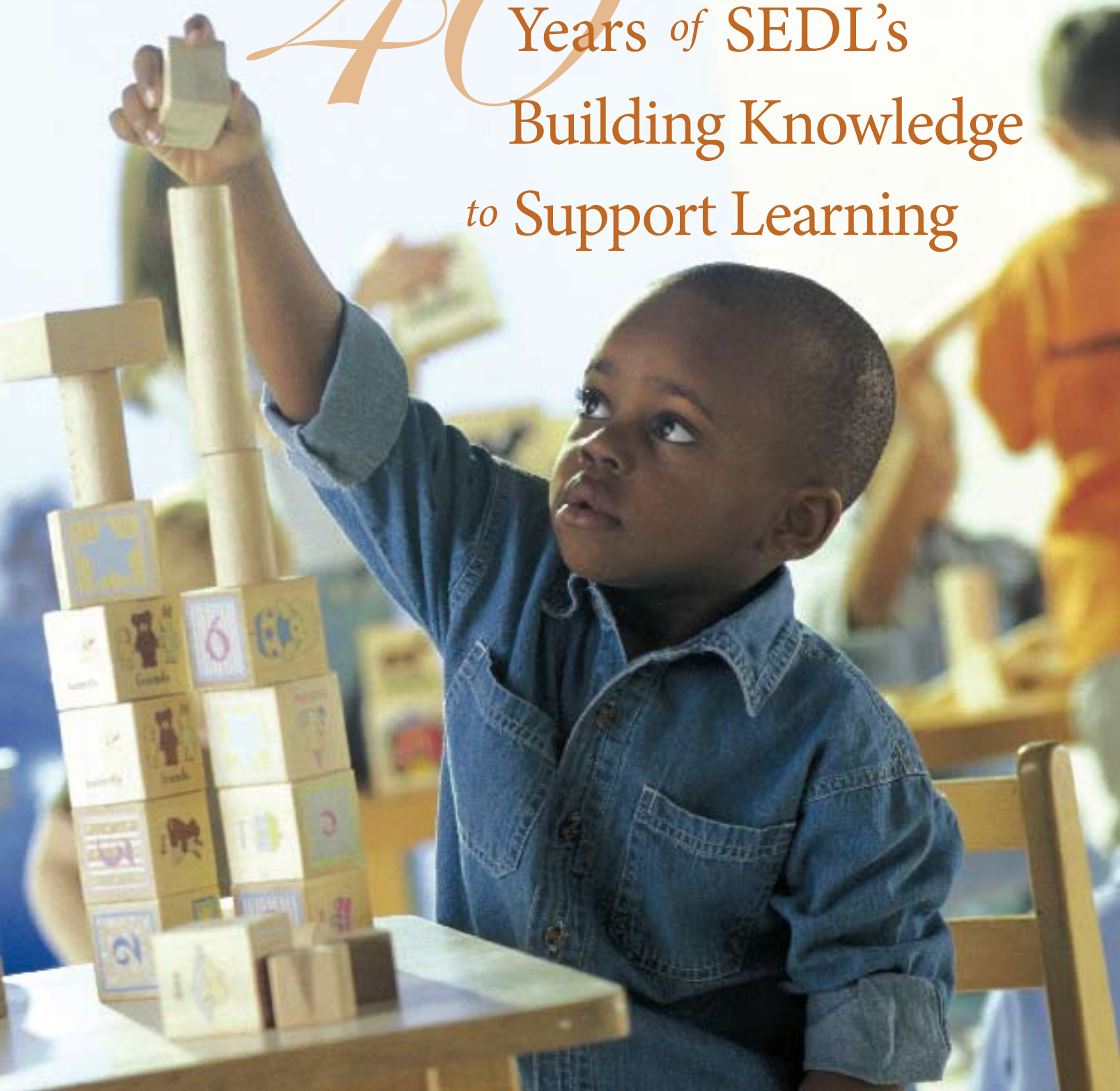


# SEDL Letter



Volume XVIII • Number 3 • December 2006

*40* Years of SEDL's  
Building Knowledge  
to Support Learning



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# SEDL Celebrates Successes *Past and Present*

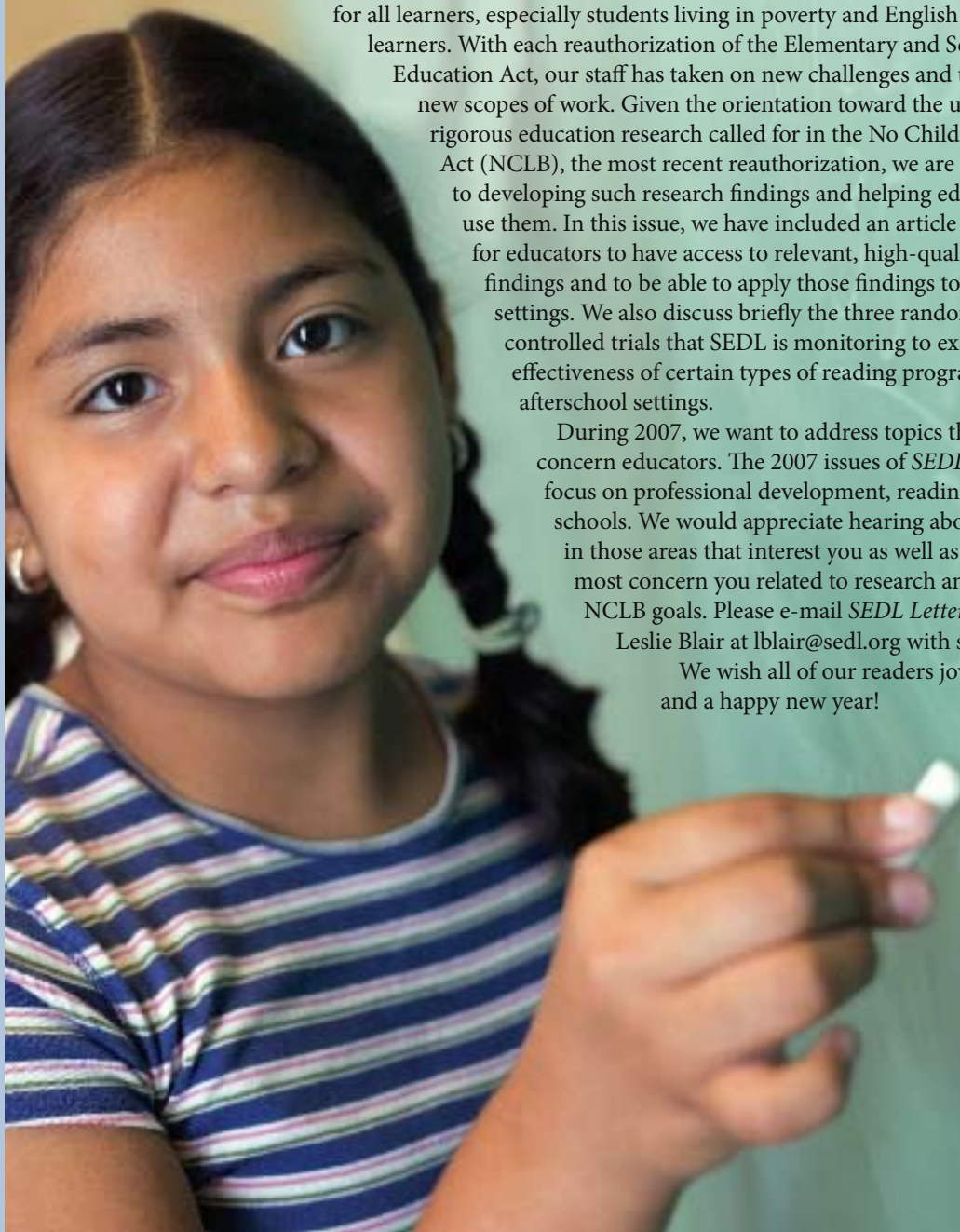
**2006** has been a great year for SEDL. Not only have we celebrated our 40th anniversary, but we've also broken ground on a new headquarters and taken on new projects to strengthen teaching and learning. The recent work includes overseeing three randomized controlled trial studies, joining forces with the Harvard Family Research Project to serve as the national coordinator for the Parental Information and Resource Centers, working with the Campbell and Cochrane collaborations to facilitate systematic reviews of disability research, and participating in a dissemination effort with the National Institute for Literacy to reach parents and teachers with research-based reading resources.

