



THE CENTRAL CAROLINA RESA FROM 2012 – 2019

A RECORD OF QUALITY AND
EXPANDED SERVICES TO A
GROWING NUMBER OF MEMBER
ORGANIZATIONS

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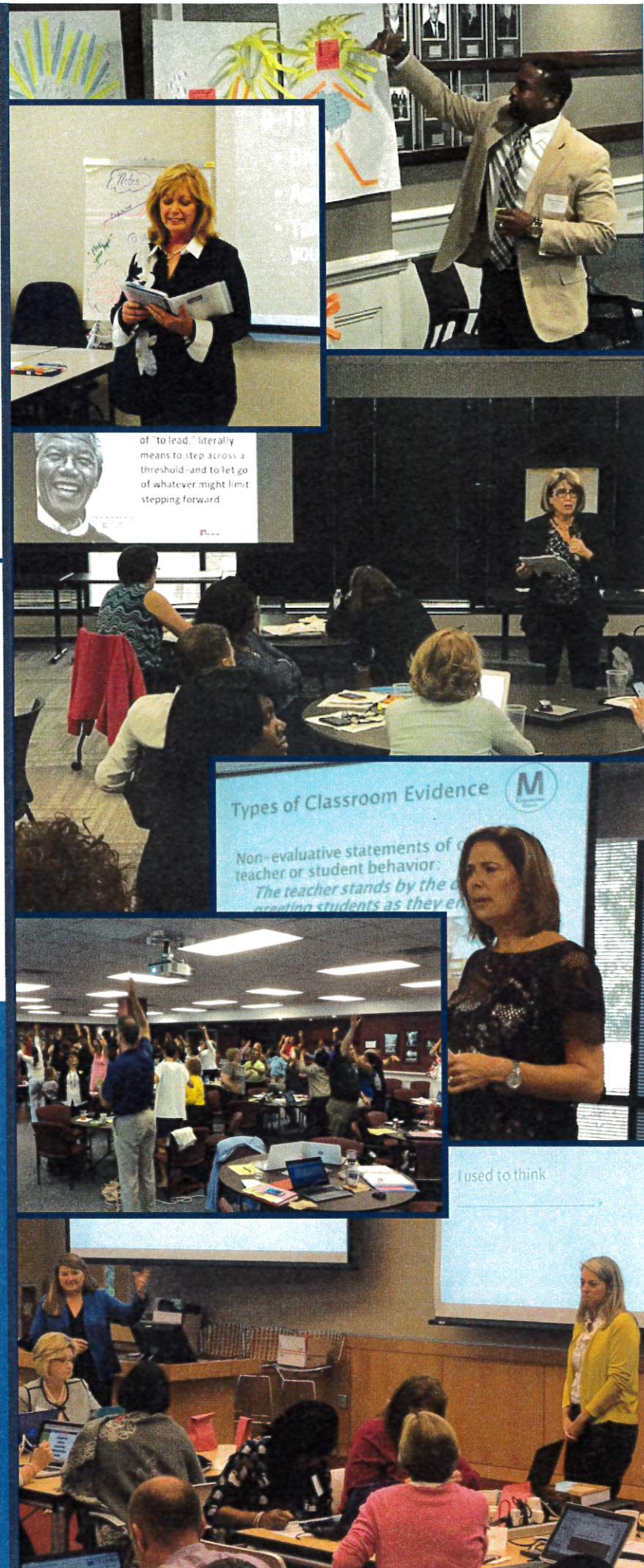


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MILESTONES FROM 2012-2019

In January 2012, Neil Pedersen and Dana Stutzman (previously Gunderson) assumed administrative responsibilities for the Central Carolina RESA, following the retirement of the first CCRESA Executive Director, Lawrence Walker. The CCRESA contracted with Pedersen & Associates for the services of Dr. Pedersen (Executive Director) and Ms. Stutzman (Communications and Office Manager). This was the first of four years that the CCRESA received \$250,000 to support the implementation of the federal Race to the Top program under the Obama administration. This grant, essentially, doubled the CCRESA's budget, which resulted in the opportunity to provide much professional learning and to develop a close collaboration between the Department of Public Instruction and the CCRESA.

