

# NERRRC FOCUS

Northeast Regional Resource Center

PROMOTING A QUALITY  
EDUCATION AND A BETTER  
LIFE FOR CHILDREN AND  
THEIR FAMILIES.

SPRING 2006

THIS ISSUE'S FOCUS:  
Teacher Quality



Top Row: Betsy Laffin, Kathleen Paliokas, Phoebe Gillespie, Jan Phlegar, Carol Keirstead, Karen Mikkelsen, Kathy Dunne, Jane Nesbitt, Joanne Cashman / Bottom Row: Susan Taylor, Rebecca Phillips, Kristin Reedy & Susan Villani

## NERRRC Hosts Regional Teacher Quality Forum

### Developing the Work Force in the Northeast

At the request of Region 1 states, the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC) convened national and regional technical assistance (TA) providers and State Education Agency (SEA) teams for two days of focused work on teacher quality. The meeting was held at the Learning Center, Marlborough, Massachusetts, May 4-5, 2006.

#### Why here? Why now?

The National Center for Improving Teacher Quality (CTQ), funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), has sponsored national forums for State Teams for the past several years. The purpose of the CTQ Forums is to help states develop models for improving the preparation, licensing, and professional devel-

.....  
"Ultimately, we can only hope that what we do addresses the needs of children, families and teachers. If not, what a colossal waste of time and money these meetings would be!"

- Participant Comment



opment of both general and special education teachers of students with disabilities. The national CTQ Forums are an opportunity for states to share ideas, hear from experts on topics of critical interest and concern, and develop state-specific action plans for systems reform. State Teams typically include, at a minimum, the state director of teacher licensing and/or teacher education program approval, the state director of special education (or designee), and a dean from a school of education that has responsibility across both general and special education.

The idea for the NERRC event grew out of the October 2005 CTQ National Forum, in which six Region 1 states participated: Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont. After the CTQ Forum, Region 1 states asked NERRC to host a Mid-Cycle regional meeting to give State Teams an opportunity to come together for a “mid-course” check-in with each other, consult with CTQ staff and other technical assistance providers, and to further develop their action plans.

In addition, several NERRC states have been selected for “focused work” with the OSEP-funded National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers (The Personnel Center) at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). Phoebe Gillespie, Project Director, has worked with stakeholder groups in Rhode Island and, most recently, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey to develop strategic plans focused on special education teacher recruitment and retention. These states were also invited to join in the NERRC Mid-Cycle meeting.

All of the Northeastern states are deeply engaged in workforce development activities intended to expand their pool of special educators, develop the capacity of general education

teachers to more effectively address the diverse learning needs of all students, and upgrade their systems of personnel development, teacher preparation and teacher education program approval. Representatives from all eight Region 1 states participated in the NERRC conference.

### General Education/Special Education Collaboration

NERRC brought together a broad array of national and regional technical assistance providers spanning general and special education, all of whom have a stake in and responsibility for teacher quality. Co-sponsors included: The Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), the National Center for Improving Teacher Quality (CTQ), the National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers (the Personnel Center), the IDEA Partnership Project, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, and the New England and New York Comprehensive Assistance Centers.



*Vincent Watkins,  
The Watkins  
Group*

Presenters also represented regional and national organizations as well as both general and special education. NERRC extends a special thanks to:

- ⊙ Joanne Cashman, Ed.D., Director, IDEA Partnership, NASDSE
- ⊙ Kathy Dunne, New England Comprehensive Center and Director of Professional Development, Learning Innovations at WestEd
- ⊙ Phoebe Gillespie, Ph.D., Director, the Personnel Center, NASDSE
- ⊙ Arlene Hudson, Boston Public Schools

- ◉ Carol Keirstead, Director, New England Comprehensive Center, RMC
- ◉ Karen Mikkelsen, Senior Program Associate, NERRC, Learning Innovations at WestEd
- ◉ Kathleen Paliokas, Director, National Center for Improving Teacher Quality (CTQ), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- ◉ Rebecca Phillips, Communications Coordinator, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ), Learning Point Associates
- ◉ Melissa Price, Project Coordinator, New York Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change, Syracuse University
- ◉ Santina Thibedeau, State Director Special Education, New Hampshire Department of Education
- ◉ Susan Villani, Ed.D., New York Comprehensive Center and Senior Program/Research Associate, Learning Innovations at WestEd
- ◉ Vincent B. Watkins, CEO, The Watkins Group, Inc.

