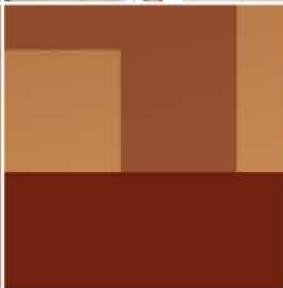
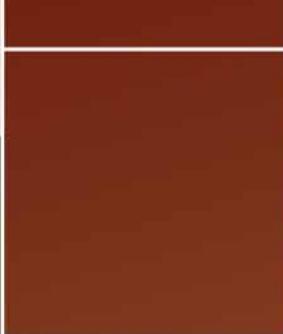


2001

SERVE Annual Report





SERVE ANNUAL REPORT

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2001

This *SERVE Annual Report* was edited by Dr. Donna Nalley, SERVE Publications Director, and designed by Richard Emond, SERVE Senior Graphic Designer.



Dear Reader,

SERVE has truly “Spread its Wings” in 2001—the first year of its second decade of service to schools and communities in the Southeast. **Spreading Our Wings** is the title of a report, prepared by John Dornan and his colleagues at the Public School Forum of North Carolina, which chronicles the first decade of SERVE’s work.

In this first year of its second decade, SERVE has reinforced its value to the Southeast by securing the renewal of its major contracts and grants, thereby ensuring that its portfolio of research- and development-based services to the region will continue. In addition, SERVE has integrated the work of its various programs to focus on developing models, tools, and processes that schools can use to address the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students and communities in the Southeast. And the organization is adapting its operations to the exigencies of our post 9/11 society.

SERVE has grown to a staff of over 100, housed in offices across the region to ensure timely access to services. It has deepened the expertise of staff, and it has focused their efforts through the adoption of five strategic goals:

1. Develop and maintain SERVE as a high-quality, high-performance learning organization
2. Develop a high-quality, focused portfolio of research-based programs, initiatives, products, and publications, emphasizing cutting-edge issues and addressing persistent problems
3. Be a financially stable, adaptable, and growth-oriented organization
4. Be recognized as a valued member of the education and education-related infrastructure in the member states, across the region, and across the nation
5. Be a major contributor to improving student performance across the Southeast

In 2001, we have determinedly pursued those goals. We believe this **Annual Report** reflects our determination. In this report, we feature four SERVE projects that have had a particularly strong impact on teaching and learning in the Southeast and beyond. The report also provides fiscal and governance information about SERVE. If you would like to learn more about our work, please contact us. Our website is www.serve.org, and our toll-free number is 800-755-3277.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John R. Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John R. Sanders, Ed.D.
Executive Director and CEO of SERVE

SERVE, directed by Dr. John R. Sanders, is an education organization with the mission to promote and support the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. The organization's commitment to continuous improvement is manifest in an applied research-to-practice model that drives all of its work. Building on theory and craft knowledge, SERVE staff members develop tools and processes designed to assist practitioners and policymakers with their work, ultimately, to raise the level of student achievement in the region. Evaluation of the impact of these activities combined with input from affected stakeholders expands SERVE's knowledge base and informs future research.

This vigorous and practical approach to research and development is supported by an experienced staff strategically located throughout the region. This staff is highly skilled in providing needs-assessment services, conducting applied research in schools, and developing processes, products, and programs that inform educators and increase student achievement. In the last three years, in addition to its basic research and development work with over 170 southeastern schools, SERVE staff provided technical assistance and training to more than 18,000 teachers and administrators across the region.

SERVE is governed by a board of directors that includes the governors, chief state school officers, educators, legislators, and private sector leaders from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

At the core of SERVE's business is the operation of the Regional Educational Laboratory. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, the Regional Educational Laboratory for the Southeast is one of ten programs providing research-based information and services to all 50 states and territories. These Laboratories form a nationwide education knowledge network, building a bank of information and resources shared nationally and disseminated regionally to improve student achievement locally. SERVE's National Leadership Area, Expanded Learning Opportunities, focuses on improving student outcomes through the use of exemplary pre-K and extended-day programs.

In addition to the Lab, SERVE operates the Southeast Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education and the SouthEast Initiatives Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR♦TEC). SERVE also administers a subcontract for the Region IV Comprehensive Center and has additional funding from the Department to provide services in migrant education and to operate the National Center for Homeless Education.

Together, these various elements of SERVE's portfolio provide resources, services, and products for responding to regional and national needs.

Program areas include

- ▶ Assessment, Accountability, and Standards
- ▶ Children, Families, and Communities
- ▶ Education Leadership
- ▶ Education Policy
- ▶ Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education
- ▶ School Development and Reform
- ▶ Technology in Learning



In addition to the program areas, the SERVE Evaluation Unit supports the evaluation activities of the major grants and contracts and provides contracted evaluation services to state and local education agencies in the region. The Technology Support Group provides SERVE staff and their constituents with IT support, technical assistance, and software applications. Through its Publications Unit, SERVE publishes a variety of studies, training materials, policy briefs, and program products. Among the many products developed at SERVE, two receiving national recognition include ***Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development***, honored by the National Staff Development Council, and ***Study Guide for Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment***, honored by Division H of AERA. Through its programmatic, technology, evaluation, and publishing activities, SERVE provides contracted staff development and technical assistance in specialized areas to assist education agencies in achieving their school improvement goals.

SERVE's main office is at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with major staff groups located in Tallahassee, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia, as well as satellite offices in Bonita Springs, Florida; Durham, North Carolina; and Shelby, Mississippi. Unique among the ten Regional Educational Laboratories, SERVE employs a full-time policy analyst to assist the chief state school officer at the state education agencies in each of the states in the SERVE region. These analysts act as SERVE's primary liaisons to the state departments of education, providing research-based policy services to state-level education policymakers and informing SERVE about key state education issues and legislation.



Anchor School Project

Director: Dr. Jean Williams

The Anchor School Project is a technology grant program designed to improve educational opportunities for Southeast migrant students traveling north in support of the agricultural industry. Project components include the use of technology in new and innovative ways; alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in sending and receiving states; collaboration among partners dedicated to migrant education; professional development for teachers in both sending and receiving sites; parental involvement training and family support; and an Instructional Support Team that follows many of the families as they travel between sites.

(See www.serve.org/anchorschool for more information.)

Assessment, Accountability, and Standards

Director: Dr. Wendy McColskey

SERVE's Program on Assessment, Accountability, and Standards focuses on classroom assessment practices that support student engagement in higher levels of learning, personnel evaluation systems that support professional growth, and district leadership in standards-based reform. Recent research on the critical role good feedback plays in student learning suggests teachers also need support in thinking about how their feedback to students could be improved. SERVE's workshops in classroom assessment provide a structured way for teachers to experiment and make a powerful classroom assessment system a reality. The workshops are offered at three levels: awareness, application, and extension. The theory behind SERVE's work in teacher evaluation is simple—provide clear expectations for performance and appropriate opportunities for growth toward meeting those expectations. SERVE has developed a comprehensive system for teacher evaluation that combines summative (accountability) with formative (professional growth) phases in a multi-year cycle of evaluation, and SERVE offers in-depth training on the methods and practices needed to implement teacher evaluation successfully. (See www.serve.org/assessment/individualgrowth4.html for more information.) District leaders play a key role in translating state standards, assessment, and accountability policies into meaningful organizational goals and action plans, and, in particular, in supporting the kinds of adult learning (among teachers and principals) that leads to long-term improvements in the quality of student learning. SERVE supports a regional consortium of districts (called SERVE-Leads) interested in standards-based reform as a way of building and disseminating knowledge about district strategies.

(See www.serve.org/assessment for more information.)

Children, Families, and Communities

Director: Dr. Beth Garriss Hardy

SERVE's Program for Children, Families, and Communities addresses educational and developmental needs of learners from birth through adulthood in the context of school, home, and community in traditional and non-traditional settings.





The following are some of its projects and activities:

- ▶ SERVE has been named the nation’s leading Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) in the area of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO). SERVE provides leadership for the REL system and other expanded learning opportunity programs seeking to improve student achievement through quality preschool and school-age programs.
- ▶ The SERVEing Young Children (SYC) project works to improve the quality of children’s early experiences by conducting research, producing publications, providing technical assistance, convening conferences, and facilitating collaborative relationships among early childhood and public school service providers.
- ▶ The National Center for Homeless Education is a national resource center of research and information enabling communities to successfully address the needs of homeless children, youth, and their families.
- ▶ Project Aspire, an Even Start Family Literacy grant, serves families by offering adult education, early childhood education, and other programs for parents.
- ▶ The Anchor School Project is a migrant education project funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Migrant Education, providing a technological lifeline to migrant farm-working families as they move from southwest Florida to other parts of the United States in search of seasonal agricultural work.
- ▶ Project Kaleidoscope, a 21st Century Learning Community grant, is a consortium of agencies and schools, providing after-school academic and enrichment programs for students and learning opportunities for parents and community members.
- ▶ The Glaxo/Hill Center Project, a public/private partnership, works toward improving education through The Hill Center’s highly successful strategies for special education.
- ▶ The Region IV Comprehensive Center @ SERVE works to help schools realize the goal of the Improving America’s Schools Act: that all children achieve to high standards, particularly those students with special needs.

(See www.serve.org/children for more information.)

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration

Director: Susan Martelli

SERVE provides guidance to the six states in the Southeast and to the 349 schools and their districts implementing school reform models through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program established by Congress in 1997. SERVE just completed case studies of 38 of these schools on the implementation of their comprehensive school reform plans. The second phase will continue the case study approach with a subset of the schools from the first study. In this phase, SERVE will provide guidance in using data to drive implementation. Assistance is available through workshops, the SERVE Forum on School Improvement, and online.

(See www.serve.org/CSRD, www.serve.org/CSRD/data-driven, and www.serve.org/UCR for more information.)