In 2015, the CCRESA became a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation and assumed responsibilities for all of its own financial operations which, previously, had flowed through its official fiscal agent, the Orange County Schools. Simultaneously, the CCRESA terminated its contract with Pedersen & Associates, and Dr. Pedersen and Ms. Stutzman became employees of the CCRESA.

In the Spring of 2017, the CCRESA received start-up funds from DPI to initiate the Local Alternative Teacher Preparation Program (LATP). The CCRESA entered into a major contract with RTI and employed two additional staff members (technically on loan from WCPSS) to design and implement the LATP program.

In January of 2019, Dr. Pedersen submitted his resignation to the Board of Directors effective June 30, 2019. Subsequently, the Board conducted a search for a new Executive Director and selected Dr. Ed Croom to be CCRESA's third Executive Director.

ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF THE CCRESA

In 2012, there were 13 local school districts that were members of the CCRESA. They included:

- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
- Durham Public Schools
- Edgecombe County Schools
- Franklin County Schools
- Granville County Schools
- Halifax County Schools
- Johnston County Schools
- Nash-Rock Mount Public Schools
- Orange County Schools
- Person County Schools
- Vance County Schools
- Warren County Schools
- Wilson County Schools

Since that time, 5 additional school districts have become members and 6 other organizations are participating as Affiliate Members. They include:

- Greene County Schools
- Northampton County Schools
- Pitt County Schools
- Roanoke Rapids Graded School District
- Wake County Public Schools
- Educational Schools for the Deaf & Blind
- East Carolina University
- NC State University
- NC School of Science & Math
- UNC – Chapel Hill
- NC Central University

The expansion of the CCRESA has not only provided additional financial stability to the organization, but it has increased collaboration among school districts and networking between LEAs and Affiliate Members. During the past seven years, the minimum dues has remained at \$10,000 and the maximum has decreased from \$35,000 to \$20,000.

When Dr. Pedersen and Ms. Stutzman arrived, they found an office in need of significant upgrades, and they set about creating a more professional work environment. A new website was launched in 2012, and a second new website was developed in 2017. The antiquated copier, telephone system, and internet service were all replaced. The CCRESA also contracted for custodial and recycling services, and entered into a five-year lease at the same rates for the facilities that it used in the NCSBA building. With the addition of the LATP program, new office furniture and carpeting were installed in the main office area.

Previously, any changes to the CCRESA website had to be made by a contractor. Consequently, it was continuously out-of-date. Ms. Stutzman has been integrally involved with the development of the new versions of the website and is able to make most changes and additions herself. The current website has the functionality for members to view information about past and upcoming events and to register online, including on mobile devices.

When the CCRESA became a 501(c)3, Ms. Stutzman set up all the financial systems, including payroll, on Quickbooks. Consequently, the administration and the Board have access to all financial records, as does the auditor. Maddison & Caison has audited the CCRESA since 2015 and has been complimentary of how the organization has managed its finances. The internal control of the CCRESA's finances has also eliminated earlier problems with the timely payment of invoices.

Financially, the CCRESA is a very sound organization. It is projected that by the end of the 2019 fiscal year, the CCRESA will carry over a total fund balance of \$650,000. Of this amount, \$235,000 is tied to the Central Carolina Teaching Initiative (CCTI). The CCRESA has two interest bearing accounts, a CD with FirstInternet Bank and a Money Market Savings account with CapitalOne360, in addition to the primary checking account with BB&T.

In 2017 the CCRESA established a 403(b) retirement program for its two employees with T. Rowe Price. In addition, in 2019 the CCRESA began providing health insurance for employees who need such coverage.

Shortly after his arrival, Dr. Pedersen formalized the process for nominating candidates for Regional and State Superintendent of the Year. New forms were developed and an online voting process was established to ensure that all superintendents had an opportunity to participate. Two of the CCRESA's Regional Superintendents of the Year were subsequently selected to be the State's Superintendent of the Year (Jim Merrill and Patrick Rhodes), and Jim Merrill was named a national finalist.