- ◉ States engaged in both structured and informal cross-state sharing and problem solving sessions on topics of common interest and concern.
- ◉ Participants gained new knowledge in personnel development and support strategies through topical presentations focused on issues including teacher recruitment and retention, teacher preparation, professional development, community involvement, NCLB/IDEA, Communities of Practice, and more.



*Sherry Gile, Vermont – NEA and Karin Edwards, VT Department of Education*

#### OUTCOMES

- ◉ State Teams reviewed progress and continued the development of State Action Plans relative to their participation in the CTQ and/or Personnel Center initiatives.
- ◉ State Teams consulted with national and regional TA providers from CTQ, the Personnel Center, the Regional Comprehensive Centers and other TA providers.



*Melissa Price and Christine Givner, NY State Team*

#### MEETING DESIGN

To assure achievement of the intended outcomes, the meeting was designed to include the following components:

- ◉ Facilitated State Team planning time
- ◉ Cross-State Sharing in Affinity Groups
- ◉ Opportunities to meet with national and regional TA providers
- ◉ Sharing of the latest information on topics of interest and relevance to the majority of states
- ◉ Opportunities to shape future activities that will support states' capacity for systems change

**“If you bring people together to talk, you talk about your differences. If you bring people together to do something, you go right to what is common.”**

~ Joanne Cashman, IDEA Partnership 2006

Kristin Reedy, NERRC Director, welcomed everyone to the conference and, inspired by Joanne Cashman’s quote, reminded participants, “That’s why we’re here. We’ve brought people together, not just to talk, but to *do* something. What do we have in common? The obligation and responsibility to work together to improve state systems of personnel preparation, professional development, standards, licensure, and the availability of highly qualified teachers who have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate educational opportunities for all students.”

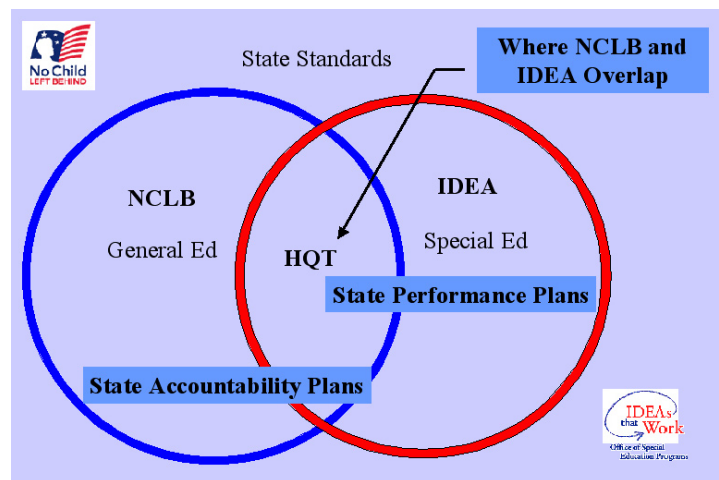


*Kathleen Paliokas, National Center for Improving Teacher Quality*

**The Why Behind it All—Kathleen Paliokas and Joanne Cashman**

The opening session, *The Why Behind it all: Connecting Policy and Practice to Improve Teacher Quality for All Students with Disabili-*

*ties*, featured Kathleen Paliokas, Director, Center for Improving Teacher Quality, and Joanne Cashman, Director, the IDEA Partnership. Joanne and Kathleen focused on putting our work in context by reviewing the goals and commonalities between NCLB and IDEA. One of the main areas of NCLB/IDEA alignment is in the area of Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT). They reviewed the purposes of the two statutes and gave an update on CTQ work with the states. Forty-two state teams are currently working with CTQ to reform state systems of certification and licensure and to align policy and practice. State system components include: State Standards, Program Approval, Licensure, and Re-licensure and Ongoing Professional Development. Common issues and concerns across states include: aligning standards, program approval and licensure; creating broad understanding and support for policy decisions; engaging higher education faculty in special and general education; building collaboration across general and special education in pre-service and ongoing professional development; creating Highly Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) criteria that combine flexibility with sufficient content area rigor; and understanding how NCLB’s highly qualified requirements impact service delivery options for students with disabilities.



Cashman and Paliokas reviewed a March 26, 2006, U.S. DOE letter to Chief State School Officers, outlining procedures that will be used to assess states’ progress in meeting 100% HQT goal. Finally, they reminded us that “highly qualified” is not a value judgment about the person as a teacher. Rather, highly qualified

is best thought of as a statement about *competency in a subject area*. Words are important! Feelings are even more important!

