

Supplemental Educational Services Web cast

Panel Discussion

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Hello, my name is Susan Wilhelm, and I work in the Title I Program office, which has jurisdiction over the implementation of the supplemental educational services provisions in Title I. For this segment of our web cast, I'm pleased to be joined by practitioners representing various regions of the country, and different entities charged with ensuring that supplemental educational services get to the students who need them.

I'd like to introduce my guests to you at this point. First, we have Joanne Carter, who is the Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Student and School Services for the State of Maryland. She'll be speaking from the state perspective.

Next, we have Dr. Kit Marshall, who is the President and Founder of Action Learning Systems, a supplemental service provider in Los Angeles, but who also works throughout the state of California.

And, last but not least, we have Melinda Ness, who is currently the K-12 Special Programs Coordinator for Forsyth County schools in Forsyth, Georgia.

And, we're going to start our conversation by talking a little bit about the strategies that you found most effective in helping getting supplemental services up and off the ground. Because what we're really interested in...is talking about what has to happen when the rubber hits the road to make this work. And, maybe we can start with you Melinda.

Melinda NESS, K-12 Special Programs Coordinator, Forsyth School County, Forsyth, Georgia

One of the key things that has to occur for this to work in the district is to integrate it into the district's improvement process. And, to do that we have to communicate with the providers and have them meet with us, and talk about what our goals are, and what our expectations are for our students. We have to build an ongoing relationship with those providers, but we also need to build an atmosphere of communication, and collaboration, and trust. And, I think that's been a critical piece of the work.

Susan WILHELM

Kit, from a provider's point of view, what do you think has been one of the most effective strategies for helping to get supplemental educational services in place?

Kit MARSHALL, President & Founder, Action Learning Systems

Primarily, the same kinds of things that have an influence on effective regular class programming is where the focus needs to be. There needs to be an intense focus around creating a coherent process, so there does definitely need to be a lot of communication, clear identification of what the assessments are going to be that will be used.

They need sometimes very much to be aligned with what the state is testing, what the accountability assessments are. But, primarily it's having a very clear application process for the providers. I think that the clearer that is, the better you're going to start out at the district level with SES (Supplemental Educational Services) providers that really have the background and the knowledge of the state requirements.

Susan WILHELM

Joanne, what are some of the most common questions that you get from school districts as they're working to implement supplemental educational services?

Joanne CARTER, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Student School Services for the State of Maryland

Susan, the most common question that we get is specifically: How do school systems communicate more effectively with parents so that parents are knowledgeable of what supplemental educational services are? How it would benefit their children? And, how to get their child enrolled?

There is some confusion between the choice provision and supp services, in terms of not all students are eligible. And that becomes a real critical distinction for school systems.

Also, the question poses itself, how long does the school system need to keep the window open in terms of notifying parents of the availability of the services? We've really stressed in Maryland that that window needs to be open as long as it's necessary to ensure that there's been an aggressive outreach, and all parents have had the opportunity to access those services.

Another strategy that we've used, or common question that we've had, is: Can a local school system provide, or alter, the provisions in the application that the state approves? Specifically, as it relates to teacher-student ratios, qualifications of teachers, numbers of hours, amount of dollars to be paid to the providers for the services that they're rendering.

And, our response has been, there needs to be negotiation, however the application is the application of record, but this is a win-win, and there needs to be compromise and negotiation on both sides.

And, finally, I guess, another question now that we're really into implementation is: What does the school system do when a provider is not meeting the timelines that have been negotiated? When there are concerns about health and safety issues, attendance, or in fact, if a program is up and running, given that there is a payment structure for services?

Susan WILHELM

Thank you. I want to piggyback on one of the things that you've mentioned in terms of information to parents. Melinda, what type of information have you found to be most helpful for parents in letting them make informed choices among supplemental service providers?

Melinda NESS

Well, the information has to be provided to them in ways that's clear and concise. A lot of times we get hung up on educational jargon, and that's difficult for parents to understand what we're talking about.

They also need to know that there's a way that they can receive assistance, access information, if they have some questions, and whom they can contact. Especially, those limited English families who need the language assistance. And we've established in our district a relationship between a person that works for us in Title I and the community, through our Transition Center, so that they can feel comfortable to come for those services, and know that they'll get the right answers they need to make decisions.

