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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the need for a regional dissemination system: the conceptualization of the Southwest Educational Development Labortory (SEDL) Regional Exchange as part of the nation-wide Research and Development Exchange (RDx); and the operation of the SEDL Regional Exchange (RX). It emphasizes that the Research and Development Exchange is designed to disseminate information about research and development (R&D) outcomes to educational practitioners; to feed forward information about practitioner needs and activities; and to link practitioners with information resources and training services. Undergirding the RDx (and thus by association, the SEDL/RX) are two assumptions: (1) That R&D should guide change of improvement, and (2) That "real" consumer needs should guide R&D. Perhaps a further assumption is that the R&D outcomes are not widely used to improve education because they are not responsive to felt "real" educational needs. The persons and institutions directly involved with the RDx (whether members of Advisory Boards, RDx staff, and National Institute of Education staff) believe that accomplishment of RDx goals (and SEDL/RX objectives) will contribute greatly to operationalizing the second assumption which in turn should actualize the first assumption. (Author/BW)

THE SEDL/REGIONAL EXCHANGE: ONE COMPONENT OF AN EMERGING EFFORT TO DISSEMINATE THE OUTCOMES OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background Information

Regional exchanges--designed to disseminate information about educational R&D outcomes, link practitioners with needed resources, and feed-forward information about practitioner needs and activities--have emerged in conjunction with an expanded definition of dissemination. As R&D products and information have accumulated, educational researchers and decisionmakers have recognized that dissemination constitutes more than a linear, one-way flow of information.

Dissemination provides a crucial link between problem and solution, researcher and practitioner, and educational products and the users of those products. Without such linkage, the research and development process is incomplete. Havelock (1975), describing what he calls the "research utilization process," writes that "[the process] builds on two ideas: first, that user communities and research communities are separate problem-solving systems and, second, that two-way communication between them is the essential prelude to the event we call 'research utilization'." Similarly, a 1976 policy analysis report to NIE prepared by the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Science and Technology at Northwestern University concludes:

> In a more complete systems sense, Dissemination cannot be viewed as a basically isolated segment [of the Research, Development, and Installation process]. Precisely because it is the link between Research/Development on the one hand and Selection/Implementation/Utilization on the other, we must conclude that for both theoretical and practical purposes, Dissemination does not exist (or exists dysfunctionally) when the Research/Development and/or the Selection/Implementation/Utilization functions occur inadequately or inappropriately or (in the case of Selection/Implementation/Utilization) do not occur at all.

Conceptualizing dissemination as a "linkage" process suggests a significant expansion of its definitions and functions. Evidence of this expansion is most clear in a definition endorsed by the 1977 Dissemination Forum and the Dissemination Analysis Group in its 1977 final report to the HEW Dissemination Policy Council. The definition outlines four "levels" of dissemination activity. Level one, "spread," involves a one-way flow of knowledge, while the second level, "exchange," expands to a "two-way or multi-way flow." Level three, "choice," is the "facilitation of rational consideration and selection" among educational knowledge and products; and level four, "implementation," is described as "the facilitation of adoption, installation, and the ongoing utilization of improvements." The dissemination process, then, can include not only the flow of knowledge and products from developer to user, but also the flow of information from users (and potential users) to developers and the facilitation of the selection and implementation of R&D outcomes. All four levels of function are essential to "complete" the research and development process--i.e., to effectively link users and R&D outcomes.

Recent surveys of educational dissemination delineate a number of specific, interrelated criticisms of past educational R&D and dissemination efforts. These criticisms include the following:

. Educational research and development products are not available to consumers, particularly local school practitioners. Developers of educational R&D products generally have two basic alternatives for marketing a product: (1) market the product themselves or (2) release the product to a commercial publisher for marketing. To date, neither alternative has proved successful in getting R&D products to consumers--perhaps because the marketing approach

(as usually applied) overlooks or pays inadequate attention to the client's or user's needs while concentrating on the developer's needs."

The first alternative has not succeeded because funds rarely are allocated to R&D producers for product dissemination. This fact is documented in a January 1976 report by the Interstate Project on Dissemination (IPOD), a project involving chief state school officers and dissemination specialists from seven states. The report describes federal legislative mandates for the dissemination of educational products, and concludes:

> In no one instance did the research locate an authorizing statute specifically setting aside funds to carry out a dissemination requirement. While there are a number of references relative to funding for dissemination activities, these are phrased in permissive language such as "funds may be used for...." ...In the one instance where funds for dissemination are more specifically identified, the proportion of funds is inadequate in comparison to the complex task to be performed.

The second alternative has not been successful, as a 1973 report to Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States has noted; R&D producers frequently have been unable to interest commercial publishers in their products "because of copyright problems, product complexity, size of potential market, and cost factors." Even in the cases where R&D products <u>have</u> been marketed, either commercially or by the developers, the product cost is often prohibitive to most school districts.

<u>R&D products are not produced in a form readily useable by local school personnel</u>. Many R&D products require special skills or knowledge beyond the experience of most public school personnel and cannot be implemented without special training. This training increases the cost of implementation and reduces the effective range of dissemination. Some products also require facilities and/or equipment which many schools lack.

R&D products, no matter how effective, are not relevant to the perceived needs of consumers. The IPOD report, among others, attributes this weakness in educational R&D to the "lack of involvement of practitioners in determining the 'research agenda.'" Decisions concerning the need for change or improvement in public school programs often are made outside the local level, without involvement of public school practitioners. (For example, mandates for development in both career education and the metric system were initiated at the federal and state levels.) No matter how accurate such decisions may be, unless local school personnel also perceive the need for specific change, the programs and products designed to evoke such change will not be successfully adopted.

Consumers do not receive adequate information concerning educational R&D products. Although labs and centers, some federal offices, state and intermediate education agencies, and others all disseminate information concerning educational products to local education agencies, these efforts are uncoordinated and, for the most part, directed to limited or specialized audiences. The IPOD report concludes that because of statutory conflicts in assigning responsibility for dissemination to various institutions "without clear delineation of the articulation expected between the levels," and because "research and development centers and educational laboratories have no policies and only limited formal relationships with SEA's on dissemination," each institution has gone about its own business of dissemination. The results are both gaps and overlaps--"duplication, confusion, and...information overload on the part of clients bombarded by information on all sides."

The information which does reach consumers does not always provide an adequate basis for assessing and selecting products for adoption. R&D producers often fail to compile evaluation information on their products, as

the Comptroller General's report has noted; and user assessments of product effectiveness are almost nonexistent.

Methods of dissemination are not geared to audience characteristics. Dissemination has been approached largely as a mechanical rather than a dynamic process. Past and current dissemination systems seem to have overlooked the fact that information, and the media through which it is transmitted, must be so structured as to be acceptable to and useable by a given consumer.

