

Letter from the Director

September 2014

Dear Colleagues,

As a busy fall begins, all of us in Comprehensive Centers have completed our annual reviews and are beginning our Year 3 work. In preparation for providing the best possible services to states, the BSCP Center and Regional Comprehensive Centers held a joint planning meeting recently in Portland. Our focus was on enhancing our work while states are going through a period of significant change. The ideas that we developed at that meeting will guide the initiatives that the BSCP Center is launching this year. As always, we seek your feedback on how to make our work more valuable to SEAs and their Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs). I would like to thank Mike Seibersma and the Northwest Comprehensive Center staff for being gracious hosts and for collaborating with us and making this meeting a success.

Thank you for a great thought-provoking meeting. The BSCP staff set the tone for collaboration through the meeting format and open dialogue. The discussion on capacity building to transition to the SEA of the future, including the information and discussion on dynamic capabilities and absorptive capacity, resonated with the work we do every day. The information and discussions related to the changing landscape, i.e. shorter tenure of State Chiefs, funding and political influences, led to discussions of our role in investing in systems development rather than people. I appreciated the discussion on challenges and the Center's willingness to collect feedback on how its work can support us in meeting those challenges. I look forward to continued collaboration with the BSCP staff.

—Allison Layland, Florida and the Islands
Comprehensive Center

Funding for Student's Sake Webinar Scheduled September 30

I invite you to join the BSCP Center at a productivity webinar and discuss how today's way of funding schools won't be sustainable tomorrow. Going forward, states will have no choice but to tackle education productivity in order to maximize student outcomes at any spending level. On September 30, 2014 at 12:00 p.m. CST/10:00 a.m. PST, Marguerite Roza, Director of Edunomics Lab and partner in BSCP Center, will host an interactive webinar for state leaders on student-based allocation at the state level. In this webinar for state education leaders, participants will hear about a basic funding framework designed to promote productivity. Participants will explore different funding structures and learn how student-based funding formulas are working in some states.

Register now for *Funding for Students' Sake: How to Stop Financing Tomorrow's Schools on Yesterday's Priorities* at <https://attendeegotowebinar.com/register/7339198693673547010>.

SEA of the Future Will Focus on Rural Education

In the fourth volume of *The SEA of the Future* we will explore the ways in which SEAs can support rural districts and schools. The volume will feature the work of several leading observers on this important topic. It will examine both policy and practice considerations specifically tied to the unique rural context. The volume will be informed by several SEA and district practitioners with direct experience working in and with rural districts and schools.

Communication Benchmarking Initiative

I know many of you have been waiting for the report of the communications benchmarking work that we have been doing. Currently, the state chiefs who had teams participating in the benchmarking work are receiving the benchmarking document prior to the general release later this fall. There will be a convening of participating SEAs and their RCCs in a follow-up meeting to discuss results and share ideas. At that meeting, we will survey interest in creating a Strategic Communication Network that will share tools, ideas, and strategies around holistic communication approaches and gauge interest in a deeper-dive communication benchmarking activity. Please reach out to me or Lois Myran if you have interest or suggestions for potential SEA or RCC participation in a further communications benchmarking activity on processes around strategic communication.

Next Steps Planned in the SEA Talent Initiative

The BSCP SEA Talent Initiative will begin its work with states that have expressed an interest in examining and improving their recruiting and hiring practices. As a first step, the BSCP Center will seek to create transparency around hiring practices by doing a process map with each state that includes their strategic human capital plan, recruiting approaches, and steps in the candidate selection and hiring process.

We will first access public information about an SEAs process to frame the practices and work in collaboration with RCCs to flesh out and confirm the hiring practices in place. This practice or process map will allow an SEA the opportunity to:

- Understand all steps in the process that take place across multiple divisions within the SEA and, sometimes, within the state government.
- Identify constraints in their processes (i.e., excessively long times for specific for activities, redundant review or approval steps).
- Provide an opportunity for the SEA to make immediate process changes and improvements.

Once SEA hiring processes have been documented, we will examine best practices in government hiring and benchmark the SEA processes against them. This project will help states to learn about, adapt, and work to implement improvements in their hiring practices. Those

improvements can be clearly communicated across all divisions/sectors of government and will be informed by best-practices.

As we begin the third year of the BSCP Center work we look forward to continued collaboration and networking with you in Year 3. Please continue to communicate your ideas and needs as we begin the new program year.

Sincerely,



Dean H. Nafziger, Ph.D.

Director

Building State Capacity & Productivity Center at Edvance Research

210-558-4101

dnafziger@edvanceresearch.com

Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

The Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP Center) focuses work on helping state education agencies (SEAs) throughout the country, as they adapt to constrained 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 Edonomics Lab (Georgetown University).

Visit us at:



www.bscpcenter.org

