



## ***Educational Program Evaluation***

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### **Evaluation and Planning Support to the State of Alabama**

Sun Associates is an educational technology consulting firm with considerable experience in national, state, and local level technology planning and evaluation. We are currently working with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) to:

- Revise Alabama IMPACT, the state's current five-year strategic plan for K-12 technology
- Develop and pilot state-wide teacher and administrator technology survey instruments
- Develop and conduct a state-wide pilot for district-level (local) technology plan evaluation

These three strands of activity are woven into a comprehensive package of planning and evaluation services that bring value to ALSDE and promise to substantially benefit Alabama's teachers and students throughout the upcoming five year planning cycle.

#### *Revising the IMPACT Plan*

Sun Associates has worked with ALSDE to facilitate a statewide stakeholders group to review the state's K-12 Technology Plan (IMPACT) in preparation for the creation of a revised plan. After accumulation of this input and feedback, Sun has worked throughout 2006 with ALSDE staff to craft the 2007 – 2012 IMPACT plan that has subsequently moved to the Alabama State Board of Education for approval.

#### *Evaluating IMPACT*

Sun Associates has designed a systemic, rigorous, and highly formative evaluation process for IMPACT aimed at the generation of continual improvement in how technology is used in Alabama schools. The evaluation process has been designed as an integral part of the state's plan and works to coordinate the efforts of educators at all levels.

#### Statewide Surveys

A central component of the IMPACT evaluation plan is a uniform data collection process based on a Technology Use Survey tool specifically mapped to the IMPACT goals and objectives. Sun Associates has developed this Survey which will collect data annually to determine the state's progress toward meeting its target benchmarks. The ultimate product of this survey is an annual statewide progress report to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education as part of Alabama's NCLB Consolidated Performance Report.

Sun Associates has developed two statewide surveys – one for teachers and another for administrators. Both instruments are currently being field-tested among a selection of pilot districts. Sun Associates will

work with ALSDE to review the field-test data, and refine the instruments accordingly. Finalized surveys will be rolled out and available for use statewide in February, 2007.

### Local Evaluation Process

At the local level, Sun Associates has worked with ALSDE to design an assessment process in which districts identify unique benchmark indicators to measure progress toward successful implementation of their *local* technology plans. This evaluation approach is grounded in the understanding that for real change and improvement to occur at the district level, local educators must engage in meaningful reflection on the impact of technology *within the context of their unique educational needs and aspirations*. Specifically, districts need actual data that addresses the question, “Of what value is technology to our students’ learning, and to what extent is our district realizing this value?”.

To facilitate the collection of relevant data, and ultimately to answer this critical question, Sun Associates has designed a local plan evaluation process that is aligned with the goals and objectives of IMPACT, and that is responsive to local priorities. As such, this process incorporates broad measures (the statewide survey) as just one facet of a much richer process of local indicator development, data collection, and structured reflection on technology’s value within individual schools and classrooms.

Much of the data collected locally will be of a highly qualitative nature and will include teacher/student/parent interviews, assessment of student and teacher work, and local classroom observations of the variety of ways that technology is impacting student learning. Through our work, local technology planning and evaluation in Alabama school districts will become a process that engages a broad community of district stakeholders representing a wide range of educational priorities.

### *Local Evaluation Training and Piloting*

To assist ALSDE in the implementation of the local component of IMPACT’s evaluation, Sun Associates has worked with an initial group of six Alabama “Pioneer Districts” to pilot IMPACT’s Local Technology Evaluation process. During 2006 – 2007, this work has included face-to-face training as well as off-site support to the Pioneers using a variety of communication modes. The work and training focuses on the development of local evaluation questions, indicator rubrics (aligned with the evaluation questions) to assess district technology progress, local data collection strategies, and review/use of the assessment data.

Information gathered from this Pioneer District pilot work will be used to fine-tune training materials that will ultimately be used to support districts across the state in implementing the Local Technology Evaluation process as part of their local technology planning work. Implementation of the new Local Technology Evaluation process is expected to be incremental and will be prevalent statewide by the end of the 2007 – 2012 planning cycle.

The Pioneer Districts are on track to exit the training and pilot process with a robust local evaluation component to integrate into their 2007-2008 school year local technology plan.

### *Online Resources (For More Information)*

- [www.sun-associates.com/alsde/pioneer](http://www.sun-associates.com/alsde/pioneer)
- [aleval.wikispaces.com](http://aleval.wikispaces.com)
- [www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section\\_detail.asp?section=61](http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section_detail.asp?section=61)