Kerry Leslie Abel, Coordinator of Dropout Prevention and Community Partnerships for Richland County (SC) School District One, is the 2018 recipient of the National Dropout Prevention Center's Governor and Mrs. Richard W. Riley Award for Excellence in Dropout Prevention which identifies and brings recognition to an outstanding individual who has made significant contributions to the advancement of dropout prevention initiatives in the state of South Carolina. He is responsible for coordinating district efforts related to dropout prevention, intervention, and special programs. He is also the cofounder and Coordinator of the Richland One Evening High School, a high school designed to serve students aged 16-20 interested in obtaining a high school diploma but, due to life circumstances, are unable to attend school during the day.

Mr. Abel is the founding director of the Office of Afterschool Programs for Richland County School District One and served as director for six years. Under his leadership the district received the 2004 Afterschool Champion Award from the National Afterschool Alliance. His past experience includes Project Director for Richland One’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant and Director of the Columbia Urban League’s “Drugs Destroy Dreams” Youth Drug Prevention Program.

Mr. Abel is active in his alumni, church, and professional communities, including board membership for the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance and the Community Health Assistance Team. He is a member of the National Dropout Prevention Network and the South Carolina Alliance of Black School Educators, receiving that organization’s 2014 President's Award.