Letter from the Director

June 2014

Greetings Colleagues,

Those of us in the Comprehensive Center Program throughout the country are beginning to develop work plans for the next year. Recently the BSCP Leadership Team participated in a collaboration call with Great Lakes and Mid-West Comprehensive Center teams to; update the regional center staff on major initiatives at the BSCP Center and to discuss state needs in the area of capacity building, productivity, and performance management.   I found this process to be informative and of great value for the participants, particularly to enhance regional planning. My appreciation goes to the leadership teams at Great Lakes and Mid-West Comprehensive Centers for initiating this opportunity to be collaborative thought partners to enhance the services we provide to states. I encourage your center to let me know if you would like to participate in a collaboration call in the near future.   As we go into year three planning, let's keep our doors open and find ways to learn from each other's work.

A recent paper from the Fordham Institute, *The State Education Agency: At the Helm, Not the Oar*, has evoked considerable commentary about how SEAs can most effectively accomplish their many mandates. Ashley Jochim, a research analyst with the Center on Reinventing Public Education, a BSCP partner, has penned a useful response, titled *To Take the Helm, State Ed Agencies Need a Navigator.* The article examines the challenges that come with contracting work out to other organizations.   Ashley comments that, "While the prescription to shrink the size of the SEAs may be an attractive one to those who see these agencies as ineffective, it is at best an incomplete fix. Form, function, and politics matter much more." Through our partnership with CRPE, we will continue to study the issues of SEA performance and productivity and assist states as they seek to leverage their investments in PK-12 education toward greater effect. This article is well worth the read and provides references to additional CRPE work on what SEAs can do to build capacity to lead reform.   To read more go to: **http://t.e2ma.net/message/o1f5i/kuzsjg**

BSCP Center Updates:

* **The Developing and Managing SEA Talent in the SEA** benchmarking project will provide a kick-off webinar scheduled for June 18 from 11:30 to 1:00 pm CST. Kristin Nafziger and Heather Zavadsky will facilitate the introductory webinar for RCCs to learn more about the project, provide feedback, and engage with their states in this second benchmarking initiative. Participation and registration information will be sent out by the BSCP Center. You may also link to the BSCP website's Capacity Building Projects tab for a description of the Collaboration Benchmarking project.

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- ✳ **The Communications Benchmarking Project** is continuing. Because there is little information or research that specifically covers SEA communication strategies, we have found this project to be particularly interesting and exciting.   We are in the process of comparing results with recent research of effective communication strategies from organizations outside of the education field. This work is moving forward and will be shared with interested states and RCCs upon completion of the analysis and research, hopefully near the end of June or July.

- ✳ The announcement for [Volume 3](#) of **The SEA of the Future** was sent out in late May. Already, several hundred of you have opened the document. This volume of our flagship publication, entitled Building the Productivity Infrastructure, gives insights from 4 perspectives about how SEAs can organize to promote productivity. As always we are eager for you to read these thought provoking essays and give us your reactions.

- ✳ The **Project Management 101 webinar** was recently held. Participants that were new to the project management process found it to be informative with requests for the webinar and power point to be posted on our website. We are in the process of having the webinar and slides posted on our website, analyzing the surveys from the 22 participants, reviewing their recommendations, and determining the next steps for this project.

- ✳ The **Chief Performance Officer** group is currently prioritizing their "Problems of Practice" discussions and identifying a date for a face to face meeting to be held in San Antonio.   RCCs that represent the 8 Chief Performance Officers states are also invited to this face to face meeting.

I hope you find this update of our current work to be useful. As you can see, we are headed into some new and important practice areas, and we are energized by the potential utility of our latest projects. I trust this letter finds you with a little downtime for summer relaxation and time away from your desks enjoying the benefits of the warm sunshine season.

Sincerely,

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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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