Leadership Initiative Collaboration:
AASA/Scholastic/UCLA

The *Leadership Initiative* for developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Support was introduced to members of the American Association of School Administrators in June, 2009 through two articles in *The School Administrator*. The co-directors of the Center at UCLA introduced basic concepts in an article entitled: "Comprehensive Support for Remedying a Disconnect." Scholastic consultant and former Mobile Public Schools Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Rhonda Neal- Waltman, provided an administrator's perspective of the value of a system of learning supports in an article entitled: "Transformation through the Storm's Eye."

On October 29, 2009, a widely publicized webinar hosted by Scholastic and AASA entitled: "Strengthening School Improvement by Developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports to Address Barriers to Learning and Teaching". The aim was to familiarize district leaders and others across the country with the frameworks of a comprehensive learning support system and with the opportunities the inter-organizational collaborative would provide. The webinar is archived on the Scholastic website and linked to the UCLA and AASA websites to provide a basic introduction to all who are interested in this work (https://scholastic.webex.com/scholastic/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP =TC&rID=48915112&rKey=09f14db0881f5159&act=pb)

See the current initiative goals here: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/aasa/exhibitlig.pdf

Lead Districts

The current phase of the work began by issuing and request for proposals and identifying four Lead districts in the southeast region of the country to develop and provide key demonstrations of a comprehensive system of learning supports (see Exhibit below for excerpts from the request for proposals).

Eleven proposals were submitted by the November 1, 2009 deadline. Using a common criteria, the proposals were rated and four districts were chosen. The results were announced in a 12/1/09 Press Release circulated by AASA and UCLA ("AASA, Scholastic, UCLA. ... Announce Joint Effort to Transform Education ...Four AASA districts were selected to be Learning Support Collaborative Lead Districts..."). The Districts are:

- Gainesville City Schools, GA
- Jefferson County Public Schools, KY
- Indian River County School District, FL
- Sabine Parish Schools, LA

(See Appendix A for a description of each).

Exhibit

Excerpts from the Request for Proposals

Title: *School Improvement Opportunity to Develop a Comprehensive System of Learning Support*

AASA/Scholastic/UCLA Application for Lead District
Learning Supports Collaboration

How to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in school and have a strong start in being productive contributors to our society is a core question for school improvement policy makers and planners. Nationally, there is great concern and debate about how to raise student achievement, reduce dropout rates, address disparities among children from different socio-economic backgrounds, close racial and ethnic achievement gaps, serve transient students and immigrant populations, and increase the level of expectations of – and support for – all children. ... To meet the challenges for the many students in need, school districts must design comprehensive systems of learning supports that address barriers to learning and teaching and ensure that students are engaged and re-engaged in classroom learning. ...

AASA, Scholastic, and UCLA have formed a unique collaborative aimed at expanding leaders' knowledge, capacity, and implementation of a comprehensive system of learning supports. This effort supports AASA's flagship initiative, Educating the Total Child. ... The four districts that are selected to participate in the collaborative will be provided with supports to help them move forward. ... This involves:

- Building understanding about a comprehensive system of learning supports and how such a system transforms public education
- Creating policy and practice framework documents that can be shared among critical stakeholder groups.
- Working to design and implement a learning support system.

As a member of the collaborative, district leadership will become an integral part of AASA's Leadership Development efforts. This will include acknowledgment of the district's leadership in school transformation presentations at national and state association meetings, mentoring of others districts, among other recognitions. ...

The AASA/Scholastic/UCLA team brought the districts together for face to face meetings on December 3, 2009 during an AASA meeting in Savannah, GA and on February 11, 2010 at the AASA National Conference in Phoenix, AZ. Between meetings districts were offered support and guidance through phone and email.

Following a "Thought Leader" presentation at the AASA National Conference on a Comprehensive System of Learning Support, the four districts were part of a workshop where they presented their initial efforts related to their proposal to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports. Appendix A provides a brief overview about the four districts and their initial plans for moving this work forward.

See http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/aasa/aasa.htm for a brief update on progress and barriers encountered by the initial districts with respect to moving forward.

Work Related to Other Initiative Goals

Work with AASA leaders to explore expansion of the organization's role as a national catalyst for moving from a two- to a three-component education blueprint to ensure a federal, state, and district reform policy with respect to educating the total child (e.g., enhance understanding of the issues involved and the need for developing a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students-a comprehensive system of learning supports).

