

DEAR COLLEAGUE

March 2011

We hope you are beginning to see some signs of spring in your part of the country; it has been a long time coming! We at CII continue to gather stories of state departments who are working hard together with their schools to improve schooling success. A new Promising Practices Brief by Julia Corbett of CII is now available. *The Oklahoma Story: Situating School Improvement Grants (SIG) within a Coherent System of Support* tells the story of how this CII Pacesetter state's attention to developing a coherent system of support provided a ready vehicle for implementing their SIG plans. The Oklahoma story joins Virginia in our Promising Practices series; watch for announcements of upcoming new additions to the series. This timely brief and all CII publications are available for free download from the web site at www.centerii.org.

Indistar™, CII's web-based school improvement system, continues to generate interest among states who are working to improve student success. Lisa Kinnaman met with officials from the Idaho Division of Special Education, who are investigating an adaptation of the CII Self-Assessment Tool for use with their Special Education Division. Pam Sheley and Stephanie Benedict, CII, also traveled to Idaho this month to work alongside the Idaho Statewide Systems of Support (SSOS) Team using their WISE Tool, Idaho's version of Indistar™, and help them prepare for their upcoming review of School & District Improvement Plans using an electronic scoring and feedback rubric that has been built into the tool.

The Pacesetter state teams in Cohort #1 participated this month in the third in their series of distance learning activities for this year. Karen Laba, a CII consultant, presented on the state's role when using coaching for school improvement. The presentation was based on Dr. Laba's CII publication, *Coaching for School Improvement: A Guide for Coaches and Their Supervisors*, available for free download from the CII web site. Printed copies are also available.

Tom Kerins, Program Director, CII, joined Mary Peterson, Southwest Regional Comprehensive Center, to work with staff from the Nevada Department of Education on evaluating their statewide system of support. Nevada, a Pacesetter state in cohort #2, is using tools from the CII publication *Evaluating the Statewide System of Support*, available from the CII web site.

The National Network of State School Improvement (NNSIL), a partnership initiative of CII and CCSSO, convened its membership on March 22nd for a webinar that focused on examining state's monitoring practices of SIG implementation by local education agencies (LEAs) and schools that receive the grants. The goal of the webinar was to improve the state education agencies' (SEAs') decision-making ability for funding and support continuance of SIG among the LEAs and schools. Featured presenters were Steve Underwood of the Idaho Department of Education, who discussed the Indistar model, and Karla Baehr and Jesse Dixon

of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. A 30-minute follow-up discussion session is also scheduled with the presenters as returning panelists. More information about the March 22 webinar, including slides, audio-visual recording, and resources are available at the NNSSIL website – www.centerii.org/leaders/.

Finally, be sure not to miss out on the upcoming regional SIG conferences. CII, along with the other Content and Regional Comprehensive Centers in the center network, is collaborating with the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), U. S. Department of Education, to connect educators, administrators, and practitioners together to learn from one another and begin creating peer networks and communities of practice. Four conferences are planned for April and May, and states should be planning to attend one of them. For more information or to register, please visit your regional comprehensive center site. In the mean time, we hope you find something interesting and informative in the attached resources, and will check in again next month.

Best regards,

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