Research studies have documented the ways in which people obtain information and concluded that most people get information not through reading or other impersonal or mechanical means but through informal channels, usually through personal contacts in one form or another. For example, an August 1976 study by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) reveals that the most frequent means by which practitioners learned about the Laboratory's bilingual instructional materials was through another person within the same school or agency. The information sources most influential in the decision to adopt materials were SEDL staff members and visits to schools which were using the materials. In no case did an individual first become aware of the materials through an educational product catalog or clearinghouse, and in no case was a catalog or clearinghouse listed as most influential in the decision to adopt. Journals, newsletters, brochures, and other written materials also were low on the list of information sources, while exhibits, demonstrations, and other approaches involving personal interactions ranked high. Yet dissemination systems continue to be structured in mechanical terms, using media and retrieval mechanisms which local school personnel will not or cannot use.

A related problem is that past efforts have largely ignored the ramifications of change inherent in the dissemination process. Information concerning educational innovations--practices and products which require substantial change in the behavior and orientation of teachers and sometimes entire school districts--has been presented with little or no consideration of the disequilibrium which accompanies the adoption of innovations and the schools' tendency to maintain equilibrium by resisting change.

Users of educational R&D products lack the skills and perspectives needed to make rational choices concerning product adoption and use. Local school personnel often lack adequate training in using information to identify educational issues or problems; to select effective solutions from a range of alternatives; and to implement those solutions. Existing dissemination systems for the most part fail to recognize this circumstance; they assume the existence of a user group which uniformly knows its own information needs, knows how to ask for that information, and knows how to interpret the information no matter how or in what form it is delivered.

During the past 54 months, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's Regional Exchange (SEDL/RX) has initiated activities aimed at overcoming such weaknesses and strengthening linkages among SEDL, other dissemination and linkage agents, and practitioners within the region. Conceptualization of the SEDL/RX was based on an examination of the four crucial--and interacting--elements of an effective dissemination system:

- the originator of the dissemination effort;
- the information which is to be disseminated;

- the media, or mechanisms, through which the information is disseminated;
- the user/consumer to whom the information is disseminated.

If a dissemination system is to function effectively, certain basic requirements must be met for each element of the system.

SEDL staff, analyzing educational dissemination efforts in light of these four elements, developed a list of specific requirements for structuring an effective regional dissemination network. The following sections of this paper describe each of the four elements within the context of the functions of the SEDL/RX.

The Originator: Who Should Disseminate? The IPOD report documents 208 separate federal dissemination requirements, for which a total of 54 agents or agencies have been assigned responsibility. These include federal agencies, national clearinghouses, national and state advisory councils, state and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, educational labs and centers, and others. Not only is the responsibility for disseminating educational outcomes fragmented; in some cases the report reveals, there are "conflicting assignments of responsibility."

Even though a number of those dissemination mandates concern specialized data for specialized audiences, substantial confusion exists as to which agencies can and should disseminate information about educational outcomes to practitioners. The IPOD report argues strongly for state education agencies (SEA's) to play a major role in dissemination. State education agencies function increasingly as catalysts for educational development; they have the broadest direct access to local schools. NIE has recognized the need for SEA involvement in dissemination by funding a series of capacity building projects.

However, other studies suggest with equal force the necessity for research and development institutions, and particularly educational labs and centers, to be involved in disseminating information concerning R&D outcomes. One study conducted by Stanford University warns against the "hand-it-on" or linear approach to research, development, and dissemination, "which assumes a series of unrelated steps producing a needed end product." The linear model, according to the report, is "weak and ineffective," because "information from implementation must be fed back into the development phases." Such feedback "is best accomplished when the same people are involved to a significant degree in the entire process." The authors conclude:

> We take a strong position that the centers and labs need to be in the business of dissemination and implementation, primarily because we believe that this will result in better research and will achieve more impact on the educational field.

Clearly, dissemination cannot be accomplished by one kind of agency alone. State education agencies, with their mandate to promote educational development and with their strong ties to local and intermediate education agencies, must be involved. Yet the agencies which develop the outcomes aimed at improving educational practices--which have the expertise and resources to produce, organize, and evaluate the results of educational R&D and to feed back into the developmental process information gathered during dissemination--also need to be involved in dissemination.

A first requirement for developing the Research and Development Exchange (RDx) and the SEDL/RX, then, became that of creating interfaces between state education agencies and research-based institutions such as educational laboratories: building mechanisms for coordination and shared responsibility to avoid duplication and information overload and to maximize the dissemination capabilities of each institution.

The Information: What is to be Disseminated? Dissemination systems developed in past years have tended to focus on this element--upon creating a substantial resource base of information concerning educational outcomes. As a result, the information base has become the strongest element in most existing systems. However, most systems have not focused strongly upon certain kinds of information necessary to an effective dissemination system.

Current dissemination systems--educational clearinghouses and catalogs in particular--have tended to focus primarily upon creating awareness of the existence of new educational R&D outcomes. SEDL's experience and research have demonstrated that the effective dissemination of educational outcomes, especially those which are complex in design or application, requires far more than "mere awareness." According to a May 1975 SEDL report to NIE, "Information must be provided so that adopters not only will know how to use the product properly but also will understand the principles or underlying philosophy behind the innovation." This conclusion is supported by recent studies which document the need for special information and assistance in implementing new programs and products. (See "Development of Scope of Work" for a more detailed description of such studies.) Another requirement of the SEDL/RX, then, became to build in such information as a part of its resource base.

Still another information requirement for the SEDL/RX was that of collecting and feeding back into the system user-generated information concerning product effectiveness and unmet needs. Numerous studies and reports have called for the inclusion of user assessments of R&D products and needs for new R&D efforts. The IPOD report, for example, calls for a

dissemination system which would "allow for and facilitate information flow from local educators to state agency personnel and beyond to the research and development community," and which would provide for the communication of local "needs and problems." Similarly, David A. Lingwood (writing in collaboration with Ronald G. Havelock), in a special report to NIE, stresses that "RDx must become much more concerned with 'feedforward,' building multiple procedures for gathering, verifying, synthesizing, disseminating, and getting effects based on needs in educational practice."

Media: How Is Information Communicated? Dissemination is a communications process. A successful dissemination system, then, should be based upon tested theories and approaches for effective communication. Current systems, however, tend to select media on the basis of other criteria. Certainly factors such as cost and scope are important in selecting the appropriate medium for disseminating information about educational R&D outcomes. However, even the most inexpensive method of disseminating information cannot be judged cost-effective if the medium interferes with effective communication.

