



**STATE OF LOUISIANA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
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**Louisiana Department of Education (LDE)**  
**July 2012 Quarterly Report to the DD Council**

**UPDATE/PROGRESS ON AGENCY INITIATIVES**

**1. Families Helping Families Contracts**

In June 2012, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary approved 19 contracts with 10 Families Helping Families Resource Centers for the FY2012-13. The total for each contract is \$76,000, and the goal of each contract is to assist LEAs and parents of students with disabilities to work together in planning and implementing special educational services for children and youth. FHF at the Crossroads of Louisiana will receive \$65,000 additional contract funds to support the Louisiana GUMBO project.

**2. Special Education Parent Survey**

The LDE will be conducting the school year 2011-12 Special Education Parent Survey in August and September as school districts open for the new school year. Scantron Corporation will again be the contractor that disseminates the Parent Survey to families of students with disabilities in 21 local education agencies (LEAs)/LEA charters. The last time that LEAs were surveyed was approximately four years ago. Every family of a student with a disability in the 21 LEAs will receive a survey delivered by U.S. Post to their home address as provided by LEAs to the Louisiana Department of Education in the SER data system. Undeliverable surveys are returned to the LDE. Results of the survey should be available in the fall of 2012.

**3. Communication Initiative**

On May 18, 2012 the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) convened a meeting of parents, professionals, and others that reflected an interest and involvement in the education, habilitation and care for infants, children and youth with complex disabilities. The Stakeholders were invited to join the LDE in the development and implementation of a new statewide campaign to assure that all students, specifically those with complex disabilities, are offered appropriate support and instruction in literacy and communication development. The goal is to assure that all children of Louisiana are provided the appropriate supports and services they need to express themselves and engage in the essentials of literacy (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). The LDE will work with other existing initiatives to take action steps related to this goal. Lynette Fontenot has produced a short video (a little over 6 minutes) to highlight issues around the need for augmentative and alternative communication supports for individuals with complex communication needs. This video is posted on the LDE's Access Guide (<http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov>)

#### **4. Opportunity for Parents to Serve on Education Advisory Committee (as reported in the LaDDC News)**

As part of the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDE) Louisiana Believes Plan, advisory committees are being formed to provide input and feedback on the implementation of educational reform initiatives. The LDE is seeking parents to serve on the Louisiana Believes Parents/Community Advisory Committee. Parents interested in serving on this committee should send a letter of interest to [louisianabelieves@la.gov](mailto:louisianabelieves@la.gov) by Thursday, July 2, 2012.

#### **5. Louisiana Believes Plan**

The *Louisiana Believes* plan is based on the belief that all students can achieve academic success, and that those closest to students - parents and educators, not bureaucrats - should be empowered to make decisions to support the success of their students. The LDE presented the main policy components of the plan to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) at the June 2012 meeting. A summary of the plan is provided below. For further information, visit the Louisiana Department of Education's website (<http://www.louisianaschools.net>) and the following link: <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/19878.pdf>

##### **Revised Louisiana Believes Plan**

The *Louisiana Believes* plan is comprised of basic principles and core elements that are essential to driving continuous academic improvement. These include the enactment of Acts 1, 2 and 3 of the recent legislative session; the approved ESEA waiver, the transition to the Common Core State Standards; and the implementation of Compass - the state's new evaluation system for educators. The goal of the *Louisiana Believes* plan is to achieve one central objective: ensuring all students, at every grade level, are on track to attain a college degree or succeed in a professional career.

The plan released on June 18 includes many new components and builds upon the idea that belief in children, families and educators, coupled with support, can lead to student success. Among the initiatives detailed in the plan released today are:

##### **Belief in Children:**

- Louisiana will create a unified system of academic pre-kindergartens statewide with standardized benchmarks and assessments
- Expectations for children will reflect internationally competitive goals through implementation of the Common Core State Standards and Compass
- Louisiana's school and district accountability system will raise the bar without dropping schools' scores; schools will be rewarded for rigorous coursework

##### **Belief in Educators:**

- Rather than prescribing state-run professional development programs for districts and schools to follow, "network teams" will provide support around the needs and strengths of the districts and their schools; network teams will be assessed in part based on surveys of district leadership opinion
- Teams of teachers and schools leaders will choose academic material and have autonomy to seek rigorous coursework for students while red tape at the state level is diminished
- ESEA waiver allows for flexibility in funding decisions, allowing superintendents more flexibility in how they spend \$375 million in Title I, 21st Century and REAP funds

**Belief in Families:**

- Creation of "Achievement Zones" in districts with large numbers of failing schools
- Qualifying families have option to enroll students in public and nonpublic schools participating in the Louisiana Student Scholarship Program
- Course Choice will expand options for students, providing career training as part of the state's core K-12 education program

**Advisory Committees**

Members of the advisory committees named on June 18 will meet quarterly this year and offer ongoing input on the implementation of the Louisiana Believes plan. More than 100 educators have been appointed to serve on the Louisiana Believes Teacher and Principal Advisory Committees. Thirteen district superintendents and charter school leaders will serve on the Louisiana Believes Superintendents Advisory Committee. Teachers and principals submitted letters of interest to the Department and were selected based on their diverse professional backgrounds and geographic representation, as well as recommendations from other educators and community groups.

In addition to the teachers, principals and superintendents committees, a panel of parents and community members will be selected to serve on a Louisiana Believes Parents/Community Advisory Committee. The Department is inviting members of the community to submit letters of interest over the next two weeks.

**6. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant**

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant is a federal grant aimed at improving the reading and writing skills of students. Louisiana is one of only six states selected to benefit from the federal grant. These flow-through funds will directly support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in their literacy efforts to benefit at risk children (including students with disabilities) from birth through twelfth grade.