JOB-ALIKE COUNCILS

In 2012, the CCRESA supported four councils: Curriculum & Instruction, Technology, Human Resources, and Finance. Since that time, three more have been added: Principals, Public Information Officers, and Equity. Councils, typically, meet 4-5 times per year, and they are central to the mission of the RESA in that they promote collaboration, information sharing, and advocacy. The Councils, actually, provide one of the best formats for professional learning, particularly that which has direct implications to council members' day-to-day responsibilities. They also provide invaluable support and networking opportunities to administrators who are new to their roles.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Over the years, the CCRESA has offered a wide array of professional learning topics in a variety of formats. For the most part, they fall into the following categories: (1) Curriculum and Instruction; (2) Digital Learning; (3) Assessment; (4) Leadership; and (5) Codes of Conduct, Restorative Justice, and Safety. The first three categories overlap and encompass the broader aspects of what takes place in an engaging and effective educational setting. The two major areas of concentration of our professional learning are this inclusive picture of the teaching and learning that takes place in learning environments and leadership.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Much of the early focus of the professional learning programs in this area was on content, since the Common Core standards were a major emphasis in the Race to the Top initiative. The CCRESA provided logistical support to DPI consultants who conducted workshops on these standards and how to teach them. Along these lines, the CCRESA partnered on several occasions with DPI and SREB in the implementation of Math I, II, and III, and the Essentials for College Math. A major offering was on implementation of the Rigorous Curriculum Design model based off of the book *Build a Rigorous Curriculum* by Larry Ainsworth who was with the Leadership and Learning Center. Tom Hierck provided a series of programs over the course of two years and worked closely with a number of our districts, including Granville and Johnston County Schools.

This theme of effective unit planning and lesson design continued in subsequent years by Candi McKay and, most recently, Connie Kamm. Connie Kamm focused on student-centered and problem-solution based learning. The CCRESA joined EdLeader21 (Ken Kay) to promote the teaching and development of soft skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. The intent was to provide school and district leaders, as well as classroom teachers, with a picture of what forward-thinking teaching and learning should look like in today's schools as we prepare students for a world that we can scarcely imagine today.

DIGITAL LEARNING

Although digital learning is a means and not an end, it is a critical element in future-focused schools. The CCRESA contracted with the Friday Institute for a two-year program that was entitled "Mission Critical." Mary Ann Wolf and her team helped districts to identify and clarify their vision for the type of instruction that they would like to see in their schools and then to provide them with tools and resources to make effective use of technology to make this vision become a reality. The CCRESA also promoted the effective use of digital resources by contracting with Discovery Education to conduct two four-day workshops on the effective use of DE's products. Because most of the districts in the region made some use of DE products, the CCRESA sponsored a Discovery Education Users Group that met about three times per year for several years. For the past two years, DPI contracted with the CCRESA to support professional learning related to the Digital Learning Competencies that the State Board had adopted for teachers, administrators, and other support personnel.

The CCRESA also provided support for the implementation of the Home Base suite of products that DPI made available through the RttT grant. The CCRESA was one of the few RESAs to support user groups for staff to learn about the use of Power School, SchoolNet, and TNL. The CCRESA also sponsored several sessions for principals and assistant principals on the effective use of the NCEES instrument.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an important issue on many different levels. The State's school grading and educator evaluation system and the various iterations of federal programs make extensive use of standardized assessments such as EOGs, EOCs, Final Exams, ACT, and Work Keys. The CCRESA has offered numerous workshops to many different audiences on EVAAS, the ACT, and the College Board assessments (e.g. Advanced Placement Exams).

Equally, if not more, important is the use of formative assessments in the classroom. Formative assessment is one of the most powerful aspects of quality lesson design and execution. Consequently, it was stressed in Connie Kamm's and Thomas Hierck's workshops as well as in the Friday Institute's "Mission Possible." In addition, the CCRESA sponsored workshops on formative assessment with internationally acclaimed Ken O'Conner, Jan Chappuis (Pearson), and Sue Gendron (Scholastic).