Several major research studies have surveyed existing dissemination approaches to determine which media in which environments offer the most effective communication with which audiences. Results of these studies include the following:

- adopters most often obtain initial information about new educational products through personal information channels;
- adoption decisions are generally based upon information obtained through a variety of information channels;
- voice-to-voice communication is generally more effective than the use of written or other electronic media;

- educational practitioners will use sophisticated, formal dissemination channels (such as requests for computer searches) to a limited extent; however, they may not necessarily use these channels efficiently or appropriately;
- different audiences respond to different media.

Another requirement of the SEDL/RX, then, was to provide for the use of a variety of communications media.

The User: Is Anybody Out There Listening? The dissemination audience is perhaps the most critical element within a dissemination system. The nature of the user audience has a significant impact upon the other three elements of the system. In fact, some studies have demonstrated that user characteristics influence the impact of programs or products adopted even more than the characteristics of the materials themselves. An evaluation study of the national Follow Through models, for example, has concluded:

> The peculiarities of individual teachers, schools, neighborhoods, and homes influence pupils' achievement far more than whatever is captured by labels such as 'basic skills' or 'affective' education.... Unique features of the local settings had more effect on achievement than did the [Follow Through] models.

User audiences vary greatly and according to a variety of factors--differences may be based upon cultural or ethnic groupings, variations between rural and urban or agricultural and industrial areas, job function, status, or institutional structure and focus. Each different group has somewhat different needs, a different pace of accepting and absorbing change, and different responses to any given product or dissemination strategy.

Studies have demonstrated that potential consumers are selective about the sources from whom they will accept information and about the media through which they obtain information; they are selective about accepting information which requires a change in belief or behavior, particularly if they have not requested such information. User audiences are more receptive

to information which is generated by sources whom they know and respect. This fact argues strongly both for the establishment of regionally based information exchanges and for the involvement of existing dissemination channels and sources, particularly state and intermediate education agencies. A regional system offers a broad scope of effort--thus providing for a more efficient use of resources than is possible through multiple, small-scale dissemination activities--yet at the same time provides for personal, individualized contact with user groups which would not be possible through a nationally based system.

In considering the potential users of educational R&D outcomes, an effective dissemination system also must consider the ramifications of change in the lives and environments of those users. The dissemination of information concerning educational research and development is, for the most part, the dissemination of educational change, whether large or small. Recent research has attempted to document--and then to manage--the process of adopting change. One major study indicates that individuals accept new ideas in five separate stages:

- the awareness stage (they first realize that the idea exists);
- the interest stage (they want more information on the idea);
- the evaluation stage (they determine how the information they have gathered relates to their own situation);
- the trial stage (they experiment with the idea on a small-scale basis);
- the adoption stage (they are satisfied with the idea and put it into large-scale, continued use).

Another relevant research study has focused upon the concerns of the target audience from whom a change in practice or behavior is demanded. The study indicates that individual concerns evolve in sequence from concerns with self (such as self-image, comfort or discomfort with the new practice), to concerns with tasks (e.g., performance, mastery), to concerns with impact (e.g., influence upon student performance).

The rate at which individuals move through these stages of acceptance of change--and the likelihood that they will get stuck at some intermediate stage, ultimately rejecting the change--depends primarily upon the nature and degree of the expected change, the manner in which it is presented, the source which presents it, and the nature of the audience. Clearly this process has implications for dissemination efforts. Ideas or products whose adoption requires major changes in a user's thought or behavior need special methods of presentation, explanation, and reinforcement. Some new ideas or products need to be presented differently to different audiences, in order to facilitate the change process.

One way to encourage acceptance among potential consumers of educational change and innovation is to involve those consumers in the process of determining needs for change. A 1975 SEDL report on dissemination states that "representatives of institutions tend to expose themselves to those ideas which are in accord with their interests, needs, or existing attitudes." The report continues, "there is evidence that there will be little effect from exposure to innovative programs unless the prospective 'client' or user perceives the innovation as relevant to his [/her] needs...."

Educational researcher Richard E. Schutz, describing the process of effecting educational change, has listed the requirements for gaining consumer acceptance of new information or innovations. These requirements include:

- a joint effort [between change agent and audience] that involves mutual determination of goals;
- a "spirit of inquiry";
- a relationship growing out of the mutual interaction of the client and the change agent;
- a voluntary relationship between change agent and client, with either free to terminate the relationship after joint consideration;
- a relationship where each party has equal opportunities to influence the other.

If those requirements are not built into the relationship between change agent and client, or disseminator and consumer, the result is likely to be resistance to change rather than adoption.

Consumer marketing studies have demonstrated that product marketing efforts are most successful when based on suggestions made by the consumers themselves. Similarly, educational processes and products, when developed and disseminated with substantial input from educational practitioners, are adopted more readily. Philip Kotler, et al., for example, have documented an approach which establishes a "user driven" system and increases the effectiveness of educational dissemination. Their study supports the conclusion that involving representatives of user groups in planning and implementing a dissemination system increases the acceptance and use of that system.

More importantly, a dissemination system whose users help to determine the system's scope, focus, and approaches becomes much more responsive to the needs and concerns of its users. Users can provide data which then become a part of the dissemination system's information base, including both data concerning the use of outcomes which have been disseminated and data concerning areas of need for further research and development.

A final requirement for the R&D Exchange and the SEDL/RX then, was to identify its user audience, and the characteristics, needs, and interests of the various subgroups within the audience; to establish cooperative relationships with those groups; to involve them in the determination of needs for development and dissemination; and to structure dissemination efforts according to those needs.

2. Development of the Scope of Work

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's Regional Exchange was established in October 1976 as one of seven regional exchanges and four central support services which comprise NIE's nation-wide dissemination network, the Research and Development Exchange (RDx). The RDx design includes several characteristics that have been noted as essential to a dissemination system that supports the use of innovation and the implementation of change. In a 1978 NIE-sponsored survey of five major dissemination studies (Educational Knowledge Dissemination and Utilization: Synthesis of Five Recent Studies, Far West Laboratory for Research and Development, January, 1978), authors John A. Emrick and Susan M. Peterson noted that:

- some form of personal intermediary or linkage is essential to the [dissemination/utilization] process; and
- a relatively comprehensive yet flexible external system is needed to support the utilization and change process through provision of materials and in-person assistance.

The national/regional structure of the RDx provides both of these characteristics. The national support contractors provide the regional exchanges with materials, technical assistance, and cooperative planning. The regional exchanges, on the other hand, establish the personal linkage, the familiar, client-based component that is essential in transmitting information and other resources.

The SEDL/RX is aware of the importance of this interpersonal linkage. The project bases its activities and planning on guidance from its Advisory Board, a group that includes one representative of each of its six SEA's (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas; Mississippi joined the SEDL/RX service area in April 1979) and a representative from the ROEP VI.