This issue of *SEDL Letter* celebrates our history and touches upon our new work. Throughout the years SEDL has remained committed to quality education for all learners, especially students living in poverty and English language learners. With each reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, our staff has taken on new challenges and usually new scopes of work. Given the orientation toward the use of more rigorous education research called for in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the most recent reauthorization, we are committed to developing such research findings and helping educators to use them. In this issue, we have included an article on the need for educators to have access to relevant, high-quality research findings and to be able to apply those findings to their local settings. We also discuss briefly the three randomized controlled trials that SEDL is monitoring to examine the effectiveness of certain types of reading programs in afterschool settings.

During 2007, we want to address topics that most concern educators. The 2007 issues of *SEDL Letter* will focus on professional development, reading, and middle schools. We would appreciate hearing about the topics in those areas that interest you as well as topics that most concern you related to research and meeting NCLB goals. Please e-mail *SEDL Letter* editor

Leslie Blair at [lblair@sedl.org](mailto:lblair@sedl.org) with suggestions.

We wish all of our readers joyous holidays and a happy new year!



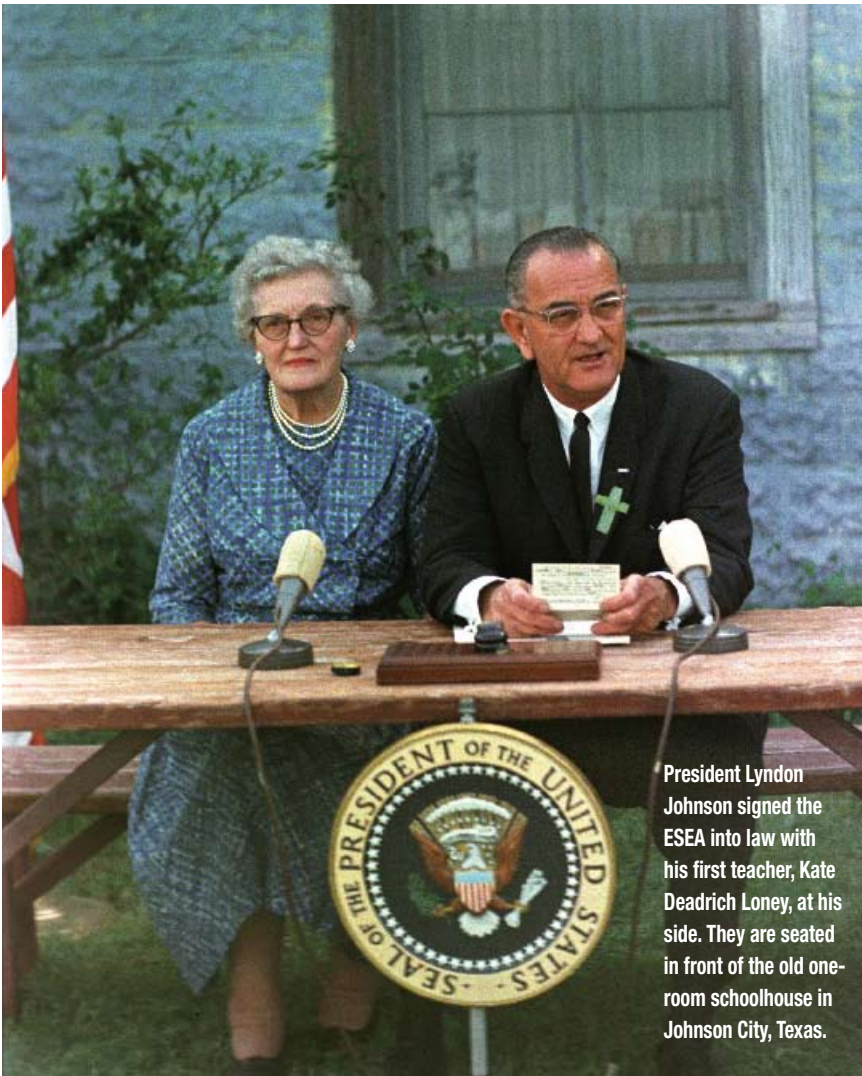
# 40 Years of Commitment to Quality Learning for All

By Martha Boethel, Leslie Blair, Debbie Ritenour, and Wes Hoover



*“By passing this bill, we bridge the gap between helplessness and hope for more than 5 million educationally deprived children. . . . I believe deeply no law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America.”*

— President Lyndon B. Johnson



President Lyndon Johnson signed the ESEA into law with his first teacher, Kate Deadrich Loney, at his side. They are seated in front of the old one-room schoolhouse in Johnson City, Texas.

With these words, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law. It was Palm Sunday, 1965.

Part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty, the ESEA allocated \$1 billion annually to schools serving low-income children. Those who crafted the ESEA envisioned a network of institutions that would bridge the gap between research and practice, developing and disseminating research-based solutions to the nation’s most urgent education problems. The following year, 20 regional educational laboratories were established to meet that goal. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) opened its doors in a one-room office “with four chairs and five employees,” according to one staff member. Forty years later, with plans to build a new 50,000-square-foot facility in Austin, SEDL continues to thrive.

Although from the beginning SEDL’s work extended well beyond the bounds of the regional laboratory, that program is indelibly imprinted on SEDL’s institutional history and culture. The ESEA has been even more of an influence on the organization, with each reauthorization bringing new approaches and philosophies to tackle educational challenges. Our work has evolved over the past 4 decades to meet changing times and needs, but our focus on linking research to practice and our dedication to ensuring a quality education for all learners—particularly those historically least served by our nation’s educational system—endure, a direct result of President Johnson’s vision for a Great Society.

# The 1960s

## SEDL's Formative Years

*From the beginning, SEDL's work extended well beyond the bounds of the regional educational laboratory program.*

In 1964, President Johnson established an education task force led by John Gardner, who was head of the Carnegie Corporation and later became the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. The task force saw the educational laboratories as a way to improve learning through the dissemination of new ideas and practices. The labs would operate experimental schools, pilot innovative approaches, and provide teacher training.

In a message to Congress in 1965, President Johnson described the laboratories as drawing “equally on educators and the practitioners in all fields of learning . . . to improve curricula and train teachers.” A House committee report also envisioned a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that called for involvement of state departments of education, local school systems, colleges and universities, private research organizations, community organizations and experimental schools. The report reiterated that the laboratories were not to be adjuncts of universities; rather, it called for a new kind of institution that focused on the needs of practitioners.

In 1965, the Office of Education issued guidelines for the new laboratory program, and received 40 formal prospectuses.