Susan WILHELM

Kit, from a provider's point of view, what information do you find parents are most responsive to, and what's been your experience in Los Angeles, in terms of making information available about your services?

Kit MARSHALL

First of all, one of the things that's critically important, are the basics: that many of the parents, English is not the home language. And, so for a provider to be acutely sensitive and aware of that is very important. I can give you an example of provider fairs where we were the only ones that had Spanish-speaking presenters. And, so the parents all ended up over there. And, it doesn't mean the other providers wouldn't have had wonderful programs, but there we were with parents racing over to get other parents to come over and talk with us. So, I think understanding that is critically important in a large English-learner population.

And, then secondly, I think it's critically important to know that parents often times haven't considered that they have a choice. And, that just hearing that they have options, and they can choose from amongst those options isn't enough. And, so, I think that face-to-face, we've found that it's very helpful to have parents talking with other parents.

And to make sure that the normal, ongoing events, in places like, sort of the three "M's" of looking at having movies, meals, opportunities, that kind of thing, and also, being in malls, is a good way for districts to share that information, and have parents stop by and talk about it.

Susan WILHELM

I've heard people talk about using community centers. This is the first time I've heard anyone mention malls, but that's actually a really good idea...

Kit MARSHALL

(AGREEING) Movies, malls and meals.

Susan WILHELM

There's one aspect of supplemental services, in terms of the structuring, getting it in place. But, one of the other critical factors, or equally important, is making sure that the services really meet student needs. Melinda, can you talk a little bit about what things need to be in place from the kids' point of view.

And, maybe we could start by talking about the importance of alignment, between what is happening, with the supplemental service provider, and what's going on in the regular classroom. In Forsyth, what did you do to help make a smooth connection there?

Melinda NESS

One of the things we did up front was to meet with the providers individually, and we were small enough to do that, where we could talk about what their services were, how those services would be provided, and how they would be implemented with the student and the family. The other thing that we talked about was how that aligned with our district work, and what our expectations were, as well as what the state expected from us in regards to making increased student achievement.

The message came from the district office that this was an opportunity for students rather than a mandate. And, I think that made people more open and more willing to work together. We also have a tremendous amount of technology in our district, so we were able to access the student information regarding test data, regarding student performance in our ongoing assessments, and share that with the providers so that they approach their work from an informed basis. And, they could set goals that were reasonable for the students in the amount of time that they had to work with them.

But, the most important relationship was between the classroom teacher and the provider. We had to make it as efficient and as effective for teachers, given the load of work that they already have to do, so that they can work with the providers and not feel like this was an additional burden, but, also that they were part of a team. And, so we met with them, and with the principals ahead of time, so that they knew what was coming. They had an understanding of how it would work. We took care of all the details for them. And, then they were only responsible for the implementation, but they knew they had support if they had any questions or issues that came up.

Susan WILHELM

Joanne, do you find regular communication between the providers and the teachers is something that's happening in Maryland school districts?

Joanne CARTER

Well, Susan, I can't really speak to the issue of regular communication between providers and teachers, at this moment. I know that it is one of the things that, as we conduct our monitoring process, we're trying to assess how much contact there is between the provider and the parents, as well as the providers and classroom teachers.

But, the key for us is that, in this initial phase of starting up and getting going, that there has to be ongoing communication between the provider and the local school system's central contact. Because, if that communication is not working, then I think it becomes harder to assess: are the services being actually provided?

So, in our school systems, giving a specific example, since I was in Montgomery County on Friday, they're holding ongoing meetings with the providers to address issues that have arisen based upon the fact that the system instructional specialist assigned to the schools are there when the tutoring is going on, and so, as problems arise, they're able to engage in solution meetings in order to try to resolve those issues.

And then specifically, as parents come to pick up the children from the services, that's another opportunity for engaging in conversation. But clearly, in our monitoring instrument, which we have in place in Maryland, the providers must talk to us about what kinds of strategies do they have in place for communicating with teachers.

