survey and Evaluation Plan

On March 23–30, 2011, Kathy Carrollton, program manager of Professional Learning, and Kristy Kueber, program manager of School Performance, of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), worked with Glenda Copeland, MA, SECC Georgia state liaison, to review and revise documents needed to initiate a survey for administrators, school improvement specialists, academic coaches, teachers, and students participating in the implementation of Thinking Maps in their schools. The team also reviewed and adjusted the focus group interviews to include second-year implementers. On August 9–10, they plan to meet with Erin McCann, SECC program associate, to review data collected from the 2010–2011 school year and to revise the evaluation plan for the third year of implementation.

### Teacher Quality Conference

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) conducted its 8th Annual Advancing Teacher Quality Title II, Part A Conference in Savannah on March 21–22. SECC program associates Debra Meibaum and Danny Martinez, MA, collaborated with the TQ Center in providing technical assistance to Anne Marie Fenton, PSC program director, Assessment, in planning the conference.

During Day 1, TQ Center staff held a keynote session on ensuring an effective teacher for every student. Martinez conducted a luncheon session focusing on the preconference equity survey results. In addition, Meibaum facilitated the afternoon general session featuring an interstate panel on innovative practices in ensuring equitable distribution. Following the panel session, participants selected from an array of equity-based concurrent sessions that best met the needs of their individual districts. Day 2 of the conference provided additional opportunities for the participants to increase their knowledge of equitable distribution issues.

## Parent Outreach Project

On March 18, Reatha Owen, of CII; Julie Hollis, of the Georgia Parental Information and Resource Center (GaPIRC); Michelle Tarbutton and Brenda Williams of GaDOE; and Sally Wade, EdD, SECC program associate, conducted a telephone interview with JaBra Davis, SES district administrator of Valdosta Schools. The purpose was to obtain outcome data for the Supplemental Educational Services Parent Outreach Project. The project resulted in doubling SES enrollment and was favorably received by school staff and the community. Davis plans to implement the program in the next school year. Also, Tarbutton, Williams, and Hollis presented the SES Parent Outreach Project at the Georgia Title I conference. GaDOE plans to support the project in the 2010–2011 school year, and project data will be reported at the end of the school year.

## Support for Lesson Enhancement for Performance Standards

SECC program associates Copeland and Camille Chapman, MEd, participated in a needs-sensing meeting on March 16 at GaDOE to determine how SECC can assist with lesson enhancement for the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) to support Thinking Map (TM) implementation in the current needs improvement schools. Clara Keith, associate superintendent for School Improvement, convened the meeting, with participants Kathy Carrollton; Avis King, deputy superintendent, School Improvement; Martha Reichrath, deputy superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Sandy Woodall, mathematics program specialist; Pam Smith, director, Academic Standards; and Lynn Holland, program manager, Special Education. The group indicated that support is needed in mathematics and language arts for CCGPS, and the work to support TM will focus on the areas of math and diverse learners through videotape/web access of materials. Keith, Woodall, and Smith are the primary contacts for this work.

## Louisiana

*By Robyn Madison-Harris, EdD, SECC State Liaison*

### Academy of Pacesetting States

Robyn Madison-Harris, EdD, SECC Louisiana state liaison, represented the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) Pacesetter team during the final distance learning session hosted by CII on May 6, 2011. Previous sessions were held on November 17, 2010, January 26, 2011, and March 23. The sessions focused on development of the states' operational manuals for school and district support. LDOE is working to revise its manual to reflect its recent reorganization. Madison-Harris also participates in monthly conference calls with staff from CII and other centers to collaborate on activities.

## Technical Assistance for English Learner Efforts

LDOE staff Terry Simoneaux, section director; Shelia Campbell, Title III coordinator; Melanie Mayeux, migrant coordinator; LaTefy Schoen, parent involvement NCLB programs coordinator; along with SECC staff Darlene Brown, project director, Madison-Harris, and Georgina González, program associate, revised and developed three requests from LDOE, which focused on ED priority #8, diverse learners. LDOE staff reviewed the English Language Learners Program Handbook (ELLPH), and González explained pertinent comments from her and colleague Blanca Quiroz. The group also reviewed several links and documents that were related to ELLPH.

