

## Partnering for Success

### How One SEA Built Capacity to Support Effective Educator Practice

In the fall of 2019, the newly minted Director of Educator Talent Acquisition and Effectiveness sat at one end of a conference table explaining her need for assistance in reinvigorating the Mississippi Department of Education’s (MDE’s) Professional Growth System (PGS). At the other end of the table were her boss and three staff members from the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC). As she provided background on the PGS, she made special note of her concern that her office, comprised of only two staff members, had limited capacity to both make improvements needed to the system and meet the demand for PGS training for administrators across the state. She reminded everyone of the prominent role the PGS plays in Mississippi’s Strategic Plan. The first objective in achieving Goal 4: *Every School has Effective Teachers and Leaders* is to “strengthen Mississippi Educator and Administrator Professional Growth System implementation.”

Recognizing the immediate need to build state capacity and improve the existing system, MDE leadership requested R7CC’s assistance in supporting this priority initiative. For the past three years, R7CC has assisted MDE in improving its PGS and building statewide capacity to support its effective use. Below are highlights of what R7CC did and what happened as a result.

#### Formed a Linked Teaming Structure

Early on, R7CC recognized the need to build an infrastructure that would establish conditions for success. With implementation science as the backbone of its technical assistance, R7CC worked with MDE leaders to build a linked teaming structure that would ensure effective decision-making and communication processes were in place to support the work of improving the PGS. This structure included a Senior Leadership Team comprised of the Chief State School Officer and her senior-level leaders who would authorize actions and commit resources needed to advance the work and a State Implementation Team comprised of mid-level state leaders who were responsible for strategic planning and supporting implementation of approved strategies.

Recognizing that improvements to the system had to be informed by those using the system, the State Implementation Team and R7CC requested that the State Leadership Team form a stakeholder workgroup that would go through the training and advise MDE on improvements needed. A group of 12 educational leaders and teachers from educator preparation programs and districts across the state came together in six sessions to review the Combined Rubric Training that all administrators must complete. This working group made both short- and long-term recommendations to improve the existing training and design additional training that would enhance inter-rater agreement among observers and provide much-needed training for teachers. MDE has made all the short-term recommended changes and is working to implement many of the long-term recommendations of the stakeholder workgroup.

#### What is the PGS?

The PGS model sets forth the performance standards that teachers, administrators, and other educational personnel are expected to meet and describes the stepwise process used to implement the system. In addition, all administrators responsible for assessing educator performance are required to successfully complete training on the PGS.

Read more [here](#).



Communication between the State Implementation Team and the State Leadership Team was essential to breaking down interoffice silos and disseminating information across the agency.

When needed, R7CC worked with MDE to form working groups of key stakeholders to engage with MDE in the PGS improvement process. This provided critical input and buy-in from the field.



Transmission

State Implementation Team (SIT)



Engine

State Leadership Team (SLT)



Steering

Stakeholder Working Groups

The SLT has the authority and resources to power SIT initiatives. **Both teams are made up of MDE staff.**

### Identified the Strengths and Gaps in the PGS

In addition to the working group feedback, R7CC recognized the need to look at other data to identify the critical gaps that would need to be addressed to improve the PGS. To identify these gaps, R7CC engaged the State Implementation Team in an analysis of the following:

- existing data collected by the Department during a 2018 pilot of the PGS;
- an assessment designed and facilitated by R7CC for the State Implementation Team to examine the extent to which the PGS reflected evidence-based features and practices; and
- a State Capacity Assessment completed by the State Implementation and Leadership Teams to assess the leadership, infrastructure, resources, communication, and engagement available to support implementation of the PGS statewide.