The establishment of the current relationship with the Advisory Board has been a careful, deliberate process. Communication between the Advisory Board and SEDL/RX staff is frequent and open. Guidance on and evaluation of project activity, areas for special concentration, and general satisfaction are continually sought. Whenever possible, the Advisory Board's first priority is the SEDL/RX's first priority. The project's efforts in the past 54 months have resulted in an interactive, supportive group that allows for the type of exchange noted by Emrick and Peterson:

> An important prerequisite for effective dissemination is the development of trust between potential users and dissemination sources; user audiences are more receptive to information generated by sources whom they know and respect.

Because regional exchanges operate within a network, however, they must also be responsive to the goals and missions of a variety of other agencies in the network: NIE, other labs and centers, SEDL, and the RDx. Although the needs of the SEA's take precedence whenever possible, the SEDL/RX is aware that guidance is also provided by these agencies.

As a result, the SEDL/RX's specific objectives and activities have been developed after consideration of a variety of resources:

- network agency missions;
- regional priorities;
- research reports and studies;
- basic operating principles and assumptions.

Planning from Network Agency Missions

The development of the SEDL/RX scope of work for the current three years (i.e., 12/1/79 - 11/30/82) is based not only on the cumulative effects of the prior three years' experience in establishing and expanding its own purpose and functions but also on a knowledge of the purposes and functions of the other agencies in its network.

NIE Missions. NIE itself was founded as the primary federal agency for collecting and disseminating the findings of educational research. Speaking of the agency's creation, U.S. Congressman John Brademas quoted the House committee rationale:

> ... if they are to be aware of the needs of real students and real teachers and real administrators and real educational settings, researchers involved in developing new knowledge about learning must be involved with such consumers of education.

Thus, NIE was charged with the principal responsibility for the dissemination of R&D results. In 1977, Congress reinforced its dissemination directions to the Institute, stating that one of its priorities was:

> ... improved dissemination of the results of, and knowledge gained from, educational research and development, including assistance to educational agencies and institutions in the application of such results and knowledge.

Building upon this mandate, the June 1978 reorganization of NIE provided for a major program group, the Dissemination and Improvement of Practice Program (DIP):

> This program area supports research aimed at strengthening the capacity of educational institutions and individual educators to acquire and apply knowledge to the practice of education: additionally this area supports improved systems for developing, disseminating and using knowledge at the national, regional and local level. The program gives primary attention to the needs of individuals and institutions who typically find it difficult to acquire and apply new knowledge because of lack of resources, access or experience.

> The program concentrates its resources on three main areas of activity: increasing the availability and usefulness of existing educational knowledge through the support of practical information resource systems; support of research which establishes a clearer understanding of the ways in which new knowledge can be assimilated into educational practice; and increasing the effectiveness of research and dissemination activity defined by regional needs and regional perspective.

The Research and Development Exchange itself was created as one NIE strategy for transferring R&D outcomes; the SEDL/RX subscribes to the rationale and contributes to the activities above.

Laboratory Missions. According to the Final Report of the Panel for the Review of Laboratory and Center Operations, Research and Development Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories: Strengthening and Stabilizing a National Resource, and to Dr. Patricia Albjerg Graham's February 28, 1979 letter to Dr. James H. Perry, regional educational laboratories are designed to:

- identify concerns and priorities through regionally representative governing and advisory structures and activities that help the regional clientele define their needs;
- conduct applied research and development in pursuit of those priorities;
- provide technical assistance to the region;
- facilitate communication among agencies and individuals;
- promote the use in the region of R&D results from all sources; and
- disseminate the results of their own R&D on a national basis.

As indicated on the chart on page 38, the SEDL/RX has addressed and will continue to address the above criteria, though conduct of applied research and development is not a current RDx or SEDL/RX emphasis.

SEDL Missions. The SEDL/RX is also an important instrument in assisting SEDL to achieve its laboratory mission. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's three-to-five year plan (SEDL Long Range Plans: 1978-1983, submitted to NIE on September 1, 1977) outlines a process for developing an integrated system of regional services, focusing on educational research, technical assistance, dissemination/linkage, and, to a lesser degree, on educational development. These efforts will be designed to meet the institutional's goal of "linking potential users or beneficiaries with systematic, cost-effective educational solutions." As described in the plan, the SEDL/RX will be a significant element in this system, providing:

- a mechanism for coordinating dissemination activities within the region;
- a channel for forwarding information about practitioner needs to the R&D community, including SEDL;
- an instrument for linking technical assistance resources, both within the Laboratory and elsewhere, with those who need such resources; and
- an information resource base upon which the Laboratory can draw in planning regional activities, services, and programs.

In addition, the SEDL/RX has planned activities which speak directly to three of the Lab's four current institutional functions proposed for SEDL in its "Institutional Functions Proposal":

- identifying concerns and priorities through regionally representative governing and advisory structures and activities that help the regional clientele define their needs;
- nationally disseminating the results of its own activities;
- collaborating with other educational agencies and research and development performers in the planning and conduct of work;
- continuous strengthening of the institution's capabilities beginning with institutional self-evaluation and including staff recruitment, training, and development.

Only the fourth SEDL institutional function is tangential to the SEDL/RX's current emphasis.

Within the Laboratory, the SEDL/RX objectives and activities complement those of another SEDL regional service project, the Regional Planning Project. The Planning Project concentrates on activities or topics (usually noninstructional in nature) related to SEA policy issues while the SEDL/RX concentrates on those activities or topics (usually instructional in nature) related to dissemination for school improvement.

RDx Missions. The RDx, the coordinating network for all regional exchanges and support services, has defined underlying principles to which the SEDL/RX subscribes: it is a network which is developmental, coordinated, and responsive to clients' needs. Its primary role is as a support system to state dissemination and school improvement goals and priorities. As a result of these principles, four long range RDx goals have developed:

- to promote coordination among dissemination and school improvement programs;
- to promote the use of R&D outcomes that support dissemination and school improvement efforts;
- to provide information, technical assistance, and/or training which support dissemination and school improvement efforts; and
- to increase shared understanding and use of information about client needs in order to influence R&D outcomes.

It is toward meeting these RDx goals (and thus client needs) that the SEDL/RX activities have been designed.

Planning from Regional Priorities

With the missions of these various national network components in mind, the SEDL/RX proposes activities which are responsive to the needs of its own region: it has sought direction for its future activities from two primary

regional sources, the Second Formative Evaluation of the SEDL/RX, 12/1/77-2/28/79, for which SEDL/RX Advisory Board members and other region educators were interviewed about SEDL/RX services, and the results of the second long range planning meeting, May 16-18, 1979, which involved SEDL/RX staff, its Advisory Board members, and an NIE representative.

