



IMPLEMENTING EFFICIENCIES IN SEA SYSTEMS TO PROVIDE DIFFERENTIATED SERVICES TO SUPPORT DISTRICT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Need

Differentiating state services to support district and school improvement makes sense for two reasons: (1) support is most effective when targeted to the specific needs of the district or school, based on both performance data and diagnostic data about prevailing operational and professional practice; and (2) state resources of time and money are more efficiently allocated when targeted to the specific needs of the district or school rather than applied in a blanket manner to all districts or schools in a common strata of improvement status.

States need: (1) diagnostic instruments, protocol, and metrics; and (2) services aligned to diagnosed gaps in performance and practice.

The Context

Under the provisions of No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) and state-specific goals for improved academic performance by districts and schools, states grouped schools and districts according to the number of years they had missed state targets on student assessments. In constructing systems of support to assist districts and schools with improvement, states often applied a common set of services for all districts or schools in the same performance status. Often too little attention was given to diagnosing the operational and professional practices in the districts and schools. Thus, resources, including funding and state-sponsored personnel, were inefficiently allocated. In more recent years, many states have established means for differentiating districts and schools based on finer-grained analysis of student performance and diagnostically determining gaps in operational and professional practice that contribute to student outcomes. Likewise, the protocol for diagnosis has become more sophisticated: higher functioning districts and schools are provided instruments, tools, and procedures for self-diagnosis, while lower capacity districts and schools are coached in their self-diagnosis or provided external diagnosis through site visits and document reviews by state teams.



The Opportunity

With the greater variation in state diagnostic methods and in-service alignment that has evolved over time and was accelerated with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility process, we have the opportunity to study the various approaches and identify those that are most promising.

The Work

The collaborative benchmarking process is described in the attached paper, *Discovering and Implementing Best Practices to Strengthen SEAs: Collaborative Benchmarking*. The study will be led by the Building State Capacity & Productivity Center (BSCP Center), meaning that we will provide the facilitation leader, provide or acquire the subject matter expert (SME), and provide the staff support to conduct the work. We will recruit interested Regional Comprehensive Center (RCC) and state education agency (SEA) teams to obtain guidance on which specific aspects of the diagnostic methods and service alignment issues they wish to learn about. The ideal SEA team will be comprised of individuals who have a high level of authority in the SEA in order to effect change, who know and lead the accomplishment of SEA goals, who collectively have knowledge of state systems of support, and who are motivated to make improvements in their states' delivery of services. Ideally too, RCCs will participate with their SEAs throughout the process giving them support, providing travel funding, and helping plan implementation of the process changes. Our goal is that the RCCs will continue to support the SEAs in the implementation of the process improvement activities.

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 and content comprehensive 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 Fiscal Analytics Unit (Georgetown University).

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