And they need to show some documentation of evidence that that has occurred, because we need to make certain that the goals that have been established, in terms of how much growth is expected, it's a two-way street between what's going on in the classroom and what's needed in support. So, that's one of the things we're working with.

Susan WILHELM

Kit, of course one of the key parts of the contract between the district and the supplemental service provider is identifying specific educational goals for the students that are receiving those services. Could you speak a little bit about your experience and how those goals are identified?

Kit MARSHALL

I think there are a couple of keys to that. And, one of those is to understand, that as a SES provider you're really extending the opportunity for students to learn. You're extending the amount of time that students have to learn. So, you need to be not taking students in a completely different direction. Therefore, there are some key things that if you address those it really makes a huge difference.

One is that you need to be examining individual assessments. For example, curriculum-embedded assessments, district level benchmarks, as well as state testing that might be given to the students, so that you can analyze, really compare those things, and triangulate those things right down to the individual student needs.

Secondly, it's important to do some co-writing of those objectives that you have in mind with the regular staff, with district level personnel. And, I think, one thing that I would say would be preferable would be if the district has an objectives key monitoring process, so that the objectives that are selected from are standards aligned, and curriculum aligned -- that makes a big difference, too. So that even though the provider may have separate pre/post tests for their own material, they need to be understood that there is a huge accountability to the standards that the school are being held accountable to. So, I think that that's an important thing.

And then, another issue, I think, is the explicit measurements, that are objective, that certainly are measured over time, both formative and summative kinds of assessments. And that there needs to be a reporting mechanism, monitoring and then reporting mechanism, by the provider, again, to continue to align and support their regular curriculum, and the benchmarking process, and so on. I think ultimately that's going to be your test.

Susan WILHELM

Melinda, do you have anything you want to add to that?

Melinda NESS

One of the additional pieces, I think, that sometimes gets overlooked is the involvement of parents in this process. And, as part of our supplemental services work, our provider met with parents after the session to debrief them on what was going on, and engage them in the work as well, so that they were aware of what the expectations were for their child, and also how the child was progressing. And, I think, a lot of times that gets left out of the loop. But, it's a real critical piece to the students' success.

Kit MARSHALL

Can I add? I just wanted to add one thing that I think is critically important, and it just makes a tremendous difference. We have the parents, the regular class teacher, and the student, hold a student-led conference toward the end of their 30 hours, or their amount of time that they're giving the support.

So, the parent learns about the goals from the student directly. The regular class teacher learns about the process of student-led conferences, and is able to really connect with what that student actually has been able to learn. That's often quite impressive, and increases the expectations that the regular class teacher has for the student.

Susan WILHELM

Joanne?

Joanne CARTER

We've suggested that providers be onsite when there are parent-teacher conferences, because parents are coming into the building, they're receiving the report cards, and there's no reason why the provider cannot be a part of that conference in terms of sharing the progress that the student is making in terms of the supplemental educational services. And, that's also a good opportunity for exchange between the classroom teacher and the provider, his or herself.

The other part of it is, and I think Kit mentioned that before, is in our process of approving a provider, we think it's central that that be a rigorous review. And, what we've found initially is that we had very few providers that were able to reach the bar in terms of that review. And, specifically, because there was not a clear understanding of what was meant in terms of alignment with the school system, and in this instance, we're using the voluntary state curriculum, and while providers said that there was an alignment between their curriculum, they are having to demonstrate for us exactly what that alignment is. And I think that will help also to ensure that the instruction is appropriate and will result, not only in students being able show gains on the provider instrument, but the bottom line is results on the state assessment for accountability.

Susan WILHELM

That actually is the perfect segue into my next question, because Kit, one of the things I wanted to ask was: How do you demonstrate, as a provider, that your students are making progress based on the services that you're providing?

Kit MARSHALL

One of the things that I'd recommend, that districts and certainly providers think about, is that it's very important that the providers' assessments not be the only things that are used to document. So, there's clearly a common agreement about that here.

I think that, as a provider, one of the things that if you're going to stay around as a provider, you'd better be doing third-party evaluations. And, so one of the things we've done is we have contracted, and I think the next level of that is the real rigorous evidence that has to do with such things as actually doing the ultimate state accountability process of a rigorous evidence and its randomized controls. So, we are moving in that direction. I just don't think that that's something you can avoid right now. I think it's critically important to get on that.