Education Leadership

Director: Dr. Steve Bingham

SERVE's Program on Education Leadership provides a comprehensive regional focus on leadership and educator quality from classroom to boardroom, schoolhouse to statehouse. The Education Leadership Program's goal is to improve school leadership capacity and educator quality by advancing models of teacher and principal professional development that promote student learning. A portfolio of research-based tools and processes enriched by ongoing opportunities for networking and dialogue assists in transforming low-performing schools into high-performing learning communities. Education Leadership projects are supported by an Online Learning Community where the needs of teachers and principals in under-resourced, low-performing schools are addressed in discussions with each other and more advantaged colleagues across the region.

(See www.serve.org/edleadership for more information.)



Education Policy

Director: Dr. Helen DeCasper

The Program on Education Policy addresses the policy development implications of local, state, regional, and national issues, problems, and initiatives in education. SERVE is committed to providing policymakers with objective, research-based information that will lead to more coherent and effective education policies. SERVE has developed a protocol for sensing education policy issues emerging in the region and nation and uses data collected from a variety of national, regional, and state sources to provide staff and constituents with information about current and emerging issues. Education Policy staff uses information gathered through the sensing process to conceptualize, research, and write Policy Briefs on issues of high importance to policymakers, educators, and others interested in education policy. These publications analyze education policy issues, identify and report trends, report the implications of education policy decisions, examine specific policy choices among states in the region, and propose policies to enhance education. Education Policy staff works in a variety of ways to help foster an informed policy environment that supports the successful transformation of low-performing schools into high-performing learning communities focusing on reading, curriculum and instruction, assessment and accountability, and quality education personnel. Senior Policy Research Analysts, located in each state education agency, provide local, state, and regional policymakers with information and assistance for the development and analysis of education policy.

(See www.serve.org/policy for more information.)



Evaluation and Quality Control

Director: TBD

A comprehensive program planning and evaluation system—for evaluation of programs, products, policy, personnel, and the evaluation process itself—is in place at SERVE to provide the tools for continuous improvement. The role of evaluation at SERVE is to inform decision making regarding educational efforts





by judging merit, worth, and significance of products, services, and projects. The Evaluation and Quality Control Unit has the primary responsibility for conducting educational evaluation at SERVE. The unit promotes utilization-focused evaluation, and staff is skilled in a variety of evaluation methods, including program planning/needs assessment, implementation evaluation, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation.

Expanded Learning Opportunities National Leadership Area

Director: Dr. Catherine Scott-Little

In 2000, SERVE was designated by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, as the lead Regional Educational Laboratory in the area of expanded learning opportunities. Services outside the traditional school-based classroom time—early childhood programs before children enter school, before- and after-school programs, and extended school hours—are increasingly recognized as a critical element for improvements in student achievement. SERVE conducts research, promotes collaborative partnerships, disseminates information, and provides training to improve the quality of expanded learning opportunity programs across the nation. (See www.serve.org/elo.html for more information.)

GlaxoSmithKline/Hill Center Project

Director: Jane Griffin

In 1997, The Hill Center and SERVE were awarded a grant to train public school teachers to identify and more effectively teach students with learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorders. This training was developed in response to national concerns for children with learning disabilities. Founded in 1977 by George Watts Hill, The Hill Center is the oldest and largest North Carolina school for children with learning disabilities and provides a unique half-day teaching model that serves students from approximately 42 schools. (See www.serve.org/children/hillcenter.htm for more information.)

The Greenhouse

Director: Dr. Richard Basom

SERVE's Greenhouse provides a nurturing environment to fledgling projects during the formative stages of development. While in the Greenhouse, new ideas and concepts are incubated into strong programmatic initiatives. The matured efforts transfer into an existing program, develop into a new program, or remain in the Greenhouse as unique projects.

During the past year, SERVE's Greenhouse has contained three projects:

- ▶ Promising Futures Model development funded by an IERI planning grant
- ▶ A National Science Foundation study
- ▶ An REL-sponsored research study on superintendent turnover

The Literacy Project

Director: Dr. Paula Egelson

To address schoolwide change and literacy issues across the curriculum, the SERVE Literacy Project offers the following processes and training opportunities. Senior Project provides a process for strengthening communication skills by means of a culminating assessment for twelfth-graders. Seniors write a research paper on an approved topic of student choice, develop a related product, create a portfolio, and present their findings before a review panel comprised of community members and educators. Each student has a mentor from the community, and there is a scoring rubric for each component of the program. SERVE provides training, institutes, meetings, products, and a website (www.serve.org/seniorproject) to support this process. In response to the growing English Language Learner (ELL) population across the Southeast, SERVE provides ELL training to interested districts. SERVE also helps schools and communities close the achievement gap through America Reads tutoring materials, which are published online.

(See www.serve.org/litproject for more information.)

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

Director: Diana Bowman

NCHE is a national resource center of research and information that helps communities to successfully address the needs of homeless children and youth and their families. The goals of the Center are to (a) disseminate resource and referral information related to the complex needs surrounding the education of homeless children and youth, (b) provide rapid-response referral information, (c) foster collaboration among various organizations with interests in addressing the education of homeless children, and (d) synthesize and apply existing research and guide the research agenda to expand the knowledge base on the education of homeless children and youth and their families. (See www.serve.org/nche for more information.)

Program for the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education

Director: Dr. Francena Cummings

SERVE's Program for the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education is geared toward the improvement of science and mathematics education through a focus on teaching and learning. This mission is pursued by developing and/or identifying capacity-building models of technical assistance and identifying and disseminating exemplary materials. The program operates the Southeast Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education @ SERVE for the six southeastern states.

(See www.serve.org/prisme for more information.)





Project Aspire

Director: Kathleen Dufford-Melendez

Project Aspire is a federally funded Migrant Education Even Start grant. A multiple-site family literacy program located in the western migratory stream of Florida, the program facilitates continuity in education and social services and assists in the transfer of student and family information. Project Aspire is structured to meet the needs of highly mobile migrant farm workers and their children and to narrow the achievement gap between migrant children and their peers through a cohesive family literacy program that provides adult, early childhood, and parenting education combined with quality parent/child interaction and home visits by Project Aspire staff. Staff assists in the coordination of services in three regional areas throughout western Florida to provide a unified and seamless program to meet the education and training needs of migrant families throughout the school year.



Project Kaleidoscope

Director: Dr. Beth Garriss Hardy

SERVE staff members are partners with the Collier County (Florida) Public Schools in the design and implementation of Project Kaleidoscope, a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant project, which targets migrant and other at-risk children and their families. The project operates six school-based Community Learning Centers, plus three satellite centers. Program activities include

- ▶ Multi-generational family literacy programs
- ▶ Academic support and enrichment for students of all ages and abilities in literacy, math, science, and technology
- ▶ Full access to services for individuals with disabilities
- ▶ Telecommunications and technology education for individuals of all ages
- ▶ Integrated academic and fine arts programming
- ▶ Integrated health education, social services, recreational, and cultural programs
- ▶ Nutrition and health programs

(See www.collier.k12.fl.us/grants/kaleidoscope/index.html for more information.)



Publications

Director: Dr. Donna Nalley

SERVE publishes a variety of free research-based studies, training materials, policy briefs, brochures, and videotapes. These informative products and publications are guides to available resources, discussions of current issues in education policy, and examples of exemplary educational programs.

(See www.serve.org/publications for more information.)



School Development and Reform

Director: Dr. Mary Apodaca

The mission of the School Development and Reform (SDR) Program is to help schools, communities, and states close the achievement gap between low- and high-achieving students. SDR staff develops and documents procedural knowledge about how to transform low-performing schools into high-performing learning communities and disseminates this knowledge through the Internet, print publications, meetings, and conferences. SDR staff operates the first SERVE SuperSite in partnership with the North Bolivar School District of Shelby in the Mississippi Delta. Five educator-mentors work one-on-one with teachers and administrators to implement the district's state-mandated Corrective Action Plan. They are engaged in strategic planning, revising curriculum, classroom best practices, and leadership development. (See www.serve.org/schoolreform for more information.)

SERVEing Young Children

Director: Dr. Catherine Scott-Little

Recognizing that quality early-childhood services are essential to improving student achievement, SERVE provides a variety of services to the Southeast to help teachers, caregivers, and parents promote all areas of children's development. The Early Childhood Project—known as SERVEing Young Children (SYC)—builds collaborative relationships among the early childhood community to enhance efforts in early childhood education for children from birth to age eight. SYC staff members conduct research, write publications, convene conferences, provide training, and offer technical assistance to promote sound early childhood policies and practices. (See www.serve.org/Syc for more information.)

The SouthEast Initiatives Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR♦TEC)

Director: Margaret Bingham

SEIR♦TEC is a consortium of five organizations working together to support technology in underserved, resource-poor schools in the Southeast. Consortium partners include SERVE (lead agency), the Instructional Technology Resource Center at the University of Central Florida, Learning Innovations @ WestEd, the National Center on Adult Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Southern Regional Education Board. Building on the partners' collective and individual expertise, SEIR♦TEC offers a unique combination of services and products for educators. (See www.seirtec.org for more information.)





The Southeast Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education @ SERVE

Director: Dr. Francena Cummings

The Southeast Eisenhower Regional Consortium is one of ten regional consortia created by Congress to improve mathematics and science education throughout the nation. Consortium staff coordinates mathematics and science resources, disseminates exemplary mathematics and science educational instructional materials, and provides technical assistance for the implementation of teaching methods and assessment tools for use by elementary and secondary schools' students, staff, and administrators. Consortium staff assists in the development and implementation of standards-based state curriculum frameworks, facilitates the use of telecommunications technology as a tool for mathematics and science instruction, supports equity in education by promoting programs and activities that meet the needs of underserved groups in mathematics and science, supports the use of informal mathematics and science agencies by disseminating information and encouraging collaboration, and promotes dialogue with community groups to engage them in meaningful ways to support mathematics and science. A number of informative local, state, regional, and national informative resources are available from the Consortium, as well as SERVE's free products and publications that address mathematics and science concerns from schools, districts, and state education agencies.

(See www.serve.org/Eisenhower for more information.)

