
*Implementation
of a
Comprehensive
Learning Supports
System*

**A Report for:
Louisiana Department of Education
Office of Federal Programs Support
Division of Student & School
Learning Support
Health & Wellness Section**

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Implementation of a Comprehensive Learning Supports System

Introduction

World-Class Education. No Exception. No Excuses. This vision of the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is linked to the belief that not only can all children learn, but also that it is the inherent responsibility of all adults connected to education to insure that it happens. The LDOE has been laser focused on school improvement and more specifically on capacity building for districts which, in turn, provides more effective support for schools.

One specific target for building capacity has been the transformational work in rethinking student and learning supports. The work is driven by the reality that school improvement efforts need leadership and guidance related to enabling all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at schools, thereby reducing dropout rates and the achievement gap. The aim is to provide district and schools with a design for braiding and developing all available resources in ways that better address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students.

In August 2009, guided by the research and consultation of Dr. Howard Adelman and Dr. Linda Taylor of the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, and in partnership with Scholastic, Inc. Community Affairs Division, an LDOE design team prepared *Louisiana's Comprehensive Learning Supports System: The Design Document*. The document described a vision for a comprehensive learning support system for Louisiana. The team defined a learning supports system as "...a process by which schools, families and communities facilitate learning by alleviating barriers, both external and internal, that can interfere with learning and teaching." The design document was shared as part of presentations to the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and senior staff; there was strong support for moving forward to implement this new way of supporting students and schools. The team then focused efforts on developing the strategic plan to guide implementation of the comprehensive learning supports system (CLSS.)

Early on in the work, the team recognized the impact that a CLSS could have for improved outcomes for Louisiana's children. Such work, especially from a state department level, requires transformational systemic change, focused initially on the following:

- (1) Creating awareness, readiness, and engagement among key stakeholders for moving forward;
- (2) Clarifying how the learning supports resource team focus may serve as an operational mechanism for cross-department information sharing and communication; and
- (3) Implementing a phase-in plan for designated districts/schools.

Contracted Scope of Services

One of the implementation strategies from the LDOE was to contract with Dr. Rhonda Neal Waltman, who has first-hand experience in implementing a learning supports system at both the district and school level. This second of two reports represents a comprehensive assessment of the CLSS at the LDOE.

Specific goals and objectives for the contracted services included the following:

Goal 1: Assist in the initial implementation of the CLSS.

Objective 1.1: Build SEA capacity to provide strategic support for field staff.

Objective 1.2: Build LEA and school level capacity for implementation and sustainability.

Goal 2: Aid in the integration of the CLSS into efforts of the State's Goal Offices in achieving the State's Nine Critical Goals.

Objective 2.1: Assist in facilitating infrastructure changes to support the SEA reorganization.

Objective 2.2: Support the implementation and management of the framework of a CLSS.

Goal 3: Assist in the development of an implementation guide/tool kit as effective resources for LEA level implementation.

Objective 3.1: Advise and recommend appropriate rubrics, standards, and benchmarks to guide development of content arena and system implementation.

The Section Leader of Health & Wellness (H & W) and the H & W staff were primary contacts for this contract. Exemplary leadership and participation was the hallmark of the efforts and they deserve the utmost praise and appreciation for the untiring efforts to promote a CLSS for Louisiana schools.

Goal 1: CLSS and Implementation Effectiveness

Capacity Building

Prior to full implementation of a comprehensive framework such as CLSS, it is critical that capacity building come first. Capacity building for systemic change includes the following:

- Introducing basic ideas to relevant groups of stakeholders to build interest and consensus for the work and to garner feedback and support;
- Establishing a policy framework and obtaining leadership commitment; and
- Identifying a leader (equivalent to the leader for the instructional component) to ensure policy commitments are carried out for establishing CLSS

Capacity building for CLSS at the state level is an ongoing endeavor that is often occurring in parallel to initial implementation in districts. Throughout the contract periods, numerous capacity building meetings and coaching opportunities were held with stakeholders and staff from the following: Health & Wellness Section, the primary lead section; section leaders for other Student & School Learning Support offices; leaders from the Office of Innovation; and staff from the College and Career Readiness Goal Office.

For district level participation, two districts were selected: Grant Parish Schools and Jefferson Parish Schools. Throughout the contract periods, Grant Parish was a primary focus of district capacity building, as leaders and teams from all nine Grant Parish schools are participating in the CLSS training. Training was provided for district leaders, school principals and members of the school learning supports teams. In addition, community meetings were held to connect the internal work with the community.

In Jefferson Parish, elementary, middle and high schools from two feeder patterns (total 14 schools) were selected to participate in the learning supports rollout. During the contract period, training was provided for some district leaders, all selected school principals and members of the school learning supports teams. Local school training was provided to the local staffs of four schools at the opening of school.