### State Team Planning Time Provides Opportunity for Teams to Strategize

States had the opportunity to work in teams for a significant amount of time. They were asked to choose a focus area for their work at the meeting and to develop a single goal statement for their two days together. At the close of the event, State Teams completed a matrix indicating their focus area, goal statement, immediate or short-term activities, strategies, TA needs, and resources. They finished by articulating one immediate follow-up action that would guarantee the forward movement of their plan.



*Susan Villani (center), of the NY Comprehensive Center, facilitates the NY State Team*

#### EXAMPLES OF STATE TEAM SHORT TERM ACTION STEPS

- ⊙ Establish the new CTQ team.
- ⊙ Determine the criteria for systems alignment.
- ⊙ Take the information from this meeting to the State Personnel Taskforce to assist with development of the strategic action plan.
- ⊙ Meet in conjunction with the State Inclusion Conference with follow-up meetings summer 2006.
- ⊙ Connect with the State Administrators Leadership Organization to move our common agenda.
- ⊙ Get on the Standards Board Agenda for their June meeting and plan our presentation.



*Pam Rosen (left), Maine and Jane Nesbitt (right), NERRC, the New England Comprehensive Center and Learning Innovations at WestEd*

### Topical Focus Areas and Affinity Groups

States also had multiple opportunities to meet in cross-state teams or Affinity Groups. Based on the focus areas and goals that individual State Teams identified, groups of states were matched with TA providers to focus on common problems and to look for possible cross-state collaborative solutions. States were also encouraged to use meal times for cross-state discussion, strategizing, feedback, and consultation with resource personnel. Appointments could be made with TA providers to join states during State Team time, at meals or as a follow-up to the meeting.



*Susan Villani (left) and Kathy Dunne (right), New York and New England Comprehensive Centers, and Learning Innovations at WestEd*

### Topical Breakout Sessions

On Day 2 of the conference, participants had a choice of two topical sessions, providing opportunities for more in-depth, cross-state discussions.

- ◉ Leadership Development—State, Local, Higher Education: Phoebe Gillespie, the Personnel Center, and Melissa Price, Syracuse University
- ◉ Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: Lessons Learned from the Teaching of Reading: Kathy Dunne and Susan Villani, New England and New York Comprehensive Centers and Learning Innovations at WestEd
- ◉ Involving Communities in Personnel Development Initiatives—Models for Implementation for the State and Within Local Districts: Phoebe Gillespie, Personnel Center, Vincent Watkins, the Watkins Group, Santina Thibedeau, NH Department of Education, and Arlene Hudson, Boston Public Schools
- ◉ General/Special Education Collaboration— Keeping Quality Teachers: Karen Mikkelsen, NERRC, Melissa Price, Syracuse University, and Susan Villani, New York Comprehensive Center and Learning Innovations at WestEd.

### Communities of Practice: Bridging the Worlds of the Decision-maker and the Practitioner—Joanne Cashman

In this plenary session, Joanne Cashman, IDEA Partnership, reviewed the need to ensure broad-based stakeholder involvement in our work in states and communities. Where is the “value-added” in engaging stakeholders? Our thinking has evolved from a focus on simply building relationships and exchanging information to *transformational thinking*. Transformational thinking demonstrates the ability to sense issues before they reach a crisis point; specifies the dimensions of an issue with those impacted; moves beyond organizational positions to shared interests; and unites the state and the stakeholders around common goals. Transformational thinking introduces *two-way* and *multi-scale learn-*

*ing*—how to “scale up” what we know works and develop structures that bring together multiple perspectives—from federal, to state, to local, school site and individual levels. Joanne asserted that we need a new way of working together because contemporary problems are complex and interrelated. There are no simple solutions. To fill our “knowing” versus “doing” gap, we need to bring promising strategies to scale. To do that, Joanne encourages the development of Communities of Practice—as a way of working and a way of learning.

#### COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

- ◉ Use the natural bonds between people that do common work.
- ◉ Maintain communication that strengthens natural bonds.
- ◉ Keep community members focused on outcomes.
- ◉ Use the “community status” to bring attention to issues and to engage the people that can help move change to the “tipping point.”

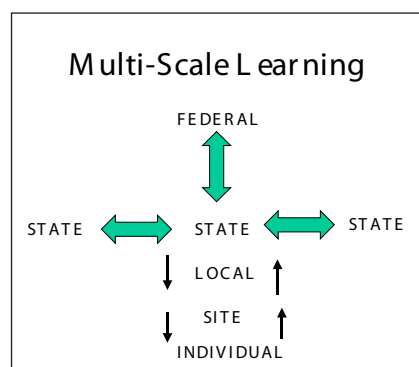
We need to be able to operate at the intersection of research, policy and practice. Communities of Practice can be used as a national, state, and local TA strategy, shaping and spreading effective practice and reframing policy, research and practice.