Strategies for Understanding Networking Resources, Actions, and e-Yearbooks (SUNRAY)

Director: Gloria Bowman

The goal of the SUNRAY project is to assist higher education faculty in developing strategies and partnerships that will prepare future educators to use technology effectively for teaching and learning in order to meet the goals of 21st-century schools. Project staff members conduct professional development institutes and academies, create and maintain a virtual technical assistance community, and establish and support cohorts of higher education faculty and colleagues across the Southeast. In addition to these activities, SUNRAY participants document the processes and lessons learned during the project to share with other educators. The nine higher education SUNRAY campuses participating are University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (Arkansas), Mercer University (Georgia), Southeast Louisiana University (Louisiana), Jackson State University (Mississippi), North Carolina Central University (North Carolina), Universidad Metropolitana (Puerto Rico), Winthrop University (South Carolina), Greensboro College (North Carolina), and Fairmont State College (West Virginia). Partnering with SERVE on the SUNRAY project are the Instructional Technology Resource Center at the University of Central Florida, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, and Learning Innovations @ WestEd. Apple Computers, Inc. and Hart, Inc. provide technical support and services.

(See www.serve.org/sunray for more information.)

Technology in Learning

Director: Dr. Elizabeth Byrom

SERVE's Program on Technology in Learning focuses on improving the processes of teaching and learning through the use of emerging electronic technologies, including computers, the Internet, telecommunications, and software applications. The Technology in Learning staff conducts research and development in strategies, methods, and materials and provides technical assistance and staff development to educators, parents, and others in schools, districts, and state education agencies.

(See www.serve.org/technology for more information.)

Technology Support

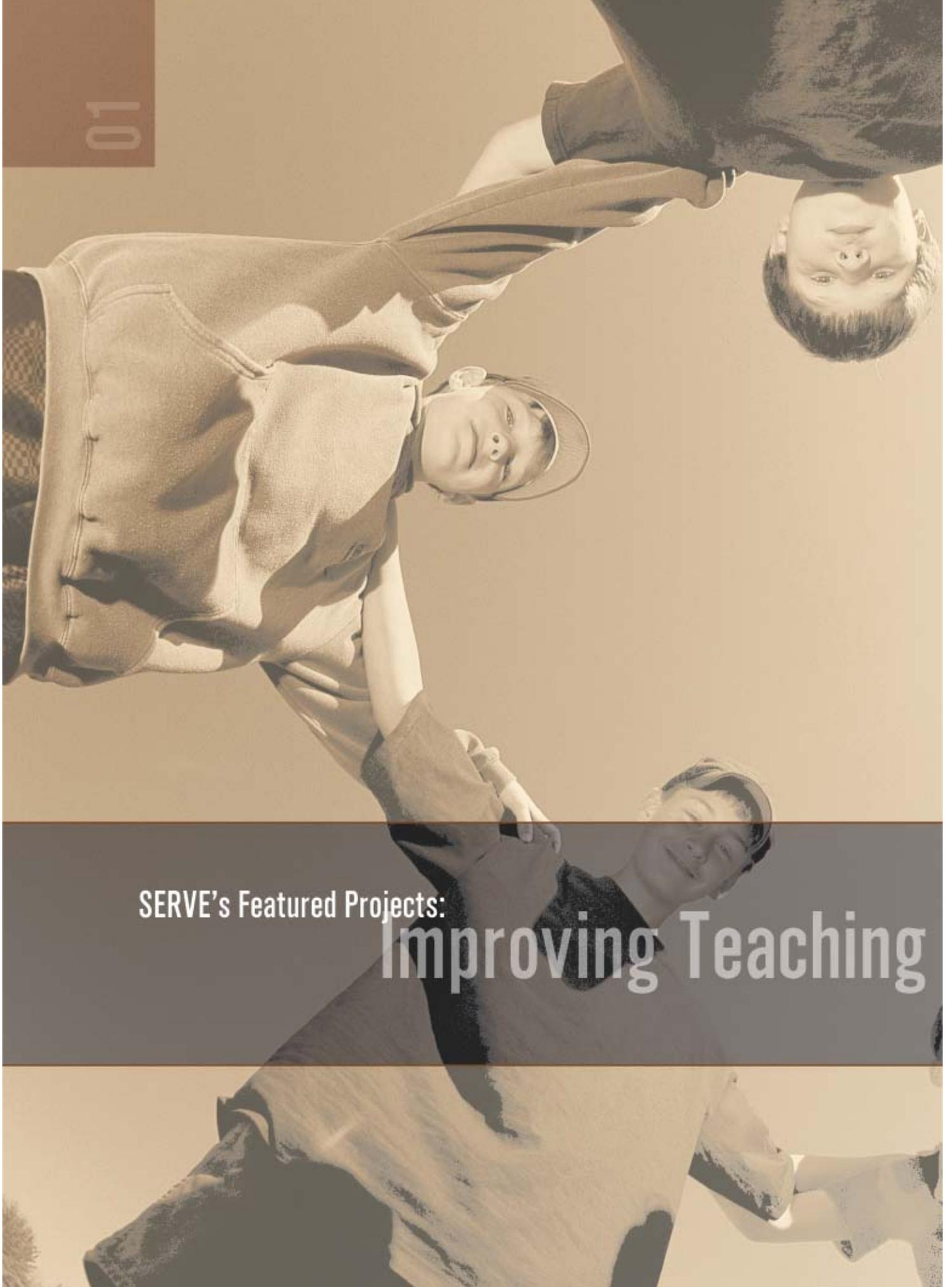
Director: Gregory Lee Pow

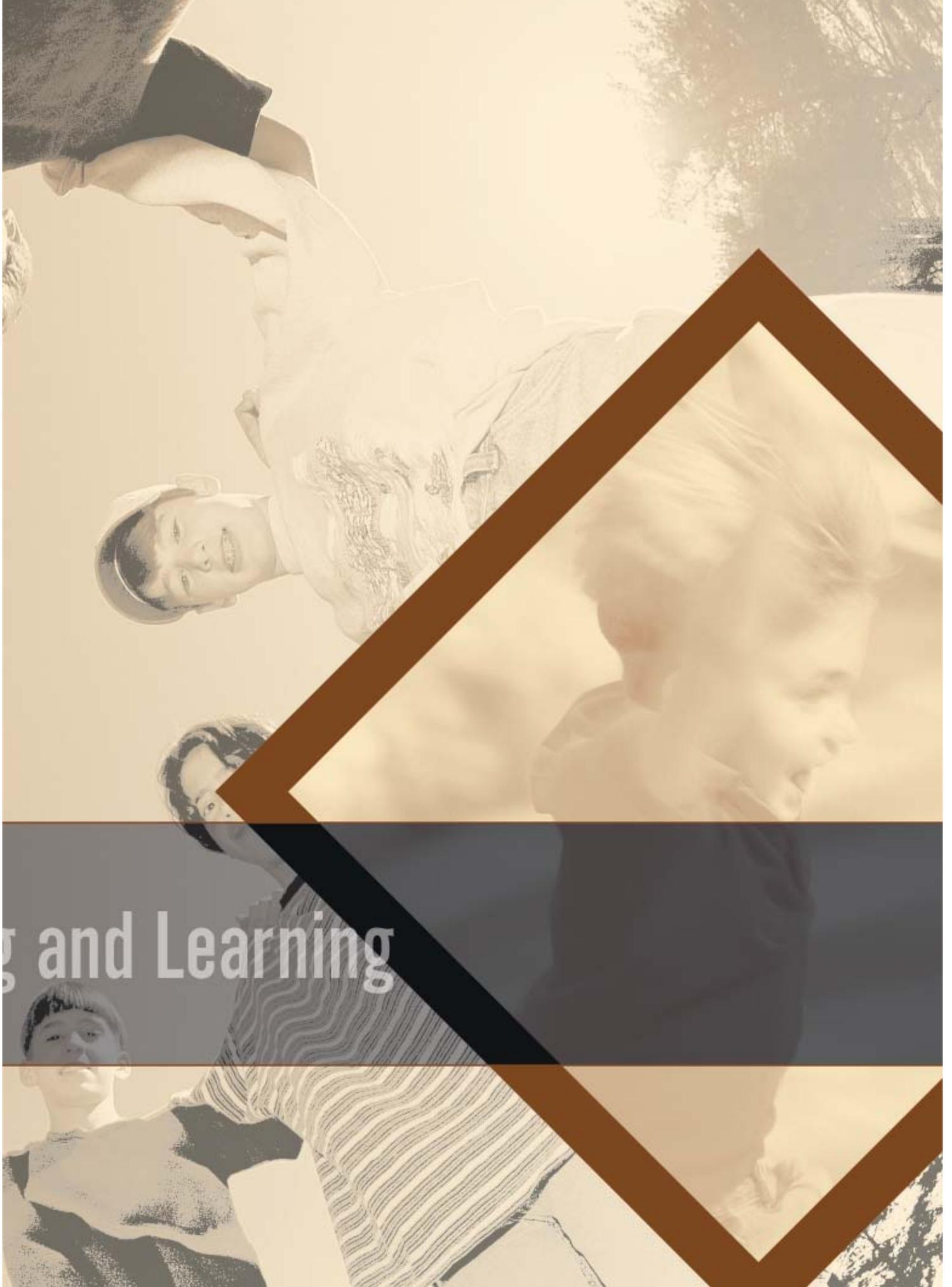
SERVE continues to enhance its technology infrastructure this year with the installation of the new TCIP-based videoconferencing server and software and new collaboration software for staff work and discussions. The videoconferencing enhancement provides greater communication capabilities among offices and external partners. The system is used to conduct monthly program and staff meetings. SERVE has also increased the use of videoconferencing to conduct meetings with programs throughout the Southeast. We have upgraded our collaboration software to support the communication of our staff members, clients, and partners located in each of the six states. This system is available on SERVE's Intranet and Internet. This software is the primary discussion tool used by the states' policy analysts in the region. In addition, SERVE continues to maintain its local and wide area networks (LANs and WANs) that support e-mail, collaborative software applications, videoconferencing, and Internet and Intranet services.