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

In addition to this focus on high quality, future-focused teaching and learning, the second major focus for professional learning has been on district and school leadership. Effective leaders are absolutely essential to the success of a school or district. The CCRESA provided professional learning to principals and other leaders on how to become effective leaders through a variety of programs. In many cases, administrators attended programs such as those offered by Connie Kamm, Tom Hierck, and the Friday Institute as part of a team that included district and school administrators and supervisors and teachers. The work of researchers like Hattie emphasize the importance of school leaders being participants in the professional learning provided to teachers in their schools and for them to have a working knowledge and be able to communicate what effective instruction should look like in their schools. Brian McNulty (Leadership and Learning Center) offered two workshops to district and school administrators on “School Leadership that Works,” that draws upon the work of Marzano, Hattie, and Fullan.

Since 2012, Lynn Williams has offered workshops on Crucial Conversations, Crucial Accountability, and Influencer based upon the work of Joseph Grinney and the VitalSmarts organization. 225 administrators have participated in this program that developed their communication skills and understanding of how to influence individuals and organizations to achieve their goals.

Neil Pedersen created the Leadership Roundtable program in which administrators read books related to their professional and personal lives and meet for day-long discussion groups to process what they have learned and how they can apply it. Over the course of the last four years, the following books were read, in most cases by several different cohorts of education leaders.

- Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing our Kids for the Innovation Era by Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith
- What School Could Be: Insights and Inspiration from Teachers Across America by Ted Dintersmith
- Decisive: How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work by Chip and Dan Heath
- The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact by Chip and Dan Heath
- Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us by Daniel Pink
- The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups by Daniel Coyle
- Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth
- The End of Average: How We Succeed in a World that Values Sameness by Todd Rose

- Learning Transformed: 8 Keys to Designing Tomorrow's Schools Today by Eric Sheninger and Thomas Murray
- Teaching in the Flat World: Learning from High Performing Systems by Linda Darling Hammond and Robert Rothman
- The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact by Michael Fullan
- The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference by Malcolm Gladwell
- Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns by Clayton Christensen
- Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools by Michael Horn and Heather Staker

In 2013, the CCRESA sponsored a cohort of assistant principals in the region to participate in NCPAPA's program Future Ready Leaders. This allowed us to eliminate the waiting list in our region for this popular program to support assistant principals who aspire to the principalship.

In 2018-19, the CCRESA launched a new program called "Lead and Learn" to support first and second year principals. Anna Brady, a recently retired Regional Superintendent from Guilford County, designed and facilitated seven sessions for this cohort of principals. The program was very well received, and it is recommended that it be continued next year.

CODES OF CONDUCT, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, AND SCHOOL SAFETY

During this administration's time, concerns regarding issues related to school safety and student discipline have increased dramatically. School administrators have implemented many measures to enhance safety on their campuses. Issues have arisen about the effective and appropriate use of School Resource Officers. Codes of conduct have been revised to promote fairness and consistency and to reduce recidivism.

The CCRESA contracted with Engaging Schools, a consulting firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to lead three workshops on "Recalibrating Schoolwide Discipline and Student Support." Some districts, subsequently, followed up with Engaging Schools and made major changes in their Codes of Conduct for students. These and other sessions also supported schools in instituting restorative justice practices in an effort to improve student behavior in school and to reduce disparities in suspension rates among racial and ethnic groups. The CCRESA also convened a one-day conference to which school districts sent teams to share information about SROs, codes of conduct, the court system, and restorative justice practices.

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM (LATP AND CCTI)

In 2016, the CCRESA partnered with RTI and the WCPSS to draft a proposal to submit to the State Board of Education to initiate a program that would allow the CCRESA to prepare lateral-entry teachers to earn a standard NC license to teach. This action was taken in response to the growing number of lateral entry teachers in our region, as well as the rest of the state, who needed to enroll in teacher preparation programs. In 2017, the State Board approved CCRESA's application and provided \$300,000 in start-up funds. The CCRESA signed a contract with RTI to support the program through the summer of 2018 and employed two full-time staff members to operate the Local Alternative Teacher Preparation Program (LATP). Approximately, 87 teachers registered for the program the first year and 78 the second year.

