

Letter from the Director

November 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Again, it is my pleasure to share with you highlights of the work from the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center.

State Special Education Improvement Planning Assistance Offered—Early next year SEAs will begin year one of a three-year phase-in plan to complete a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). In considering how we could assist SEAs in this important work, we decided to create a rubric-based tool to: (1) develop and implement the SSIP; (2) achieve an integrated approach to serving all students; and (3) continuously improve practice in the SEA. Here is a link to that tool, the *Systemic Improvement in the State Education Agency* document: <http://bit.ly/11W3U1q>

The BSCP Center will also provide assistance for your leadership team which includes initial training on the rubric, use of the IndiSEA™ online performance management system, and follow-up consultation. There is no charge for this technical assistance. If you are interested in further information, please contact Lois Myran at 701-974-3644, or send a request to info@bscpcenter.org.

Strategic Planning Requests Keep the BSCP Center's Schedule Full—The BSCP Center has received several requests from regional comprehensive centers (RCCs) for assistance in strategic planning with states. We have provided assistance to Indiana, Illinois, and the Virgin Islands; finding the process to unfold uniquely in each state. We are also in the initial discussion stage with other RCCs.

Perspectives on Strategic Planning from Florida and the Islands Center—Because of the pervasive interest in strategic planning currently, and knowing it is always helpful to learn what other centers and states are doing, I have asked Florida and the Islands Regional Comprehensive Center (FLICC) to share their strategic planning perspectives. The following description has been provided by Allison Layland of FLICC:

Strategic planning often comes about to address a crisis or issue within an organization. Causal drivers can be financial, poor resource management, low productivity, high customer dissatisfaction, or, in the case of an educational system or institution, chronic low student achievement. When a causal driver pushes the need for a strategic plan, all too often a small select few at the top leadership level develop a strategic plan for others to implement. After a polished, multicolored, glossy plan is published, more often than not the plan sits on a shelf collecting dust, or it fails to be implemented, monitored and

adjusted effectively to achieve the intended goals. To avoid such failure, an organization and its leadership need to be ready to take on meaningful reflection, data analysis and strategic thinking. A culture open to tough dialogue and long term change needs to be established.

The Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS (FLICC), with its collaborative partners, including the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center, provided technical assistance to the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education to build their capacity in developing the readiness to engage in strategic planning, create a 5-year strategic plan, and develop a cyclical process of implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Capacity included processes, structures, knowledge, and resources to establish a culture to support strategic planning, productivity, and change management.

Readiness began with stakeholder meetings to establish a causal driver for strategic change. Input was gathered that resulted in three state priorities: increasing academic achievement, positive school culture, and improving teacher and leader effectiveness. Each of these on its own is a strong cause for change, but together they provide the impetus for systemic change that could be supported by all internal and external stakeholders. An expanded leadership team consisting of, not just top level state leaders, but also state and district directors, coordinators, superintendents, and deputy superintendents was identified to develop a 5-year strategic plan focused on addressing the three state priorities. The process included:

- *Increasing participant knowledge of strategic thinking and planning using examples from business, education, and research.*
- *Examining why strategic plans fail and ways to avoid failure.*
- *Re-examining the current vision and mission in the context of the changing landscape to identify foundational values and future desires.*
- *Analyzing past and current data to identify the current state of the state and desired goals.*
- *Pushing thinking through probing questions and honest, open dialogue.*

The result was the establishment of an expanded leadership culture that shifted from a school focus to a multi-level organizational focus that includes state, district, and school. The team moved from communication and coordination to collaboration, and committed to developing a 5-year strategic plan—despite having uncertainty due to an upcoming gubernatorial race which could result in large leadership changes—because it is the right thing to do for the children of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are interested in learning more about the strategic planning work that others are doing so we can share it broadly. Please let us know about your related efforts.

As we move into the holiday season, the BSCP Center partners and I would like to send a special holiday greeting. Take time to enjoy this exciting time of the 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, and the Edonomics Lab (Georgetown University).

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