Two Regional Facilitator positions were approved by the LDOE for initial staffing to directly serve school districts adopting CLSS. The Regional Facilitator for Grant Parish has been an integral part of the success of CLSS and has developed a relationship with both central office and local school personnel. In conjunction with the section leader, the contractor provided guidance recommendations to the Facilitator throughout the contract period. During the contract period, the assistance was provided in interviewing candidates for the second position, to serve the region that includes Jefferson Parish; the Health & Wellness Section Leader has made a recommendation to fill the second position and currently the application is proceeding through the hiring process.

On December 15, 2011, the Health & Wellness Section hosted a meeting of school districts and state department of education officials from four states. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: (1) to provide Louisiana schools participating in the CLSS rollout the opportunity to learn, share and network with other districts / states who are also involved in the CLSS work; and (2) to host the national collaborative meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and Scholastic Inc.'s Community Affairs Division. The collaborative focuses on school districts and state departments of education that have adopted a model of the CLSS. This meeting was tremendously helpful to Grant Parish participants and Jefferson Parish participants in solidifying their commitment to implementing a CLSS. (See Agenda in Appendix.)

Effectiveness Measures

A primary deliverable for the first goal was to "support the development of effectiveness measures." In planning the evaluation, it is essential to clarify what information is most relevant. This involves specifying intended outcomes and possible unintended outcomes. It also involves plans for assessing how well processes have been implemented and where improvements are needed. The LDOE staff responsible for CLSS has begun to develop effectiveness measures and they acknowledge that this process is ever evolving and continues to be at the forefront of initiative planning.

In determining implementation effectiveness, it is important to differentiate between formative measures and summative measures. In the case of CLSS implementation, the summative vs. formative distinction is context dependent. In this systemic change phase, formative measures are the primary focus of the initiative, and opportunities to "test run" various aspects of the process with initial stakeholders have benefitted implementation.

Formative effectiveness measures, including a state-level tiered implementation benchmark checklist, were developed by and with the H & W Section Leader. The purpose of the tiered checklist was to demonstrate the continuum of information and assistance that could be provided from the state to districts, depending on the district leader commitment to developing a CLSS. In addition to the state level tiered checklist, benchmark tools for district rollout were developed. Examples of benchmark tools are included in the Appendix - Goal 1.

In contrast to formative evaluation, summative evaluation provides information on process efficacy (the ability to do what an initiative was designed to do). The CLSS initiative has been strategically placed in two interested districts, both in the initial stages of rollout; therefore, it is far too early to determine efficacy. However, addressing the need for data collection is essential in the early stages of an initiative with the potential impact of CLSS. At the state level, the information management system can serve as a major aid in future summative evaluation. The state data management system also serves district and schools; therefore, it is essential for two-way communication to be maintained with the state information technology team. Further analysis is necessary to determine what effectiveness data is currently not collected electronically; and to ensure data can be disaggregated during analysis to allow for appropriate baseline and subgroup comparisons.

Impact Data

Further, establishing effectiveness measures for schools is essential to provide impact data on the effects of decreasing barriers to learning and improved student achievement and well being. The first emphasis should be on direct indicators related to the addressing barriers to learning. For example, once a school maps and analyzes resources, the school determines that a primary focus is needed on reducing bullying, then bullying indicators are of greatest interest (e.g., incidence reports). The needs assessment data gathered initially provide a base level for comparison. In addition, if any positive changes in the school, neighborhood, and home have contributed to a reduction in bullying, such data also clearly are relevant.

Examples of impact data are provided below as a guide for further discussion:

Students	Families & Communities	Programs & Services
Increased knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enhance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acceptance of responsibility (including attending, following directions and agreed upon rules/laws) • self-esteem and integrity • social and working relationships • self-evaluation and self-direction/regulation • physical functioning • health maintenance • safe behavior Reduced barriers to school attendance and functioning by addressing problems related to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • lack of adequate clothing 	Increased social and emotional support for families Increased family access to special assistance Increased family ability to reduce child risk factors that can be barriers to learning Increased bilingual ability and literacy of parents Increased family ability to support schooling Increased home (family/parent) participation at school Enhance positive attitudes toward	Enhanced processes by which staff and families learn about available programs and services and how to access those they need Increased coordination among services and programs Increases in the degree to which staff work collaboratively and programmatically Increased services/programs at school site Increased amounts of school and community collaboration Increases in quality of services

Students	Families & Communities	Programs & Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dysfunctional families • lack of home support for student improvement • physical/sexual abuse • substance abuse • gang involvement • pregnant/parenting minors • dropouts • need for compensatory learning strategies 	<p>school and community</p> <p>Increased community participation in school activities</p> <p>Increased perception of the school as a hub of community activities</p> <p>Increased partnerships designed to enhance education and service availability in community</p> <p>Enhanced coordination and collaboration between community agencies and school programs and services</p>	<p>and programs because of improved systems for requesting, accessing, and managing assistance for students and families (including overcoming inappropriate barriers to confidentiality)</p> <p>Establishment of a long-term financial base</p> <p>Source: smhp.psych.ucla.edu/.../developing_resource_oriented-mechanisms.pdf</p>

