



# eBulletin

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## A Note from the Director

As we move toward the 3rd year as the Southeast CC, it is important to reflect on the progress of the work in the southeast states. All five states have benefited from the presence of the Southeast CC in some way. Meetings were held to raise the awareness of state department staff on issues of importance in implementing No Child Left Behind. State department staff members interacted with their colleagues within and across states in discussions at meetings on Response to Intervention, middle school and high school reform, and supplemental educational services. One additional meeting on statewide systems of school support was held May 24 in Atlanta, Georgia. These meetings are held to give states the opportunity to share successes and work toward solutions to common challenges. The Southeast CC counts among its achievements the fostering of collaboration among the five states in the comprehensive center.

In addition to the joint meetings and the forum, the Southeast CC provided professional development and/or technical assistance to each state in accordance with its needs. So, whether the services provided addressed corrective action districts, curriculum revision and alignment, high school reform, literacy, parental involvement, or some other critical area, the Southeast CC worked collaboratively with the state to address its specific instructional or leadership needs.

So what's up for next year? The Southeast CC met with leaders in the state departments of education to further define and refine states' needs. We expect to continue the work begun in years 1 and 2. We also expect to expand the work of the Southeast CC by collaborating more with other service providers in our region as we delve more deeply into various strategies and methods that states need to employ when implementing statewide systems of support.

As always should you have a question or concern, please contact the state liaison for your state or me.

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The primary purpose of the Southeast Comprehensive Center's (Southeast CC's) e-Bulletin is to provide information to help the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina implement the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The e-Bulletin, published quarterly, contains articles relevant to the implementation of NCLB and supplies updates regarding changes to the rules and regulations defining it. In keeping with this goal, this issue's **e-Bulletin Focus** is on one of the requirements of NCLB: parent and family involvement. There is information on Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) and resources for increasing school, family, and community connections in the **Federal Resources Spotlight**.

Also included in this issue is an **NCLB Update** with information on the final regulations to amend Title I, Part B of NCLB and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This e-bulletin also features **State Highlights** for the five states.



## Southeast CC e-Bulletin Focus: Parental Involvement

"The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."

*[Henderson, A.T. & Mapp, K.L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Austin, TX: SEDL.]*

The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) developed a guide and toolkit, *Beyond the Building*, to facilitate school, family, and community connections. These materials are designed to help school improvement leaders and technical assistance providers create and increase family and community connections with schools.

The activities are intended to engage participants in a series of interactive sessions that help foster family and community connections with schools by

- aligning goals and plans to actions and characteristics commonly found in effective family and community involvement programs,
- integrating information from current research on family and community involvement into new and existing efforts,
- building the capacity of all stakeholders to take an active role in meeting the needs of students in the school community, and
- meeting the No Child Left Behind Act family involvement requirements as described in the Title I, Part A Guide.

The guide is organized into four sections:

1. Introducing Family and Community Connections With Schools includes activities that provide an overview of the key issues found in the current research on family and community involvement with schools.
2. Exploring the Syntheses includes activities that engage participants in building awareness and deeper understanding of the findings and recommendations contained in the four syntheses published by SEDL.
3. Establishing a Receptive Culture includes activities that involve participants in exploring school, family, and community involvement efforts in their own communities.
4. Moving to Practical Application includes activities that help participants apply the knowledge and experience gained from engaging in the activities from Sections 1, 2 and 3.

The toolkit includes four of SEDL's research syntheses on Family and Community Connections with Schools (on CD-ROM); seven strategy briefs, each focusing on different aspects of family and community connections with schools (hardcopies and on CD-ROM); three interactive learning modules (on CD-ROM in flash format); and referenced handouts (in paper and on CD-ROM).

The following article is a research brief from *Beyond the Building*.

### What do we mean by “family and community connections with schools”?

When some people think of family involvement, they think of parents volunteering in their child's classroom and attending parent-teacher conferences. The reality is that schools, families, and communities can connect in many different ways to support students. Connections can take place at the

school, in the family's home, and out in the community. School-community connections can include school events sponsored by local businesses, immunizations provided on school campuses by a local health department, or a retired citizen who volunteers as a reading tutor. In addition, schools can play a crucial role in the community, serving as an important partner to improve the lives of children and their families.