## Literacy Support and Professional Development

Kathleen Theodore, MA, SECC program associate, continued to provide TA to the Louisiana Intervention Task Force during its meeting on March 14. The team reviewed comments from the first pilot of the DIBELS Next intervention presentation that took place on February 28 in Caddo Parish and used these comments to edit the presentation. A subsequent pilot took place in New Orleans on April 1. In addition, the team brainstormed next steps for creating advanced PD modules and reconvened on April 21 to continue work on this project.

## Statewide School Survey

LDOE received an ED grant to plan and implement a statewide school survey, and state staff are in the process of determining what type of survey would best meet Louisiana's needs. Michael K. Coburn, division director, Division of Student and School Learning Support, Office of Federal Programs Support at LDOE, and Sally Wade, SECC program associate, met via telephone conference on March 25 to discuss the feasibility of replicating the Georgia school health survey. They also discussed various state surveys and plans to connect Coburn with the appropriate GaDOE staff.

## School Turnaround and Improvement

SECC sponsored participation in the Eastern School Improvement Grant conference for John Hanley and Russell Armstrong of LDOE's School Turnaround Office, which was held in Washington, DC, on April 13–14. On March 31, SECC's Madison-Harris and Camille Chapman provided feedback on presentations assembled by LDOE school improvement (SI) staff to be made to school and district staff prior to the opening of the SI eGrant, which occurred in April.

## STEM Education Efforts

Concepción Molina, EdD, Camille Chapman and Danny Martinez, SECC program associates, are working with Dr. Guillermo Ferreyra, chief of the STEM Goal Office at LDOE, to plan a multiday leadership academy for principals in the Math Science Partnership. Approximately 50 leaders will attend this academy where they will explore best practices in mathematics instruction and the Common Core State Standards. In addition, Dr. Ferreyra submitted two requests for information on STEM topics, which were fulfilled by SECC staff. Chapman led a team that developed a report on studies of math software programs, while Martinez led development of a report on professional development for middle school math teachers. SECC staff submitted the reports to Dr. Ferreyra in April and May, respectively.

## Teacher Effectiveness

On March 11, Debra Meibaum, SECC program associate, provided Elizabeth Shaw, director of the Human Capital Office at LDOE, information on the following new resources from the TQ Center: *Measuring Teacher Contributions to Student Learning Growth for Non-Tested Grades and Subjects*, *Teacher Evaluation Models in Practice*, and *High-Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources*.

## Mississippi

By Debra Meibaum, MAT, SECC State Liaison

### Efforts to Improve High School Graduation Rates

Beth Howard, EdD, SECC program associate, recently held a conference call with Donnell Bell, a division director at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), to discuss assistance with reviewing and updating MDE's College Begins in High School document. The team plans to hold work sessions later this year to begin the process.

### Restraint and Seclusion Policy Development

On March 28, Dale Lewis, SECC program associate, met with a team from MDE led by Shane McNeill, bureau manager for the Office of Healthy Schools, to make final revisions to a draft policy for restraint and seclusion in Mississippi schools. The team also discussed next steps including the creation of a procedures and frequently asked questions document, gaining feedback from school district personnel, and beginning the Administrative Procedures Act process.

### School Improvement Grant Districts and Schools

SECC staff met with Kim S. Benton, EdD, director, Office of School Recovery, and Linda Reeves, fiscal officer, Office of School Recovery at MDE, on March 15–16. Objectives of the meeting

were to discuss assistance in supporting SIG implementation and to continue developing tools for monitoring implementation. Areas of potential support included helping state educational agency (SEA) staff develop and establish SIG renewal application criteria, assisting in the facilitation of district/school planning and completion of SIG renewal applications, and helping SEA staff ensure district understanding of comprehensive school improvement plans. The group focused its efforts on refinement of the implementation monitoring tool and development of district quarterly reporting forms.