SERVE's Featured Projects:

Improving Teaching





g and Learning

Leadership

In spite of nearly a decade of school reform efforts, many of our low-performing schools are still in trouble, and the achievement gap persists. Expanded learning opportunity programs—such as preschool programs and after-school programs—are a solution many schools are exploring.

Examples of expanded learning opportunities, including after-school programs to provide enrichment for students, pre-kindergarten programs to prepare children for school, and longer school hours or additional school days, are becoming more common. These learning opportunities can provide low achievers individualized help with academic subjects and assist students not reached during the traditional school day.

SERVE was named the nation's lead Regional Educational Laboratory in Expanded Learning Opportunities for this five-year contract period, and as such, SERVE's vision is to lead the Laboratory system in efforts to improve student achievement through expanded learning programs. During the first year of the contract, SERVE conducted an extensive research

Expanding Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs: SERVE's Regional Leadership Area Assisting Expanded Learning Opportunities

Assisting Expanded Learning Opportunities Programs: SERVE's New National Leadership Area

synthesis on after-school program evaluations, developed partnerships with a variety of organizations, and convened meetings and conferences to promote the use of expanded learning programs.

For example, in spring 2001, SERVE convened state specialists in early childhood education from across the country in a targeted professional development experience to examine research-based information on promoting quality expanded learning policies and practices. Co-sponsored by SERVE, the National Center for Early Development and Learning, the National Association of Early Childhood State Specialists in State Departments of Education, and the National Institute for Early Childhood Development and Education, the event enabled participants to learn from a nationally known communications expert how to effectively deliver research-based information in order to impact policy and program decisions.

A second example of SERVE's work in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Leadership Area is a symposium on readiness assessment systems, held December 2001, in Atlanta, Georgia. Across the country, early childhood programs and school systems are struggling with how best to collect assessment data from children entering kindergarten in order to gauge how well the community and early childhood programs are doing in their efforts to prepare children for kindergarten and to inform schools concerning where to focus their efforts to best meet the needs of kindergarten children. Unfortunately, there are significant challenges to collecting assessment data from children at this young age.

In order to serve as a catalyst for improvements in readiness assessment systems, SERVE partnered with Sharon Lynn Kagan of Teachers College at Columbia University and Richard Clifford of the National Center for Early Development and Learning to convene teams from nine states implementing wide-scale readiness assessment systems: California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Carolina. In preparation for the symposium, leading researchers were asked to write commissioned papers on specific readiness assessment issues. The symposium was as an opportunity to review assessment issues from a research perspective, to promote practical discussions of how states are addressing these issues, and to set an agenda for future research and follow-up in the field of early childhood assessment.

One participant commented, "Hearing well-informed persons discuss the same issues I was facing was extremely helpful, not only in terms of critical information and points of view, but also [discussions of] confusion and ambivalence [states are experiencing] on many matters. I have a much better perspective to apply to my challenges in assessment and evaluation."

The goal of SERVE's National Leadership Area is to improve the quality of many different types of Expanded Learning Opportunities through research, development of useful tools, and opportunities for stakeholders to discuss current issues. By addressing the Expanded Learning Opportunities field from a variety of angles—school readiness programs, after-school programs, and assessment policy issues—SERVE is providing timely and research-based information to professionals dedicated to improving student outcomes across the nation.



Improving

In 1999, low student test scores and other factors placed four of the six Bolivar County school districts in the Mississippi Delta on probation. But then, Mississippi suspended its accountability system until a new one would be functional in 2002. North Bolivar School District (NBSD) officials in Shelby were in limbo.

Also in 1999, the Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE approached the Mississippi state superintendent with the idea of partnering with a low-performing Delta school district to raise student achievement. SERVE wanted to test a theory of action for intensive intervention based on ideas from the agricultural extension agent model and the state assistance teams in North Carolina.

The educational extension agent works with district and school administrators, while his team of mentor-teachers works in classrooms to assist in improving instruction—the cornerstone of higher-quality student achievement. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement has been funding the SERVE intervention, and team members document all work in collaboration with SERVE’s Evaluation Program. They began the work in January 2000.

on in the Mississippi Delta With Strategic Planning for Reform
Mississippi Delta With Strategic Planning for Reform Improving In

Improving Instruction in the Mississippi Delta With Strategic Planning for Reform

In summer 2000, after performing some work in classrooms and doing an analysis of why district children weren't achieving, district and SERVE officials attended a workshop that began a strategic planning process, eventually involving 80 community and school district participants. The strategic planning process culminated on Friday, June 1, 2001. While many strategic plans are immediately stored on dusty shelves along with other non-implemented good ideas, the following Monday, with SERVE staff facilitating, NBSD teachers and administrators identified three institutional goals based on the strategies. They based their 2001–2002 accountability on these goals.

Implementation of the strategic plan amounts to continuous professional development embedded in administrators' and teachers' daily work. The following from a Mentor Teacher's journal provides a hint of how hard the work and the changes are:

Staff meeting Tuesday morning; obtained standardized norm-referenced test information and began compiling as requested. Met with Brooks Elementary staff for staff development. Gave kindergarten teachers copies of curriculum-management software suggestions. They were very appreciative. Mr. Hall was as well and was quite interested in the SERVE publication on kindergarten evaluation. Met with first-grade teachers in breakout session. Listened as they talked about the frustrations they feel with changes required. Most are making very good headway. All are trying. Thursday, I completed third-grade stats from tests and returned them to Mr. Hall. He has very definite plans for this information and seems to have a renewed determination to use it for improvements in many areas. Thursday afternoon, I assisted one of the teachers with her curriculum software work.

Each Wednesday afternoon, students are dismissed, and teachers meet more formally. The following are planned activities for the next week from the same mentor's journal:

Activities for the week of September 17–21: Share SERVE publication on kindergarten evaluation with kindergarten teachers. Meet with them to begin setting up format for their use of the curriculum-management software. Continue to get information from other schools using software for lower levels. Assist teachers in generating the progress report due to parents on Thursday, September 20. Staff meeting Tuesday. Staff development Wednesday.

Will they sustain the momentum that comes with a new school year? Will instruction improve as they align their curriculum and testing with state standards? The indications are yes; they're following through.





In many circles, there is growing concern about high school graduates' lack of preparedness for entering the workplace or the university. Employers report that many new workers don't have the skills to be successful or competitive on the job. Many employers now hire on the basis of a person's ability to master a set of skills, rather than on the basis of existing skills (Salzman, Moss, & Tilly, 1998). In the educational arena, as many as half of all college students did not have adequate academic preparation and were required to take remedial courses (Haycock & Huang, 2001). At the high school level, there is anxiety about the secondary experience itself. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education, in conjunction with several national foundations, initiated the National Commission on the High School Senior Year. Their final report was issued in October 2001. The intent of the commission was to examine ways to make the senior year more rigorous and productive. Possible solutions to this dilemma included eliminating the senior year, having students develop a capstone project, requiring an internship of all high school students, and encouraging more young people to enroll in advanced classes.

Senior Project: The Bridge Between High School and the Real World

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Senior Project: The Bridge Between High School and the Real World

"The best classes are those where you learn the material and life's lessons. You learn to apply it. You learn skills. You develop a broader base of knowledge."

—Senior Project student

Educators are discovering that one way to strengthen the twelfth-grade year is to implement Senior Project, a culminating assessment that demonstrates what students know and what they can do as they prepare to graduate from high school. SERVE initiated Senior Project as an area of study in 1994. It was a way of engaging seniors, raising standards, integrating the curriculum, and preparing students for the real world. Today, there are over 75 high schools that are part of SERVE's Senior Project Network. SERVE also provides training to schools, coordinates a yearly institute, facilitates networking meetings across the Southeast, operates a website, develops videotapes on various Senior Project topics, and conducts research.

"All the years of school prepare you for Senior Project."

—Senior Project student

Senior Project requires students to produce a research paper on an approved topic of student choice, develop a related product, work with a mentor, and present their findings before a community review panel. Student topics are expected to be a learning stretch; topic categories include academics, personal or career exploration, and community service. Each student has a mentor from the community, and there is a scoring rubric for each component of the program. Senior Project emphasizes communication skills, such as writing, researching, and speaking, and personal skills, such as planning and time management. If implemented properly, Senior Project acts as a transition between high school and the workplace and/or higher education.

"The 'forgotten' kid benefits the most from Senior Project."

—Faculty member at a Senior Project school

Research has been a critical part of SERVE's Senior Project work. In a survey conducted by SERVE in 1998 and 1999, over 80% of parents and faculty members at 16 Senior Project high schools across the Southeast agreed that "as a result of participating in Senior Project, students' writing, presenting, and time-management skills had improved." In a follow-up study conducted by SERVE during the 1999–2000 school year, high school graduates of four Senior Project high schools and four non-Senior Project high schools reported that the skills that Senior Project supports—writing, researching, speaking, time management—were the ones needed in the workplace or at college.

"Senior Project made me think of school as more important."

—Senior Project student

During 2001, a video on how to develop and score a Senior Project presentation was developed; in part, it was based on the procedural knowledge of Senior Project coordinators. A comprehensive Senior Project website was designed based on coordinator input, and a study on how colleges weigh Senior Project participation in the college admissions process will be completed at the close of the year. A Senior Project Network distribution list was created, and Senior Project coordinator meetings, training, and a national institute occurred across the Southeast. Senior Project truly acts as a bridge to adulthood for many high school students in our region.



Providing

As American families become more mobile, so do their children. And when children move, a complex system of school-related paperwork follows them—or at least it should. Too often, however, children arriving in new schools “stump” their teachers. What were they studying? What materials were they using? What standards had they achieved? Teachers face these questions regularly as children move from town to town and state to state.

Perhaps the most compelling example of children caught in this cycle of change is that of migrant children. Imagine what the school year is like for nine-year-old Juan, who is living in Immokalee, Florida. Juan begins his school year by acquainting himself with his teacher and peers and learning the daily classroom routines. Over time, Juan begins to feel comfortable and secure in his school. His teacher provides classroom instruction that is designed to help him achieve the standards and benchmarks required of all students in Florida schools.

Now, imagine what happens to Juan when, prior to the end of the school year, he must travel to a new state.

