



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

September 18, 2018

April Dunn
Chairperson
Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
626 Main St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

Ms. Dunn,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding special education in Louisiana. I reviewed your letter and in response to your inquiry, am pleased to share information about initiatives in place to increase the number of professionals who support students with disabilities across our state.

Louisiana's Believe and Prepare initiative has provided \$4.89 million to three cohorts of school systems to support closer partnerships with educator preparation providers. Since 2014, expert mentors have supported over 850 undergraduate teacher candidates pursuing teacher certification through a yearlong residency program. To see examples of school systems using Believe and Prepare to increase the number of special education teachers, please visit <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/teaching/believe-and-prepare-cohort-3-community-overview.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

The Classroom Teacher Enrollment Program (CTEP), administered by the Louisiana Board of Regents, allows teachers to enroll -- tuition free -- in courses with unused seats at Louisiana colleges and universities when seats are available after the add/drop process has concluded. This program is currently in place and is available to all teachers, including special education. You can learn more about CTEP here: <https://regents.la.gov/divisions/planning-research-and-academic-affairs/academic-affairs/teacher-education-initiatives/ctep-classroom-teacher-enrollment-program/>.

As part of Louisiana's approved ESSA plan, the LDOE is actively developing resources to assist schools and school systems that are over-relying on exclusionary discipline and disproportionately suspending or expelling out of school certain student subgroups (i.e. minority students and students with disabilities). The LDOE released a Request for Information (RFI) to identify experienced and expert partners that can assist school systems in identifying and implementing evidence-based behavioral interventions. If you would like more information about how the LDOE is supporting school systems with addressing behavior and discipline in Louisiana's schools, please visit <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/school-redesign/discipline-and-behavior-intervention-rfi-f.pdf?sfvrsn=6>.

The LDOE, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health, submitted a grant proposal to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) entitled Project AWARE. The purpose of this grant program is to build or expand the capacity of State Educational Agencies, in partnership with State Mental Health Agencies overseeing school-aged youth and local education agencies (LEAs), to:

Louisiana Believes



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- increase awareness of mental health issues among school-aged youth;
- provide training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-aged youth to detect and respond to mental health issues; and
- connect school-aged youth, who may have behavioral health issues (including serious emotional disturbance or serious mental illness), and their families to needed services.

Louisiana was recently awarded the maximum grant amount of \$1.8 million annually for the next five years (\$9 million in total). Implementation will include substantive professional development for teachers and school site staff, but more importantly will strengthen student access to mental health supports and improved behavior.

Additionally, your letter stated that the Louisiana Department of Education ended funding support for two programs administered by the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) Human Development Center. It is important to clarify that the LDOE does not provide grant funding to support programs administered by other agencies or entities. The LDOE may contract with entities like LSUHSC for specific professional services that address the needs of the LDOE. All contracts define a set of deliverables that the contractor must produce to meet those specific needs within a period of time set forth in the contract.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Wong".

Jamie Wong
State Special Education Director

Louisiana Believes