---

**“I am very impressed with the Learning Community/Community of Practice concept and the exchange of expertise among institutional initiatives.”**

- Participant comment on this session

---



Two-Way and Multi-Scale Learning: Communicating to Learn What Works

---

## “Stop the Monologue! Start the Dialogue!”

~ Hal Bloss, Assistant Executive Director,  
Intermediate Unit 18, Pennsylvania

---

### How Did We Do?

In general, participants agreed that the event was of high quality, well organized, planned and facilitated. It provided useful support and access to TA providers as well as cross-state networking opportunities.



*Roger Frant, Connecticut State  
Department of Education*

### Participants' Responses –examples

How do you plan on using what you learned at this event in your job?

- ⊙ Continue state level coordination, collaboration, and communication to advance the proposed goals/plans.
- ⊙ Share information with stakeholders.
- ⊙ Use the Learning Community concept presented by Joanne Cashman.

How will participation in this event enhance the SEA's capacity to address the needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families?

- ⊙ Validated that stakeholders need to be informed and included in these efforts.
- ⊙ Promoted cross-division work that will benefit the group efforts.
- ⊙ Meeting and planning about “what to do next” helped to move the initiative forward.

### Follow-up requested after this event:

- ⊙ Contact with a variety of TA providers present at the meeting.
- ⊙ More planning time and work in-state with stakeholders.
- ⊙ Notes/ideas from the meeting.

### Benefits to Participants

Though the target audience for this event was teams from Region 1 states, the benefits realized were multi-layered as evidenced by these comments:

#### BENEFITS FOR STATES

- ⊙ *It was a pleasure to be around so many competent people with such a deep commitment to this work.*
- ⊙ *The face-to-face time is so important for the changes to move forward.*
- ⊙ *Knowledge is power. Persons of influence can/do go back and exercise that influence in their particular arenas.*

#### BENEFITS FOR TA PROVIDERS

- ⊙ *The event will help me coordinate with other TA providers – it has built a foundation to develop deeper relationships.*
- ⊙ *I liked the organization of the event as a prototype to support continued work and a venue for improved communication/sharing/problem-solving.*
- ⊙ *I gained greater understanding of other regional and national organizations and opportunities for collaboration.*

## Future Action

### NEXT STEPS FOR STATES

- ⊙ *We plan to produce an inclusion teacher education certificate that produces qualified/effective teachers that address the needs of students with disabilities and address teacher shortages.*
- ⊙ *We have developed a plan to engage all educators in local assessment and RtI.*
- ⊙ *We will still have to translate discussion into action.*
- ⊙ *State planning time was awesome. We will follow-up with more in-state opportunities and communication.*

### NEXT STEPS FOR TA PROVIDERS

- ⊙ Continue to model general education/special education collaboration.
- ⊙ Work to leverage our collective resources to more effectively support states.

- ⊙ Provide a coherent, well-coordinated approach to the provision of TA to states.
- ⊙ Step outside categorical boundaries, share resources, knowledge and expertise to help build state capacity to provide a high quality education for each and every student.

## Final Comments

- ⊙ *Thank you for picking up the ball to bring the work down to realizing goals and supporting outcomes.*
- ⊙ *Thank you for a terrific meeting.*
- ⊙ *The meeting was well run, provoked interesting conversations, and seemed to be of benefit to all.*
- ⊙ *Thanks again for a great model of collaboration!*
- ⊙ *Hard to see how it could have accomplished its targeted objectives any better.*

*Note: Photographs and PowerPoint Presentations from the event will be posted on the NERRC Web site at: <http://www.rfcnwork.org/content/view/279/47/>.*

Article written by Kristin Reedy, Director,  
Northeast Regional Resource Center.  
For more information, email Reedy at [kreedy@wested.org](mailto:kreedy@wested.org).

### Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC) NERRC is part of Learning Innovations at WestEd

20 Winter Sport Lane • Williston, VT • 05495  
tel: 802.951.8226 • fax: 802.951.8222 • TTY: 802.951.8213  
[www.rfcnwork.org/nerrc/](http://www.rfcnwork.org/nerrc/) • [www.WestEd.org/li](http://www.WestEd.org/li) • [www.WestEd.org](http://www.WestEd.org)

Serving Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

*This document was developed pursuant to cooperative agreement #H326R040008 under CFDA 84.326R between the Northeast Regional Resource Center, Learning Innovations at WestEd, and the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and no endorsement by that office should be inferred. Note: There are no copyright restrictions on this document; however, please credit the source and support of federal funds when copying all or part of this material.*

