



Building State Capacity
and Productivity Center



November 2018

Greetings Colleagues,

We are entering the final grant year for the BSCP Center, and we are pleased to reflect on our work with you. For this month's letter I will focus on the Strategic Performance Management-SPM journey and the impact it has on state agencies.

SPM Creates a Culture of Success

In the fall of 2015 the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP), began its Strategic Performance Management (SPM) work with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). In our technical assistance manual we describe Strategic Performance Management (SPM) as a “process that draws everyone in the SEA into a smoothly operating, open system that recognizes their contributions and encourages their innovation” (p. 3). SPM incorporates elements of strategic planning and connects them to performance measures, productivity considerations, and ongoing processes for gauging progress, improving practice, and exceeding expectations.



For the past three years, ADE, with support from the BSCP Center and the South-Central Comprehensive Center (SC3) established a new strategic direction and organized its work in pursuit of that direction. Last month, we visited ADE during one of their monthly meetings that they call First Fridays. These monthly get-togethers have become important times to collaborate on milestones and actions, report on progress, celebrate successes and address challenges. During our visit, the Chief of Staff, Gina Windle, received several emails from staff participating through the video streaming.

The change within ADE is remarkable. Commissioner Johnny Key noted that “we are more strategic in how we work together, and in the work, we have done.” Staff are committed to the SPM process and it shows. During our visit with the Learning Services team, we saw their work



on Individual Student Success Plans (part of their strategic direction), walking the staff through the same training they have provided for districts and schools. Activities such as this ensure all staff are kept abreast of goal-related initiatives, thus creating one voice for the agency's work. First Fridays are live streamed for those employees unable to attend in person.

Commissioner Key noted a shift in ADE's relationship with districts, moving away from more prescriptive initiatives toward broader guidance toward key state goals and support for district initiatives. The agency's work has shifted from the individual school to a greater focus on districts.

SPM provides structure and guidance for their everyday work. Both Commissioner Key and Ms. Windle noted a shift in culture with employees seeing how their work fits in the larger vision and mission of the agency. Staff from various departments are able to form collaborative teams to advance work toward agency-wide goals and milestones. Both Commissioner Key and Ms. Windle noted that they continue to make shifts in job functions to have the right mix of skills in place to advance the strategic work. Commissioner Key noted that "we are shifting who we bring in, looking at what skills we need to bring on" The most telling sign of this shift was expressed by Ms. Windle, "People in the field feel they can email or call anytime and get an informed and helpful response."

"SPM has been critical, aligning and prioritizing the work, creating the cross-team interaction. Without the structure [of SPM], we would have struggled to move beyond the individual and unit. We are doing in-depth strategic thinking, taking time so decisions are rationale. We better understand the agency needs. We are looking at things more systemically." ...Commissioner Johnny Key on the change in organizational culture.

The BSCP Center continues to facilitate and support SPM in other states and territories throughout the nation, including Kansas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Missouri, Oregon, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Hawaii State Public Charter School Association. Dr. Allison Layland shared, "It is truly rewarding to see SPM efforts and work sustained beyond our support. It is what technical assistance is meant to accomplish."



The Building State Capacity and Productivity Center enthusiastically welcomes Dr. Kim Benton

I welcome Dr. Kim Benton, Strategic Performance Management consultant, to the BSCP Center. Dr. Benton is also a faculty member at William Carey University in the Department of Educational Leadership and a school improvement consultant for the Academic Development Institute (ADI). Prior to these positions, she served as the Chief Academic Officer/Deputy State Superintendent at the Mississippi Department of Education from 2013-2018. A veteran



educational leader, Dr. Benton previously served with the state agency as the interim Chief Deputy State Superintendent and Director of the Office of School Recovery where she was responsible for overseeing Mississippi's School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. Prior to joining the state agency, Dr. Benton served in several capacities within the Meridian Public-School District including Executive Director of Federal Programs and Special Populations, principal, teacher and instructional specialist. In addition, she has served as an adjunct instructor for Mississippi State University and the University of West Alabama. The

wide range of educational experiences Kim possesses, makes her an excellent fit for the BSCP Center. Welcome, Dr. Benton.

As always, hearing from you with questions or comments is always a pleasure. Please do not hesitate to contact me. In closing, I would like to wish each of you a Happy Holiday Season. May it be a time of joyful celebration with your families and friends.

Sincerely,

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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 23 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 Westat, the Academic Development Institute, and the Edunomics Lab (Georgetown University).

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