But, secondly, I think, it's critically important that as a provider that you are using the regular district benchmarks. We have benchmarks that we've developed, that have about a 95% predictive rate of the California Standards Test. So, we use that as part of our pre and post assessment of where the students are, and we identify the explicit standards that the students are going to be learning.

So that, for example, in algebra, when we're working with algebra and functions, what we're doing is actually identifying each Saturday that the students are attending a three-hour session, there's an explicit standard that they're addressing for those three hours. And that there's a pre-in entry and a post, and then we determine the next week if they're retaining that information, and it's in our post test at the end.

All of that information is heavily documented and reported. In our partnership with Los Angeles Unified School District, the district itself has, about 15 hours into the program, they ask us to fill out a report. And so we do that. And, then, I mentioned student-led conferences. The student-led conference process is not only wonderful and engaging, but it is probably the best way to report whether or not a student has learned what it is you set out to teach them.

Susan WILHELM

And, Melinda, what are you doing in Forsyth County to measure progress of students who are receiving supplemental education services?

Melinda NESS

We conduct individual student profiles on all of our students routinely throughout the district, anyway in K-5. So, that's just part of our way of doing business. But, we work with the providers. They collect qualitative data, and some quantitative data, of their own, and align that, and put that into our profiles on the student. And, having that body of evidence helps us understand if a student is moving forward, and developing, and

increasing the knowledge they need to master their quality core curriculum in the state of Georgia.

One of the things that the providers have done in our state, and in particular the one I work with, is the lessons that he teaches come from the Georgia Learning Connections, which is the state's web site. So, that we know that the lessons are clearly aligned to the state's expectations. And, that helps ensure for us that they're teaching the right things.

But, we also look at those lessons to see that our systems standards, which are in addition to those state standards, are aligned as well, and embedded in the work.

Susan WILHELM

That's great. I told you that we were going to get down to some of the really nitty-gritty, in terms of where the rubber hits the road so, here's my next question. One of the things that we hear is that lots of times students get signed up for supplemental educational services, but then they may not participate as regularly as one might hope. What are some strategies that school districts can use to encourage students to attend supplemental services once their parents have made a selection and the services are up and operating?

Melinda NESS

For our program, because it was an in-home service, the parents got to select the location where they would meet. And generally it was at the home. And, I think that made attendance a non-issue. There were some times when the schedule had to be changed, and we made it clear, in communicating with parents, that the expectation was that the provider would be treated fairly and given advance notification. If an issue occurs, then the provider, the tutor, and myself sit down, and talk and meet with the parents, and work through those issues. So, we haven't had very many specific instances where the situation was not workable.

Susan WILHELM

Joanne, do you get questions about that?

Joanne CARTER

We get questions about that all time Susan, and I think one of the things that is working in Maryland is many of the providers are actually onsite, at the school. So, at the end of the day, it's an easy transition between their regular program to an identified classroom library where all the students who are getting supplemental services meet. Attendance is taken there. Then, they are escorted by whoever is providing the service to the classroom. So, that has helped in some ways to help students to attend the services.

And then, I think, the other thing is they're trying to wrap these services around a full after-school program. So it may be that they are there for their supplemental services component, and then there's a recreational component. But, rather than students going directly from the end of the regular day into supp services, that there is a break. Sometimes there are meals provided, nutritional snacks. Some of the students meet in the gym, and so they have an opportunity to do some exercising.

Another approach that we've taken is also that providers understand that they don't get paid if students don't attend. So, we do have principals in buildings, we have master teachers, who have agreed, as a part of the system, to be there also. And, they, in a way, are people

that the students can initially relate to. And so that there's that opportunity to, if they see someone walking out of the building who should be going to supp services, they're able to encourage them, and that they need to be staying here.

We have several types of providers. So, as in Georgia, we have providers who provide the services in the home. But, parents obviously have an opportunity, and as is required under law, to choose the provider. So, if they choose a provider who is not school-based, then it is incumbent upon that parent to ensure that the child is getting to that provider's services.

Susan WILHELM

Kit, what's been your experience in Los Angeles?