From the Second Formative Evaluation, the SEDL/RX staff learned that it was viewed as highly facilitating, and that its past activities had contributed to: SEA dissemination system-building, more coordinated state dissemination programs, increased knowledge about and acquisition of resources, and to SEA staff knowledge and skills. Respondents were especially pleased with their regular contact with SEDL/RX staff and with the value of SEDL/RX-sponsored workshops.

The evaluation also revealed that future activities should attempt to increase awareness of the SEDL/RX among an audience other than SEA personnel, broaden the SEDL/RX client base, clarify its role within SEDL, and move toward a more regional approach toward dissemination.

As in the past, the specific direction of the SEDL/RX's scope of work was again guided by the SEDL/RX Advisory Board and its constituencies. This guidance has been maintained through regular contact and Advisory Board meetings, and was actively sought during the SEDL/RX's second long range planning meeting.

The cited long range planning meeting was an opportunity to reflect upon past activities and goals in order to reaffirm or revise plans for the future. With the help of data from the Second Formative Evaluation interviews, the Advisory Board members, other SEA staff, and SEDL/RX staff examined previous activities and discussed the implications of continuing

these activities during the next funding period. As a result of these discussions, the Advisory Board recommended the following activities, listed in priority order:

- individualized SEA workshops;
- consultant services;
- "R&D Speaks" conferences;
- SEDL/RX sponsorship of SEA attendance at appropriate conferences;
- regional workshop/conference;
- knowledge synthesis products (other than those by RDIS);
- SEA visits by SEDL/RX staff members;
- CITE services;
- Regional Program File;
- Regional Resource Center;
- regional dissemination forum;
- Human Resources File;
- information resources workshop.

At the same time these activities were recommended, a context for them was also outlined. That is, the Advisory Board recommended activities within the framework of the SEDL/RX's reaffirmed primary goal:

- to assist the six SEA's to develop, expand, and strengthen state-wide and regional dissemination systems which effectively and efficiently disseminate R&D outcomes and other resources that contribute to school improvement.

As with the results of the Second Formative Evaluation, the long range planning discussions indicated that the nature of the SEDL/RX's activities within this goal should be timely responses to SEA and/or regional needs with slightly less emphasis on long-term work in selected areas. The priority selection of activities reflects this interest.

In the scope of work which follows, efforts have been made to address these recommendations. In addressing them, the SEDL/RX staff recognized that timely responses require regular information gathering procedures, and these have been built in. The staff also recognizes that its primary goal of aiding the six SEA's with their dissemination systems can only be accomplished with a holistic, long range approach, in which each activity progresses toward the achievement of the primary goal. This has also been noted in the scope of work.

Planning From Research Reports and Studies

In addition to considering the literature reviewed in "Background Information," the SEDL/RX staff regards the following as having particular relevance to proposed activities.

Emrick and Peterson's synthesis states,

> The evidence from these studies indicates that information in the form of reports, descriptions, comprehensive packages (or whatever)--seems to contribute a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for initiating "change-oriented" utilization in schools.

This report and others draw several key conclusions:

- linking agents must help motivate clients to seek information. One study (Sieber, Louis, and Metzger, The Use of Educational Knowledge: Evaluation of the Pilot State Dissemination Program) cited by Emrick and Peterson concludes, "the process [of information-seeking] is not self-starting and probably not self-sustaining." In their synthesis, Emrick and Peterson emphasize the need for nurturing practitioner involvement, warning, "Evidence from the five studies suggests that dissemination systems designed around the notion that schools behave as rational, information-seeking consumers will have very limited success." Similarly, Rich concludes:

  > ... we should not assume an immediate receptivity to knowledge synthesis processes by decisionmakers, intermediaries, and practitioners. Channels of communication and feedback need to be cultivated and maintained.

- the process of implementing new programs and products is a complex one, with implications for linkage strategies and--most significantly for the SEDL/RX--linkage training approaches. Sikorski, et al., in the 1976 report, "Factors Influencing School Change," note that a major weakness in the traditional "RDDA" (research-development-dissemination-adoption) model is its failure to consider the complexities of implementation: "In general, developers assumed that school people would have no trouble implementing...innovative curricula--and, in general, evidence has disproved their assumption.... According to follow-up studies, even when an innovation appears simple to its developers, its unfamilarity... is likely to cause problems for users." Likewise, Fullan and Pomfret (1977) state, "...implementation is not simply an extension of planning and adoption processes. It is a phenomenon in its own right." They outline factors which influence the implementation process, and the stages through which potential adopters move in implementing new programs and products. The principles hold for research results as well as for products and programs; Havelock (1975), writing about the use of research findings among practitioners, stresses that "communication is not enough: the user needs help in implementing and integrating useful research knowledge within his [/her] system."

- both linkage and linkage training models must be flexible--developed according to specific client needs and characteristics. (Philip K. Peile, "Review and Analysis of the Role, Activities, and Training of Educational Linking Agents," November 1975; Butler and Paisley, "Factors Determining Roles and Functions of Educational Linking Agents with Implications for Training and Support Systems," January 1978; Paul A. Douglas, "Change Processes at the Elementary, Secondary, and Post-Secondary Levels of Education," in Nash and Culbertson, 1977).

- RDx efforts need to focus on programs and products beyond the narrow and rigorously defined boundaries of "research and development;" Lingwood, for example, sees a need to "keep RDx open to content other than that based on R&D: practice innovations, sources of support, referral services, etc., may prove more useful to many clients than R&D based knowledge."

Thus two basic requirements for effective dissemination seem to emerge from cited studies of educational dissemination efforts:

- availability of adequate information (of varied kinds and in varied forms) about educational programs, products, and other outcomes; and

- personal contact between linking agents and potential users.

Therefore, future SEDL/RX activities will seek to:

- strengthen linkages and personal contacts with practitioners, developers, and other linking agents (building a "comprehensive yet flexible" linkage system); and
- use those linkages to collect, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate useful information about educational programs, products, and practices.

Planning From Basic Principles and Assumptions

Before planning any specific activities for the SEDL/RX's future, the staff first considered several general questions, such as, "What is our reason for being?; Who will we serve?; How can we best serve them?"

Based on our knowledge of national missions, regional priorities, research literature, and past experience, the SEDL/RX views the following principles and assumptions as basic to its future:

- "school improvement" is the *raison d'être* for dissemination;
- target audiences are expanded;
- collaboration is essential;
- regionalism is of value;
- practitioner needs are the basis for establishing SEDL/RX goals and activities.

