

# Letter from the Director

January 2014

Dear Colleagues,

As we begin our work in 2014, I would like to introduce Dr. Heather Zavadsky who recently joined our staff. Heather comes to us with a wide range of experiences that fit well with the BSCP Center's work. Many of you have gotten to know and have worked with Heather during her 25 years of experience as an education researcher, consultant, and practitioner. Her research emphasis is on systemic reform at the state and district levels, particularly in urban education, effective human capital strategies, district data and accountability systems, resource management, systemic district/school turnaround, and special education. She recently published her second book on district reform for Harvard Education Press entitled, *School Turnarounds: The Essential Role of Districts*. Prior to holding lead research positions for the University of Texas System and Educate Texas, Heather managed The Broad Prize for Urban Education for the National Center for Education Accountability. Her practitioner experience includes teaching and administration. We welcome Heather to the BSCP Center with confidence that she will be a strong resource in our work with you.

**New BSCP Center Publications Released**—*Solutions (Issue No. 5)* entitled, *SEA Strategic Communications: A Stakeholder Approach to Prioritize Communications Efforts*, by Romanita Matta-Barrera and Kristin E. Nafziger, was recently released. It is the product of our work with Colorado and the Central Comprehensive Center. This issue provides practical advice to SEAs on how to prioritize limited communication resources to productively engage with diverse and disparate stakeholder groups. Accompanying this document is a Stakeholder Communications Tool containing three worksheets—"Stakeholder Identification", "Classification", and "Prioritization"—to support SEA with efforts to strategically allocate communication resources. The document further supports the work of the BSCP Center and Regional Comprehensive Centers as interviews continue to be conducted with states interested in the Benchmarking SEA Strategies Communication Initiative. As the interviews are completed and the data compiled, you can look forward to a cross-state summary including best practices. See the BSCP Center website <http://www.bscpcenter.org/> under the Publications tab for these documents.

The BSCP Center also released *Solutions (Issue No. 6): Summary of States' Strategies for ESEA Priority Schools*, by Carole Perlman, Ph.D. This publication examines 42 state flexibility plans and summarizes states' strategies for addressing ESEA Priority schools, based on their responses in their flexibility requests. As Carole reviewed the flexibility plans she commented, "I was struck by the thoughtfulness with which the plans were crafted. It was fascinating to me to see how the states addressed the same sets of requirements in ways that made sense in their diverse

local contexts.” This report is a companion report to the BSCP Center’s *Solutions (Issue No. 2): Summary of States’ Strategies and Consequences for ESEA Focus Schools*. *Solutions* issues (No. 2 and No. 6) can also be found on the BSCP Center website under the Publication tab.

**Webinars Planned**—Please watch for registration details for a second Productivity webinar on February 26, 2014—*Building a State Information System to Support Improvements in Productivity*. This webinar, facilitated by Dr. Marguerite Roza, will be based on topics discussed in *The SEA of the Future (Volume II): Prioritizing Productivity* in response to your feedback for more detailed productivity strategies. This webinar will explore how SEAs can build an information system designed to drive productivity—what data are needed, how to compile the data into useful resources for leaders at every level of education, and how these stakeholders can use the data to drive decision making and advance productivity.

The Center is also planning a webinar on Project Management 101 for early spring. This will be an introductory or review session based on the Project Management Institute’s PMI model. Registration details will be forthcoming.

In closing, I want to wish each of you a successful and healthy new year. I continue to be enthused by the work that we are doing together. I look forward to continuing our collaboration in 2014.

Sincerely,



Dean H. Nafziger, Ph.D.

Director

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### **Building State Capacity and Productivity Center**

The Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP Center) focuses on helping state education agencies (SEAs) throughout the country, as they adapt to reduced fiscal resources and increased demands for greater productivity. As State Departments of Education are facing a daunting challenge of improving student performance with diminishing financial resources, the BSCP Center provides technical assistance to SEAs that builds their capacity to support local educational agencies (LEAs or districts) and schools, and to the other 21 regional comprehensive centers and national content centers that serve them, by providing high quality information, tools, and implementation support. The partners in the BSCP Center are Edvance Research, Inc., the Academic Development Institute, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), and the Edunomics Lab (Georgetown University).

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