

Letter from the Director

April 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings! I know you are deeply engaged in the work in your area. We appreciate hearing about your work at the state and Regional Comprehensive Center (RCC) level as we communicate with you through our letters, calls, and initiatives. Please continue your conversations with us as it allows us to stay on target with your needs.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE BUILDING STATE CAPACITY AND PRODUCTIVITY CENTER?

The SEA of the Future (Volume III) to be Released Early May

In the third volume of *The SEA of the Future—The Productivity Infrastructure: Laying the Foundation for a More Productive Education Sector*—we continue to explore ways in which state education agencies (SEAs) can support more productive and innovative practice across all of their districts and schools. Dr. Paul Hill (founder of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), a partner organization to the BSCP Center) begins the volume by explaining why a more productive education system requires states to systematically review policies and practices to ensure local agencies have the flexibility and information they need to seek and implement new, and hopefully, more productive solutions.

Kelly Hupfeld, J.D. (of the Center for Education Policy Analysis at the University of Colorado Denver) then digs deep into new policy frameworks that will provide local districts and schools the flexibility and leverage they need while maintaining quality support and accountability at their state education agency (SEA). Dr. Larry Miller (also with CRPE), Dr. Marguerite Roza (Director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University, a partner organization of the BSCP Center), and Dr. Suzanne Simburg (also of the Edunomics Lab) team up to discuss how new funding and allocation models can encourage productive local decision making and how states can seize the rare opportunity some now have to redesign their funding allocation models. Finally, Dr. Roza discusses the data needed to support districts and schools as they seek new, more productive solutions. Together these essays describe what we call a *productivity infrastructure* for SEAs. Our *The SEA of the Future Series* is created through the leadership of Dr. Betheny Gross (also of CRPE).

Kick-Off for Developing and Managing Talent in the SEA Benchmarking

I am pleased to announce that we are kicking off, at the beginning of May, our next benchmarking project on human capital strategies. We believe this benchmarking activity will be of particular interest as SEAs encounter different human capital needs and challenges in their shift from compliance monitoring to a performance management approach. The kick-off will begin with an organizational call or webinar for states and RCCs that are interested in participating in our second benchmarking initiative. Look for an email invitation from the BSCP Center toward the end of April that will provide you with times, dates, and other details for this initiative. You may also go to the link on the BSCP website's



[Collaborative Benchmarking Projects](#) tab for a description of the project. (Or, click on the *Benchmark* graphic to open *Developing and Managing Talent in the SEA*, number 4 in the *Benchmark* series.)

Communication Benchmarking at the District and School Level

One question heard during a number of interviews for the Benchmarking SEA Strategic Communications project is: “How do we ensure that districts and schools know about, understand, and are implementing what we develop at the state level?” This is an interesting question and brings in other issues like the role of communicating new policies to the external public and the role of the SEA with local education agencies. While looking into the question, we were able to learn from the Houston (Texas) Independent School District as they described a cross-departmental team of district and school leaders, business partners, and parents, studying and strategizing around a newly adopted bill in Texas—House Bill 5 (83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013). This discussion not only revealed how a district is collaboratively studying and planning, but also gives a small glimpse into the many considerations educators must include in response to new or revised bills and policies and how to adjust curriculum and professional development, as well as how to communicate the changes to parents.

The SEA Strategic Communication benchmark project interviews are complete; the information is being gathered, and the analysis is underway. We are finding that, while each participating SEA has its own unique context and challenges, there are many process similarities and interesting approaches we believe will be useful across different states. We are now sending specific information gleaned through this process to RCCs and participating states while a full analysis of the SEA Strategic Communication benchmarking work is under development and will be available to all interested parties in late April.

Save the Date for the Project Management 101 Webinar

At the request of many of the RCCs, the BSCP Center is offering a *Project Management 101* webinar on May 14, 2014. This 1.5 hour webinar is a general introductory, or review session, on project management. The Project Management 101 webinar is designed to do three things:

1. Provide a straight-forward definition of what a project is and is not.
2. Give participants an introduction to the main phases and processes of a project.
3. Provide an understanding of why and how to apply project management processes to ensure the success of projects undertaken.

Registration details for the May 14 Project Management 101 webinar will be forthcoming.

Introducing the BSCP Center's New Project Manager

I would like to introduce Kenneth “Kenny” Patterson, the new project manager for the BSCP Center. Kenny has an abundance of higher education experience, having worked in various roles from adjunct instructor to technology professional and project manager. In recent years, he worked as the Senior Client Services Manager of Information Technology for the Alamo Community College District in San Antonio, Texas where he oversaw a large, diverse staff of eLearning, multimedia, helpdesk, user support personnel, and client services professionals. He has also worked for Pearson Education, delivering learning assessment products for K-12 students.



Kenneth holds an MBA from Webster University, as well as the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification credential from PMI Global and the Certified ScrumMaster (CSM) designation as an agile project/software management professional. Currently, he is pursuing a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. In his spare time, he performs with local and regional theater companies. His latest production, which opened in April, is *Catch Me If You Can* at the Woodlawn Theater in San Antonio.

With Kenny's background in educational technology; project management; user support/service; experience with leading projects and teams in large, diverse complex systems, he will have a positive influence in the work of the Center. Please join me in welcoming him to the BSCP Center team.

Association for Finance and Policy Annual Conference Attended

Several BSCP Center partners attended and presented at the Association for Finance and Policy Annual Conference (AEFP) held in San Antonio this past March. The conference attracts the nation's best thinkers in how to improve school systems by better leveraging resources,

practices, and policy. At the school level we heard about studies illustrating that targeted approaches like *pay for performance* programs often achieve better results than general policies like across-the-board salary increases. A panel focused on state research needs and highlighted interest in disseminating more of the research findings acquired by SEAs; in learning more about teacher evaluation and turnaround; and the relationship between financial and academic deficits.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you with any questions or comments you may have regarding the work of the BSCP Center. You may contact me directly or at info@BSCPcenter.org.

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 Edonomics Lab (Georgetown University).

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