### Defining the Region and the Work

SEDL's prospectus clearly identified the needs of its region—initially defined as the states of Louisiana and Texas—and articulated a strong mission to address them. Edwin Hindsman, who would become SEDL's first chief executive officer, led a planning committee that also included Rogers L. Barton and James H. Perry, both of whom played important roles in SEDL's history (see

sidebars on pages 5 and 7). The committee members proposed a focus on intercultural education, with particular attention paid to low-income Hispanic, African American, and Cajun student populations.

### Complex Programs, Multiple Funding Streams

In the first few years of SEDL's existence, Dr. Hindsman oversaw the development of a complex structure of programs that yielded nationally acclaimed curriculum products and research results focused on educationally disadvantaged students. Virtually from the beginning, Dr. Hindsman and his staff looked for additional opportunities beyond the regional laboratory program through which to further SEDL's mission. In fact, in only 1 year—its founding year—did SEDL obtain funds solely from its regional lab contract. Soon SEDL was conducting work under the auspices of other federal agencies, including the Office of Economic Opportunity and the National Science Foundation, as well as state agencies and local school districts.

As the tumultuous 1960s neared their end, five of the 20 labs nationwide closed. The Vietnam War was escalating, creating demands for funding that might have gone to education and other programs. For SEDL, though, the future looked bright. The organization's innovative curricula, which focused heavily on basic literacy, math, and thinking skills for language-minority children, provided the basis for work with migrant students in south Texas. This work included the operation of an early childhood development center in McAllen, Texas, and a “mobile migrant” program in which SEDL staff followed and worked with migrant students as they moved with their families during the growing season. SEDL's curricula work also led to the development of the Follow Through Program, which was designed to extend the benefits of Head Start into the elementary grades and would be critical to SEDL's work for the next 2 decades.

Finally, as the decade closed, SEDL submitted its application for funds to construct an innovative research and development facility that would house the organization. After a site visit by the U.S. Commissioner of Education, the facility grant was approved in August 1969.



## Dr. Edwin Hindsman:

### “Devoted to Finding Ways to Preserve and Develop Human Talent”

Dr. Edwin Hindsman was associate director of the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas when he chaired the committee that wrote SEDL's original prospectus. He was chosen as the organization's first chief executive officer in 1966 and served until his death on December 27, 1970, at age 47. Under his tenure, the organization grew from five employees to 218.

Dr. Hindsman was an educational psychologist who had served on the faculty at the University of Texas and the University of Indiana. He had also been a staff member at the U.S. Office of

Education. Preston Kronkosky, who served as CEO of SEDL from 1981 to 1996, described Hindsman as “a visionary and dreamer devoted to children whose lives had been affected by poverty, those who were not being served by the education system.” Hindsman believed in tackling the truly difficult problems—the problems no one else was willing or able or brave enough to take on.

As the late Congressman Jake Pickle said, “Dr. Hindsman's entire energies were devoted to finding new ways to preserve and develop human talent.”

*“Serenity does not exist in a state of inaction. It exists for us when we face up to our responsibilities, to our obligations in this changing world.”*

— Dr. Edwin Hindsman

## Rogers L. Barton:

### Man of Action

If Edwin Hindsman was the visionary who helped define SEDL's mission early on, Rogers L. Barton was the man who put that vision into action. Although Barton never served as SEDL's executive director, he played a large role in the organization's early success. Barton knew how to organize and lead. “He loved good ideas, whether they were his own or someone else's,” said SEDL staff member Martha Boethel, “and he put every idea to the strictest test.”

Barton came to SEDL in 1967 from the Texas Education Agency. Preston Kronkosky, who later became CEO of SEDL, had worked previously under Barton in Corpus Christi Independent School District. At the time, Barton was the assistant superintendent of instruction for secondary schools. Kronkosky and Barton overhauled the district's mathematics program, aligning curriculum district wide. Kronkosky says Barton was devoted to his work and expected others to be as well. “If I was working 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, he asked why I wasn't working 14 hours a day, 6 days a week,” Kronkosky said. “Barton pushed me to grow in ways I hadn't thought possible.”

In 1970 Barton left SEDL for Dallas Independent School District. He later returned to SEDL for a year as a consultant shortly after Kronkosky had been appointed acting executive director. He helped Kronkosky develop a plan for the future of SEDL before his death in early 1984.



Dr. Edwin Hindsman

# The 1970s

## Scaling Up, Scaling Down

*“No child fails. Schools may fail to provide a supportive environment, teachers may fail to communicate what they know, materials may fail to help the child learn. But no child fails.”*

— SEDL annual report, 1973

President Richard M. Nixon’s administration ushered in the 1970s. Nixon rejected much of the Great Society emphasis on the social function of schools and programs to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups, focusing instead on state and local control. Although the change in administration brought more uncertainties for federal support of education, SEDL began the decade on a high note, emerging as one of only four institutions that received federal facility construction funds in 1970. SEDL’s new building included

television and media production facilities, an early childhood learning center with an audio-visual control booth for taping model lessons, and a state-of-the-art IBM System 3 computer that ran RPG and Fortran.



## Leading the Way

By June 1971, SEDL had 264 employees. Most were based at the Austin headquarters; others were located in Baton Rouge or in field sites across the region. SEDL began working with a San Antonio television station to produce *Los Niños*, a *Sesame Street*-type weekly bilingual television program for Spanish-speaking preschool children and their parents that was picked up by a number of other stations across the Southwest. With funding from the Texas Education Agency, SEDL also began testing parent involvement and parent education activities in communities in east and south Texas.

By 1973 SEDL had fully developed and tested an integrated set of curriculum products for both English and Spanish speakers aged 3–8. Under the Follow Through Program, SEDL developed a bilingual, bicultural model and tested it in sites in Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and California. The migrant program was also nationally significant. Migrant program staff were working with school districts and day care centers in Texas and other states to provide preservice and inservice training and to adapt materials that would meet the needs of migrant children.

To publish and distribute its curriculum products, SEDL set up its own publishing company in 1973. National Educational Laboratory Publishers Inc. (NELP) was established as a private, for-profit subsidiary of the organization. When several SEDL products were officially approved by the State of Texas's textbook adoption committee, business picked up considerably.

SEDL's outstanding work in curriculum development was about to be curtailed, however. Federal curriculum development initiatives began receiving a great deal of criticism by the mid to late 70s. Critics, including many publishers who believed the government was undermining their development efforts, argued this was not an appropriate role for the federal government. In 1977, Congress decided it would no longer fund full-scale curriculum development through the ESEA.

Though the regional laboratory program managed to survive this and other political shifts during the 1970s, the work was scaled back significantly, and only eight of the original 20 labs survived the decade. SEDL was one of them, with a reorganized region encompassing six states—Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas—and a revised agenda that focused heavily on field research, training, and technical assistance.

## Dr. James H. Perry: A Patient Second Administrator



Dr. James Perry became SEDL's second chief executive officer in June 1971. A member of the original prospectus-writing committee, he came to SEDL from Louisiana State University. Dr. Perry's challenge was not to create but to survive, and he was to be tested to the limit. By 1979, with funding opportunities severely curtailed, SEDL was much reduced in staff size and scope of work. Dr. Perry led a comprehensive reorganization of SEDL's programs and signed agreements with the National Institute of Education that would ensure institutional funding through 1984. With SEDL's immediate security guaranteed, he resigned in November 1981.