Providing Migrant Students a Mechanism for Continuity in Learning
Anchor School Project's Electronic Portfolio Providing Migrant

The Anchor School Project

Juan enters a new school and begins the "getting acquainted" cycle all over again. Valuable instructional time is lost as Juan's teacher struggles with potentially incomplete or uninformative student records.

The Anchor School Project recognizes the impact of these inconsistencies on the educational progress of migrant children and has developed an electronic portfolio to provide greater continuity of instruction for migrant students. The electronic portfolio provides data on the student's academic profile, as well as information on his or her interests, goals, and community/school activities. Also, the electronic portfolio provides teachers with access to lesson plans and assessments aligned to state standards.

The process of developing an electronic portfolio began with a series of meetings with Collier County (Florida) district staff and representatives from each Anchor School (Manatee Elementary, Naples Park Elementary, and Village Oaks Elementary). A Portfolio Development Team with representatives from the district office and from each Anchor School was established. The Portfolio Development Team, along with Anchor School Project staff, established the components for the portfolio, and the team meets regularly to update the content, guidelines, and processes for each portfolio component.

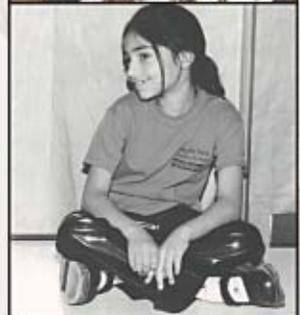
The student portfolio for the District School Board of Collier County is a purposeful collection of work showing student proficiency levels for specific content areas. The portfolio provides the following:

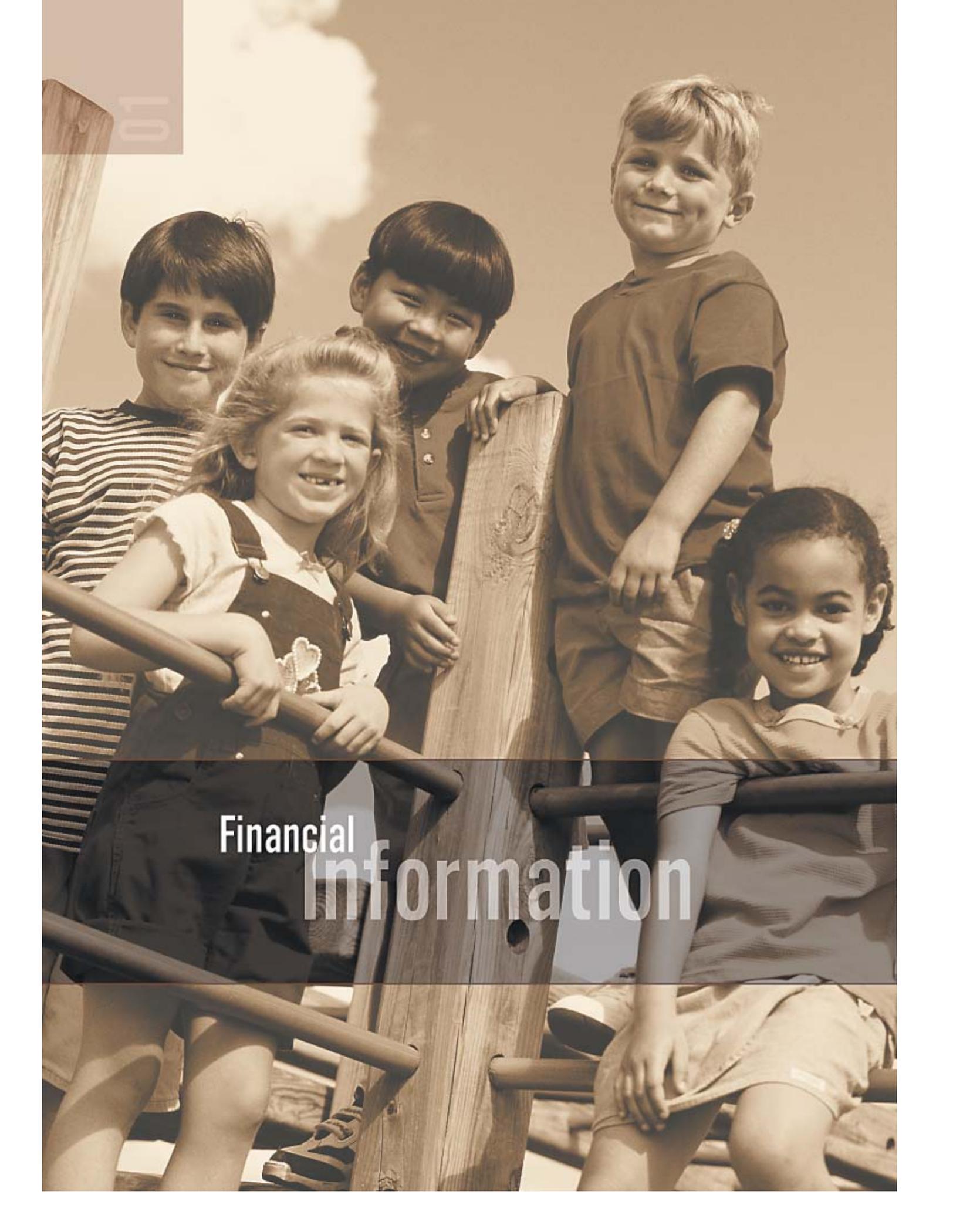
- ▶ A method to exhibit a student self-portrait
- ▶ Information for teachers to make decisions, take action, and guide instruction
- ▶ Evidence of student growth and achievement demonstrated in a variety of ways
- ▶ A collaborative mechanism to assist in setting future learning goals

The ongoing work of the Portfolio Development Team has produced some valuable insights or "lessons learned" for those interested in the process, including the following suggestions:

- ▶ Create a "big picture" view of the portfolio that includes a definition and a template design, which reminds developers of the purpose of the portfolio.
- ▶ The portfolio is only as good as its content. Portfolio components have been carefully defined to include guidelines and process considerations.
- ▶ Technology is an efficient tool for storage and management of student data; however, data is of little help to teachers without the use of quality assessments.
- ▶ Keeping district staff and building-level leaders informed and involved is crucial to the project's success.
- ▶ Resources for accomplishing the task must be considered.
- ▶ Keep student achievement and motivation in mind at all times.

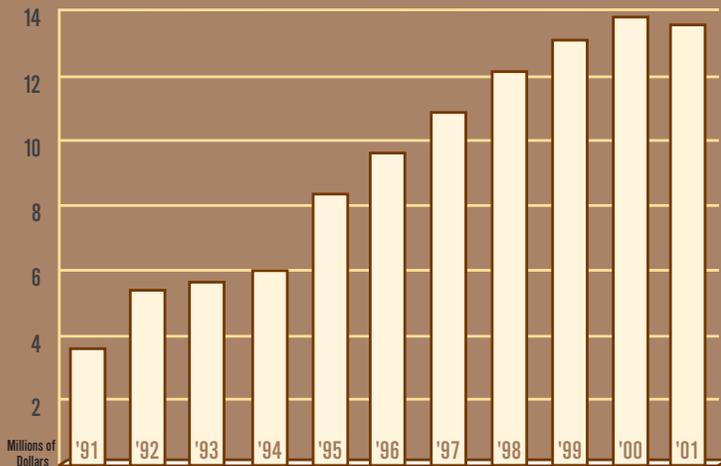
One teacher commented, "The portfolio should make it possible for a student, his current teacher, and his former teacher to communicate and foster a program that best meets his or her needs without guess work." Another teacher noted that the most significant contribution of the electronic portfolio is "the direct link with families that are moving upstream to decrease the loss of skills and to ensure that students are in school."