Many people have good intentions in trying to make connections between the school, families, and the community. They are disappointed when their efforts don't always result in the kinds of positive outcomes they are hoping for. One of the challenges about understanding school, family, and community connections is that different kinds of connections can have very different results (Fan & Chen, 1999). Many forms of “at-school” connections, such as attending school meetings and student performances, don't necessarily have a strong impact on student achievement. However, they can be valuable in other ways, as they increase communication and understanding among school staff, family members, and community partners.

Understanding that connections have many dimensions can also help explain why some of the research seems to contradict itself about what difference these connections can make. As we create partnerships and programs, it is important to understand what kinds of connections make what kinds of impact. Then we can be deliberate about making connections that will support the specific results we want to achieve.

We should also make sure that the connections we make will meet the goals of all of the partners involved. Research has shown that educators, community partners, and parents often have very different ideas of what role parents should play in their child's education. Connections that meet the school's needs, such as a booster club fundraiser, may not be important to parents who want to learn ways to help their children prepare for college. Meeting the goals of all partners requires an understanding that one definition of parent involvement does not fit all.

### Related Research

Below are some examples of research studies related to the topic of defining “school, family, community connections”. Abrams and Gibbs (2000) found that school staff and community members (including parents) had very different views about the reasons for low student performance, the appropriate role for parents in the school, and the role of the principal. They also found that developing a mutual understanding of roles, clarifying how power would be shared, and setting specific goals created potential for improvement.

Keith and Keith (1993) found a significant link between parent involvement and student achievement. They also found that the different components that made up “parent



involvement”—parent’s educational aspirations, parent-child communication, home structure, and parental participation in school activities—were not strongly connected to one another. In other words, although parents may communicate with their child about school, they might not necessarily participate in school activities. Lopez (2001) found that although parents of successful migrant students did not regularly attend school functions, they strongly perceived themselves as being highly involved in their children’s education. These families saw the transmission of a work ethic as their way of helping their children succeed in school.

### Putting it into Practice

1. Think about the ways that schools, parents, and community groups are working to connect in your school community. Create a list of the connections, grouping similar efforts together into categories (such as school-home communication and help with schoolwork).
2. Ask the people involved in these efforts what kinds of outcomes they are hoping will result from the connections. Try to get a variety of perspectives—from school personnel, parents, and community partners—since each partner may have different goals for the connection.
3. After you have compiled a list of the connections and their intended purposes, search the Connection Collection at <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources> to find out what the research has shown are possible results of these connections.
4. Based on the research you find, think about these questions: Do you have a mismatch between the connections you are working to create and the kinds of outcomes you are hoping to produce? Are you missing any connections that would help your school community accomplish its goals?
5. Share the results of your research with your local school, family, and community partners. Discuss how you can work together to make sure that your connections are effective and meet the goals of all of the partners involved.

### For More Information

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) has produced a publication “*Education and Community Building: Connecting Two Worlds.*” The authors offer information about the differences in philosophies, organizational cultures, operating styles that influence how schools and community based organizations work together. They also suggest “rules of engagement,” to guide and strengthen school-community partnerships.

For more information, call IEL at (202) 822-8405 or download the publication at <http://www.communityschools.org/combuild.pdf>.

The National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University brings together schools, districts, and states that are committed to developing and maintaining school-family-community partnerships. Their Web site at

<http://scov.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/program2.htm> has a list of six kinds of partnerships, and the results that can be expected from each kind. The Network offices can also be reached at 410-516-8800.

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Parental involvement is required under Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Please refer to the law for more specificity and citations at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg2.html#sec1118>.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Web site also has a section with resources for parents and families; it is available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>.

Additional information on parent and family involvement can be found in the Mississippi highlights and the Federal Resources Spotlight of this newsletter.



## State Highlights and Events

### 2007 Regional Forum

The Southeast CC is hosting its second annual regional forum in Atlanta, Georgia on October 23, 24 and 25, 2007. Designed to help state educational leaders address NCLB implementation challenges and plan for the future, the forum is specifically aimed at leaders in the departments of education in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This year’s forum is titled, “Leadership Tools for NCLB,” and invited participants will be asked to select one of the following four strands:

- Leadership I: Enhancing Skills of State Level Staff
- Leadership II: Strategic Leadership
- Issues in Teacher Quality
- Middle/High School Reform

For more information on the Southeast CC’s 2007 Regional Forum and other resources and planned events, please visit the Southeast CC Web page at <http://secc.sedl.org/>.