Kit MARSHALL

We've learned three good lessons about what's required. The first one is that because we're in a partnership with the district, LAUSD, Los Angeles Unified School District, that is its own provider, that we really have a partnership. So, they provide site coordinators who call students in between times, make sure parents are notified that the child isn't there, needs to be there, needs to take the opportunity to access those services, and so on. So, certainly one powerful way is by providing the partnership with the district that's its own provider, and they help attend to making sure that the parents have the opportunity to get their students there the next week.

The second way, which I think is probably my best-loved way to talk about it is that we have a program called "The Literacy Loop," which is a cross-age tutoring program that's approved for supplemental services in the state of California. And, we literally recruit and hire high school students from feeder pattern schools and they attend a lot of training. They get a lot of support from certificated staff and we embed, or nest, that program inside L.A.'s best, which is a very popular after-school program that has a lot of recreational, a lot of motivation to it.

So, the second way is by having those cross-age tutors, and, of course, that has a tremendous affect on English learners, for example, and students, recognize these kids, some of them are their siblings, so it's a very powerful process that has wonderful results, by the way.

And then the third thing I think that's critically important to think about in terms of attendance is that if it's the same thing they didn't get the first time, only it's twice as fast as they didn't get it the first time, it's definitely not going to be motivating for the students. So, it really needs to be compelling instruction. It needs absolutely to be standards aligned, but it needs to be compelling and motivating. There need to be reasons why the students want to come back, and that requires that they have a very, very high success rate in the program. So, those are three really important keys that we think get the kids there and keep them there.

Susan WILHELM

That's really interesting. Could you talk a little bit more about some of the strategies that you're using to reach English language learners. One of the things that we hear from time to time is that, particularly with students with disabilities and with English language learners, that there's not as many people out there that are providing services. Or folks haven't thought of strategies that it was effective, reaching out to that community. Could you speak about that just a bit?

Kit MARSHALL

I think, first I would say that, sort of repeating that “The Literacy Loop” process, which has students who have the same language, has made a big difference for us with English learners, because if they don’t quite hear it in English, then the student can speak it in Spanish, for example, or another language, in that we pair the students up that way, so that they have an opportunity to be with people who do speak their own language, their language of the home. That’s important, I think.

Secondly, the kinds of instruction that student very often receive in a regular classroom does not provide enough scaffolding for their instruction, does not necessarily pre-teach vocabulary, but moves them right into the lessons that have the new vocabulary. So, one of the keys that we really have found to be successful in working with English learners, along with being able to have people there who speak their language, is that we focus on both pre-teaching and re-teaching, so that as we parallel the regular class programs, we know where the students are going, where they’ve come from.

Once we assess them, we can provide tremendous scaffolds, and organizers, and opportunities for students to learn vocabulary before they are introduced to the vocabulary in the regular classroom. And that raises expectations often times of the regular teacher for that student because they already have some of the definitional information.

We also focus a lot on comprehension strategies, so that we make sure that the students have an opportunity to work in reciprocal talk groups, reciprocal teaching talk groups, where they learn and practice strategies that then can transfer back to the regular classroom. We think that’s critically important. We see a big difference there.

And, then finally, I think one of the things that’s turned out to be real important is that in the re-teaching process, that we need to understand that a lot of curriculum is spiraling curriculum, and is not necessarily the best kind of curriculum for English learners. So, what we do is we have a real focus on identifying those skills that the students may get again later on in a spiraling curriculum, but we identify those critical skills, and then we teach them using a more of a mastery-orientation, so that we’re going to ensure that they get lots of time for the skills that they need.

Susan WILHELM

Joanne, did you have any issues in Maryland, in terms of recruiting providers that could work with English language learners or students with disabilities?

Joanne CARTER

We had several providers who indicated that they could not provide services for students with disabilities or English language learners, but we do have several who’ve indicated that those are the only students that they will serve. And again, we provide a full list for parents of all of the providers, the services that are offered, the students that they can accommodate, and so parents get to choose. And through fairs that we have provided, that some of the districts have provided, it’s an opportunity to really have that discussion.