## That 1970s Look and Feel

In September 1973, SEDL moved into its new facility at 211 E. 7th Street in downtown Austin, Texas. Designed by Brooks, Barr, Graeber, and White, the Southwest Tower was the first office condominium arrangement in Austin. SEDL's offices within the building were designed by the Quickborner Team (named for its members' home community, Quickborn, Germany). The team used an office landscape concept, designed to be ergonomically correct and structured to support the way SEDL staff worked and communicated. It incorporated flexibility and openness by using colorful, moveable modular pieces and planters to delineate office space. The design, cutting edge at the time, remains memorable in the minds of SEDL employees who lived with it until 1999, when the office space was renovated.



# The 1980s

## A Decade of Rebuilding



plan was never carried out, but the administration consolidated programs and redirected large portions of aid into block grants to the states. The Reagan administration, however, helped jumpstart the education reform movement when a national commission appointed by the Secretary of Education released the groundbreaking report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983.

### A Changing Federal Focus

Dr. Kronkosky had barely settled into his new position when the government announced that all regional laboratory contracts were to be unilaterally cancelled. Thanks to the labs' good standing with key members of Congress, this death sentence was commuted to a national recompetition of all the lab contracts in 1985. Field research was out; capacity building through training, technical assistance, product development, and dissemination was in.

In 1985 SEDL conducted regionwide needs assessment surveys and designed an ambitious agenda that, as always, focused strongly on English language learners, supports for basic skills instruction, and family involvement. SEDL also proposed a new program to provide rapid-response information for the region's education policymakers, particularly legislative and governors' office staffs.



SEDL's second chief executive officer, Dr. James Perry, thought SEDL was secure when he signed agreements that provided federal support for the institution's work through 1984. He resigned in late 1981, and SEDL's director of field research—who had overseen the Follow Through Program and several innovative dissemination initiatives—took the helm on an "acting" basis. In February 1982, after an extensive nationwide search, Dr. Preston Kronkosky was named SEDL's third chief executive officer, just in time for the Reagan revolution.

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, he vowed to curtail the federal role in education and even to abolish the Department of Education. That

### New Work, New Commitment to School Reform

With this proposal SEDL successfully defended a once-again reorganized five-state southwestern region (consisting of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) against a bid by testing giant Educational Testing Service. Dr. Kronkosky and his staff also undertook a rebuilding strategy, looking for additional funds to support and expand the national reform agenda spurred by *A Nation at Risk*.

In 1983 SEDL established the Regional Rehabilitation Exchange, the first in a succession of projects designed to ensure that products, services, and research findings targeted to people with disabilities are accessible, relevant, and of the highest quality. In 1986 SEDL began providing technical assistance to Texas schools through the Bilingual Multifunctional Resource Center, a precursor to the current regional comprehensive centers.

Dr. Kronkosky also struck a deal with the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas through which SEDL took custody of research-based products and tools related to the Concerns-Based Adoption Model





## Dr. Preston Kronkosky: Building a Foundation for the Future



Dr. Preston Kronkosky, SEDL's president and chief executive officer from 1981 to 1996, devoted more than 37 years to a career in education, 28 of them with SEDL. During his early career, Dr. Kronkosky served in the U.S. Marine Corps. He then became a classroom teacher and an administrator in Corpus Christi ISD. When he came to SEDL, he brought with him a deep concern for underserved children and teenagers.

Rogers L. Barton, once Dr. Kronkosky's supervisor in Corpus Christi, recruited him into SEDL's field services work. During

his tenure as CEO, Dr. Kronkosky successfully diversified SEDL's funding base and guided the regional laboratory work through its transition from a research focus to that of capacity building among state agencies, education service centers, associations, and school districts. Dr. Kronkosky also established a capital building fund for SEDL, which made possible the new headquarters building in Austin, set to open in Fall 2007.

(CBAM), a nationally recognized framework for understanding and facilitating the adoption of educational innovations. SEDL also was fortunate to hire Dr. Shirley Hord, one of the model's lead developers. Now a scholar emerita with SEDL, Dr. Hord conducted innumerable SEDL-sponsored trainings in the use of CBAM's tools. Over the next 2 decades, she also led a series of research and development initiatives addressing school leadership, professional learning communities, and systemic reform.

Once again, SEDL closed the decade on an upswing. From a low of less than \$2 million in funding in 1983, SEDL more than doubled its funding by 1990, its rebuilding efforts bolstered by the national tide of educational reform. In 1989 President George H. W. Bush and the nation's governors met to lay the groundwork for the National Educational Goals, which emerged as the centerpiece for reform in both the Bush and Clinton administrations (Robelen, 1999).



Dr. Shirley Hord



# The 1990s

## Putting the Pieces Together



*“Given our roots in LBJ’s vision for a Great Society, our institution has always had at its core two ideas. The first is one of purpose, with a central focus on serving the education needs of children in poverty. We do so in the belief that a quality education is the best mechanism for freeing individuals and society from the ravages and inequities of poverty. The second idea is one of instrument, with a central focus on bridging education research and practice. We do this in the belief that the delivery of quality education must be founded on a knowledge base supported by evidence and applied with wisdom.”*

— Dr. Wesley A. Hoover

### Dr. Wesley A. Hoover: Strengthening the Research Base

By the time Dr. Wesley A. Hoover was named president and CEO in December 1996, he had spent 17 years at SEDL, developing an understanding of the institution—and the persistent education issues SEDL works to address—that is both broad and deep. He began his SEDL career conducting research on teaching reading to bilingual children. Later he directed SEDL’s institutional assessment unit, establishing and overseeing a rigorous quality assurance process for all institutional products and services. In the early 1990s he took over a struggling project focused on using community resources to strengthen science instruction in rural settings; this work led to the creation of SEDL’s Southwest Consortium for the Improvement of Mathematics and Science Teaching, which Dr. Hoover directed from 1992 through 1996.

During Dr. Hoover’s tenure thus far, SEDL has initiated a number of new efforts and doubled its resources, with 2006 being the most prosperous year ever for the institution. Dr. Hoover has also led SEDL to take a more rigorous approach in research and development and expand our reach nationwide.



As the 1990s began SEDL joined other research and development leaders in seeking solutions that incorporated lessons learned from both the successes and the failures of the past. Why had so many of the instructional innovations of the 1960s and early 1970s disappeared from the educational landscape? Why hadn’t more of them moved into widespread use? With the federal investment in education once again expanding, the R&D community explored critical questions as to how to bridge the persistent divide between policy and practice, and how to sustain and scale up innovative approaches.

The ESEA was reauthorized as the Improving America’s Schools Act in 1994 under the administration of President Bill Clinton. It pushed states to develop standards-based systems applicable to all students—even students served under Title I. It also recognized the need to maximize teaching and learning in core academic subjects and the need for intensive professional learning focused on improving teaching and learning.

As a result, much of SEDL’s work throughout the 1990s focused on simultaneously supporting the smallest unit of change—the individual classroom teacher—and ensuring that the entire infrastructure of schooling in the United States, from the classroom all the way to state and federal policies and programs, were operating in synch.

Through its federal funding, SEDL addressed policy alignment and comprehensive reform strategies, and continued work in the areas of language and culture and family and community involvement. Staff also piloted new efforts addressing rural education and the use of technology to strengthen student achievement. In 1992, under the leadership of future CEO Dr. Wes Hoover, SEDL established one of 10 regional consortia focused on the new standards-based reforms in math and science instruction. Also in the 1990s, SEDL went national with its disability work; the National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, first piloted in 1991, still functions today strengthening the quality and relevance of disability research.

In 1996, Preston Kronkosky retired from SEDL, and Wes Hoover was named president and CEO after a nationwide search. Dr. Hoover brought a strong research and evaluation perspective to the office of the president, an orientation that has served the organization well in the past decade. Under his leadership, SEDL greatly expanded its program evaluation work, moving beyond a focus on the institution’s own work to conduct evaluation studies for a variety of other state and local programs.

