

Overview of the UCLA Center's Work with Louisiana Since 2005

2005-07

While our Center has worked with a number of Louisiana school and community colleagues over many years (e.g., through our listserv and mailings, responding to requests for resources and technical assistance, meetings with staff from school-based health clinic), we increased our involvement with the state after the hurricanes, Katrina and Rita, and the related flooding in 2005. Just days after the storms, we received a call from a social worker at the state department of education who asked for resources related to crisis response. She explained the difficulty of locating personnel (state, district, and school) who had been displaced and the many problems related to providing help to the students and families and schools impacted by the disaster.

As an immediate response, we provided resources for responding in a crisis. These were sent to all who we had contact information for in the state and in the impacted surrounding states (including those communities and school districts across the country who were receiving those who were relocated). For the next three weeks, we prepared daily updates and sent them across the country to all on our listserv and posted them on our website. This enhanced the updating and sharing of information not only in the directly affected states but to others who were interested in helping and learning lessons from the disaster response. We also started focusing on resources for crisis aftermath and transition supports for newcomers (e.g., welcoming centers, linking families to resources). Based on the feedback from colleagues and follow up over the course of the year, we were able to do a policy and practice analysis and write up some lessons learned on mobilizing resources when a disaster hits.

2007-08

As the schools in New Orleans reorganized following the hurricanes, we were contacted by a New Orleans based mental health foundation interested in introducing and funding a system of learning supports in newly forming local charter schools in the Recovery School District. They asked us to come to New Orleans and provide an orientation to schools interested in pursuing the foundation's RFA. Subsequently, two schools were selected for multiyear funding. Initially, we worked directly with the staff at the two schools. An April 2010 communication from the foundation indicates: "We are in the second year of implementation with our two schools with one more year of funding to go. One is doing an excellent job. They finally put [a designated leader] in the position of Learning Supports Director and she's really got things off in the right direction. They don't have the full span of services, but what they do have is well coordinated and there is a big focus on work in the classroom to support every child learning. Unfortunately, [the other school] has chosen to go the route of using their funding for special ed and their program, while serving some students well, is not a good adoption of the model. One of the things we've found is that a lot of the outcome locally, is dependent upon the personnel — how individuals charged with responsibility for implementing the model see the work and how they organize the work in a given school. So we are proposing in an i3 application a learning supports institute where we hope to help shape the vision and provide support as people work to implement the model in individual schools."

During this period, we were also contacted by a Louisiana department of education colleague working with mental health in schools as part of the state's coordinated school health unit. We provided her with direct assistance, publications and resources to meet immediate needs, and then met to discuss future work we might do together as part of our *National Initiative: New Directions for Student Support*. This led her supervisor in the Division of Student Learning and Support to initiate a series of conference calls related to their work with school and community networks. We suggested that the recently developed UCLA collaboration with Scholastic's *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative might provide a good opportunity to help support some new

directions work. This led to a series of calls and in person meetings with the Division staff, the UCLA Center's co-directors, Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor, and Scholastic's VP for Community Affairs, Karen Proctor, and their consultant Rhonda Neal Waltman.

2009-May 2010

Through ongoing contact with staff in the state department, the UCLA/Scholastic collaborative team began to work with Assistant Superintendent Donna Nola-Ganey (Office of School and Community Support) and her staff. She indicated that the state department had committed to outreach to a range of "world class" consultants and resource centers as a way to transform the way all units in the department function. The transformation is intended to move the department from its overemphasis on compliance to playing a greater role in providing districts with support for capacity building. The Scholastic Team was invited to a March 31, 2009, meeting with the state superintendent and his cabinet to propose for their consideration the adoption of a comprehensive system of learning supports with the ongoing involvement of the UCLA/Scholastic Team.

The proposal was well received, and the Scholastic Team was invited to follow through. After a series of phone and video conferences, a Design Team was formed to develop the design document for Louisiana's Comprehensive Learning Supports System. A series of meetings in June and July 2009 focused on sharing information and creating readiness related to the design process. As part of this, a general orientation was provided to the staff of the Office of School and Community Support.

In selecting members for the Design Team, the department included representatives from a broad range of Offices and Divisions:

- >Office of Quality Education, Division of Professional Development
- >Office of Educator Support, Division of Special Populations
- >Office of Management and Finance, Division of Planning, Analysis, and Information Resources and Division of Education Finance
- >Office of Literacy and Numeracy
- >Regional Education Service Centers
- >Office of School and Community Support, Division of Student Learning and Support; Division of Nutrition Assistance
- >Office of High School Redesign
- >Recovery School District
- >Board of Secondary and Elementary Education
- >Office of School Student and School Performance; School Improvement

The process included Design Team meetings and work groups that met between meetings. Sections of the design were crafted and a total draft of the design document was compiled and reworked until it was deemed ready to submit.

As the Design Team neared completion of its work, a meeting with the State Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent provided feedback and an update on how their work would be meshed with the department reforms. The feedback and other information provided a clear endorsement for the work to continue.

A subsequent meeting with the extended cabinet in August was another key event in the process. Each cabinet member commented on the presentation of the design for a comprehensive learning supports system. There were clear statements from cabinet members indicating the value of the work to their own work (e.g., professional development, finances, special education, public relations).

The online and hard copy of the Design for Louisiana's Comprehensive Learning Supports System became available in September 2009. The state superintendent also provided a brief TeacherTube statement about the importance of the work.

In September an Advisory group of senior state department staff was identified. An Implementation Team of mid-level staff from across the department was recruited to plan the strategic steps in introducing the learning supports system to the state department staff, to superintendents across the state, and to interagency partners.

Multiple opportunities through federal grants allow a comprehensive system of student support to be integrated into the major initiatives in the state. There is discussion of including this in the second department proposal for the Race to the Top competition and in the School Improvement Grant and the Interagency Systems of Care initiative. The state department also included a focus specifically on implementation of the Comprehensive Learning Supports System in one Region in their proposal for the federal Integrating Schools and Mental Health Systems program.

To help create awareness and readiness for a rolling out of a statewide initiative built around Louisiana's design for a Comprehensive Learning Supports System, the UCLA Center co-directors accepted an invitation to provide a keynote address and a workshop session at the Louisiana Social Work Conference in March, 2010. The time in Louisiana was also used to meet and discuss a series of matters with the department's leadership for learning supports.

A focus throughout the course of this work has been on identifying potential within state demonstrations of a comprehensive system of learning supports. One place that has been discussed is Sabine Parish, a district the UCLA Center has interacted with over many years and was chosen this year as one of the four LEAD districts involved in the American Association of School Administrators/UCLA/Scholastic collaboration for establishing demonstrations and leadership for developing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports. A goal of the AASA/UCLA/Scholastic collaboration over the next year is to support and strengthen learning supports at Sabine so other districts in the state can learn directly about how to initiate and develop the work within the statewide initiative.

As of April and May 2010, the state department is focused on how various existing funding streams might be braided to improve the opportunities for all students to succeed in school. A series of regional meetings has been undertaken to bring local administrators up to date about how funds can be braided. These meetings underscore how existing funding streams can be braided and redeployed to support development of the type of Comprehensive Learning Supports System illustrated in the state's design document.