But, where providers don’t indicate that they’re able to accommodate students with special needs or English language learners, the school systems have stepped up to work with the providers as a part of this partnership to identify ways in which those appropriate accommodations can be made. And, again, if that’s through the site coordinators, or

ensuring that, you know, as they've done the recruitment that they've identified individuals who can provide these services because they do that as a part of their normal ongoing instructional work.

That has helped to address the issue, but it continues to be one that is going to be of paramount importance as I feel the numbers of students who will access these services continues to increase. Word of mouth, I think, is really going to convince more parents that this is very beneficial to their students, and therefore, they will access the services. But, currently we're doing it either in our application process, asking: Can you, will you be able to accommodate these students? And, if not, then working with school systems to look at ways in which they can support the provider in the provision of those services, depending upon what type of accommodations are needed.

Susan WILHELM

Okay. Melinda?

Melinda NESS

In our district, 90% of the students the first year of implementation of supplemental services were English language learners. And, there were a few special-ed students. But, I think Joanne makes a very critical point: It's the partnership between the school, and the teachers, and the providers that makes, provides for the success of those students. The strategies that the special-ed students need as part of their IEP need to be communicated to the provider so that they can provide the instruction in ways that helps the student be successful.

And, our teachers also have been trained in working with English language learners so that they can also support the work. The tutor that we worked with this year, the provider, did a bi-weekly report to classroom teachers, and they did it electronically through email, so that the teachers could then read it, give them feedback on what they saw in the classroom. And then the tutors could communicate back and forth. So, I think it was that partnership that allowed for the tremendous success and the growth in student gains in achievement, which we could document at the conclusion of the process.

But, we did find that the parents felt very successful and encouraged by the process. They felt that it was open to them, and they were very pleased with the services they received. And, again this year, signed up with the same provider.

SEVERAL

Great, great.

Susan WILHELM

We've talked a lot about district level activities. I want to change the focus just slightly for a moment. And, Joanne, I want to talk more specifically about what states can do to support districts as they work to implement supplemental services. It's not just selecting the providers and the monitoring activities, but I think, isn't Maryland working on a tool kit, and some other types of support for districts?

Joanne CARTER

We are working on a tool kit that will be available to districts that will provide sample

letters that can go out to parents that are more parent-friendly. We're providing templates that can be used by the districts in terms of contract negotiation, because that's been an extended process as well. We're working with trying to do some public service announcements to support the districts in their recruiting efforts at the state level. And we're also developing some customer satisfaction surveys so that districts will have access to those. So, we have some cross-sharing.

But, more importantly, we're doing a lot of technical assistance around the state. We have several specialists who, as a part of their Title I responsibility, in addition to our specialists who have primary responsibility for supplemental educational services, as they're out there, they're talking with the districts. They're trying to identify what things are working, what kinds of technical assistance are needed. And so we're going to do training for providers on an ongoing basis, where they can come together and just network, and talk about the issues that they have confronted that they had not anticipated.

Classic example, we had a provider who had already thought about the fact that, if you're going to have students after school, you have to be accountable for who's picking that child up. You cannot just release the child to anyone. But, another provider had not even thought about the fact that they had to have emergency information. And so they shared those forms. And that's the role that the state is taking in terms of identifying strategies that are working, or resources that are working.

Susan WILHELM

Kit, were there things that the state, from your perspective, that states can do to help facilitate this process?

Kit MARSHALL

I believe that the application process that is put out by the state is critical. I think that the ongoing reporting required so that if you're going to apply again next year you've got to show proof, recent proof, of results, not the one that you sent in two years ago. And so I think it's important for the state to attend to that.

Certainly I don't think there's any question that states can provide a lot of support by having provider meetings, for example, but I honestly believe that closer to the district, and to the site level, is where the relationship, certainly, and the clarification about local standards, for example, local benchmarks and assessments, all of that occurs more easily at the local level.

I think one of the things that we've found to be extremely successful in the communication process is that we were a comprehensive school provider, reform provider, and partnered with many districts before we were a SES provider. So we offer free training in the strategies that we use in the SES program to the school sites where we're providing the work, so that we have a much tighter alignment. And we're actually providing some supportive kinds of training and support for the teachers during the regular school day. And that's been extremely helpful in building relationships at the site level.