## Importance of Family and Community Involvement Continues to Grow

During the past few years, family involvement has been in the spotlight like never before. NCLB supports the idea that involved and informed parents can help make schools better, while research findings have reiterated the importance of parent and family involvement in a student's achievement.

SEDL's work in the field of school and community involvement in schools began in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the influx of mothers into the workforce began to influence the structure of families and the role of families in education.

We undertook three projects that sought to study and help improve relationships among schools, families, and communities. The most significant work by SEDL in the field was its ground breaking 6-year study of beliefs and attitudes toward parent involvement in their children's education at the elementary level. Former program manager David Williams who worked on the study, says, "The results revealed that parents and educators had different views about parents' involvement in their children's elementary school education. Educators were most comfortable with parents being involved in traditional roles, such as volunteer or receiver of information, whereas



parents were far more interested in nontraditional roles such as co-decision maker and school advocate."

Since then SEDL has developed numerous products and tools to support school, family, and community partnerships that support student achievement, including the Collaborative Action Team process and Beyond the Building, a multimedia toolkit designed for educators and community organizers to learn to facilitate family and community involvement in schools. The family and community work laid the foundation for SEDL's work in the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning. SEDL has also recently teamed up with the Harvard Family Research Project in a new initiative to serve as the national coordinator for the 60 Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs).

## SEDL and the Harvard Family Research Project Team Up to Provide Technical Assistance to PIRCs

SEDL is gearing up for a new 5-year initiative to strengthen family involvement in their children's schooling.

SEDL has received a \$1.19 million first-year award from the U.S. Department of Education to serve as the national coordination center for 60 newly funded Parental Information and Resources Centers (PIRCs) in every state. The PIRC program was created by Congress in 1995 to provide services and information that build parents' capacity to strengthen their children's academic readiness and achievement.

Teaming up with Harvard University's nationally recognized Harvard Family Research Project, SEDL will provide technical assistance to centers throughout the U.S. SEDL and Harvard will produce resource materials and conduct trainings to help the PIRCs carry out core programmatic, management, and accountability activities, and also will provide Web-based resources geared directly to families and teachers.

The Miko Group, Inc., will provide logistical and program management supports to the project. Miko is a veteran-owned small business based in Norman, Oklahoma.

Family involvement has been a major area of focus for SEDL since its inception in the mid-1960s. For the past 6 years SEDL has operated the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, whose focus is to provide research-based tools for building partnerships that boost student achievement, particularly among traditionally underserved groups.

SEDL president and CEO Wes Hoover said, "Research shows clearly that, with knowledge and supports, families can make a difference in their kids' success in school. We look forward to working with Harvard and with the network of PIRCs to address this critical need."





1965

On Palm Sunday, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signs into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA calls for a network of institutions that bridge the gap between research and practice, leading to the creation of 20 regional educational laboratories.



1967

SEDL is awarded an operations grant of \$1,048,500.

1968

The U.S. Office of Education discontinues five of the original 20 laboratories. SEDL survives.



1970

SEDL is awarded a \$4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for construction of new research and development facilities.

1971



Dr. James H. Perry is named SEDL's new executive director following the death of Dr. Edwin Hindsman. SEDL buys its first computer—an IBM 1130, a small mainframe with 64 kilobytes of memory.



1973

SEDL moves into the Southwest Tower at 211 E. 7th Street in downtown Austin.

1974

The Texas State Board of Education approves four of SEDL's curricular products for statewide textbook adoption; all are bilingual education programs for early elementary students.



1975

SEDL increases the scale of its television production work with a \$250,000 grant from the U.S. Office of Education and produces *La Esquina*, a bilingual TV series for high school students.

1976

SEDL is awarded a grant of \$1,750,000 by the U.S. Community Services Administration for a 3-year project to establish and operate Basic Skills Learning Centers.

1981

Dr. James Perry resigns as SEDL's executive director. The U.S. Bureau of Education of the Handicapped awards SEDL a grant for the Teaching Inservice Providers project, designed to train trainers in the use of a competency-based inservice program for preschool staffs.



1982

Dr. Preston C. Kronkosky is appointed as SEDL's new executive director. SEDL initiates the Best of Basic Education Skills project, funded by the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families.

1983

SEDL enters into a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Handicapped Research (now the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research) for operation of the SEDL Regional Rehabilitation Exchange as a rehabilitation research and demonstration project.

1985

SEDL is awarded a 5-year contract to operate a regional educational laboratory for the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas in the first open competition for regional educational laboratory contracts since 1966.

1987

SEDL is awarded a 2-year grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research to develop ILS-NET, a computer-based communications network for regional independent living centers. SEDL's REL obtains a supplemental award of \$555,000 from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement for a Rural, Small Schools Initiative (RSSI).

1988

SEDL is awarded a 3-year grant by the U.S. Department of Education to continue operations at a significantly increased level of funding as a National Follow Through sponsor.

# SEDL Timeline

The 1960s

The 1970s

The 1980s

## 1991

The Minority Internship Program is established to enhance the participation and success of minority students in the field of educational research and development.

## 1992

SEDL consolidates its mathematics and science education programs by creating the Center for the Improvement of Teaching in Mathematics and Science. SEDL begins its Infant/Toddler Training Project designed to enhance professional services of caregivers of at-risk infants and toddlers and their parents.



## 1995



SEDL launches its Web site at <http://www.sedl.org>. As part of a 4-year pilot project, SEDL begins operating the National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research. SEDL

also establishes the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center, which serves the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

## 1996



Preston Kronkosky retires from his position as president and CEO. Wesley A. Hoover is appointed the new president and CEO.

## 1998

SEDL collaborates with the U.S. Department of Education to develop the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) awards database. SEDL is also awarded funding to provide technical assistance to state departments of education as they fund Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration projects.



## 2000

SEDL wins another 5-year REL contract totaling almost \$35 million. SEDL also receives two 5-year awards from the U.S. Department of Education to establish the Southwest Consortium for the Improvement of Mathematics and Science Teaching and the South Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium. SEDL publishes its award-winning *Active Learning with Technology* portfolio, which was field-tested with more than 1,000 teachers in a variety of settings.

## 2001

SEDL publishes the first of four annual research syntheses by the newly created National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

## 2002



SEDL develops an online national Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) awards database. SEDL publishes the oft-cited *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*.

## 2003

SEDL expands its database work to include Reading First grantees. SEDL wins a 3-year \$9.6 million contract from the U.S. Department of Education to lead the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, an eight-member partnership housed at SEDL.

## 2004

SEDL launches a new online store and electronic library on its Web site. SEDL works with the Texas Education Agency and the Arkansas Department of Education to create electronic data management systems.



## 2005

SEDL wins competitions to establish two comprehensive technical assistance centers, the Southeast Comprehensive Center and the Texas Comprehensive Center.



## 2006

SEDL breaks ground on a new 50,000-square-foot headquarters at the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport community redevelopment site in Austin. SEDL receives a grant to support the continuation of the National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research and receives additional funding for the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning. SEDL also teams up with Harvard's nationally recognized Harvard Family Research project and is funded to serve as the national coordination center for the 60 Parental Involvement and Resource Centers (PIRCs).



