

The Productivity Infrastructure: Laying the Foundation for a More Productive Education Sector

Betheny Gross
Center on Reinventing Public Education

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Productivity is clearly a priority in state education agencies (SEA). The first two volumes of *The SEA of the Future* made the case for a “productivity mindset” in our country’s state education agencies. Authors in these volumes argued that SEAs must fight against focusing exclusively on regulatory compliance to find more ways to provide local autonomy and consistently measure, assess, and hold themselves, their districts, and schools accountable for both performance and costs. Though these essays sharply challenged the traditional work of SEAs, state leaders responded enthusiastically, saying, “Yes. Where do we start?”

In this third volume of the series, we introduce the “productivity infrastructure.” The productivity infrastructure constitutes the building blocks for an SEA committed to supporting productivity, innovation, and performance—from the state chief to the classroom. These building blocks include:

- Policies to expand the flexibility of district and school leaders and allow them to make choices about resource use.
- State funding arrangements that fund students, not programs.
- Information systems that allow district and school leaders to accurately assess the productivity of policies and practices.

The essays in this volume offer a rich discussion of each of these elements.

Paul Hill of the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) begins the volume by explaining why a more productive education system requires states to systematically review policies and practices to assure local agencies have the flexibility and information they need to seek and implement new and, hopefully, more productive solutions.

Next, Larry Miller, also of CRPE, teams up with Marguerite Roza and Suzanne Simburg, both of the Ednomics Lab at Georgetown, to discuss how new funding and allocation models can encourage productive local decisionmaking and how states can seize the rare opportunity many now have to redesign their funding allocation models.

Kelly Hupfeld of the University of Colorado Denver digs deep into new policy frameworks that will provide local districts and schools with the flexibility and leverage they need while maintaining quality support and accountability at the SEA.

Finally, Marguerite Roza discusses the data needed to support districts and schools as they seek new, more productive solutions.

Together, these essays provide a foundation for the work of SEAs. The partners at the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center are committed to helping education agencies transform these ideas into real policies and practices that are right for their own states.

The BSCP Center's work includes, among other important topics, support for improving a state's Differentiated System of Recognition, Accountability and Support; managing performance; assuring functional coherence in the SEA; developing effective communication systems; and developing and managing talent. Information about these efforts is available at www.bscpcenter.org/publications.

SEAs can engage in this work with the BSCP Center partners in a variety of ways. The BSCP Center regularly offers webinars that can be viewed in real-time or from an archive at www.bscpcenter.org/events. Several webinars from Marguerite Roza on financing districts and schools are currently available.

SEA leaders seeking more intensive and focused support can participate in topic-based and collaborative problem-solving sessions called benchmarking activities. A benchmarking activity on building the internal talent for an SEA with a productivity focus will begin in spring 2014 and finish in fall 2014. Ideas for future benchmark topics are always welcome.

Finally, SEAs seeking more comprehensive support can request a direct consultation from the BSCP Center partners, who will work in close partnership with the regional content centers to provide focused and context-specific services.

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