"School improvement is the *raison d'être* for Dissemination. Effective dissemination can only occur within the context of a purpose for the process; thus, "school improvement," the rubric for improving educational practice and increasing equity, is the primary goal toward which R&D outcomes and other resources will be disseminated. This goal obviously implies change, which means that one of the SEDL/RX's roles will be that of change agent. It will accomplish this by helping to link theory and practice, by using existing networks whenever possible to transmit research results to chief state school officers, other SEA personnel, superintendents, members of boards of education, principals, and teachers. Furthermore, the SEDL/RX

will transmit clients' needs to developers for future refinement, revision, or retargeting.

Target audiences are expanded. Four primary audiences have been identified as target groups for DIP planning. As described in the paper, "Responses to Questions Raised by the Panel for Review of Laboratory and Center Operations," sent by Dr. Patricia Albjerg Graham to Dr. James H. Perry, those audiences are, in priority order, teachers, principals, members of school boards of education, and chief state school officers.

Teachers are essential to any effort to transform theory into practice. Principals are linch pins in the change process, often creating the atmosphere in which it survives or fails. Members of boards of education provide community perspectives on the education process and often have responsibility for major decisions affecting it. Chief state school officers are key resources for understanding both state-wide and district-by-district issues. Superintendents serve a similar role at the district level, providing an overall perspective and establishing an atmosphere for learning and change to occur.

The enormity of this audience prohibits a single project of modest funding from reaching everyone individually. Therefore, the role of the SEA's becomes essential. The SEDL/RX will continue to rely on the invaluable assistance and guidance of its Advisory Board, whose members are the contacts for SEDL/RX activities within their states and the representatives of their state's perspective in regional activities and planning. Thus the SEA's will be the primary target audience for the SEDL/RX, to act as the link between R&D developers and users.

Collaboration is essential. In addition to guidance from the SEA's, the SEDL/RX will seek assistance from teacher centers, professional organizations, colleges, and universities. This connecting, matching function

between regional needs and regional/national resources is a function the SEDL/RX is uniquely able to perform. It can foster a relationship with each of the target groups and encourage their relationships with each other. The SEDL/RX, through the RDx, can also provide access to the larger R&D community such as NIE labs and centers.

In addition to collaborating with these groups, the SEDL/RX will continue and expand its cooperative efforts with other primary resources:

- established information systems such as ERIC, Bibliographic Retrieval Services, and CITE;
- regional resource centers;
- The University of Texas at Austin R&D Center;
- individuals from throughout the region and nation who have expertise in dissemination theory and approaches, linkage, and areas of school improvement.

SEDL itself and the projects within it are valuable resources for SEDL/RX collaboration. The SEDL/RX Project Director reports directly to the SEDL Executive Director and is also the director of SEDL's ACYF Basic Educational Skills Project and SEDL's USDE Follow Through Program. As such he has extensive experience in and responsibility for installing and implementing many of SEDL's R&D outcomes. Furthermore, since he also serves as Deputy Executive Director, he is in an excellent position to assist the Executive Director of SEDL in coordinating efforts of the SEDL/RX with other SEDL programs, particularly their dissemination components.

The SEDL/RX has received invaluable assistance in its "R&D Speaks" activities from SEDL's Division of Bilingual and International Education as well as from SEDL's Division of Special Projects (Special Education). Collaboration with these and other divisions is expected to increase during the next several years.

The SEDL/RX will also be coordinated with other Laboratory dissemination efforts, which include:

- individual project dissemination efforts;
- liason with publishers;
- communications activities, including Laboratory publication of papers and documents, and information responses and briefings to constituents.

Coordination with other RDx contractors is also essential; the SEDL/RX plans to maintain its contact with the System Support Service, which provides both information and assistance about approaches and tools for data collection, and establishing operational procedures. The Resource and Referral Service provides assistance in processing and responding to regionally generated requests for information, and in identifying resources individuals, and organizations. The SEDL/RX plans to collaborate with the R&D Interpretation Service in using and disseminating interpretation packages in reading, math, and oral and written communication, and for the feedforward of information concerning client responses to the packages. The Dissemination Support Service provides staff development opportunities for RDx contractors.

The SEDL/RX will also continue to maintain contact with the other regional exchanges through cooperation in processing specific information requests, working on common system requirements, and attending RDx and RX meetings. The SEDL/RX staff plans to strengthen and expand contacts with the other regional contractors during the next 36 months. Specific plans include cooperating with RDIS and other interested RX's to conduct "R&D Speaks" conferences in reading, mathematics, and oral and written communication.

Fully implemented, these coordinated efforts will result in a regional linkage system which provides:

- a flow of information from educational practitioners to R&D producers concerning local needs and the effectiveness of R&D outcomes in meeting those needs;
- a flow of information from R&D producers to educational practitioners and decisionmakers concerning effective, relevant R&D outcomes;
- an effective process for identifying the regional needs from which grow planning, decisionmaking, selection of R&D outcomes, and evaluation;
- an effective process for identifying and applying resources to meet those needs;
- the increased identification, selection, and use of R&D outcomes among practitioners in the region.

Regionalism is of Value. Regionalism has been accepted as major characteristic of the SEDL/RX since it began. Based on a variety of seemingly unquestionable factors, such as the convenience of regionalized services and the advantages of sharing and communicating among similar groups, the SEDL/RX staff has spent a considerable amount of the project's time, energy, and money on devising services and activities with a regional focus and on facilitating interaction among SEA representatives. To a large extent, these efforts proved successful within the limits of the project's influence and time frame. It has become apparent, however, that establishing a regional system is a much longer process than was first believed.

A number of events have contributed, with great promise, to the possibility of a truly regional project. Because each Advisory Board member has some degree of responsibility for dissemination within his/her SEA, there is increased sharing and communication among them. It is logical that linkages among such colleagues would form. The funds offered by NIE for special purpose grants and state capacity building grants, and the

attendant requirements, services, and linkages that accompany these grants, have added another area of common interest and experience among four of the six states. Members of the Advisory Board have not hesitated to commit their time and that of other SEA staff to help plan, attend meetings, and procure and share information with the project. Each state's chief state school officer has provided letters of commitment to the SEDL/RX. Client ownership and interest in the future for the SEDL/RX seem to be intact.

However, in the past 54 months, interest in project activities that promote a regional structure has been sporadic. From the beginning, there has been greater interest in individualized state workshops and training sessions than in gathering all the states for regional meetings. It has been difficult for the SEDL/RX to determine topics of interest common to the states. And when such topics were detemmined, few states were at parallel stages of development. Thus the individualized SEA workshop remained one of the services most valued by SEA's. (They were ranked first out of thirteen activities by the Advisory Board members during the second long range planning meeting. Regional activities were ranked at various levels: "R&D Speaks" conferences and regional dissemination workshops/conferences scored high--third and fifth, respectively. However, the Regional Program File, the Regional Resource Center, a regional dissemination forum, and the Human Resources File all scored in the lower third of the activities.) These regional activities all hold promise for service that goes beyond state lines and agendae, allowing for a new entity--a regionally oriented service project.

