

4/15/15 Update Response to the Following Questions

1. Do you have information about how effective Alabama's Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is in achieving your ambitious objectives and addressing the barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students, or is it too soon to know?

PLAN 2020 – Attendance Improvement Results

Alabama's Integrated Learning Supports initiative has become a cornerstone of the Office of Learning Support's efforts to assist districts with accomplishing the goals and objectives of our state's strategic plan, Plan 2020.

The efforts were cited by the Public Affairs Research Council (PARCA) as one of the most promising initiatives from the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE.) The first cohort of districts showed tremendous gains in reducing student absences and improving attendance. This is extremely significant to ensuring our students graduate on time, prepared for college, work and life!

The complete PARCA report may be obtained at the following location:

<https://docs.google.com/a/southalabama.edu/file/d/0B5jrmEZadtQoWfNjci1EYWppWUE/edit?pli=1>

Please note that the specific discussion of learning supports may be found on the following pages: Page 9, Pages 23 (bottom) through 27.

NOTE: We will have results for the second cohort and attendance improvement over the summer.

PROGRESS MONITORING

In addition, the districts receive progress monitoring regularly from the Learning Supports Coaches who are a part of the partnership between Scholastic and the ALSDE.

Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 districts have been participating in benchmarking activities throughout the year and have moved along a continuum towards achieving their goals. In the process, they have adjusted their approach, remapped, and conducted ongoing assessment with help from Scholastic consultants. The full results of their implementation through collective district data will become available during the summer.

2. Is it accurate that Alabama's Department of Education started this initiative with 10 school districts last year, added 30 more school districts this year, and plans to expand to every school district in Alabama within five years? Do you know approximately how many school districts are in Alabama?

The initiative was launched with 10 districts in 2013-14 and added 29 additional districts in 2014-15. We anticipate expanding the initiative to 30 more districts in 2015-16, while delivering ongoing service to the first two cohorts for a total of 69 districts being served next school year. There are currently 135 districts in Alabama.

3. Are you finding that Alabama's Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports is influencing other states and serving as a model for them?

We hope that Alabama can be a model for state-wide implementation and we know that it will be for other districts. Our annual MEGA conference is an opportunity for other states and districts to come attend sessions about the success of our approach in Alabama. Additionally the webinars that we are hosting in conjunction with Scholastic are open to other Districts across the nation who are implementing an integrated approach to learning supports.

4. Is there anything else you would like to say about the importance and success of Alabama's Unified and Comprehensive System of Learning Supports?

We believe that an alignment of ideal conditions has allowed the perfect environment for our successful implementation in Alabama.

- 1) We have the deepest support from the top in our leader, Dr. Tommy Bice.
- 2) We have dedicated staff at the ALSDE level who are committed to the sustainability and involved in the delivery of the methodology as well as working to build the capacity at the district and school levels.
- 3) Our Coaches provided by Scholastic are deeply immersed in the delivery in Alabama and come with a background of having implemented the comprehensive and unified system of learning supports in their own districts.
- 4) Alabama has taken a comprehensive approach to this initiative, weaving it into the ALSDE's strategic plan. The implementation is built for capacity building and sustainability - first and foremost – at the district leadership level. The goal of the ALSDE is to build the capacity of district leadership teams who, in turn, help school leaders build capacity to help teachers teach and students learn.
- 5) We train school leadership teams selected by the district team. In most districts we begin with one or two feeder patterns, made up of a high school and the middle schools and elementary schools who feed to that high school.
- 6) Our districts have numerous opportunities to increase their capacity, including the following: professional development on site at the ALSDE and within their district locations; technical assistance through numerous on-site visits and through regular telephone communication; nine webinar opportunities; and numerous other contacts.
- 7) Coaching is sustained over multiple years for every district.
- 8) A Collaborative among the cohorts has emerged wherein existing districts serve as mentors and models for the next cohort.
- 9) ALSDE and Scholastic have worked towards a regional model where districts come together at multiple, appropriate points, to share ideas and gain from each other's experiences.