# The 2000s

## Rigor, Research, and Resilience

With the new millennium came the presidency of George W. Bush and a strengthened emphasis on accountability and research. The 2001 reauthorization of the ESEA, or the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), sets a high bar for achievement in core content areas, outlines requirements for highly qualified teachers, and mandates professional development and educational services that are firmly grounded in rigorous scientific research. Though its funding and mechanisms have been debated, its goals of eliminating achievement gaps and ensuring that all students achieve at high levels have been broadly supported. From 2000 through 2005, SEDL focused intensively on helping states understand and begin to address the new NCLB requirements and to access research-based resources that meet the law's strict standards.

In recent years, the Bush administration has made major changes in a number of federal programs, including several that had been linchpins for SEDL's regional service work. The administration eliminated the regional math and science consortia and the

regional technology in education consortia, both programs for which SEDL had long been a contractor. For the 2006 regional laboratory recompetition, the Department of Education once again shifted the labs' mandate, this time requiring the bulk of resources to be devoted to randomized controlled trials of educational interventions. Though SEDL offered a competitive proposal, for the first time in the institution's history, it failed to obtain the regional laboratory

*“Meeting the needs of all children requires a strong research base that is tightly connected to practice.”*

—Dr. Wesley A. Hoover, 1999

contract, losing its bid on the basis of its small business subcontracting arrangements rather than on the merits of the proposed work.

SEDL once again demonstrated both its resilience and its relevance to the educational reform landscape at state, regional, and national levels, however. In 2003, SEDL became the lead organization for the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, which is assessing the effectiveness of afterschool programs in strengthening student engagement and achievement. In 2005 SEDL was awarded contracts for two regional comprehensive centers, one serving Texas and the other serving five southeastern states. The comprehensive center program, a restructuring of the former regional consortia and regional technical assistance centers, is designed to help build state and local capacity to address the goals and requirements of NCLB.

SEDL also has been named as the national coordinator to provide technical assistance to the nationwide network of Parental Information and Resource Centers, an initiative that will be part of SEDL's National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, which is also conducting an exploration of models of community engagement through a partnership with the Kettering Foundation. SEDL has continued to grow its research and evaluation capacity through a number of projects, including evaluations of programs addressing English language learners, high school completion and success, core content instruction, and professional development strategies.

At SEDL we are proud as our work continues into our fifth decade—as we change to meet the nation's educational challenges, strive to make a difference through quality research and development, and work with partners and clients to solve problems in classrooms and communities throughout the country. Today, more than ever, we affirm our enduring commitment to “understanding and confronting the hard problems facing children, families, and educators” throughout this great nation.



**SEDL's Disability Research to Practice Program Increases Knowledge, Improves Lives**

SEDL is more than a research and development company—we're a research, development, and dissemination company. We help people understand research-based information so they can use it in their own settings. Nowhere, perhaps, is our dissemination work more apparent than in our Disability Research to Practice program.

In 1983, SEDL received a \$220,000 grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) to establish the Regional Rehabilitation Exchange (RRX). The RRX identified and promoted exemplary rehabilitation and independent living programs and practices in SEDL's region and served as a model for four additional RRX projects. NIDRR continued to provide funding to SEDL for the next few years to operate other model programs.



In 1995, SEDL's dissemination work took a new turn with the establishment of the National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research, also funded by NIDRR. The goals of the NCDDR were twofold: 1) to ensure the widespread dissemination and utilization of research outcomes resulting from NIDRR research projects and 2) to increase the capacity of researchers to identify and use development and dissemination strategies that meet the needs of their target audiences. The NCDDR accomplished its goals through the production

of resource guides, newsletters, trainings, modeling partnerships with researchers, and topic-centered portals and repositories accessible through its Web site.

The NCDDR began its third cycle of funding in 2006. Its new scope of work responds directly to NIDRR's concern for increasing the effective use of NIDRR-sponsored research results in shaping new technologies, improving service delivery, and expanding decision-making options for people with disabilities and their families.

Under the new funding, NCDDR is collaborating with two international organizations—the Campbell Collaboration and the Cochrane Collaboration—to establish a registry of evidence-based systematic reviews that address topics important to persons with disabilities, their families, and their service providers. The three organizations will also collaborate to provide training and technical assistance to researchers.

Systematic reviews provide information about the effectiveness of interventions by identifying, appraising, and summarizing the results of research using an approach that seeks to minimize bias. Dr. John Westbrook, program manager for SEDL's NCDDR, says that systematic reviews are crucial to inform policy- and decision-making. He says, "They are also useful when there is uncertainty regarding the potential benefits of an intervention—they provide a synthesis of evidence from the research."

As SEDL's dissemination work evolves, Westbrook says, "The NCDDR will continue to work to help ensure that consumers and practitioners can access and use high-quality evidence-based knowledge on disability and rehabilitation issues. We understand that this knowledge can greatly impact—and improve—the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families, and we are committed to helping these individuals obtain the knowledge they need."





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*The authors wish to thank everyone who contributed to the anniversary article, especially SEDL information associate Nancy Reynolds.*



# National Partnership

## Begins Work on Large-Scale Efficacy Trials of Promising Afterschool Programs

By Debra Hughes Jones and Michael Vaden-Kiernan

In recent years, there has been a movement to strengthen the quality of afterschool programs by tying these programs to the academic subjects of the regular school day to improve student achievement. At the same time, according to Dr. Robert Stonehill, director of the U. S. Department of Education's 21st Century Learning Centers program, there have been thousands of studies conducted about various aspects of afterschool programs, many of which suggest that afterschool programs have benefits (*SEDL Letter*, May 2006). The problem is that few of these studies were rigorous studies that used randomized controlled trials. Those that were rigorous attempts to study the impact of afterschool programs on student achievement outcomes have yielded mixed results. So, an important question remains: Can fully developed, well-implemented, promising afterschool programs have an impact on student achievement?

To address this question, SEDL, as part of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, recently ran a competition focused on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that could provide rigorous evidence in the debate about the benefits of afterschool interventions on student achievement. Below, we describe the projects that were funded and discuss the development of a research consortium to support their efforts over the 2-year funding period.

### Three RCTs Focus on Reading Programs

*A Randomized Evaluation of the Adventure Island Afterschool Reading Program with English Language Learners*, conducted by the Success for All Foundation, evaluates the Adventure Island afterschool reading program with English language learners (ELLs) and other language minority children. Adventure Island, an adaptation of the Success for All program, is currently being evaluated in a large-scale randomized experiment, but that experiment includes few ELLs. This experiment provides a definitive evaluation of a promising approach to afterschool education with a population of great interest. Adventure Island will be studied in 14 majority-Hispanic schools in Alabama, Texas, and Utah, with approximately 1260 children in grades 2-4.

*Continued on page 21*



# Better Research, Better Schools

## *Making Today's Research Relevant to the Classroom*

By Lesley Dahlkemper



Nadine Kujawa, Aldine  
Independent School District

When students struggled in math, science, and reading in the Aldine Independent School District, Superintendent Nadine Kujawa mobilized her staff and armed them with education research to find solutions to low achievement.

“We kept looking at the research until we found something that was a good fit for our kids,” says Kujawa. “You can find research on almost any topic, but we examine what problem the research is addressing and ask whether that problem is the same as ours and go from there. The research is our guide.”

Kujawa’s emphasis on education research comes as no surprise to her staff. The district has been using research regularly to inform decisions related to instructional decisions and other decisions affecting how children learn—and excel—in the classroom.

“Whenever someone brings a proposed change to the table, we ask, ‘What does the research say?’” says Kujawa. “We send that message to principals in every building. I am a firm believer in education research and the past pointing the way to the future.”

Kujawa’s efforts are not going unnoticed. This year, she was named regional Superintendent of the Year for her visionary leadership by the Texas Association of School Administrators and Texas Association of School Boards.