The barriers to such a cooperative, interactive project are many and real. The six SEA's are autonomous, political entities. The Advisory Board members all must acknowledge first allegience to their individual SEA; any other project that assumes responsibility for activities or resources that could be locally controlled is requesting a major commitment.

At some point, however, it becomes necessary to take stock of the potential value of a regional system, and compare possible sacrifices with possible rewards. A core of services, many regional in nature, is being offered equally to all SEA's in the project. In addition to these services a variety of individual SEA activities is being proposed with a mandate to negotiate a specific, focused agenda for each SEA. These SEA agendae will undoubtedly be of major importance to each Advisory Board member. The core regional activities will be of equal importance.

Ultimately, the strength and uniqueness of the SEDL/RX lie in its regional potential; realization of this potential will require time, effort, and commitment. It remains to be seen if the full possibilities for such a facilitating, third party agency can be accomplished. Indeed, the concept of such a regional system can be seen as an innovation that the SEDL/RX is attempting to implement. Just as in any other situation that attempts change, establishment of a regional service, with all its obvious and hidden characteristics and requirements, is a process that will take time. Acceptance of this innovation, if it ultimately occurs, will be built on experience, compromise, and cooperation. If enough time is allowed for understanding to become commitment, a truly regional system may emerge.

Practitioner Needs are the Basis for Establishing SEDL/RX Objectives and Activities. Agency missions, research, and SEDL/RX experience all speak to the critical importance of basing objectives and activities on the needs of the clients being served. Thus, needs sensing becomes central to all SEDL/RX planning. While this may seem obvious, experience indicates that it is easy for institutions to cross the line from service to sales, to tell clients what they need rather than listen to them. It may also happen, however, that service institutions see legitimate areas of need which clients may not

yet recognize. It then becomes the institution's responsibility to help the client see the need as well. The push-pull between these reactive and proactive functions of the SEDL/RX is continuous, and the resulting tension encourages a constant search for needs and solutions from among the various members of the RDx network--questions lead to answers, or to more questions; feedback leads to feedforward; practitioners make contact with researchers and funding sources who may in turn aid more practitioners.

Such a multi-faceted process must be carefully considered and well organized. The SEDL/RX's holistic approach to meeting client needs will, therefore, be based on the following cyclical system:

- needs sensing;
- prioritizing needs, if necessary;
- examining possible options for meeting needs;
- examining available resources;
- choosing the appropriate strategy;
- activating the strategy;
- evaluating the action;
- following up the evaluation;
- identifying new needs.

A detailed scope of work for the next 36 months follows. As the cyclical system above indicates, new needs arise as a consequence of meeting original needs. Each year, therefore, these activities will be tailored to respond to the changing, specific needs of SEDL/RX clients. As a result of future long range planning meetings and formative evaluations, yearly negotiations between the SEDL/RX and its Advisory Board members will allow for flexibility in adapting activities to these new needs.

The scope of work, while designed for serving six states, is contingent upon NIE funding the SEDL/RX at a level adequate for six states. When Mississippi joined the SEDL/RX service area in April 1979, additional funding was modest for the period April 1, 1979 through November 30, 1979. As of this writing, the SEDL/RX's funding for the period December 1, 1979 through November 30, 1982 has not been increased by NIE to allow for the provision of services to Mississippi without a severe reduction in services to the original five states.

II. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

1. Overview of Proposed Tasks

The activity charts on the following pages outline the specific scope of work for the 36-month continuation period (December 1, 1979 through November 30, 1982).

The charts indicate anticipated tasks to be completed during the period from December 1979 through November 1982. However, individual specific tasks during the period may be modified and/or expanded:

- based upon the expressed needs of regional participants;
- through planning and review with the SEDL/RX Advisory Board and/or the SEDL Board of Directors;
- reflecting NIE's funding decision concerning SEDL;
- reflecting SEDL's funding decision concerning the SEDL/RX.

The charts on pages 35 and 36 summarize the proposed SEDL/RX activities as they relate to RDx goals.

RDX GOALS	SEDL/RX OBJECTIVES FOR DECEMBER 1979-NOVEMBER 1982
I. The RDx will promote coordination among dissemination and school improvement programs.	1. Facilitate information sharing and interaction among national, regional, and state agencies and associations. 2. Continue and expand cooperative activities with other RDx contractors. 3. Encourage and build cooperative relationships between SEDL programs/projects and the SEDL/RX.
II. The RDx will promote the use of R&D outcomes that support dissemination and school improvement efforts.	1. Provide SEA's information about and access to R&D products, outcomes, trends, available funds, etc., related to dissemination and school improvement efforts. 2. Provide SEA's information on the application of these R&D products and outcomes to the SEA's dissemination activities.
III. The RDx will provide information, technical assistance, and/or training which support dissemination and school improvement efforts.	1. Increase understanding of dissemination theory and skills among SEDL/RX clients. 2. Match client needs with available resources. 3. Increase SEDL/RX staff expertise as training and information resources.

(continued)

RDX GOALS	SEDL/RX OBJECTIVES FOR DECEMBER 1979-NOVEMBER 1982
IV. The RDx will increase shared understanding and use of information about client needs in order to influence R&D outcomes.	1. Refine SEDL/RX skills in need-sensing (identifying major state concerns about and trends toward school improvement efforts). 2. Attempt to influence the production and delivery of R&D outcomes by forwarding pertinent state/regional information to appropriate agencies, educational laboratories and centers, institutions, and information networks.

