

# **SOUTH COOK EDUCATION CONSORTIUM**

## **YEAR 2 EVALUATION REPORT**

**August 2002**

**Durland Consulting, Inc.**

**Elburn, IL**



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WHAT WORKS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FUTURE PROJECT EVALUATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>AREAS TO ADDRESS</b>	<b>6</b>



## Executive Summary

The South Cook Education Consortium was founded in April of 2000, as an intergovernmental agency, designed to be a structure that could address opportunities for best serving the students and their parents in the attending eight South Cook districts.

It was a risky untried venture, but it was also visionary and courageous in terms of addressing the overwhelming instructional and infrastructure needs of poor urban districts. There was everything to lose and everything to gain. The purposes for creating the South Cook Education Consortium were to develop, implement, support, and promote a matrix of public/private/nonprofit business and local/state/national government partnerships, through an intergovernmental entity, made up of the eight school districts in South Cook County.

To date the SCEC has leveraged their alliance towards obtaining technological materials for their schools, obtaining training for teachers, and for addressing political concerns with a larger voice that the districts could one at a time.

The Consortium functions on many levels:

1. It is a framework for addressing and working through complex issues;
2. It is a sources of resources for sharing across districts;
3. It is a support network for superintendents;
4. It is an advocacy group for addressing common concerns such as high risk community factors and school and workforce preparation concerns;
5. It is a structure for positioning the districts as “marketable” for partnerships.
6. It is a framework for creating and defining a new model of leadership within a Systemic School Reform framework.

Given NCLB, understanding and documenting how to do comprehensive school reform, within the specific context of urban schools, is an important consideration for an initiative such as the Consortium.

## **What Works**

The Consortium already experiences success. The key areas of success are:

- Financial Purchasing Power
- Strategic power
- Stronger Leadership Power
- Power and perspective of one voice.
- A model for reform
- A model for collaborative and shared context

## **Future Project Evaluation**

There are no standard models, tools, or processes for understanding and evaluating a consortium model such as the SCEC. However, there is a strong research history on understanding collaborative arrangements and what is critical for the success of collaborative groups. More than any other paradigm, collaboration seems to fit the primary characteristics and purposes of the Consortium and provides a language for feedback and embedding other data into evaluation activities. There are three elements to explore in measuring the degree of success of a collaborative endeavor – infrastructure, communication, and sustainability.

Numbers alone will not tell the story. No amount of numbers and statistics will provide the details needed about how the Consortium works and what are the combinations of components necessary for success. The Consortium is not an input – output model, (i.e. the Consortium puts in more money and student achievement goes up.) The Consortium is a model based on creating the conditions for improving the educational environment – with the focus on teaching and learning. The Consortium is about complexity not a simple solution and complexity is multidimensional. To explore and evaluate how the Consortium works, an evaluation will need to address this complexity.

In addition, the following project components and areas would need to be included in future evaluations of the Consortium:

- PowerUP Labs development and implementation
- EDU-Incubator and other implemented projects and programs

- Technology Coordination
- Engaged Learning and Constructivist Practice
- Comprehensive Student Data
- Professional development and training.
- Consortium Structural Characteristics - Social Network mapping study
- Consortium Model
- CSR and SIP models

## **Areas to Address**

### ***Model Clarification and Infrastructure Development***

Model clarification and infrastructure development are suggested as the main priorities, aligned with finding funding for a 2 1/2-day symposium and working meeting for the eight superintendents.

1. The purposes of this symposium would be to develop:
  - a. A more complete description and definition of the Consortium Model for evaluation purposes, and for replication.
  - b. A strategic map for planning the future direction and proprieties of the Consortium.
  - c. Possibly, the beginnings of a book, or lengthy report on the development and implementation of this model for future replication, from the perspective of the superintendents.
  - d. As a note for future evaluations, this evaluation has not attempted to address the barriers, issues, and daily impacts that a group such as the Consortium would face in day-to-day business. For example, how would disputes be settled, if they might arise? What happens if a district board no longer supports the Consortium as favorably? Those issues are best left to later evaluations that would seek to understand how a Consortium fully implemented, and fully functioning as defined by the Consortium itself, with strategies in place. The Consortium is not at a stage of implementation where that would be appropriate now.
  - e. Infrastructure Development - aligned with a clear definition of the Consortium, and where it is going, there has to be one person carrying out the mission and facilitating each group to do the work appropriate for each group. In terms of a collaborative group, a visible, project director would increase communication and provide an actual infrastructure that could then support the mission of the Consortium.

### ***Areas for Communication and Sharing***

One particular area that would be appropriate for the Consortium to target is school improvement planning. All schools in the Consortium complete school improvement plans; the plans should, theoretically, be aligned to district-wide plans, and to a district or school's

comprehensive school, reform model if a district and/or school has adopted a model. The school improvement plans provide a source of data about the general approach to strategic planning, data analysis, and instructional planning at the school level. These three broad areas of skills are at the foundation of developing, implementing, and sustaining successful change and reform efforts. As such, and

Other areas are technology planning and the identification and communication with all stakeholders, such as Principals, Teachers, Students, Families, Boards, Central office, and others (Community, Legislatures, State superintendent, Other related consortiums – CEC, School reform projects). Each of these stakeholders might be provided with information about the Consortium, their benefits from the Consortium, their inclusion in the development of the Consortium, and the roles and responsibilities they may have in the Consortium.

One final area specifically looks at the school level and the activities that the Consortium might address. Schools need help with the following:

1. Processes for developing more comprehensive SIP planning,
  - a. Increasing school level skills and knowledge about the complexity of using data to direct instruction. Such as the distinction between the standards as indicators of student needs and appropriate school and classroom based measures as defining the specific instruction needs.
  - b. Connecting SIP solutions to instructional practices and to appropriate teacher measures instead of standards outcomes. (Determining the appropriate cause and effect relationship.)
  - c. Understanding how (strategic planning processes) and then integrating the School Reform model, the technology planning, and the SIP processes.
  - d. Sharing and collaborating with high achieving schools within the area
  - e. Sharing and collaborating with other teachers within schools, districts, and across schools and districts.