Analyses of these data revealed that the existing training needed improvements to ensure that participants were able to effectively apply the educator rubrics in a way that reflected consistent and accurate ratings of performance. Data also pointed to a severe lack of consistency in the quality of training offered throughout the state. These data were presented to the Senior Leadership Team and resulted in an action plan that focused on two priorities for R7CC and the State Implementation Team to work on to improve PGS training: **(1) quality and consistency and (2) accessibility.**

### Built a Statewide Training System

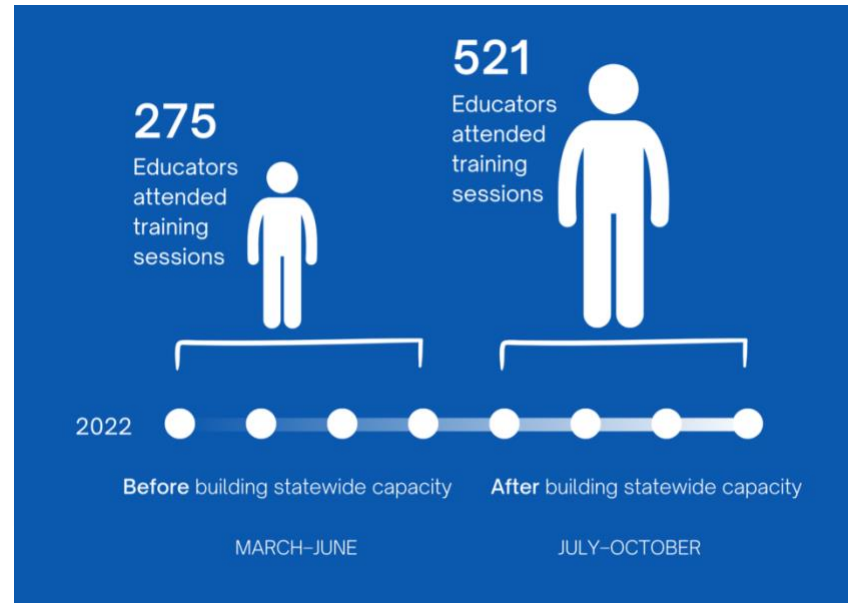
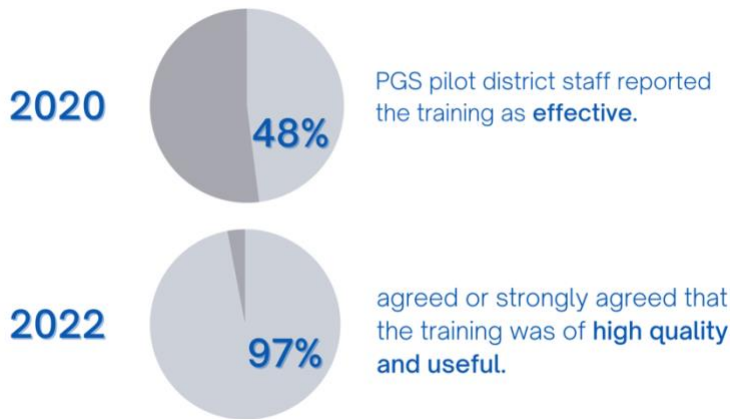
While making improvements to the training itself, MDE also needed to address the lack of state capacity to provide the training statewide and ensure consistency in the training quality. R7CC and the State Implementation Team harnessed support from the State Leadership Team to work with the Regional Education Service Agencies to recruit and hire individuals who would serve as PGS trainers. R7CC assisted Department staff in developing a recruitment, selection, and onboarding toolkit and instructed Regional Education Service Agency Directors in the use of the materials. In addition, R7CC worked with Department staff to develop a pre- and post-assessment and a set of look-fors that MDE could use to continuously monitor the training quality.

*As it relates to training, I still didn't get a clear understanding of expectations.*

*Ask more teachers what they need for the PGS to be beneficial for them.*

– Feedback from the Pilot District Survey

Due to the collaboration between MDE, the Regional Education Service Agencies, and R7CC, the results of the first round of PGS trainings show that all these efforts have addressed the Director of Educator Talent Acquisition and Effectiveness' original concerns by increasing the number of PGS trainers from 2 state staff to 12 Regional Education Service Agency trainers. As a result, twice as many educators statewide were able to access trainings in the first four months of the new PGS trainings, and almost all participants found them to be of high quality and useful.



Based on the success in building statewide training capacity to support PGS implementation, MDE, with R7CC support, plans to replicate this strategy to support statewide training for early career administrators. These training initiatives will support the state's goal of having effective teachers and leaders in every school, leading to improved academic outcomes for all students.