Susan WILHELM

I wish I could jot down notes because I keep on saying, "remember this, remember that."

Laughter

Susan WILHELM

Melinda, how about you, in terms of the state role? Were there things that the state could have done that would have facilitated things more for you? Were there an adequate number of providers recruited? That kind of thing?

Melinda NESS

Certainly the initial implementation was difficult. It wasn't as timely as we would have liked it to have been, but it was difficult, I think, for everybody. So, the state department of education did the best they could with the resources they had at the time.

For us as a district, I would think the problem that we encountered the most difficulty with had to do with two things. One was the maximum per pupil amount. It will vary from district to district, and a lot of providers did not understand that concept. So, they may come to Forsyth expecting a certain amount, and then go two miles down the road to Atlanta City or Fulton County, and it's a different amount. And, there was some confusion there. So, their expectation was the same for that amount across the state.

The other one had to do with statewide providers. We're aligning and forming a partnership with providers. When we had designated statewide providers, and we don't have the information about their services, or about their businesses, or that face-to-face communication with them, it's difficult to develop that partnership, or to even provide information to parents about what those services look like.

So, I think, when we look at statewide-approved providers we're going to have to do a little bit more work to build that relationship between districts and those providers. I can guarantee you there are people in Forsyth that are not going to take the Savannah provider because they don't see them as someone that they can connect with. So, those are ongoing issues that we've had to deal with in that regard.

Joanne CARTER

Susan, also, I think that one of the issues that we've had, is that there is a minimum number of students that is required before a provider's even willing to go into a district, and I don't think that that was factored in the first time we did our review process. And, that became a lesson learned, because a lot of time was spent on doing contract negotiations only to find that because this is a business, there is a bottom line. And, that we had parents who were selecting providers, but not a sufficient number.

And, so part of it, I think in terms of that relationship, is we need to have providers understand that as the list continues to grow, parents have more choices. And that the numbers, they need to be very clear in their application: what's the bottom line in terms of the number of students required before you will provide that service, because that also, I think, led to some of the delay in the actual provision of services in the state of Maryland.

We certainly have learned that, and we include that as part of the information that we're providing now to school systems. And, that's particularly relevant when you get into the rural communities, and you may only have one school in improvement, and you don't get a sufficient number for that provisional service.

Kit MARSHALL

Susan, I was going to say that one of the things that occurred to me also, that I hadn't

thought of before, is that one of the things that makes a big difference for us as a provider is that the state of California has identified a limited number of publications and text books that are approved. So that it reduces the number of program materials that we're looking at in order to align our materials. And, I think that makes a big difference.

Two things, and it ties to the state and the district, and the classroom, that the more coherent and well-articulated, for example, what curriculum is that the curriculum embedded assessments will be used, and that the regular classroom, for example, has a well-articulated program so we can align with it, including pacing guides, and so on. That really helps us to be a lot more accountable and a lot of that generates from the state's position on textbooks, for example.

Susan WILHELM

Very interesting. Now I want to ask you about, sort of building on what Joanne talked about lessons learned. You've got a couple years of experience under your belt. Melinda, what would you have done differently knowing what you know now, when you were putting this process in place?

Melinda NESS

Well, I know I'd definitely have more face-to-face meetings with the various stakeholders. While we did some, and it was in such a hurry, we needed to do more ground work for the community to understand what supplemental services means to students, what it looks like, who's eligible, who's not eligible, and how that's going to play out, and how it'll roll out.

Another critical piece that I would have preferred to have done was to do debrief at the end of the practice, because it's always valuable for us to go back and look at what we've done, what worked, what didn't work, how could we improve on that process, so that we do it the next time, we'll do a much better job. And, we need input from parents, and teachers, and staff members to do a better job at that. So, that debrief at the end is very critical to the process.

Susan WILHELM

How about you, Kit? Do you see things that should, maybe could have been done in Los Angeles a little differently, that might have smoothed the process out based on your experience?

Kit MARSHALL

If I look across the entire state, and the fact that we work in rural, suburban, and urban school districts, I would say across the board, we would certainly begin with randomized controlled studies initially. Because, I think that's a way to kind of tease out whether or not what you did had an effect on the students directly. Because when you're trying to align, it's not going to be your pre-post assessment that's going to drive things. So, I think that's a critically important lesson for all of us, as providers, to have.