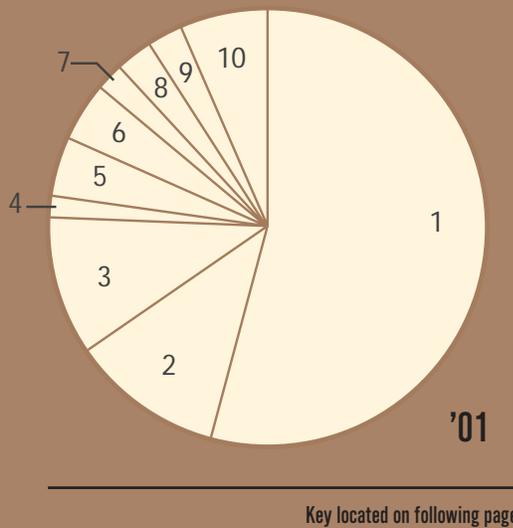


Financial
Information

**CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:
AGGREGATE VALUE OF MAJOR AWARDS BY FISCAL YEAR**

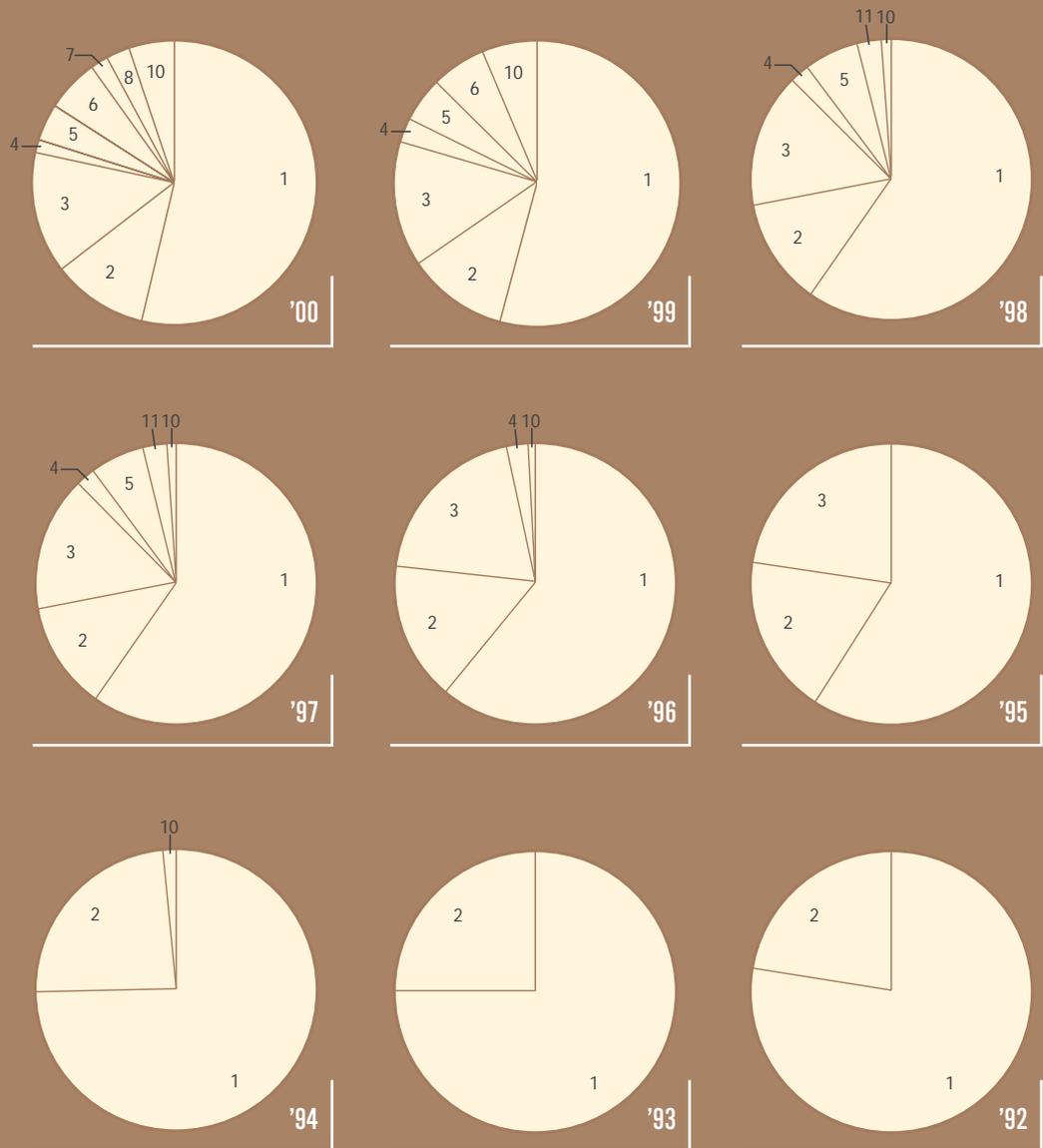


**AN OVERVIEW OF MAJOR CONTRACT
AND GRANT AWARDS BY FISCAL YEAR**



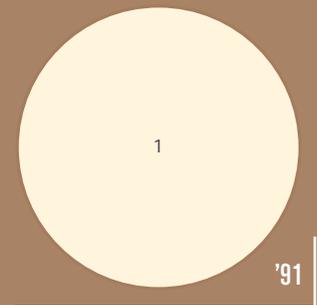


CORE WORK



KEY

- 1 Regional Laboratory
- 2 Math/Science Consortium
- 3 SEIR♦TEC
- 4 Comprehensive Center
- 5 Anchor Schools
- 6 SUNRAY
- 7 ASPIRE
- 8 Kaleidoscope
- 9 NCHE
- 10 Other
- 11 Charter Schools



FUNDING SOURCES

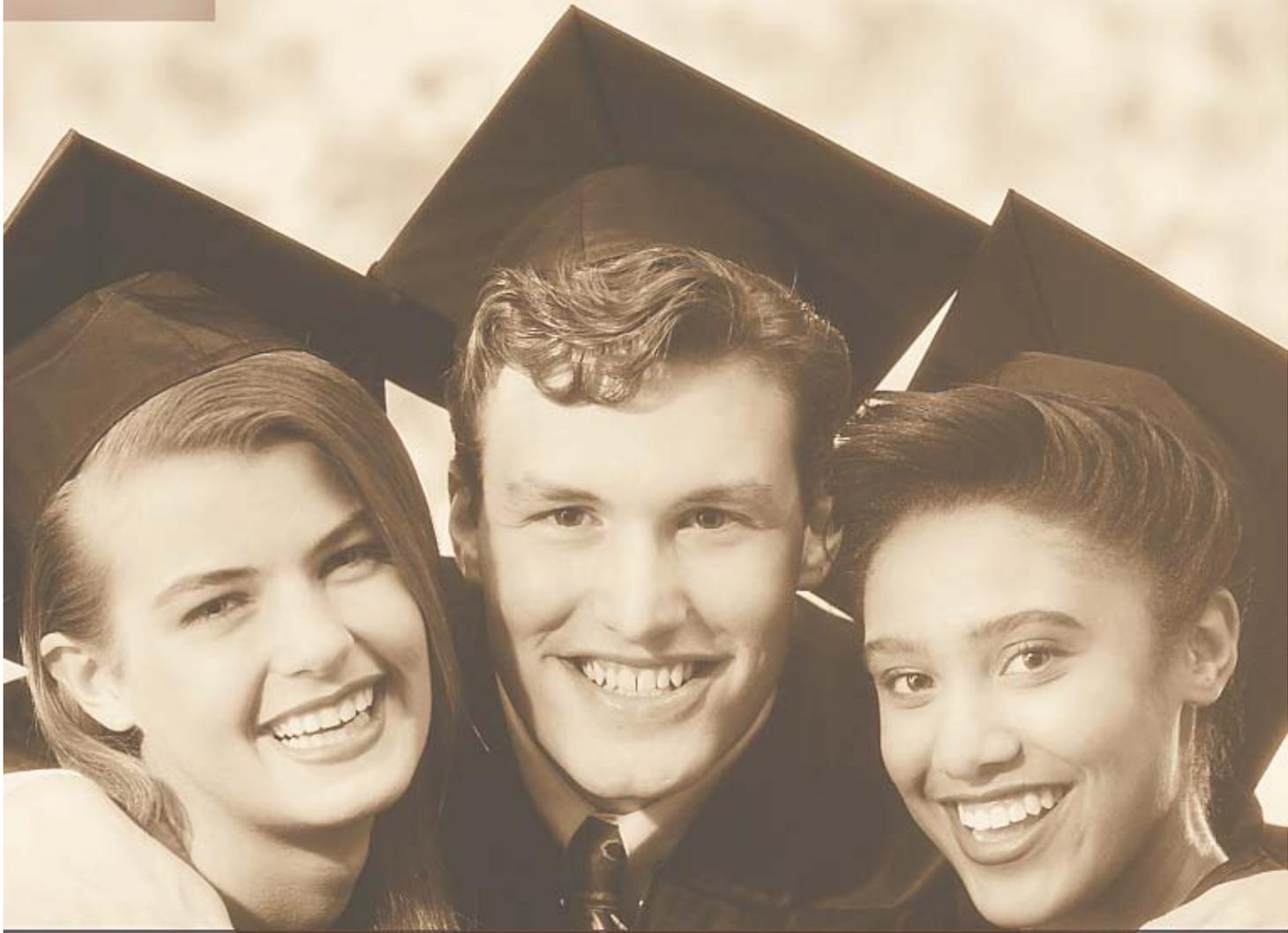
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 Alamance-Burlington School District
 Alamance Community College
 Alcorn School District
 AmSouth Bank
 Appalachia Educational Laboratory
 ARC of Greensboro
 Atlanta Empowerment Zone
 Bay District Schools
 BellSouth Corporation
 Ben Hill County School District
 Black Hills Special Services Cooperative
 Calhoun County School District
 Center for Civic Education
 Charleston County School District
 Charlottesville City School District
 Chatooga County Board of Education
 Chester County School District
 Chesterfield County School District
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 University of North Carolina at Greensboro
 University of North Carolina at Wilmington
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- FY '01 Only
- FY '01 & Prior Years
- Prior Years Only





Board of
Directors

Honorable Donald Siegelman, Governor

Governor's Office, Alabama State House
Montgomery, AL 36130
Office: 334-242-7100/Fax: 334-242-4541
Ex-officio Member

Nick Sellers, Policy Director

Governor's Office, 600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130
Office: 334-353-1277/Fax: 334-353-3012
E-mail: nsellers@governor.state.al.us

**Ed Richardson, Superintendent of Education
Alabama Department of Education**

50 North Ripley Street
5114 Gordon Persons Building
Montgomery, AL 36103
Office: 334-242-9700/Fax: 334-242-9708
E-mail: edrich@alsde.edu
Ex-officio Member

**Anita Buckley-Commander,
Director of Classroom Improvement**

50 North Ripley Street,
3345 Gordon Persons Building
Montgomery, AL 36103
Direct: 334-242-8247
Office: 334-242-8155/Fax: 334-242-0482
E-mail: abuckley@mail.alsde.edu

**Representative Richard Lindsey,
Chairman, Ways and Means Education
Fund Committee**

14160 County Road 22
Centre, AL 35960
Office: 256-475-3400/Fax: 256-475-3401
State House: 334-242-7713
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

Al Knight**Knight Communications & Consulting**

760 Paradise Cove Lane
Wilsonville, AL 35186
Mobile: 205-389-2100
Home: 205-670-0354
E-mail: Alknight40@aol.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2002

**Beatrice W. Phillips, Associate Professor
of Nutrition**

Tuskegee University
304 Campbell Hall
Tuskegee, AL 36088
Office: 334-727-8326/Fax: 334-727-8493
E-mail: Ghebwp@tusk.edu
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Virda K. Lester, Associate Professor
and Coordinator of Reading**

Tuskegee University
PO Box 412
Tuskegee, AL 36087
(Office of the Provost, 209 Kresge Center,
Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL 36088)
Office: 334-727-8282/Fax: 334-727-9903
E-mail: v_lester@tusk.edu

**Sandra Sims-deGraffenried,
Executive Director**

Alabama Association of School Boards
PO Box 230488
Montgomery, AL 36123-0488
Office: 334-277-9700/Fax: 334-270-0000
E-mail: Sandra@theaasb.org
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