### Support for Staff Serving English Learners

MDE leadership asked SECC to provide technical support to the new Title III director Christopher Norwood. In response, Georgina González, SECC program associate, facilitated a week of PD by providing an overview of Title III public law; a review of the Mississippi English Learner Guidelines; an introduction on how to coordinate Title I, Part A, Title I, Part C, and Title III funds when serving students who qualify; a synopsis of the experience she had at the National Conversation of English Learner Education in Dallas, and a cursory look at Improving Educational Outcomes for English Language Learners, Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (May 25, 2010).

### Common Core State Standards Implementation

On March 29–30, the Mississippi Common Core State Standards (CCSS) meeting included stakeholders from across the state that reviewed the alignment analysis of the CCSS for English/language arts and mathematics. Additionally, participants reviewed implementation scenarios to determine next steps for the state's CCSS plan. Trecina Green, bureau director of the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at MDE, initiated the request for this work.

### Assessment Bias Review

Jan Kirkland, division director of the Office of Student Assessment at MDE, requested that SECC provide an individual with ELL expertise to participate in bias review committee meetings for statewide assessment item review during June and July. SECC responded by providing Georgina González to assist with this work.

### Adolescent Literacy Professional Development

Ramona Chauvin, SECC program associate, worked closely with Office of Vocational and Technical Education staff members Gail Simmons, Student Services coordinator, and Mike Mulvihill, director, Office of Compliance and Reporting, at MDE to plan a pilot program that integrates literacy and career and technical

education (CTE). Six schools were selected through an application process to participate in the pilot; participants included course instructors, student services coordinators, and directors from CTE. As part of this pilot, Chauvin conducted a summer institute on June 6–10, which focused on deepening students' comprehension by improving their access to content area texts. Virtual follow-up sessions will be held to provide ongoing support and ensure effective implementation of the evidence-based literacy strategies.

## School Improvement Symposium

On March 4, the MDE Office of Federal Programs' School Improvement Committee met to continue planning the 2011 school improvement symposium and related PD opportunities. They discussed scheduling options, agendas, and content for plenary and concurrent sessions. Committee members included MDE representatives, external consultants, and SECC program associate Meibaum.

## Use of Flex Quarter Schools and Extended School Years

Dr. Larry Drawdy, MDE interim deputy state superintendent, School Improvement, Oversight and Recovery, requested information regarding flex quarter schedules and extended school years, specifically strategies, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as examples of states that have implemented these initiatives. In response, SECC staff developed a report on the topic and submitted it to Dr. Drawdy on February 25.

## Leadership and Capacity Building for Title I Schools

SECC's Meibaum facilitated work sessions on the statewide, consolidated federal program monitoring instrument on February 22–23 and March 24–25. During these sessions, task force members reviewed monitoring indicators, legal references, and evidence of compliance with the targeted indicators. They continued this work during a session on April 25–26.



Pictured left to right are task force members Jim Hamilton, Lynnice Carter, Blanche Moore, Stephanie Bradshaw, Darrell Tucker, Burbette Taylor, Sharon Dungan, Janet Aten, and Billie Fick

## South Carolina

By Beth Howard, EDD, SECC State Liaison

### SECC and SCDE Continue Year 6 Planning

On March 29, 2011, SECC staff Robin Jarvis, PhD, program director, Darlene Brown, project director, and Beth Howard, SECC South Carolina state liaison, met with Charmeka Bosket, deputy superintendent of policy of the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), in Columbia to discuss the SECC memorandum of understanding and SCDE work plan. Bosket reviewed with the group the vision of Dr. Mick Zais, state superintendent of education, as well as requests for support. Jarvis and Brown shared ED's priority areas and discussed additional areas of support that the center can provide to aid SCDE. Howard will continue to follow up with Bosket with updates on these topics.

