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**Report: SREB States Need to Make More Progress in Improving
School Leadership**

Southern Regional Education Board states are making progress in developing school leadership systems to ensure that every public school has a principal who

can improve student performance — but states need to accelerate their efforts in order to meet their own achievement goals, a new SREB report shows.

The cutting-edge principal needed in today's school "is not your father's principal," asserts *Schools Need Good Leaders Now: State Progress in Creating a Learning-Centered School Leadership System*. The SREB report calls for a new generation of school leaders who put curriculum and instruction first. It examines the progress of each SREB state in developing school leaders who look beyond traditional administrative tasks and focus on improving schools and student learning — the key to preparing students to succeed in the competitive, 21st century global economy.

Although all SREB states are making some progress in developing learning-centered leadership systems, individual states' rates of improvement and their areas of focus vary greatly. Three states — Alabama, Louisiana and Maryland — show particularly promising progress in several areas, which means they have reached higher levels of progress than other states in several categories.

The report identifies key steps that can help policy-makers in every state build leadership development systems that produce more effective school principals.

Only one state — Louisiana — improved its SREB school leadership rating from 2002 to 2006 in all six major categories measured in the report. Alabama improved in five categories, and four states improved in four categories: Delaware, Georgia, Maryland and Virginia.

Three states showed progress in half of the six categories: Florida, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The remaining states showed less progress: Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia.

None of the 16 states across the region showed "substantial progress" in any category — signaling the need for state leaders to place even more importance on the need to improve school leadership and to take action.

SREB's indicators of progress in developing a learning-centered school leadership system include:

Learning-focused leadership standards. The standards should emphasize the principal's role in curriculum, instruction and student achievement and should describe explicitly the practices of effective principals and how to measure them. Many states currently rely on national school leadership standards that do not

emphasize instructional leadership and school improvement adequately.

Recruitment. Universities and school districts should work together to recruit and select the best candidates to lead schools effectively. SREB recommends that states develop essential criteria for recruiting and selecting principal candidates who have the capacity to improve student learning. Universities need to be more selective about admitting applicants to master's degree programs designed for aspiring school principals. Currently, most graduates of these programs do not become principals.

The overhaul of university-based, graduate-level principal preparation programs. These programs generally need tremendous improvement to better develop aspiring principals' abilities to solve problems and lead school improvement, including effective ways to support and assist teachers. States also need to work to improve field experiences and mentoring for aspiring principals. Currently, many aspiring principals are allowed to intern in the schools where they currently work, use current supervisors as mentors and are not required to practice leadership of school improvement strategies.

Tiered licensing for principals. This licensing structure can ensure that both entry-level and experienced principals continually demonstrate the abilities to improve classroom practices and student learning. Currently, many states' licenses for principals are based solely on the completion of required — and often outdated — training programs and have little to do with demonstrated excellence in raising student achievement and school improvement.

Alternative licensure. Alternative paths to licensure also should be available so that high-performing teachers — and other professionals with master's degrees in fields other than education administration — can access entry-level licensure and job-embedded training in school leadership.

Professional development. Training and support should continually strengthen principals' capacities to improve curriculum and instruction and create a highly effective organization. States should give special attention to building strong leadership teams, including teachers, in low-performing schools.

SREB has a long-standing commitment to strengthening leadership development. SREB's *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education, approved by the region's leaders in 2002, call for states to ensure that all schools have effective leaders who can help improve student achievement — and leadership begins with a high-quality school principal.

SREB's Learning-Centered Leadership Program supports states in this effort through a wide variety of activities, ranging from research and benchmark reports to on-the-ground leadership training and technical assistance.

Read the report at

<http://www.sreb.org/main/Goals/Publications/LearningCenteredSchoolLeadership.asp>.

Courtney Fox Named Delaware Teacher of The Year For 2008

Mount Pleasant Elementary School Teacher Will Now Vie for National Recognition

Courtney Fox, a first grade teacher at Mount Pleasant Elementary School in Wilmington has been chosen as Delaware's Teacher of the Year for 2008. Her selection as Delaware's top educator makes her the forty-fourth Teacher of the Year since Delaware's recognition program began in 1965. Delaware's newest Teacher of the Year has ten years of teaching experience, all in the Brandywine School District.

In 1998, Courtney received a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education from the University of Delaware in Newark. Since that time, Courtney has engaged in Master-level coursework from Fort Hayes State University in Kansas as well as Master-level coursework in Gifted Education from the University of Delaware. She is also a National Board Certified teacher in Early Childhood Education and has also received Gifted and Talented Teaching Certification.

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Teaching Certification.

Following her graduation from the University of Delaware, Courtney began teaching kindergarten at the Pierre S. DuPont Elementary School. Just one year later, in 1999, she taught first grade at Mount Pleasant Elementary where she has remained since. Also, in 2004, Courtney began working with the Brandywine School District's Gifted and Talented Program.

Fox has been extremely active in improving the quality of education in Delaware. She has trained K-1 teachers in new assessment procedures for statewide consistency; has served on the Brandywine School District Language Arts Committee; consults and trains teachers nationally in Responsive Classroom Approach; is a mentor with the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and is also a lead mentor for the Brandywine School District.

The newly-selected Teacher of the Year has also received many accolades and awards over her short career. She has received a Superstars in Education Award presented by the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce; an Excellence in Education Award from MBNA; received a Character in Education: Promising Practices Award; and is included in Who's Who in Education.

When asked about her philosophy on teaching, Fox stated, "Good teachers do what they do because they care. They care about everyone who enters their school, they care about their students' families, they care about teaching as a profession, they care about their colleagues, and they have a deep passion for affecting everyone they meet in a positive way. Because they care so much, they are grateful for the opportunity to impact others by being part of a school." Added Fox, "I believe good teachers look ahead and set yearly goals for each child but recognize the importance of every day. As a teacher, I leave every day excited about the next and am so glad that this is how I have chosen to spend my life."

The process of selecting Delaware's Teacher of the Year is very demanding and is designed to find that teacher who is most representative of the entire teaching profession. Through in-class observations, portfolio reviews and consideration of finalists by a representative panel, the process finds that one person who will become this year's Teacher of the Year for Delaware.

Fox now inherits an enormous task from outgoing Teacher of the Year Caridad Alonso by representing all teachers in Delaware. She will address community groups, business leaders, legislators, and educational organizations in an effort to inform the public about the status of Delaware schools. She will also become

Delaware's entrant in the national program presented by ING Foundation which is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers and sponsored by Scholastic, Inc.

By action of the General Assembly, Fox will receive a \$5000 grant to use for the educational benefit of her students, as well two personal grants totaling an additional \$5000. The remaining 18 school district candidates will each receive a personal grant of \$2000.

Fox will also receive an educational technology package valued at approximately \$17,000 from the SMARTer Kids Foundation. The package includes a SMART Board(tm) interactive whiteboard, floor stand and software; an NEC VT465 portable projector from NEC Solutions America; creative- learning software from Immersive Education; and a 32-pad Classroom Performance System from eInstruction Corporation.

The new Teacher of the Year will also receive a Dell laptop computer; a \$1,000 grant for educational/classroom use from Harcourt Assessment, Inc.; grants from the Delaware State Education Association, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and the Delaware Professional Standards Board; a State of Delaware Teacher of the Year license plate from the Division of Motor Vehicles; free graduate-level courses from Delaware's higher education institutions; a gold watch from the Delaware State Teachers of the Year Association and lunch in Washington D.C. with Senator Thomas R. Carper.