## Alabama

### Trainer of Trainer Sessions

By Lou Meadows, State Liaison

The Southeast CC provided on-going professional development, “Trainer-of-Trainer” sessions, in the area of school improvement for the Alabama Accountability Roundtable and the Alabama State Department of Education’s School Improvement Team between the dates of October 23, 2006 and May 1, 2007.

The following four “Trainer-of-Trainer” sessions were each held successively in four locations (Athens, Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery) during the spring of 2007:

1. Writing Effective Goals, Strategies, and Benchmarks in Reading, Math, and Science — Introduction
2. Increasing the High School Graduation Rate — Introduction
3. Writing Effective Goals, Strategies, and Benchmarks in Reading, Math, and Science — Follow-up #1
4. Increasing the High School Graduation Rate — Follow-up #1

The following session was held in Birmingham on May 1, 2007:

5. Increasing the High School Graduation Rate — Follow-up #2

The following session was held in Athens on October 23, 2006 and in Mobile on April 26, 2007:

6. The Effect of Cultural Relevance on the High School Graduation Rate — Introduction

The following session was held successively in Birmingham, Mobile, and Athens in the spring of 2007:

7. How to Establish and Implement an Effective Mentoring Program — Introduction

## Georgia

### The Bridge

By Glenda Copeland, State Liaison

In order to assist alternative preparation candidates in becoming highly qualified teachers, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) is supporting an extension of resources on The Bridge. The Bridge is an online resource of the University of Georgia that connects preservice and beginning teachers to professional resources and practical knowledge through the development of professional learning communities that include veteran teachers and university faculty.

The PSC is partnering with Regional Education Service Agencies, Georgia Public Broadcasting, the University of Georgia, and the Southeast CC to create the Instructional Resources Network. The Network will provide Georgia’s alternative certification candidates an online environment organized according to the Georgia Framework for Teaching.

## Louisiana

### Literacy Support in Louisiana

By Jill Slack, State Liaison

The amount of data generated for the Reading First program can seem overwhelming, but the effective use of this data to plan, organize, and differentiate instruction in the classroom and to manage programs and policy in the boardroom is critical to achieving reading improvement goals. To build the Louisiana Department of Education’s (LDE) capacity to address this need, the Southeast CC convened a work group consisting of state-level and regional educational service center reading staff and evaluators to design and plan data summits. These summits will assist Reading First district staff and policymakers in using assessment data to make meaningful programmatic and classroom decisions. The group planned eight district summits—each tailored to a specific core reading program implemented in the state, and one additional summit designed to address the specific needs of policymakers and superintendents.

Though there has been much written about what students need to know and be able to do to become successful readers, there is much to be learned about the depth of content knowledge that teachers require, if they are to implement scientifically based teaching strategies effectively. The Southeast CC has been working with LDE leadership and Reading First evaluators to design, pilot, and refine an “Early Literacy Content Knowledge Inventory.” Though the inventory’s primary purpose is to measure the content knowledge that school staff acquire by attending state-administered institutes in early literacy, an added benefit may be its use as a needs assessment tool to gather information on what teachers know about the five components of early literacy to inform designs for on-going, job-embedded professional development.

The Southeast CC also assisted the LDE with their statewide PreK–12 Literacy Plan, specifically in the design of a comprehensive rubric that consultants used to review LEA proposals for implementing the plan in select feeder schools. Additionally, Southeast CC staff members continue to facilitate state-level study groups focused on key reading reports, which inform the LDE reading professional development plan for districts and schools.

## **Southeast Comprehensive Center and IDEA Partnership, Working Together in Support of the Louisiana Department of Education**

By Ada Muoneke, Program Associate

The Southeast CC invited IDEA Partnership, National Association of School Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) to collaborate in bringing a unified message on tiered intervention to Louisiana stakeholders.

The LDE is piloting Response to Intervention (RtI) in selected schools through the Louisiana Literacy Plan. As part of its RtI roll-out efforts, the LDE requested the assistance of the Southeast CC in bringing leaders of various national educational organizations to discourse with affiliated local chapters in Louisiana on this topic.

To lend support to the Louisiana team, the Southeast CC and IDEA Partnership are working to make the appropriate connections among national associations, state affiliate leaders, and state teams. Leaders from national organizations talk to their Louisiana affiliates about RtI when attending key meetings, conferences, or other activities that are taking place in the state. For example, in March 2007, Rich Long, executive director of the National Association of State Title I Directors (NASTID) spoke to Louisiana's Title I directors at their state meeting in Baton Rouge about understanding the role that Title I can play in tiered intervention.