Discussion of plans related to this goal are just beginning. The initial focus will be on:

(1) identifying and use keying AASA institutional platforms and networks for dissemination and diffusion of accomplishments and what has been learned from the initiative in preparation for engagement of other school districts;

(2) linking AASA, UCLA, and Scholastic platforms (e.g., online course, toolkit, etc.);

(3) adding one or more additional Lead districts identified by any of the three partners.

With respect to goal 4 – "Refine, update, develop, and personalize additional resources/tools for guiding districts in this work and continuously update websites with respect to the initiative:" This ongoing work has generated additional planning tools and capacity building resources all of which can be accessed online at no cost. UCLA and AASA have referenced the initiative on their websites. A new online course for districts to use related to developing a comprehensive system of learning supports is near completion; plans call for it to be up and running on the Scholastic website in June 2010. Regular website updates are planned for the coming year. month.

With respect to goal 5 – "Work with Lead districts on sustainability and becoming national models:" Discussion of plans related to this goal are just beginning. The first focus is on developing a plan for each Lead district to become a demonstration hub in its region and for AASA to use them as national models.

Appendix A

About the Lead Districts and Their Initial Plans

What follows is a brief overview of the four Lead districts and the initial plans they formulated for moving the work forward.

> **Gainesville City Schools (GA)**

The district is a charter school district with one high school, one middle school and five elementary schools. The district has a diverse student population with over half of the student identified as English language learners. Seventy-eight percent of the students qualify for free and reduce lunch. The district organizes for school improvement through an integrated set of Project Management Teams (i.e. Standards, assessments, and data system; Teacher and leader quality; Operational supports; Learning Supports).

The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Director of Social Work Services are the district leadership team working directly with the AASA/Scholastic/UCLA collaboration.

At the 12/09 initial meeting, the leadership team planned the following next steps:

> Share overview of addressing barriers to learning and learning support system to district and school leaders.
> Ask schools to analyze existing school improvement plans to see if, where, and how the six content areas of learning supports are included. Bring the results to the district leadership team.
> Examine infrastructure of leadership and personnel role/responsibilities for learning support.
> Retreat with school board, governing councils, school leaders and teacher leaders – share organization for learning support, personnel, leading group, strengths and areas of need.
> Greatest area of focus as identified by district at this time: Intrinsic motivation, expanding practices to support students.

> **Jefferson County Public Schools (KY)**

The district enrolls 100,000 students and has developed a "set of core beliefs and guiding principles that foster student learning via such strategies as providing an environment that is safe and caring and a curriculum that is rigorous yet personalized, connecting students to their school community and to supportive adults...One of the four prongs of our Theory of Action is Classroom and Schools as Caring Communities...."

The leadership team working with the AASA/Scholastic/UCLA collaboration from JCPS includes the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Literacy and Student Development, Executive Director Exceptional Child Education, Executive Director of Student Relations and Safety, Executive Director of Accountability/Research & Planning.

Following the initial meeting is 12/10, the team presented the learning supports frameworks to the district cabinet. They initiated a mapping of programs and resources, using the learning supports matrix (prevention, early intervention, and system of care in six content areas)

Comment they provided: "We talked about looking at the redundancy, overlaps and gaps that exist in our learning supports. We talked about a learning supports cabinet that would have the superintendent, our team and major instructional people on it."

>**School District of Indian River County (FL)**

The district enrolls 17,000 students in 2 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 14 elementary schools. 54% of the students are on free/reduced lunch. The district has been working with the UCLA learning supports frameworks, including a learning support team in some schools.

The district leadership team working with the AASA/Scholastic/UCLA collaboration includes the Superintendent, Director of Student Services, and Executive Director of School Improvement.

At the 12/09 initial meeting, the team determined that their next steps were sharing information about a comprehensive system of learning support with the cabinet, board, Principals, students services personnel, union, parent advisory council. The Superintendent indicated he would identify an administrative leader and a steering team for the component.

The district applied for a U. S. Department of Education Elementary and Secondary Counseling grant that would help support a focus on developing a comprehensive learning support system.

There was interest in working with the district professional development staff to focus on intrinsic motivation using UCLA Center resources. They plan to incorporate it into the inservice for teachers.

The district is hoping to strengthening learning supports through vertical integration (high school feeder patterns). They will form workgroups to use the matrix to map resources. In the light of district budget cuts, this work "will enhance our ability to work smarter."

Following the 2/10 meeting, the team planned to develop a learning supports design document for the district and a strategic plan for implementation (integrated into the district strategic plan).

Sabine Parish Schools (LA)

The "district serve 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]

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.