Leadership Initiative:  
Addressing Barriers to Learning & Teaching 
and Re-engaging Disconnected Students

Sabine Parish Schools (LA)

The “district serves 4,300 students and their families in an impoverished rural parish. The district has been developing a continuum of instructional and social supports for students and families within the district through partnerships with community, regional and state agencies. ... In the fall of 2008, the district organized the Student Services section with a mission ‘to remove all barriers to learning for all students through coordination and integration of at-risk resources, services and programs.’”

The district leadership team working with the AASA/Scholastic/UCLA collaboration includes the Superintendent, Director of Student Supports, Title 1 Supervisor, Director of Administrative Services, Supervisor of Student Services.

[Note: Scholastic/UCLA are also working with the Louisiana State Department of Education and Sabine is seen as an example of a district that can be used as a prototype as the state implements a Comprehensive System of Learning Support statewide. During the year, we convened a meeting of the Sabine team with the team at the state department to advance the work.]

Initial Action Plan

At the 12/09 meeting the team from Sabine planned the following as next steps:

- Share the learning support frameworks with the leadership team, principals, school board, support services staff, teachers and community.
- See how learning supports fits into state Race to the Top proposal.
- Resource mapping.
- In follow up calls, there was a request for “What would this look like at a school” to share with Principals. Sample materials were provided by UCLA.
- On 4/26/10 the district requested measurable objects related to learning supports that could be added to a Principal’s performance evaluation would might help drive the initiative. Both UCLA and the GA Superintendent provided resources.

Progress and Barriers

In April, the district responded briefly to the following two questions:

1) What progress has been made by your team in moving toward a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students?  
2) What barriers have been encountered in moving forward?

(1) Progress: “CLS has become an integrated part of the weekly agenda at the District Leadership Team Meeting. The Leadership team has conducted resource mapping in an effort to identify gaps in services and programs district-wide. CLS will be embedded into each School Improvement Plan and CLS objectives will be included in Principal Performance Evaluation Plans for SY 2010-2011. The District
Leadership team has also begun to restructure Student Support Services to align with the CLS model of neighborhood systems. In addition, the Leadership team has begun the process of restructuring the management sector by braiding local, state, and federal funds to sustain exemplary programs and move closer to establishing a Comprehensive Learning Supports System district wide.”

Update on May 28th. “We did our end of year meeting with all Student Services staff today (Appraisal, Nurses, contract mental health professionals, Behavioral Health Techs, student support services, SPED director). We reviewed our implementation efforts for this past year and set goals for 2010-11. We have developed a policy on Comprehensive Learning Supports (CLS) that will go to the board on June 7th. We have now integrated a CLS goal into the School Improvement process and trained all of the SIP teams. We will take this as far as we can on existing funds.”

Update June 14th. The team members report that Sabine has integrated a comprehensive system of learning supports into the district school improvement plan and processes. The district is working initially with one school as a demonstration for the work. District leaders have integrated several existing teams into one learning support team. Comprehensive learning supports have been added to the performance objectives of principal contracts and have been incorporated into the principal interviewing process. The learning supports district team will continue resource mapping with representatives from each school. Principals and other district staff will review the district's plans for intervention strategies. The district, in congruence with the state department of education's work, has blended resources from a variety of sources to implement learning supports. As grant opportunities become available, the district will look for additional support for the work. Money is the biggest challenge regarding implementation. Time for managing the process and bringing staff (both current and new hires) up to speed is also a challenge. Will begin to focus on data management and implementation/outcome monitoring. How to incorporate a comprehensive system of learning support into accountability measures and data management systems. Looking forward working more closely with the state department of education in doing this work.

Summary June 28.

- August 2008: Using the Comprehensive Learning Supports (CLS) Model, the Student Services Department was organized to coordinate and co-locate all district at-risk programs and services within one department. The department now includes Health Services, Behavioral Health Services, Coordinated School Health (CSH) pilot sites (ZES, MJHS, NHS), Positive Behavior Supports, Pupil Appraisal, Transportation, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Child Welfare and Attendance, 21st Century CCLC after-school and summer programs and the Neighborhood Place.
- August 2008 - Present: Student Services provides leadership for the Children and Youth Services Planning Board mandated by Act 555 to develop a continuum of care for all children, youth and families within the parish. This relationship facilitates community engagement and service integration within families and schools.
- June 2009: Sabine Parish Schools in partnership with Louisiana DHH, DSS, and DOE implemented two Neighborhood Place sites. The first in Louisiana, this service delivery model provides a one-stop shop for all state funded and locally provided social services on two school campuses located at either end of the parish, leaving no family further than 10 miles from services.
- September 2010: The District PBS Committee was formed to work with schools to implement PBS with fidelity. Secondary PBS (early intervention) programs were implemented in four schools. Behavioral Health Techs provide early intervention services in three schools.
- November 2010: Student Services doubled nursing staff and continued to provide school-based behavioral Health services at CSH sites and other schools in the district.
- October 2009: Sabine was selected as one of four school districts in the Southeast to participate in Comprehensive Learning Supports Leadership Training sponsored by the UCLS School Mental Health Project, AASA and Scholastic.
- District Leadership Team members tasked with implementation of CLS attended leadership training sessions in Savannah GA and Phoenix AZ during the 2009-10 school year. From these sessions, the team developed an implementation plan for continued rollout of CLS during the 2010-11 school year.
- March - April of 2010: Zwolle Elementary School organized a Resource Coordination Committee and conducted resource mapping for the Zwolle area using the CLS six critical elements matrix to identify gaps and laps in services.
- May 2010: Student Services purchased LEAPS web based Behavioral RTI program to roll out for CLS pilot sites in the fall. Training in Adventure Based Counseling for Sabine Career Academy and School Within a School teams as a tool to engage and motivate at-risk students was conducted.
- May 28, 2010: The Student Services Department met as a team to debrief the school year, review Comprehensive Learning Supports process and to make recommendations for CLS implementation in the 2010-11 school year. Recommendations from this group will be used in the implementation plan for 2010-13 school years.
- June 2010: Student Services integrated a CLS goal and objectives into the district School Improvement Process. After training School Performance Teams from each school in the CLS model, a third CLS goal with associated objectives and activities was added to the school improvement plan (SIP). Several schools identified the need for better transitions and developed activities around welcoming processes. Related Student Services activities included development of CLS performance indicators for the revised principal evaluation tool, and development of CLS board policy recommendations.
- June 15, 2010: The District Comprehensive Learning Supports Resource Committee first met to organize the district level committee and to provide school teams with a model for implementation of school-based Resource Coordination Teams.
- CSH will increase Health Services and Behavioral Health staff during 2010-11 school year after absorbing substantial cuts from state agencies. This is a result of blended funding which is a management mechanism of CLS. This staff increase will allow for more CLS schools in the district. Implementation will be based on readiness.

(2) Barriers to moving forward: “Barriers to implementing Comprehensive Learning Supports have been very minimal; however, we are undergoing many changes from the state level which have slowed progress with the School Improvement Process and Race to the Top Funding.”

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