

Improving School Performance

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Builds the capacity of states, districts, and schools to implement systemic improvement and research-based instructional practices to improve student achievement.

For more than 4 decades, SEDL has worked to turn around underperforming schools and to change fundamentally how schools operate. SEDL's systemic approach addresses an entire school or school system; makes student achievement the central focus; works to align performance standards, instruction, and assessment; and involves all levels of the system—district, school, and classroom.

By providing professional development, technical assistance, research, and resources, SEDL helps educators at all levels implement school improvement plans and overcome barriers to improving student achievement. Throughout the process, SEDL helps states improve the rigor of state standards and helps districts align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to those standards. SEDL provides professional development to help teachers improve instruction and boost student achievement in reading, math, and other core content areas. The role of technology to improve teaching and learning and the infusion of 21st century skills is another key piece of our professional development offerings. In addition, we conduct research and systematic reviews to identify best educational practices and to develop materials and tools to help educators.

Local Work

District- and School-Level Work

Through funding provided to schools and districts through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and other sources, SEDL is helping build the internal capacity of school and district leaders, including teacher leaders, to carry out and sustain school improvement plans. For example, SEDL is providing support over multiple years to help school districts in New Mexico, Louisiana, and South Carolina implement the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle. With this support, teachers and other school and district staff members are building their content knowledge in either reading or mathematics; developing their ability to use data in instructional and programmatic decision making; aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments to state standards; and improving the quality and coherence of instruction across classrooms. In collaboration with a consortium of rural districts in New Mexico, SEDL is developing a professional development approach for rural teachers to support the implementation of technology in geographically isolated communities. In Louisiana, SEDL is in its third year of providing professional development and evaluation support to a rural community focused on improving literacy and language development of 3- and 4-year-olds through an Early Reading First grant involving both the local school district and the local Head Start program.

State-Specific Work

Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC)

The SECC assists the state departments of education in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina to implement statewide systems of support for high-need districts and schools engaged in improvement efforts. The specific type of assistance varies depending on the needs of each state. In Mississippi, for example, SECC staff worked with the Department of Education to provide professional

development for members of the School Support Team, part of the statewide system of support. In a second initiative, the SECC is helping the Mississippi Department of Education develop its Response to Intervention model. In Georgia, the SECC has supported the Department of Education in providing professional development to state school improvement specialists in the Thinking Maps program and follow-up assistance as the specialists present the strategies to faculty in low-performing schools. In South Carolina, the SECC worked with the South Carolina Department of Education's Title I office and the Palmetto Priority Schools Office to provide schools in corrective action with leadership training and information on SEDL's Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle (PTLC). The PTLC is a collaborative process for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments with state standards.

Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC)

The TXCC provides professional development and support to the Texas Education Agency and the state's 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) to build their capacity to help districts and schools in improvement efforts. For example, TXCC staff provide the ESCs with professional development on using the Working Systemically approach to school improvement. This approach addresses five competencies required for implementing improvement at all levels of a school system: (1) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; (2) creating coherence; (3) ensuring continuous professional learning; (4) building relationships; and (5) responding to changing conditions. These competencies systemically address all components of an educational system: curriculum, instruction, assessment, standards, professional learning, resources, professional staff, family and community, and policy and governance.

Products

Working Systemically in Action: A Guide for Facilitators

Produced by a team of SEDL staff who drew upon more than 3 decades of school reform research and theory, the Working Systemically approach is a process for school improvement—and, ultimately, increased student achievement—that focuses on key components and competencies at all levels of the educational system. The guide gives technical assistance providers a framework and tools to help schools and districts establish a culture of continuous inquiry and collaboration, and develop the structures and leadership roles necessary to support and sustain both student and staff learning.

Taking Charge of Change

This easy-to-read introduction to the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a cornerstone in the school change literature for educators. Hundreds of school leaders have turned to Taking Charge of Change when adopting and implementing a new program or school-reform model.

Measuring Implementation in Schools: Using the Tools of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a conceptual framework that describes, explains, and predicts probable teacher behaviors throughout the change process to help administrators and change facilitators avoid these problems. This set includes all three CBAM manuals as well as a DVD providing an overview of CBAM.