In the 2018 session of the General Assembly, SB 599 passed, which phases out lateral-entry teacher license programs and replaces them with Residency programs that have different requirements, including the need for teachers to pass the edTPA national assessment.

During the course of the 2018-19 year, the CCRESA staff, Board of Directors, and HR Council had many discussions about the future of the teacher preparation program, which was renamed the Central Carolina Teacher Initiative (CCTI). Due to a significant amount of carryover funds, in part due to a staff vacancy that existed for much of the 2018-19 year, it has been determined that the CCRESA has sufficient funding to offer the CCTI program in 2019-20 for a third cohort of 60-65 teachers. Lisa Sonricker, the Program Director, is hard at work wrapping up the first two cohorts and revising plans for 2019-20. The revised program will have significant coaching from an outside organization (NC New Teacher Support Group) and an enhanced program for Exceptional Education teachers.

ADVOCACY AND RELATIONSHIPS

One of the major roles of the CCRESA is to advocate for programs and services that are needed to provide a quality education to the children of North Carolina. The CCRESA has taken a number of steps to build positive relationships with decision-makers in Raleigh and to share its positions with them. Frequently, administrators in DPI are invited to attend Board and Council meetings in order to create an opportunity for open and honest dialogue. State Board of Education members and the State Superintendent have attended Board meetings for this purpose as well. As the need arises, the CCRESA Board of Directors has sent communications to the State Board and/or State Superintendent stating its position on legislation or school board policies and regulations.

Prior to 2012, many of the RESAs, including the CCRESA, had a somewhat adversarial, or at least uncooperative, relationship with the Department of Public Instruction based upon experiences where it was felt that DPI was taking advantage of the RESAs. Since that time, the Executive Director has made a concerted effort to build healthier relationships with staff at DPI. Frequently, the CCRESA has provided its facilities and logistical support in order for DPI staff to offer professional learning on its site. The CCRESA also has made its conference room available to DPI staff to hold regional or departmental meetings when it was not otherwise being used. The Executive Director has collaborated with the Regional Roundtables, Regional Leads, and now the Regional Support Teams to coordinate services and enhance communications.

In 2018, the CCRESA held its first Legislative Breakfast at a restaurant in Raleigh in order to share its priorities with legislators representing this region and to build relationships with these elected officials. The meeting in 2018 was very well attended, but attendance on behalf of legislators as well as superintendents dropped off in 2019. A determination will need to be made next year about how this event can be modified to enhance its effectiveness.

SUMMARY

Over the last 7.5 years, the Central Carolina RESA has grown as an organization in terms of services that it provides, membership, and financial stability. Major accomplishments include:

- Added five LEAs and six Affiliate Members, which has expanded services to a larger region, created new partnerships with IHEs, and brought in additional revenues.
- Maintained membership fees at the 2011 levels and, actually, reduced them for districts with ADMs over 20,000 while expanding and upgrading services.
- Increased the anticipated fund balance at the end of the 2019 fiscal year to more than \$400,000 for the core operation of the CCRESA and \$235,000 for CCTI.
- Professionalized the workplace and the CCRESA operations by upgrading the website and networks, establishing an efficient event registration process, using QuickBooks to maintain all financial records and generate reports, and contracting for custodial and recycling services.
- Incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, which has clarified the CCRESA's legal status and made its operations more streamlined and no longer dependent upon an LEA to serve as its fiscal agent.
- Offered a wide range of quality professional learning programs focused, primarily, on quality teaching and learning, digital learning, assessment, leadership, and safe schools.
- Initiated a support program for first and second year principals to enhance their effectiveness as school leaders.
- Conducted 23 book studies for administrators on 14 different books on leadership.
- Offered Crucial Conversations, Crucial Accountability, and Influencer to 225 administrators.
- Increased the number of Councils from four to seven.
- Launched an ambitious and successful teacher licensure program to support the expanding number of lateral-entry teachers in the region.
- Formalized the process for selecting our Regional Superintendent of the Year, which has led to two of our superintendents being named North Carolina Superintendent of the Year.