In April 2012, the LDE announced the first cohort of 16 local school districts and one charter school that the agency recommended to receive sub-grants. Each sub-grant is in the amount of \$1 million plus \$300 per participating

student. A second round of grantees will be selected in 2013. The first cohort sites are as follows: Assumption, Calcasieu, Catahoula, East Feliciana, FirstLine Schools, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Monroe City Schools, Natchitoches, Plaquemine, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa Vermilion, West Baton Rouge

Each cohort is comprised of a continuum of schools/students typically encompassing at least one high school, one middle school, two elementary schools, and preschool/early childhood services. For further information about SRCL, contact Dr. Jill Slack at [jill.slack@la.gov](mailto:jill.slack@la.gov)

## **7. The Louisiana State Personnel Development Grant (LaSPDG)**

LaSPDG (formerly known of as LaSIG) is a federally funded grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. It focuses on increasing achievement of students with disabilities through sustained, research-based professional development targeting 4 focus areas – Data-Based Decision Making, Family Engagement, Inclusive Practices, and Culturally Responsive Practices.

The 12 participating LaSPDG districts, selected because of high need, are as follows: Caddo, East Baton Rouge, Lafourche, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Pointe Coupee, RSD-FirstLine Schools, Sabine, St. Helena, Union, and West Baton Rouge. Each of these 12 districts will staff a part-time Family Facilitator who will function as a Goodwill Ambassador by linking the needs of the families and the district, and by supporting families through professional development.

The four LaSPDG mentor districts are Calcasieu, East Carroll, Livingston and Vermilion. They were identified as high performing in one of the following areas: 1) inclusive practices (LRE), 2) performance of students with disabilities or 3) the district is nondiscrepant for both overuse of suspension and expulsion, and for over identification. Each mentor district was also a participant in the past LaSIG project.

The LDE Co-Director is Robin Clark at [Robin.Clark2@la.gov](mailto:Robin.Clark2@la.gov) or (225) 342-3588. The website housing project and project staff contact information is <http://www.laspdg.org>.

## **8. Literacy – Institute of Higher Education**

In May 2012, 16 Louisiana Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) participated in a two-day Symposium focused on pre-service literacy instruction. This event was hosted by the LDE's special education unit of the Literacy Goal Office. The intent of the Symposium was to support IHEs in their efforts to prepare teacher candidates in becoming effective reading instructors. Dr. Jan Hasbrouk and Dr. Jack Fletcher were key note speakers and presentations ranging from assessments to RTI panel discussions were available for

participants. Participating IHEs collaborated with other colleagues and left the symposium with site action plans to impact pre-service literacy instruction.

## **STATUS OF AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES/PARTICIPATION ON DDC PLAN INITIATIVES AND IMPACT**

**Objective 7.4** Students will be protected from discipline practices that cause harm and/or violate their rights.

### **Restraint Seclusion Guidelines**

The guidelines regarding the use of physical restraint and seclusion of students with exceptionalities were approved by BESE at the March 2012 meeting. A rule change Notice of Intent was approved at the same meeting, and the rules were published in the Register. They have since become permanent regulations. The new regulations are included in the latest version of Bulletin 1706 on the Louisiana Department of Education website.

### **Positive Behavior Support**

The Louisiana Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative has been funded again for the 2012-2013 school year. Next year the consortiums' scope of work will be revised to ensure that a larger percentage of its work is dedicated to addressing the needs of our most behaviorally challenged students and all Tier III students. The Prevent-Teach-Reinforce (PTR) consultants will not be receiving new LDOE contracts to address Tier III; nevertheless, each of the consortiums will be authorized to take advantage of these personnel through the usage of their regional awards. The allocations to the consortiums are also being reduced somewhat, but the actual amount has not been determined yet.

The PTR pilot in the 22 districts statewide did show significant outcomes. Consultants trained behavior coaches in the regions through a "Train-the-Trainer (TOT) on-site model that led to significant outcomes for children. A formal evaluation report of these outcomes is being written by the two national consultants that coordinated the pilot under LDOE contract. The report will be available by June 27, 2012.

During 2011-2012 the regions conducted classroom management TOT trainings throughout the state to help satisfy the Act 136 of 2010 requirement that all districts offer three types of classroom management trainings: pre-service (novice/1<sup>st</sup> year to district teachers), ongoing (all teachers), and more intense supports for those teachers experiencing classroom management concerns. Moreover, cultural competence and restorative practices trainings were conducted in many regions to address those two components required of Act 136 as well.

For further information about the PBIS initiative, contact Robert Schaff at [Robert.schaff@la.gov](mailto:Robert.schaff@la.gov)

**Objective 9.1** Louisiana will develop and implement an Employment First plan.

**Objective 9.3** The Louisiana Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program's federal draw down will increase.

**Secondary/Transition**

As was noted in the April 2012 DD Council Report, the LDE was awarded two grants from federal technical assistance centers, one of them being from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD). The LDE is extending the deadline for districts to apply for the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities NDPC-SD technical assistance grant. The LDE is looking to expand the amount of LEAs/ schools that will receive assistance in the 2012-2013 school year.

The LDE attended the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) state institute in Charlotte, NC in May 2012. The department met with NSTTAC staff to develop an annual plan that addresses transition services improvement across the state. The department also worked with staff from NSTTAC to solidify the plans to implement the technical assistance grant and will work to identify an LEA that will receive technical assistance in the area of transition services.

For further information related to transition issues for students with disabilities, contact Dr. Keita Rone at [Keita.rone@la.gov](mailto:Keita.rone@la.gov) or (225) 219-0345.