



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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D.D. Council Quarterly Report
October 2008
Division of Educational Improvement and Assistance

1. Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) Organizational/Staff Changes

As a result of reorganization efforts, the LDE has established the Office of School and District Assistance, with Rodney Watson serving as the Assistant Superintendent. The Division of Educational Improvement and Assistance (DEIA), which holds primary responsibility for special education services, is located within this Office. Susan Baton continues to serve as Acting Director of the DEIA.

Janet Mora left her position as the state supervisor of autism to serve as the Executive Director of the State Interagency Coordinating Council. The autism position has been advertised. Melodie Sparks is the new state supervisor of programs for students with hearing impairments. She can be reached at melodie.sparks@la.gov.

2. Deafblind Project

The Louisiana Department of Education has again been awarded a five-year IDEA Part D grant on serving students with deafblindness. Many of the students whose needs are addressed via this project are identified as having a special education exceptionality other than Deafblind (e.g., multiple disabilities). Educators or family members who have concerns regarding students who have both hearing and visual impairments are encouraged to contact Joyce Russo at joyce.russo@la.gov for information related to this project.

3. LDE Bulletin Revisions

Bulletin 1706, Regulations for Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act (R.S. 17:1941 et seq.) was approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and has been sent to the Louisiana Register to be published as a final rule.

Bulletin 1508, the Pupil Appraisal Handbook, will go to BESE in October for a Notice of Intent.

Bulletin 1530, the IEP Handbook, will likely go before BESE in December for a Notice of Intent. When Bulletin 1530 it receives final adoption, the ESYP Handbook will be rescinded and those regulatory sections will be a part of Bulletin 1530.

“An Equal Opportunity Employer”

4. Louisiana Accessible Instructional Materials (LA-AIM)

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has awarded 15 states and CAST, a leading education research and development organization, \$4.9 million to launch the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Consortium to improve the quality, availability, and timely delivery of accessible instructional materials to K-12 students with print disabilities. The approved Louisiana Accessible Instructional Materials (LA-AIM) project is designed to bring about needed changes within state structures that will improve access to the general education curriculum for all students.

This project also represents major reform that is designed to reduce student achievement gaps. Through its link to the NIMAS requirements for K-12 publishers to provide source files that can be used in the conversion process, all students will have access to core instructional materials in a format that meets their identified educational need.

In order to ensure every child has timely access to the general curriculum in a format from which they can learn, Louisiana leaders must facilitate changes that support:

- Development of a statewide system that will identify student needs for core instructional materials in alternate formats.
- Development of a centralized partnership among stakeholders such as the Louisiana Instructional Materials Center, Louisiana Assistive Technology Centers, and school book depository.
- Development of a statewide, shared inventory system that can track core materials that have been converted, loan materials to students, and can be used to project student need and thus order materials in advance, when possible.
- Development of a series of training modules designed to help parents, teachers, principals, and other school administrators understand the importance of identifying this particular student need, communicating the need, procuring and delivering the materials timely, and complying with state and federal regulations.
- Expansion of a professional learning community that supports ongoing collaboration and promotes educational excellence through access to general education curriculum.

Combined, these reforms target student achievement by assuring timely delivery of core instruction to all students. For further information, contact Jackie.bobbett@la.gov or donna.broussard@la.gov.

5. Louisiana Assistive Technology Initiative (LATI)

The mission of the Louisiana Assistive Technology Initiative (LATI) is to provide leadership and support to local education agencies and families in the development and implementation of assistive technology services that will have meaningful application for the educational, social, recreational, vocational, and developmental experiences of students with disabilities. The LATI has established regional centers to improve outcomes and results for children and youth with disabilities through the use of assistive technology, to access school programs and curriculum, and to increase the capacity of school districts to provide assistive technology services by making training and technical assistance available to teachers, therapists, administrators, paraprofessionals and parents. The regional centers have created active training calendars for the 08-08 school year. Refer to their websites for their training calendars and visit often for new information.

Region 1 anita.lee@ipbs.net

Region 2 <http://RIATCenter.eboard.com>

Region 3 <http://www.lati3.com/>

Region 4 and 6 <http://www.atanswers.com/about%20us.htm>

Region 5 <http://bb.lati.cpsb.org/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

Region 7 <http://www.r7cat.com/>

Region 8 <http://www.r7cat.com/>

6. Literacy

The Louisiana Department of Education will implement a literacy initiative for grades PK-4 entitled *Ensuring Literacy for All*. Forty-three schools will be selected to receive state funding, as well as support via a literacy coach and professional development. Dr. Joe Witt will provide leadership in the provision of profession development on Response to Intervention to the participating schools. The speech therapist and pupil appraisal team assigned to each school must attend an Ensuring Literacy for All training with the school to facilitate special education involvement in the initiative.

The current Literacy Pilot schools (located in St. Bernard, West Baton Rouge, Recovery School District in New Orleans, Assumption, Avoyelles, Sabine, East Feliciana, Tangipahoa, and Lafourche) will continue into the 2008-09 school year. These schools will each pilot a reading/literacy assessment instrument to be used for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The *Literacy Access: Low Incidence Disabilities Committee* has been established to make recommendations on strategies to include students with low incidence disabilities in local education agency literacy/reading programs. The work of this group will support alignment of strategies across literacy related initiatives/issues (e.g., Reading First, literacy pilot sites, alternate instructional materials, special education specific projects). A national consultant is facilitating the work of the committee and will guide the members in developing both short and long term action plans. The initial work of the committee will focus on issues pertaining to students with significant disabilities. Future work will entail a partnership with the Leadership Development Committee for Sensorially Impaired to address issues related to students who have deaf/hearing impairments and blind/visual impairments.

The state Literacy and Numeracy Conference will be held on April 28-30, 2009 at the River Center in Baton Rouge.

7. Louisiana Department of Education Mission/Vision

Vision: Create a World-Class Education System for all Students in Louisiana.

Mission:

1. Higher Academic Achievement for All Students
2. Close the Achievement Gap between Race and Class
3. Prepare Students to be Effective Citizens in a Global Market