**Robin Litaker,
Teacher of the Year Representative**

PO Box 59393
Homewood, AL 35259
Office: 205-439-2700/Fax: 205-985-2471
E-mail: rlitaker@hoover.k12.al.us
Term Expires: May 31, 2002



Honorable J. E. Bush, Governor

Governor's Office
 Capitol Complex
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
 Office: 850-488-4441/Fax: 850-487-0801
 E-mail: jeb@jeb.org
 Ex-officio Member

**John Winn, Coordinator,
 Assistant Secretary to the
 Board of Education
 Office of the Secretary,
 Florida Board of Education**

325 West Gaines Street
 Tallahassee, FL 32399
 Office: 850-201-7400/Fax: 850-201-7405
 E-mail: john.winn@flboe.org

**Charlie Crist, Commissioner of Education
 Florida Department of Education**

Office of the Commissioner
 Turlington Building (TUR), 325 West Gaines Street
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
 Office: 850-487-1785/Fax: 850-488-1492
 E-mail: cristc@mail.doe.state.fl.us
 Ex-officio Member

**Representative Heather J. Fiorentino
 Florida House of Representatives**

402 South Monroe Street
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
 Office: 850-488-5522/Fax: 850-922-5912
 E-mail: fiorentino.heather@leg.state.fl.us
 Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Dale Hickam, Deputy Staff Director for
 Senate Appropriations Committee and
 Staff Director for Senate Appropriations
 Subcommittee on Education**

402 South Monroe Street
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100
 Office: 850-487-5140/Fax: 850-487-5161
 E-mail: dale.hickam@laspbs.state.fl.us

**Ken Hamilton, President
 Palm Pavilion**

10 Bay Esplanade
 Clearwater, FL 33767
 Office: 727-446-2642/Fax: 727-446-4255
 Home: 727-447-3548
 E-mail: kenh@palmpavilion.com
 Term Expires: May 31, 2003

**J. David Armstrong, Jr.,
 Executive Director
 Florida Community College System**

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1314
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
 Office: 850-488-1721 ext. 169
 Fax: 850-488-9763
 E-mail: david@flccs.org
 Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Theresa Klebacha,
 Assistant Executive Director
 Florida Community College System**

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1314
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
 Office: 850-488-1721 ext. 146
 Fax: 850-487-3441
 E-mail: theresa@flccs.org

**Vicki Davis, Chairman
 Martin County School Board**

500 East Ocean Boulevard
 Stuart, FL 34994
 Office: 561-220-9705/Fax: 561-220-2503
 Home: 561-283-7213
 E-mail: Davisv@compuserve.com
 Term Expires: May 31, 2002

**Grace Williams,
 Teacher of the Year Representative**

6557 Waltho Drive
 Jacksonville, FL 32277
 Phone: 904-745-6295
 E-mail: fltoy98@aol.com
 Term Expires: May 31, 2003

Honorable Roy E. Barnes, Governor

Governor's Office
203 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334
Office: 404-656-1776/Fax: 404-656-2612
Ex-officio Member

**Ron Newcomb,
Assistant to the Governor for Education**

115 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334
Office: 404-463-7772/Fax: 404-463-7779
E-mail: ron@gov.state.ga.us

**Linda Schrenko, Superintendent
State Department of Education**

2066 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, GA 30334
Office: 404-656-2598/Fax: 404-651-8737
E-mail: lschrenk@doe.k12.ga.us
Mary Ann Evans, Scheduler
Ex-officio Member

**Tucker Vaughn, Director
Education Field Services**

Region IV
One Seventh Street
Augusta, GA 30901
Office: 706-821-0622/Fax: 706-821-0634
E-mail: tvaughn@doe.k12.ga.us

TBD

**Leslie Graitcer, Executive Director
BellSouth Foundation**

BellSouth Corporation
7H08, 1154 Peachtree Street, Northeast
Atlanta, GA 30367
Office: 404-249-2429/Fax: 404-249-5696
E-mail: leslie.graitcer@bellsouth.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2002

TBD

**Holly A. Robinson, Senior VP, Education
Georgia Public Policy Foundation**

6100 Lake Forrest Drive, Suite 110
Atlanta, GA 30328
Office: 404-256-4050
Fax: 404-256-9909 or 850-413-0326
E-mail: hrobinson@gppf.org

**LaMarian Hayes-Wallace, Program Management
Consultant**

Georgia Technology Authority
100 Peachtree Street
Suite 2300
Atlanta, GA 30303
Office: 404-657-1360/Fax: 404-463-2380
E-mail: lhwallace@gagta.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

Deborah Childs-Bowen

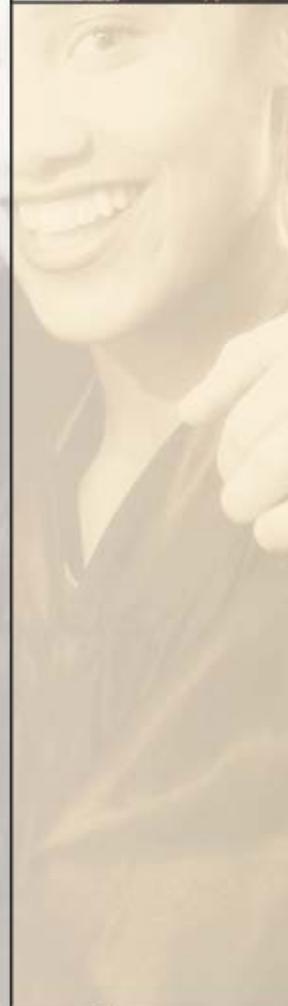
122 Braton Street
Decatur, GA 30030-3767
Home: 404-378-8502
E-mail: dchildsbowen01@aol.com

**Rogers Wade, President
Georgia Public Policy Foundation**

6100 Lake Forest Drive, Suite 110
Atlanta, GA 30328
Office: 800-423-8867/Fax: 404-256-9909
E-mail: trwade@gppf.org
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

Brenda Fitzgerald, MD

336 West Club Drive
Carrollton, GA 30117
Phone: 770-834-8130
E-mail: bcs75@hotmail.com



**Honorable David Ronald Musgrove, Governor
State of Mississippi**

New Capitol Building
PO Box 139
Jackson, MS 39205-0139
Office: 601-359-3100/Fax: 601-359-3471
Ex-officio Member

**Kelly Riley, Educational Advisor
Office of the Governor**

PO Box 139
(550 High Street, Walter Sillers Building 39201)
Jackson, MS 39205-0139
Office: 601-359-3150/Fax: 601-359-3741
E-mail: kriley@govoff.state.ms.us

**Richard L. Thompson, Superintendent
State Department of Education**

PO Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771
Office: 601-359-3512
Fax: 601-359-3242 (Jamie Bray)
E-mail: rthompson@mde.k12.ms.us
Ex-officio Member

**Larry Jones, Associate Superintendent
for Academic Education
State Department of Education**

PO Box 771, Suite 270
Jackson, MS 39205-0771
Office: 601-359-3515/Fax: 601-359-3033
E-mail: lajones@mde.k12.ms.us

Representative Alyce Clarke

1053 Arbor Vista Boulevard
Jackson, MS 39209
Office: 601-354-5453/Fax: 601-354-4737
E-mail: aclarke@mail.house.state.ms.us
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Jayne Sargent, Superintendent
Jackson Public Schools**

PO Box 2338
Jackson, MS 39225-2338
Office: 601-960-8725/Fax: 601-960-8713
E-mail: jsargent@jackson.k12.ms.us

Paul Mize**Ross & Yerger Insurance Company**

PO Box 1668
Tupelo, MS 38801
Office: 601-844-0222 or 800-295-2756
Fax: 601-844-0258 or 601-914-9346
E-mail: pmize@rossandyerger.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

**Di Ann Lewis, Director of Education
and Academic Programming
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning**

Office of Academic Affairs
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211
Office: 601-432-6372/Fax: 601-432-6978
E-mail: dlewis@ihl.state.ms.us
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Paulette Briscoe, Assistant Principal
Magnolia Junior High School**

4630 Magnolia Street
Moss Point, MS 39563
Office: 228-475-7511/Fax: 228-474-3397
E-mail (Day): Paulette_Briscoe@NPHS.edu
E-mail (Evening): PTBriscoe1@aol.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2002

**Janice Powell, Principal
Charlotte Hyatt Elementary School**

5525 New Castle Drive
Moss Point, MS 39563
Office: 228-475-2171/Fax: 228-474-3395
Home: 228-497-3335
E-mail: janice_powell@mphs.edu

**Calvin J. Isaac, Retired Principal,
Native American Education
Council Representative**

10231 Road 604
Philadelphia, MS 39350-8956
Phone: 601-656-5136
Fax: 601-656-9454
Term Expires: May 31, 2002

**Tina Scholtes,
Teacher of the Year Representative
Suddeth Elementary**

101 Greenfield
Starkville, MS 39759
Office: 662-324-0754
Fax: 662-324-6137
E-mail: tfscholtes@aol.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**David Lee Potter,
Regional Board Representative
President, Delta State University**

Kethley Building, Room 113
Cleveland, MS 38733
Office: 662-846-4001
Fax: 662-846-4014
E-mail: dpotter@dsu.deltast.edu

**E. E. "Butch" Caston,
Regional Board Representative
Dean, Delta State University**

School of Education, Delta State University
PO Box 3121
Ewing Hall, Room 326
Cleveland, MS 38733
Office: 662-846-4400
Fax: 662-846-4402
E-mail: ecaston@dsu.deltast.edu



Honorable Michael F. Easley, Governor

Administration Building
Office of the Governor
116 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825
Office: 919-733-4240/Fax: 919-715-3175
Scheduling Secretary: Sheila Evans 733-5085
Ex-officio Member

**J.B. Buxton, Senior Education Advisor
Office of the Governor**

20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301
Office: 919-733-3921 or 919-715-0960/
Fax: 919-733-2120

**Michael Ward, Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction**

301 North Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825
Office: 919-715-1299/Fax: 919-715-1278
E-mail: mward@dpi.state.nc.us
Secretary: Molly Prescott
Ex-officio Member