The Southeast CC continues to collaborate with the LDE and IDEA Partnership to schedule more national leaders in addressing various Louisiana organizations such as the Association of School Superintendents, Association of Educators, Federation of Teachers, Association of Special Education Administrators, Educational Diagnosticians' Association, Speech Pathologists and Audiologists in Louisiana Schools, and School Psychologists Association.

## **Mississippi**

### **Southeast CC Activities in Mississippi**

By Debra Meibaum, State Liaison

The No Child Left Behind Act [Section 1117(a)] requires states to establish a statewide system of intensive and sustained support and improvement for local educational agencies and schools designated as being "in need of improvement." To carry out this

requirement, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is establishing School Support Teams (SSTs) to assist in providing technical assistance and professional development to districts and schools with this designation. SSTs will be composed of individuals with expertise in the areas of reading/language arts, math, English as a second language, special education, and/or administration.

The Southeast CC and the MDE's Office of Innovative Support have partnered to co-sponsor trainings for May and June in the math and reading/language arts components of the SST trainings.

- The math School Support Team Training was held May 15–17, 2007, in Jackson, MS.
- The reading/language arts School Support Team Training will be held June 12–14, 2007, in Jackson, MS.

The Southeast CC also provided technical assistance to the MDE in revising Mississippi's proficiency standards for English language learners (ELLs). This work culminated with the Southeast CC facilitating a 2-day meeting with MDE's ELL Committee of Practitioners May 15–17, 2007, in Jackson, MS. The purpose of the meeting was to revise the state's current ELL proficiency standards.

Additionally during the month of May, the Southeast CC provided technical assistance to the special education office of the MDE. The focus of the technical assistance was to conduct an informal review of NCLB, Title I, Part A, with an emphasis on how NCLB aligns with IDEA 2004, Part B. This NCLB/IDEA technical assistance activity took place on May 30–31, 2007, in Ridgeland, MS.

## **Parental Involvement in Mississippi**

By Chris Ferguson, Program Associate

In October and November, 2006, Southeast CC staff met with the Mississippi Innovation and School Improvement Team from the MDE to ensure that the state's parental involvement policy was aligned to the requirements of NCLB. Based on review and suggestions by Southeast CC staff, the Mississippi team updated their existing policy for submission to the state board and developed a plan of action for implementing strategies drawn from the research and best practice.

## **South Carolina**

### **Formative Science Assessment Pilot in South Carolina**

By Sandy Lindsay, State Liaison

The South Carolina Department of Education asked the Southeast CC, WestEd, and several local partners to assist the state in piloting inquiry-based formative assessments in science at one elementary grade level and one middle school grade level during winter/spring 2007. Future forays into formative assessment in science are dependent upon the findings of the pilot. The Southeast CC was specifically involved in the training for administration of the assessment and in building the capacity of scorers to conduct the training for all teachers, should the assessments move to statewide implementation.

The formative science assessment pilot was conducted in March, 2007, and results of the pilot are currently being examined by the South Carolina Department of Education.

The vision for formative assessment in science in South Carolina includes three components: nature of the assessment, administration of the assessment, and scoring of the assessment.

**Nature of the Assessment.** Science assessments are to be kit/inquiry-based and should address one standard/topic per year. Over a period of 5–6 years, all—or almost all—of the academic content standards in science would be addressed.

**Administration.** The assessment would be administered typically during late fall or winter (no later than early March). Assessments would be delivered to individual students at two grade levels—one elementary and one middle school.

**Scoring.** Materials would be prepared for scoring at in-state regional centers no later than 2 weeks after the assessment. Scoring would be done by teachers, science coaches, and district science coordinators. Participation in the scoring process would result in valuable professional development at the scoring site and at the school site. Teacher scorers would be expected to share scoring experiences with other school faculty upon the receipt of score reports shortly after scoring sessions are completed.



## NCLB Update

### Modified Academic Achievement Standards— Final Rule

By Ada Muoneke, Program Associate

On April 9, 2007, the U.S. Department of Education released the

final regulations to amend Title 1 of No Child Left Behind (NCLB; CFR part 200), and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; CFR part 300). The final regulations clarified that modified academic achievement standards must be 1) based on a state's grade-level academic content standards for the grade in which an eligible student with disabilities is enrolled, and 2) challenging but a less rigorous expectation of mastery of grade-level academic content standards. In essence, the state standards are not modified; rather the expectations for student mastery may be less difficult than grade-level achievement standards.