The Houston-area school district is seeing results, which Kujawa attributes in large part to research- and data-driven decision making. The district was the winner of the Texas Award for Performance Excellence last year. “Ten years ago, we were ranked 53 out of 54 school districts,” says Kujawa. “Now we rank at the state average or higher.”

The increase in ranking is significant because the district serves a substantial high-poverty and minority-student population. Kujawa says her district has been recognized by two leading Texas universities as one of the top five districts of its size that best educate economically disadvantaged minority students.

Education research is not without its barriers, though. “The biggest one is the amount of research

out there, locating what you need, and having the time and the staff to actually use the research effectively,” says Kujawa.

Kujawa regularly brings in experts to work with teams across the district to critically review research, discuss findings in detail, and think more deeply about how to apply those findings to the district’s challenges and students’ needs.

Administrators and teachers also have access to research tools, information related to effective school practices, and data. Kujawa says the focus on education research has led to positive changes for the Aldine Independent School District. “Sometimes research forces us to make really difficult decisions. As researcher Ron Edmonds puts it, ‘We know what to do. The research tells us what to do. The question is, do we have the courage to do it?’”

In today’s high-stakes environment, public schools have little choice but to improve. The standards and accountability movement in the early 1990s and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have focused national attention on school improvement and heightened the need for high-quality education research.

Public schools also are operating in a highly competitive environment, as savvy parents shop for schools for their children. Academic achievement is often one of the top factors in a parent’s decision about where to send his or her child to school. Finding answers to what works and identifying promising innovations can make or break a school’s success.

### **Is Today’s Education Research Keeping Up With Schools’ Needs? The Challenges**

Traditionally, the federal government has served as the largest provider of education research and has increased its efforts to encourage practitioners to use and apply research as an integral part of decisions about policy and practice.

NCLB also requires schools to use “scientifically based” programs and practices in areas such as reading instruction and professional development. Leading government, policy, and research organizations also are looking at how to connect education research to practice so the research is more useful and relevant to practitioners like Kujawa.

Still, challenges remain. “There are many circumstances where we can’t get them what works because the knowledge base is not there,” says Grover J. “Russ” Whitehurst, the director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education. “Growing the knowledge base is critical, and we are doing that as we increase our number of grants for research.”

The number of research grants awarded by IES has risen from 15 a year under the now-defunct Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI) to 65 a year since the institute replaced OERI in 2002, says Whitehurst.

Some say that’s a good start, but it’s not enough to keep up with the demand for high-quality education research, especially at a time when schools are in greater need than ever before of innovations to improve student achievement.

While he applauds the institute’s efforts to improve education research, Jim Kohlmoos, who heads the National Education Knowledge Industry Association (NEKIA), says funding for education research is “totally inadequate.”

“When you compare the federal investment in education research to other federal sectors, education research is among the lowest investment of them all,” says Kohlmoos. “When the Department of Defense creates a new weapon, there is a big, upfront investment. The federal government is a venture capitalist in the beginning. It’s not the same way in education, and it should be.”

In 2002, the What Works Clearinghouse was created under the Institute for Education Sciences to provide a credible source of research focusing on effective practices in education. While the intent of the What Works Clearinghouse draws high marks, some raise concern that the federal government’s emphasis on what works is neglecting research on innovative strategies for instruction, learning, and professional development.

“The federal government has done a good job but has left some pieces unattended,” says Wes Hoover, president and CEO of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). “Developing new practices or testing strategies that are innovative—there’s just not enough money to do all of those things.”

Another challenge noted by those interviewed for this article, including Whitehurst, is that too many

education leaders and teachers are not adequately trained in a setting that makes them think about research as a critical component of their work. “People look for advice from other professionals or attend a conference or look at a slick brochure without paying closer attention to the evidence,” says Whitehurst.

Observers also say more must be done in colleges of education to prepare teachers and school leaders to better use research in their everyday work. Whitehurst recalls a meeting with deans of colleges of education whom he says collectively train 90% of the teachers in the United States. He asked them how many require a research methods course as part of their degree. “Two people raised their hands,” says Whitehurst. “It’s changing, though.”

## Efforts to Improve Education Research

For his part, Whitehurst has implemented what have been described as “sweeping” changes in the last 4 years since he was charged with leading the Institute of Education Sciences. A major goal is to build the knowledge base that he and others believe is lacking. “One can’t expect either the states, districts, or private sector to carry the burden of new knowledge or interventions,” says Whitehurst.

The institute operates with a higher degree of political independence than its predecessor with the director now serving a 6-year term, which is designed to cover more than one presidential term. Whitehurst says the staff has been beefed up with the hiring of 50 people, and a lot of programs that weren’t research-related have been moved out altogether so that greater emphasis is placed on the institute’s mission.

Whitehurst also is creating a new crop of PhD-level scientists who are trained and qualified to contribute to the field of education science by conducting rigorous evaluations, developing new products and approaches grounded in science, and designing valid tests and measures. The Institute of Education Sciences has developed predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowship programs in partnership with universities across the United States.

More than 150 students are expected to graduate at the PhD level from participating universities, including Vanderbilt, Florida State, Carnegie Mellon, the University of Chicago, and Northwestern. Successful predoctoral fellows receive a Certificate in Education Sciences in addition to a doctorate in their discipline.

The federal government is not the only agency focused on improvements. National research and



Grover J. “Russ” Whitehurst,  
head of the Institute for  
Education Sciences



Ruth Ash, Alabama State  
Department of Education

*Funding for  
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policy advocacy organizations such as NEKIA are looking at ways they can contribute to higher-quality education research.

NEKIA, for example, has developed a concept called “communities of knowledge.” The goal is to make a stronger connection in the field between educators and researchers with the help of a facilitator. Groups of educators sit down with researchers to examine problems in the classroom. Together, they tap both their day-to-day experience in the classroom and their expertise in research to solve those challenges.

Kohlmoos says keeping researchers isolated from practitioners increases the odds that their research won’t have any relevance or usefulness to solving real-world problems faced by teachers, principals, or superintendents.

“Everyone says it’s important to have high-quality, rigorous research to improve schools, but very few talk about the issue of use of research,” says Kohlmoos. “It’s one thing to have motivation to improve schools or to have great research—but what connects both? That has been a policy focus of ours.”

As the reauthorization of NCLB gets underway next year, NEKIA will advocate for policy changes that place just as much emphasis on “relevant and useable research” as has been placed on scientifically based research.

## Strategies at the State Level

Some state education agencies, such as the Alabama State Department of Education, also are stepping up their efforts to provide school leaders and educators with the tools they need to be better-informed consumers of research.

The state department launched the Alabama Leadership Academy to increase the achievement of all students in the state by supporting the growth and development of teachers, principals, and superintendents as leaders of instruction. Key to this work is deepening their understanding and use of education research in areas of instruction, learning, and other policy and practice areas that affect student learning.

The emphasis on education research also played a major role in setting the state’s direction for reading. In the late 1990s, Alabama faced two camps of thinking on how students should learn to read: phonics and whole language. The opposing sides were convened to review in detail what education research said about how students best learn to read.

“We told them, ‘We are going to look at what all the education research says and we want you all to agree that whatever the research says, we’re going to

do it,’” recalls Ruth Ash, deputy superintendent with the Alabama State Department of Education. “We now have a research-based reading program in every school with grades 1–3.”

This year, the legislature funded the Alabama Reading Initiative at \$56 million, according to Ash. The initiative’s goal is to significantly improve reading instruction and ultimately achieve 100% literacy among public school students.