### Parental Involvement Technical Assistance

SECC staff Howard and Sally Wade met with Jewel Stanley, education associate, of the Office of Federal and State Accountability at SCDE, to provide technical assistance and ensure continuity of efforts in the area of parental involvement. They provided Stanley with information on SECC's Year 4 and 5 work in this area, web-based parental involvement resources, and connections with other state educational agency parental involvement personnel.

### Longitudinal Data System Development

SCDE has been awarded a multimillion-dollar federal grant that will help the state's educators improve student achievement, teacher performance, and school quality, as announced by the Institute of Education Sciences. The state's proposal expands the current student data system to create the South Carolina Longitudinal Information Center for Education (SLICE), which meets federal requirements for collaboration with institutions and agencies of higher education in the state. It will include new data sources and quality control and will create a statewide system for teachers and principals who need information to make immediate decisions about student learning.

On March 22, Robyn Madison-Harris, SECC program associate, held a preliminary conversation with Tom Olson, information technology director, and Deb Huggins, senior information resource consultant of the Office of Data Management and Analysis at SCDE, regarding potential assistance with the SLICE project. Olson and Huggins requested that SECC assist with facilitation of stakeholder focus groups, which began in early summer to collect feedback for system design. The group also held follow-up conversations to plan activities and discuss progress.

## Educator Effectiveness Update

SECC staff shared information on new resources from the TQ Center with Allison Jacques, PhD, director of the Office of Educator Preparation at SCDE, on March 11. As a follow-up, Debra Meibaum, SECC program associate, participated in a conference call with Jacques on March 30 regarding potential areas of professional development and technical assistance.

## Palmetto Priority Schools Support

In March, SECC program associate Wade held a conference call with David Rawlinson, director of the Office of Special Projects (OSP) of the Palmetto Priority Schools (PPS), and his staff to plan school climate technical assistance. Rawlinson stated that improving school climate remains a priority and that planning would take place during an office retreat in May. As part of these efforts, Sylvia Segura Pirtle, MEd, SEDL program associate, reviewed a mock brochure that SECC created for OSP, which included a description of the services the office provides to the PPS and a logic model. The team also revised a presentation describing PPS services. A final product was provided for the planning retreat, which was facilitated by Brown, SECC project director; Pirtle; and Stella Bell, EdD, SEDL program associate, May 11–13.

## SIG Project 180 Council Work

Howard, SECC state liaison, continued to provide technical assistance to the SIG Project 180 Council under the direction of Courtney Foster, SIG project director. Howard and Foster held a series of meetings and conference calls to plan for the July SIG Summer Institute. The institute consisted of working sessions to prepare new and returning local educational agencies (LEAs) for full implementation of their SIG obligations. Howard also shared information on the SIG Regional Conferences, which were held across the U.S. (SCDE's participation was sponsored by SECC.) The council also met on March 28 to train for the scoring of new applications for the 2011–2012 implementation of SIG.

## Ongoing Literacy Support

SECC staff Kathleen Theodore and Ramona Chauvin provided ongoing assistance in the development of LiteracySC, South Carolina's statewide literacy plan. On March 15–16, Chauvin facilitated, along with Pam Wills, unit leader of Literacy and Early Learning, an additional Literacy Task Force session, where approximately 40 individuals continued writing on one of four subgroups—assessment, effective practices, professional learning, and partnerships. Representatives from each subgroup shared the current research, challenges, and recommended priority action steps for state, district, and school guidelines regarding implementation of the statewide literacy plan. On March 23–24, Theodore and Chauvin assisted SCDE staff with further development of the plan using recommendations of the task force subgroups.

### Southeast Comprehensive Center eBulletin

#### Quarterly publication of SEDL's Southeast Comprehensive Center

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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 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). 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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