These regulations provide states with additional flexibility regarding state, local education agency, and school accountability for the achievement of a small group of students with disabilities (approximately 20%). These are students whose progress is such that—even after receiving appropriate instruction, including special education and related services designed to address the students' individual needs—the students' individualized education program (IEP) teams are reasonably certain that the students will not achieve grade-level proficiency within the year covered by the students' IEPs or in the same time frame as other students without disabilities. Students with disabilities eligible for the modified academic achievement standards are not limited to those whose academic performance is close to grade level, but also include any IDEA disability category representing a wide spectrum of abilities. These regulations are effective May 9, 2007.

In summary, the final regulations stipulate the following requirements:

- Modified academic achievement standards align with the state's academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.
- Students' IEPs include goals, based on grade-level content on a subject for which the student will be assessed, and progress monitoring.
- Students eligible to be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards be assessed with a measure that is based on grade-level academic content standards, although the assessment may be less difficult than the states' regular assessment.
- Students' IEP teams make the determination regarding the eligibility of students with disabilities who should be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards in one or more subjects and conduct annual reviews of IEPs.
- States establish guidelines for IEP teams for determining whether a student should participate in alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards.



- Students eligible to be assessed based on modified academic achievement standards have access to the general curriculum based on the states' academic content standards.
- States establish and monitor implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP teams.
- States provide IEP teams with a clear explanation of the differences between assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards and those based on modified academic achievement standards.
- States provide IEP teams with information regarding any effects of state and local policies on the students' education resulting from taking an alternate assessment based on modified academic achievement standards.
- States inform parents of students selected for assessment based on modified academic achievement standards.

The states' criteria established for IEP teams are not limited to but must include documentation of (a) objective evidence of lack of grade-level proficiency in content matter attributable to student's disability, (b) multiple valid measures over a period of time that assures the IEP team that a student will not achieve grade-level proficiency within the year covered by his or her IEP, and (c) the student's IEP goals based on the grade-level academic content standards for which the student is enrolled. In addition, states may count up to 2.0 percent (~20% of students with disabilities) of the proficient and advanced scores from alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards for the purposes of reporting adequate yearly progress (AYP). Also, alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards must meet the requirements for high technical quality regardless of the strategies employed by the state for its design, and must include three achievement levels.

### Reference

United States Department of Education, Title I—Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Federal Register/Vol. 72, No. 67/ Monday, April 9, 2007/Rules and Regulations.



## Federal Resources Spotlight

### Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) Program

The U.S. Department of Education provides funding for Parental

Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs). The PIRC program is a discretionary grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. Each state PIRC serves statewide needs to provide both regional and statewide services and disseminate information to parents on a statewide basis. PIRCs help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement and that strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children. More specifically, the PIRCs are designed to

- establish, expand, or operate early childhood parent education programs and engage in a variety of technical assistance activities designed to improve student academic achievement, including understanding the accountability systems in the state and school districts being served by a project;
- help parents to understand the data that accountability systems make available to parents and the significance of that data for such things as opportunities for supplemental education services and public school choice afforded to their children under Sec. 1116 of the ESEA; and
- help parents to communicate effectively with teachers, principals, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel; and help parents become active participants in the development, implementation, and review of school improvement plans.

Additionally, the PIRCs generally develop resource materials and provide information about high quality family involvement programs to families, schools, school districts, and others through conferences, workshops, and dissemination of materials. The centers generally include a focus on serving parents of low-income, minority, and limited English proficient (LEP) students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools.

For more information you may visit the U.S. Department of Education website at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html> or contact the Parental Information and Resource Center in your state:

#### Alabama State PIRC

10520 US Highway 231  
Wetumpka, AL 36092

Director:

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Phone: 334-567-2252

Fax: 334-567-9938

Web site: <http://www.alabamaparentcenter.com>  
Hours: 8:00am - 5:00pm, Monday – Friday

**Georgia State PIRC**

600 West Peachtree Street, Suite 1200  
Atlanta, GA 30308

Director:

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**Louisiana State PIRC**

Shreveport, LA  
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Web site: <http://www.LPIRC.org>

Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday

**Mississippi State PIRC**

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**South Carolina State PIRC**

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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 (<http://secc.sedl.org>). The contents of this newsletter were developed under grant number S283B050033 from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.