Relationship of Proposed SEDL/RX Activities to RDx Goals

Proposed SEDL/RX Activities	RDx Goal I Coordination	RDx Goal II Promote R&D Outcomes	RDx Goal III Information, Technical Assistance, Training	RDx Goal IV Feedforward
RDX GOAL I				
1.1 SEDL/RX Advisory Board Meetings	X			✓
1.2 Contact With Various Educational Organizations	X			✓
1.3 SEA Interactions	X	✓	✓	✓
1.4 SEA Visits	X	✓	✓	✓
1.5 Regional/National Program Files	X	✓	✓	
1.6 SEDL/RX Memorandum	X	✓	✓	
1.7 SEDL/RX Brochure	X		✓	
2.1 RDx Coordinating Committee	X	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Collaboration Within RDx	X	✓	✓	
2.3 Services of RDx Support Contractors	X	✓	✓	
2.4 Dissemination of RDx Products	X	✓	✓	✓
2.5 Provide Assistance to RDx Products	X	✓	✓	✓
2.6 Distribute Required Reports, etc.	X	✓	✓	✓
3.1 Description of SEDL Activities	X	✓	✓	
3.2 Collaboration with other SEDL Projects	X	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Broker SEDL Resources to SEDL/RX Clients	X	✓	✓	✓
RDX GOAL II				
1.1 Knowledge Synthesis Products		X	✓	
1.2 Materials Collection on R&D Outcomes		X	✓	
1.3 Monitoring Newsletters, Research Reports, Conference Documents, Journal Articles, etc.		X	✓	
1.4 Contribute to Educational R&D Report	✓	X	✓	
2.1 "R&D Speaks" Conferences	✓	X	✓	✓
RDX GOAL III				
1.1 Regional Dissemination Workshop/ Conference	✓	✓	X	
2.1 Negotiated Invid. SEA Services	✓	✓	X	
3.1 Resource Center Holdings for Staff Use		✓	X	
3.2 Staff Participation at Significant Conferences, Training Sessions, etc.	✓	✓	X	
3.3 In-house Staff Development	✓	✓	X	
RDX GOAL IV				
1.1 State Files	✓			X
1.2 Examine Regional Newsletters and Publications	✓			X
1.3 Monitor Information Requests From SEDL/RX, CITE, SEEK	✓			X
1.4 Synthesize and Interpret State/ Regional Data	✓		✓	X
2.1 Forward Client Needs to Regional/ National Sources				X
2.2 Follow-up Effectiveness of Responses to Client Needs				X
2.3 Document Unmet Needs and Distribute to R&D Producers	✓			X

X--primary focus of activity
✓--secondary focus of activity

Activities of the SEDL/RX in Relation to
the Purposes of Regional Educational Laboratories
and the Goals of the Research and Development Exchange (RDx)

Regional educational laboratories are designed to:	Goals of the Research and Development Exchange (RDx)			
	I. RDx will promote coordination among dissemination and school improvement programs.	II. RDx will promote the use of R&D outcomes that support dissemination and school improvement efforts.	III. RDx will provide information, technical assistance, and/or training which support dissemination and school improvement efforts.	IV. RDx will increase shared understanding and use of information about client needs in order to influence R&D outcomes.
• Identify concerns and priorities through regionally representative governing and advisory structures and activities that help the regional clientele define their needs;	*1.1 Advisory Board Meetings 1.3 SEA Interactions 1.4 SEA Visits			1.1 State Files 1.2 Examine Regional Newsletters and Publications 1.3 Monitor Information Requests From SEDL/RX, CITE, SEEK 1.4 Synthesize and Interpret State/Regional Data
• Conduct applied research and development in pursuit of those priorities;				2.3 Document Unmet Needs and Distribute to R&D Producers
• Provide technical assistance to the region;			1.1 Regional Dissemination Workshop 2.1 Negotiated Individualized SEA Services 3.1 Resource Center Back-up	
• Facilitate communication among agencies and individuals;	1.2 Contact With Organizations 1.6 SEDL/RX Memorandum 1.7 SEDL/RX Brochure 2.1 RDx Coordinating Committee 2.6 Distribute Required Reports, etc.			2.1 Forward Client Needs to Regional/National Sources 2.2 Follow-up Effectiveness of Responses to Client Needs 2.3 Document Unmet Needs and Distribute to R&D Producers
• Promote the use in the region of R&D results from all sources;	1.5 Regional/National Program Files 2.3 RDx Support Serv. 2.4 Diss. of RDx Prod. 3.2 Collaboration With Other SEDL Projects 3.3 Broker SEDL Resources to SEDL/RX Clients	1.1 Knowledge Synthesis Products 1.2 Materials Collection on R&D Outcomes 1.3 Monitor R&D Publications 2.1 "R&D Speaks" Conferences	1.1 Regional Dissemination Workshop 2.1 Negotiated Individualized SEA Services 3.1 Resource Center Back-up 3.2 & 3.3 Staff Development	
• Disseminate the results of their own R&D on a national basis.	2.2 Collaboration Within RDx 2.5 Provide Assistance to RDx Contractors 3.1 Description of SEDL Activities	1.4 Contribute to Educational R&D Report		

*Number refers to numbered activities outlined within scope of work under each RDx Goal. As indicated on p. 37 some SEDL/RX activities contribute to more than one RDx Goal.

III. SUMMARY

This paper has attempted to describe:

- The need for a Regional Dissemination system;
- The conceptualization of the SEDL Regional Exchange as part of the nation-wide Research and Development Exchange; and
- The operation of the SEDL Regional Exchange.

It emphasized that the Research and Development Exchange is designed:

- To disseminate information about R&D outcomes to educational practitioners;
- To feed forward information about practitioner needs and activities; and
- To link practitioners with information resources and training services.

Undergirding the RDx (and thus by association, the SEDL/RX) are two assumptions:

1. That R&D should guide change or improvement, and
2. That "real" consumer needs should guide R&D.

Perhaps a further assumption is that the first does not occur in large part because the second does not occur. That is, R&D outcomes are not widely used to improve education because they are not responsive to felt "real" educational needs. The persons and institutions directly involved with the RDx (whether members of Advisory Boards, Lab/Center RDx staff, and NIE staff) believe that accomplishment of RDx goals (and SEDL/RX objectives) will contribute greatly to operationalizing the second assumption which in turn should actualize the first assumption.

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The Regional Exchange at Southwest Educational Development Labortory (SEDL/RX) is one of eight regional exchanges and four central support services which comprise the Research & Development Exchange (RDx) supported by the National Institute of Education. The RDx, begun in October 1976, has four broad goals:

- To promote coordination among dissemination and school improvement programs.
- To promote the use of R&D outcomes that support dissemination and school improvement efforts.
- To provide information, technical assistance, and/or training which support dissemination and school improvement efforts.
- To increase shared understanding and use of information about client needs to order to influence R&D outcomes.

The regional exchanges in the RDx act as extended "arms" of the network, each serving a set of states which make up their region. The eight regional exchanges (known as RX's) are:

- AEL/RX — Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Charleston WV
- CEMREL/RX — CEMREL, Inc., St. Louis MO
- McREL/RX — Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Kansas City KA
- NE/RX — Northeast Regional Exchange, Merimack Education Center, Chelmsford MA
- NWREL/RX — Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland OR
- RBS/RX — Research for Better Schools, Philadelphia PA
- SEDL/RX — Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin TX
- SWRL/RX — Southwest Regional Laboratory, Los Alamitos CA

The four central support services, which serve the entire RDx in their respective areas of expertise, are:

- RDIS — Research & Development Interpretation Services, CEMREL, Inc.
- RRS — Research & Referral Service, Ohio State University, Columbus OH
- SSS — System Support Service, Far West Laboratory, San Francisco CA
- DSS — Dissemination Support Service, Northwest Regional Laboratory

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