Alabama state education leaders took the same approach with the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) by looking first at what research said about effective practices in teaching students math and science.

AMSTI is the Alabama State Department of Education’s initiative to improve math and science teaching statewide. Students in AMSTI schools learn math, science, and technology through activity-based, inquiry approaches consistent with the latest research on effective math and science instruction.

“In every participating school, 85% of teachers have to abide by the research and what it says works,” says Ash. “The principal leads the effort and agrees to an outside evaluator to see if it really does improve student achievement. Not only do we use research, but we are contributing to it.”

The result, according to the initiative’s Web site: “AMSTI schools showed consistently and often statistically significant gains over non-AMSTI schools in all areas tested by the *Stanford 10* and by the *Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test* in both elementary and middle school grades.”

“It has helped educators see that they need to use research to inform how to make decisions about learning,” says Ash.

## Connecting Education Research to the Classroom

Building a strong base of high-quality and relevant research to help teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members is a critical first step.

Using the research findings to develop practical and useful tools, services, and products to help practitioners and policymakers apply the research at the local level has been the focus of organizations such as SEDL. The organization is helping district and school leaders fit the pieces of the research puzzle together in ways that reap results for students and teachers.

“You have to have people who can connect those tools and services to people in the field by helping them use the tools, reflect on their practices, and modify strategies along the way,” says SEDL’s Wes

Hoover. “We see that as our niche: connecting research and practice through building knowledge and tools and engaging educators in their use.”

For example, services such as coaching teachers provide a safe environment for educators to change practice and to see whether those changes are having the effect they had hoped.

Hoover also is well-versed in the frustrations voiced by practitioners about the lack of high-quality research germane to their work. To fill the gaps, SEDL helps educators understand the different “levels” of research, the confidence they can have in it given the research methods used, and how what currently exists might apply to their individual needs or challenges.

“There are things you can and cannot do with research, and practitioners need to be aware of that,” says Hoover. “It’s very rare that a school can take a piece of research and implement it in the way it was in the research studies. Adaptation presents real challenges.”

As educators and policymakers across the country strive to improve learning, instruction, and achievement, efforts to improve education research at the federal level and among policy and research organizations could not be more timely. The question is whether those efforts will be timely enough to address the challenges in today’s public schools.

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### National Partnership, continued

*What Works in Afterschool Programs: The Impact of a Reading Intervention on Student Achievement in the Brockton Public Schools*, undertaken by MPR Associates, Inc., in partnership with Scholastic Publications and Brockton (MA) Public Schools, is designed to compare Scholastic’s READ 180 program with Brockton’s standard services for afterschool programs. READ 180 will be studied with approximately 1,100 students in grades 4, 5, and 6, to capture gains in reading skills and other outcomes. The study will provide methodologically rigorous information about READ 180, a program that has several characteristics that have been associated with positive academic outcomes.

*Afterschool Randomized Controlled Trials: The Voyager Passport Program in Kentucky 21st Century Community Learning Centers*, is designed by The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University, in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education, to compare the impact of previously established 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) programs with the impact of CCLC programs that include the Voyager Passport Reading program. The study tests the hypothesis that economically disadvantaged youths in grades 2–5 who participate in a high-quality afterschool program with Passport achieve significantly greater learning gains over a 2-year period than do disadvantaged youth who participate in the same afterschool program without Passport.

### Afterschool Research Consortium to Support Implementation of Research Designs

SEDL will provide analytic and technical support to projects through the *Afterschool Research Consortium* (ARC). The ARC brings together SEDL staff, key project staff, Technical Working Group (TWG) members, and representatives from the Department of Education on a regular basis, to facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas, and provide strategies that can help ensure full implementation of RCT designs in afterschool settings.

The ARC focuses on substantive content issues in the afterschool field, technical and analytic issues in conducting rigorous RCTs, programmatic and research-to-practice issues, and policy issues. Project teams are brought together to discuss on-going implementation, data collection, and analytic challenges presented by the work as well as to explore opportunities to collaborate and disseminate the findings to the field.

# SEDL Celebrates Its History and the ESEA



Luci Baines Johnson

*“My father’s hope was that this law would provide students from poor environments, rural and urban, the same passport out of poverty that he had known: a decent education.”*

—Luci Baines Johnson, speaking on the passage of the ESEA in 1965

As part of its 40th anniversary celebration, SEDL held a community breakfast on November 3, 2006, at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas. Approximately 200 attendees were entertained with a video of congratulatory greetings from such well-wishers as Senator John Cornyn, Texas commissioner of education Shirley Neeley, and the Biscuit Brothers, an Austin-based band with a popular children’s education show on PBS. They also listened to the keynote address given by Sandy Kress, a partner in the law firm Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. Kress served as senior advisor to President Bush in the development of the No Child Left Behind Act. Kress spoke on the need to stay focused on reform efforts, accountability, and quality instruction. Luci Baines Johnson, daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who continues the work of her parents at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation, followed Kress with a short speech commemorating the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that her father signed into law in 1965.



**Old friends catch up.**

Above: Former CEO Preston Kronkosky, human resources assistant Tracy Hoes, program manager John Westbrook, and accounting specialist Sharon Malmquist.

Near right: Former SEDL staff members Donna Beth McCormick and David L. Williams, Jr.

Far right: Former CEO Preston Kronkosky, Joan Holtzman, and former SEDL board chairman and UT dean Wayne Holtzman.





Sandy Kress

*“Every single one of the reforms I’ve talked about—whether it was getting started with ESEA, whether it was the Ross Perot ‘no pass, no play,’ whether it was the standards and the measurement and the consequences of the standards-based movement, even the ratcheted-up muscularity of No Child Left Behind—every one of these steps over the last 40 years, I would suggest to you, was necessary but not sufficient.”*

—Sandy Kress, speaking on the history of school reform since the passage of the ESEA in 1965



Austin attorney Sandy Kress, who helped draft the NCLB legislation, greets Carol Thompson, president of the Thompson Group, and Jo Pettigrew, former SEDL board chairman.

Promising Practices in Afterschool Arts Programs Emphasized in Online Toolkit

It sounds like a class on character education: empowering students to be leaders and teach other students in a supportive atmosphere. But it’s not character education. Surprisingly, it is break dancing class in a Seattle afterschool program. Here students learn new dance moves while developing self-confidence and leadership skills. One student reported that the break dancing class has made him “want to go to school.”

The break dance program is one of several arts programs featured in the arts section of the Afterschool Training Toolkit developed by the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning. This online toolkit provides professional development to staff in afterschool programs and is developed around promising practices in afterschool programs that help boost student success.

“The arts have long been a part of afterschool programs,” says SEDL program manager Catherine Jordan who is the director of the National Partnership. “They are often key

to engaging students and keeping them interested in afterschool activities.” The arts can play a role in students’ academic success, as evidenced by the Seattle student who was encouraged to attend school because of the afterschool program. “Often the skills developed in the arts help improve self-confidence and cultivate self-discipline,” Jordan explains.

View the arts component of the Afterschool Training Toolkit at <http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/>. In addition to video



clips of exemplary afterschool arts programs, the toolkit includes lesson plans, research and resources for embedding academic content in afterschool activities, and suggestions for discussion and interdisciplinary connections.

# Happy Anniversary, SEDL



They take the cake! Wayne Holtzman (former SEDL board member), Luci Baines Johnson (chairwoman, LBJ Holding Company), Wes Hoover (SEDL president and CEO), and Preston Kronkosky (former SEDL president and CEO) celebrate SEDL's 40th anniversary at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas, on November 3, 2006.



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