

# Letter from the Director

May 2014

Dear Colleagues,

If you do not already know Lois Myran, I would like to introduce her as the individual who conducts an essential task for the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center by conducting monthly outreach calls to each of the 15 regional comprehensive centers (RCCs). These important, direct communications act as a key 1:1 dissemination activity, and ensure that the BSCP Center is well aligned with the needs of the RCCs and the SEAs which they serve.



*Lois Myran*

George Bernard Shaw is quoted as saying “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” While we know the “illusion of communication” happens, it is our desire to be intentional and attentive in how the Center communicates with colleagues. Lois is the lynchpin assuring that communication is real and accurate through monthly one-on-one calls with Regional Comprehensive Center liaisons. While this strategy is time and cost intensive I have found it to be a beneficial approach for receiving rich, first-hand information from the RCCs. We use this information to guide and hone the efforts of the BSCP Center to ensure our work is cutting edge and relevant to the needs of states and centers that we serve. I appreciate the willingness of the Regional Comprehensive Centers to be one of the dissemination arms for the BSCP Center.

Through Lois’ broad and deep tenure in over three decades in education, she is uniquely experienced to engage the BSCP Center in substantive calls with the RCCs. Lois also acts as a consultant with the Center on Innovations and Learning through the Academic Development Institute (ADI), where she supports 5 states in their *Indistar*™ process for managing performance at the SEA level.

Lois rose through the ranks with an extensive background in educational leadership ranging from consulting at the national and state levels of education, to being an education association director, curriculum and professional learning district director, elementary school principal and 15 years as a classroom educator. She is viewed as someone who has a keen understanding and vision for education and can see issues in a larger context. Colleagues describe Lois as a leader with endless energy and a passion for education, someone who understands how systems work and how to apply them, and knows how to build consensus among differing interests. As an

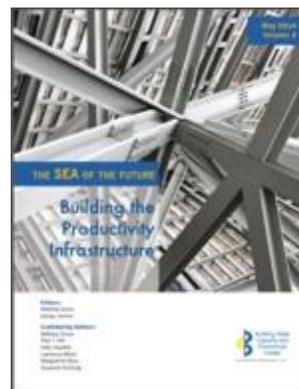
advocate for teachers and students, colleagues describe her as one of the best educational leaders to have emerged from the state of North Dakota.

### ***The SEA of the Future: Building the Productivity Infrastructure, Volume 3 Published***

We have released the third volume in The SEA of the Future series, where we introduce the “productivity infrastructure.” The productivity infrastructure constitutes the building blocks for an SEA committed to supporting productivity, innovation, and performance—from the state chief to the classroom. These building blocks include:

- Policies to expand the flexibility of district and school leaders and allow them to make choices about resource use.
- State funding arrangements that fund students, not programs.
- Information systems that allow district and school leaders to accurately assess the productivity of policies and practices.

The 4 essays in this volume offer a rich discussion of each of these elements, and we invite you to read [\*The SEA of the Future\*](#) and to share it with your colleagues.



**Benchmarking SEA Strategic Communications Progress** - Kristin Nafziger and Heather Zavadsky recently facilitated the initial Benchmarking SEA Strategic Communications webinar for the five Regional Comprehensive Centers representing states involved in the process. Prior to the webinar the Centers received an individual state report. Some of the successful strategies noted during the interviews include clear strategies for overcoming negative or political issues, multiple avenues for sharing and coordinating messages, crafting jargon-free messages and adjusting them to the stakeholder needs. Communication concerns identified in this process include a lack of coordination between various communication venues, lack of a clear communication plan, and using inefficient or ineffective communication strategies or tools. Internal and external promising practices were shared with samples from participating states. The next steps for this initiative include distributing the cross state analysis report on SEA Strategic Communications and holding a webinar for interested SEAs and Regional Comprehensive Centers. Look for announcements regarding the webinar date and cross state analysis report in late May.

### **BSCP Center Sets Kick-Off Date on Developing and Managing Talent in the SEA**

**Benchmarking Initiative** - I am pleased to announce that we have now identified a kick-off date for the next benchmarking project on *Developing and Managing Talent in the SEA* on June 18, 2014. This introductory webinar is for states and RCCs that are interested in learning more or

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want to participate in our second benchmarking initiative. Look for an email invitation in May with registration information and time details for the June 18, *Developing and Managing Talent in the SEA* webinar. You may also link to the BSCP website's [Capacity Building Projects](#) tab for a description of the Collaboration Benchmarking project.

**Project Management Webinar for Regional Comprehensive Centers hosted in May** – The BSCP Center Project Manager, Kenny Patterson, conducted the Project Management 101 webinar for interested Regional Comprehensive Centers. This introductory session on project management will be posted on the BSCP website at [www.bscpcenter.org](http://www.bscpcenter.org). A survey has been sent to participants for feedback on the webinar and suggestions for follow up work on project management or future webinar topics.

**Mississippi Department of Education continues Restructuring Work** - I am pleased to report that Mississippi State Superintendent Carey Wright is building on the Managing Performance in the System of Support initiatives consultancy started several months ago with the Mississippi Department of Education and the BSCP Center. Superintendent Wright recently appointed three top-level executives as a part of her restructuring plan for the Mississippi Department of Education. Superintendent Wright is also looking at past practices and research to determine how the department can offer more direct services to assist school districts and she will unveil further plans in the next few months. The BSCP Center looks forward to continued support and connections with our work with the Mississippi Department of Education.

That's an update on our busy spring. Thanks for partnering with us at the BSCP Center.

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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