**Brad Sneed, Deputy Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction**

301 North Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825
Office: 919-715-1264/Fax: 919-715-1278
E-mail: bsneed@dpi.state.nc.us

Senator Wib Gulley

400 West Main Street, Suite 501
Durham, NC 27701
Office: 919-683-1584/Fax: 919-683-1395
E-mail: gulleyandcalhoun@mindspring.com
Legislative Office: 408 Legislative Bldg. (Carol Resar)
Phone: 919-715-3036/Fax: 919-733-3113
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

Lowell Thomas

PO Box 2193
450 Dogwood Lane
Blowing Rock, NC 28605-2193
Home: 828-295-9727
Fax: (same, but call first)
E-mail: lowellthomas@boone.net
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

**Jane Worsham, Executive Director
North Carolina State Board of Education**

Education Building, Room 212
301 North Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825
Office: 919-715-1318/Fax: 919-715-0764
E-mail: jworsham@dpi.state.nc.us

TBD

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**Norma Sermon-Boyd, Superintendent
Jones County Schools**

PO Box 187
Trenton, NC 28585-0187
(320 West Jones Street)
Office: 252-448-2531/Fax: 252-448-1394
E-mail: drboyd@jonesnc.net
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

**James F. Causby, Superintendent
Johnston County Schools**

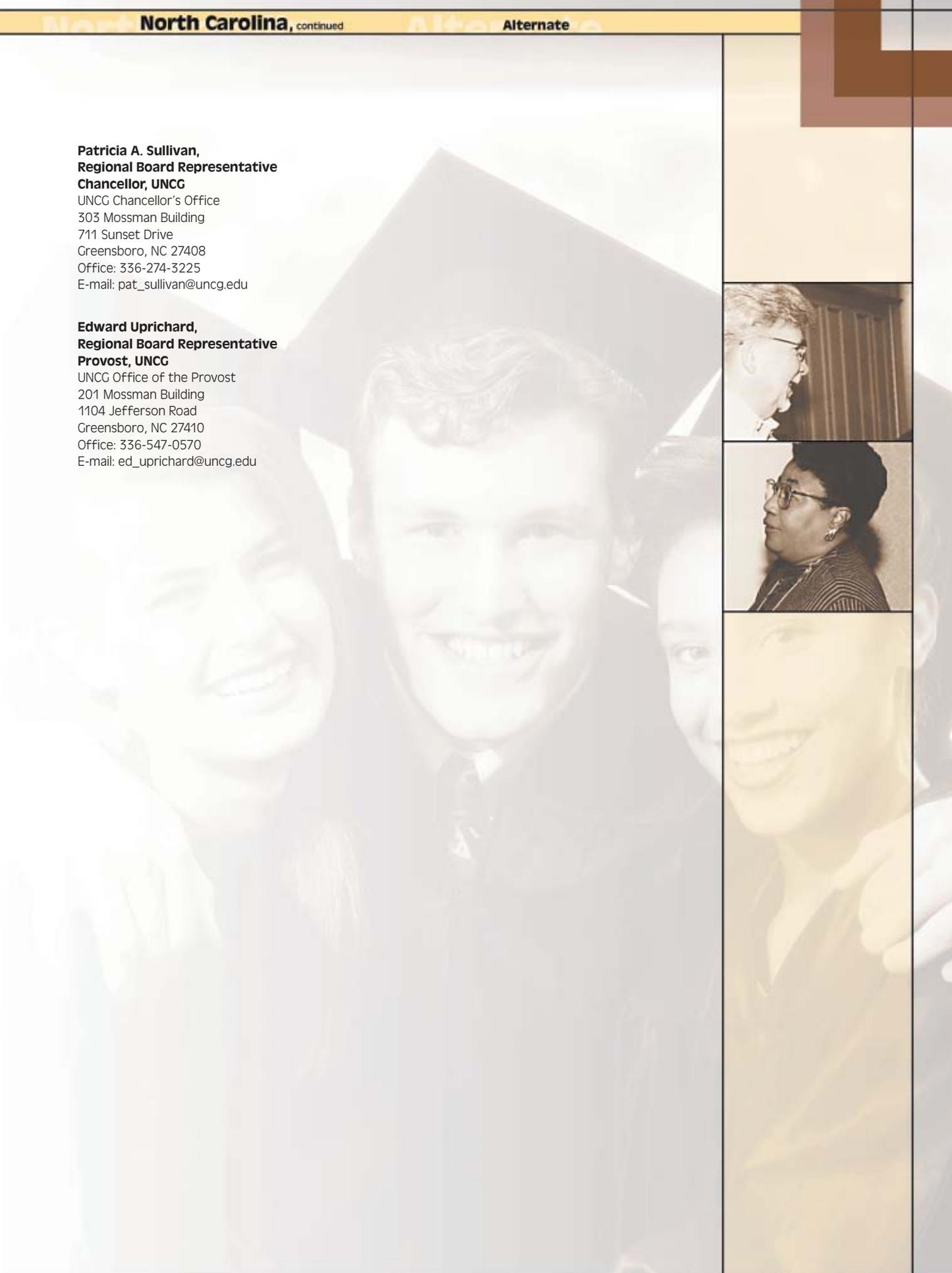
PO Box 1336
Smithfield, NC 27577
(2320 Highway 70 East)
Office: 919-934-6031/Fax: 919-934-6035
E-mail: jcausby@johnston.k12.nc.us

**Patricia A. Sullivan,
Regional Board Representative
Chancellor, UNCC**

UNCC Chancellor's Office
303 Mossman Building
711 Sunset Drive
Greensboro, NC 27408
Office: 336-274-3225
E-mail: pat_sullivan@uncg.edu

**Edward Uprichard,
Regional Board Representative
Provost, UNCC**

UNCC Office of the Provost
201 Mossman Building
1104 Jefferson Road
Greensboro, NC 27410
Office: 336-547-0570
E-mail: ed_uprichard@uncg.edu



Honorable James H. Hodges, Governor
Governor's Office, State House
PO Box 11829 (Gervais & Assembly St.)
Columbia, SC 29211
Office: 803-734-9853/Fax: 803-734-1843
Ex-officio Member

**Doug McTeer, Governor's Education
Policy Advisor**
Governor's Office
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201
Office: 803-734-0448/Fax: 803-734-0245
E-mail: dmcteer@gov.state.sc.us

**Inez Tenenbaum, Superintendent
South Carolina Department of Education**
1429 Senate Street
1006 Rutledge Building
Columbia, SC 29201
Office: 803-734-8492/Fax: 803-734-3389
E-mail: mlint@sde.state.sc.us
Ex-officio Member

**Molly Spearman, Deputy Superintendent
of Education**
Office of Governmental Affairs
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201
Direct: 803-734-6955
Fax: 803-734-8324
E-mail: mspearma@sde.state.sc.us

Representative Jerry N. Govan, Jr.
404-B Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29203
Office: 803-533-6402 or 803-734-3012
Home: 803-531-1158
Orangeburg Office: 803-533-1960
Fax: 803-533-6580
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

Jayne Speizer, Publisher
Rock Hill Herald
PO Box 11707
Rock Hill, SC 29731
Office: 803-329-4000
E-mail: jspeizer@heraldonline.com
Term Expires: May 31, 2004

Diane M. Monrad, Director
South Carolina Education Policy Center
USC College of Education, Suite 010
Columbia, SC 29208
Office: 803-777-8244/Fax: 803-777-0220
E-mail: dmonrad@gwm.sc.edu
Term Expires: May 31, 2002

Robert A. Morales, CFO
PO Box 2848
301 Camperdown Way
Columbia, SC 29602-2848
Office: 864-241-3151/Fax: 864-241-4861
E-mail: rmorales@greenville.k12.sc.us

Sylvia Weinberg, Retired Superintendent
107 North Sea Pines Drive
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
Home: 843-363-5570
Term Expires: May 31, 2003

Michelle Shain, Director
Greenville County First Steps
1205 Pendleton Street
369 Brown Building
Columbia, SC 29201
Office: 864-467-3239
Home: 864-235-5440
E-mail: mshain1001@aol.com

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Delta State University, Mississippi

**Early Childhood Institute
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National Conference of State Legislatures

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North Bolivar School District, Mississippi

North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE)

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(The) North Carolina Public School Forum

Pinellas County Schools/Quality Academy, Florida

Public Education Forum of Mississippi

Samford University

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Southeast Center for Teaching Quality

State Memoranda of Understanding

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- ▶ Florida Department of Education
- ▶ Georgia Department of Education
- ▶ Mississippi State Department of Education
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Donna Nalley, *SERVE Director of Publications*

Catherine Scott-Little, *SERVE Director of SERVEing Young Children*

SERVE (Main Office)

PO Box 5367
Greensboro, NC 27435
800-755-3277 Toll-Free
336-315-7400 Direct
336-315-7457 Fax

SERVE, Inc.

PO Box 5406
Greensboro, NC 27435
800-755-3277 Toll-Free
336-315-7400 Direct
336-315-4671 Fax

SERVE (Georgia Office)

828 West Peachtree Street, Northwest, Suite 215
Atlanta, GA 30308
800-659-3204 Toll-Free
404-893-0100 Direct
404-577-7812 Fax

SERVE (Florida Office)

1203 Governor's Square Boulevard, Suite 400
Tallahassee, FL 32301
800-352-6001 Toll-Free
850-671-6000 Direct
850-671-6020 Fax

**The SouthEast Initiatives Regional
Technology in Education Consortium
@ SERVE (SEIR♦TEC)**

3333 Chapel Hill Boulevard, Suite C-102
Durham, NC 27707
800-755-3277 Toll-Free
919-402-1060 Direct
919-402-1617 Fax

**Southeast Eisenhower Regional
Consortium for Mathematics
and Science Education @ SERVE**

1203 Governor's Square Boulevard, Suite 400
Tallahassee, FL 32301
800-854-0476 Toll-Free
850-671-6033 Direct
850-671-6010 Fax



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