Secondly, I think we would insist on having the school and the district data right up front. Because sometimes that's hard to get a hold of, and sometimes you don't get it at all, and so there are some privacy issues, which are understood of course, but since we're in a partnership, we do need to have that data available to us in a timely manner, so that we can build good programs. That would be a second thing.

And then I think, more clarification of the roles and responsibilities that are shared by not just the state, but certainly when you get down into the grassroots of it, you're talking about the provider has roles, responsibilities, the district, the site, the school principal needs to be clear about what they're doing, to not only recruit, but to retain those students in the program.

And, finally, of course, if you're working with an after-school program, there needs to be a lot of talk up front, and ongoing, and at the end, certainly to evaluate what's successful, and then up-level based on their results.

Susan WILHELM

One of the things that I found most interesting about this conversation, both you and Joanne talked about embedding the supplemental services, wrapping it around with an after-school program, and I think that sometimes people tend to think of them as distinct activities, when in fact it makes a lot of sense to coordinate, from a kids' point of view, as well as from the provider's point of view. Joanne, did you have anything you wanted to add about lessons learned?

Joanne CARTER

From the state's perspective, in terms of qualifying providers, I think that someone mentioned debriefing. We have found it very beneficial. This is a lesson learned from the first time, to debrief with providers who were not successful the first time, to provide an ongoing list of the questions that have been raised throughout this review process, so that new providers will have benefit of the kinds of questions that were asked, and the responses that are made available, in terms of being able to prepare an application that will meet the review process.

Also, another lesson learned for us is that you have to go beyond just having letters coming out to parents, that there has to be more active and aggressive outreach. And that outreach can take several different forms, but I think someone else mentioned it earlier- the best recruitment is when it is done at the school level, because parents are very familiar with their school-based staff, and just having someone there to talk about the benefit of this additional resource for parents, I think, has made a huge difference, I know, in one of our large urban districts. Initially, they were only able to recruit 1,000 students. Yet, they had almost 19,000 that were eligible. And, it really didn't make a lot of sense to us.

So, we work with that district, and what they really did is, there had to be more than one contact. There was a letter, there was a meeting with the principal, there were meetings between teachers and parents. Then, they actually went to parents who didn't respond the first or second time. They kept going back and back until they made contact with every parent to make certain that the parent clearly understood what the option was, and that they were making the right decision. Because we can't assume that all parents understand everything that they are reading.

And then, another lesson learned for us is that we're going to have to insist with the providers that they must have a local telephone number. There has to be a number where the parent can reach their provider, because when we were working in large urban districts with high poverty, the idea of a long distance phone call just will not play.

And they need to have that easy access to the provider. We've had a few instances where the provider hired an individual to provide the service, and in their mind, it was homework tutoring, and that's not what SES is about. It is not homework tutoring. And we would not

have been aware of that except that someone was onsite and realized that when the child walked in, that's what they were doing. And so, that is a real critical component -- being able to help providers understand that what we're talking about is very different from what you might consider to be homework tutoring. So, that's a critical component.

Melinda NESS

One of the things, too, that I'd like to see the state do a little bit more is ensuring that the providers have background checks and appropriate follow-up on their employees. I know that in Georgia they've done a pretty good job of ensuring that that has taken place, but for the variety and the number of people that are stepping up to the plate and looking at this as an opportunity, we need to make sure our children are protected, and that their interests are looked out for.

Another issue that you wouldn't think about, because we don't typically deal with the business world in this way, is that when you're dealing with a franchise of an organization, it becomes a territorial issue as to which franchise has control over your district. And, as a district employee, I don't have time to play that game about who's in charge, and who's not. So, those kinds of issues that are related to a business, and how it functions, need to be resolved at a higher level than at the district office.

Susan WILHELM

I want to thank you all very much for joining us today. I know I learned a tremendous amount about implementing supplemental services, and I hope that our viewers found it interesting, too. We're planning to do more of these web casts directed specifically at Title I implementation issues in school districts. And, I think we set a really nice tone for this, and I'm really excited about what's going to be happening in the future.