Recommendations

The purpose of the CLSS implementation goal is to ensure that CLSS is implemented with fidelity in the districts who have adopted the reform measure. The following recommendations are made with regard to implementation:

- Provide additional training and technical assistance to the Regional Facilitators for continued growth and understanding of the theory and practice of a CLSS;
- Ensure that Regional Facilitators attend Collaborative training opportunities to share research and best practices with district and school staffs;
- Enlist the full support of the Jefferson Parish central office Network Executive Directors;
- Use the General Assessment and specific Content Area Assessments in participating schools to determine pre/post implementation success; and
- Further develop effectiveness measures to show impact of implementing a CLSS.

Goal 2: CLSS and Integration with State Goal Offices

In the second goal area, the contractor agreed to "Aid in the integration of the CLSS into efforts of the State's Goal Offices in achieving the State's Nine Critical Goals." In subsequent planning meetings with the Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Federal Programs Support, Division Director for the Division of Student and School Learning Supports, and Section Leader for the H & W Section, it was agreed that the integration of CLSS would - first and foremost - begin with the Division of Student and School Learning Supports. After considerable integration benchmarks are reached within the division, the leadership agreed to move the integration efforts to other divisions within the Office of Federal Programs Support and beyond to the DOE goal offices.

Nine Critical Goals

The LDOE established nine critical goals that drive the reform agenda of the LDOE and serve as guideposts for the work of the offices within LDOE. The CLSS is, by design, aligned with these goals and *Louisiana's Comprehensive Learning Supports System: The Design Document* specifically addresses the connections to the nine goals. The nine critical goals are as follows:

LOUISIANA CHILDREN WILL...

- Enter kindergarten ready to learn

- Be literate by 3rd grade
- Arrive in 4th grade on time
- Perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) by 8th grade
- Perform at or above grade level in Mathematics by 8th grade
- Graduate on time
- Be prepared for and enroll in post-secondary education
- Achieve these goals regardless of race or socioeconomic status (SES)

Connections to LSSSI

Planning meetings were held with key staff members responsible for implementing the Louisiana Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative Grant (LSSSI.) The LSSSI staff members and the H & W staff members requested a meeting of all division staff members to begin the resource analysis and mapping required by the LSSSI grant and essential to CLSS as well. There were many parallels made in the planning stages between both initiatives, resulting in a united effort to analyze and map the division resources.

Launched in the fall of 2010, the LSSSI is funded through a \$13.7 grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) with the goal of creating and supporting safe and drug-free learning environments in schools and increasing academic success for students in high-risk environments. The LSSSI centers on developing and implementing a measurement tool to evaluate school climate and provide data-driven interventions through a program called PASSS – Positive Approaches for Safe and Supportive Schools (PASSS). The PASSS model is designed to improve the learning conditions related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and violence by implementing targeted interventions; generating a school safety score for participating schools, and enhancing a support program for students to address mental health needs, family needs, and academic performance. Additionally, the model will allow for the data produced from the measurement system to be reported to the public.

Based on an analysis of district and school-level data, including graduation rates, attendance rates, discipline data and/or hardships caused by the Gulf Oil Spill, LDOE selected eight districts (Tangipahoa, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Plaquemines, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Caddo, and Lafayette) to participate in the initiative. Collectively, the initiative could potentially impact more than 30 percent of Louisiana’s total school population.

Special Emphasis on School Improvement Process

In a previous report, the contractor researched and provided recommendations for embedding CLSS in the school improvement process that districts/schools are required to complete. This section is duplicated in this report for emphasis and for continuity of reporting.

In order to recommend processes for embedding a CLSS with school improvement, research included analysis of the current school improvement process and related infrastructure at the state, district and local levels. The contractor attended a cross-training professional development along with staff from various departments. Productive meetings were held with state School Improvement (SI) Section Leader and SI Staff in order to understand the depth and breadth of the school improvement process.

Background

The LDOE underwent major organizational restructuring during 2010; part of that restructuring included moving the S I Section in the Division of Student and School Learning Support (the same division as H & W Section.) In conjunction with federal and state statutes, this particular section is responsible for providing guidance and technical assistance to schools; with particular emphasis on schools that meet the "academically unacceptable status." While all Louisiana schools are required to develop a school improvement plan, only those schools classified in School Improvement and in the School Improvement Grant tiers submit the plan to the state for review.

The S I Section provides training and technical assistance throughout the year on developing the school improvement plan. The training documents provide a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to schools to ensure that the components of a schoolwide program are aligned with the requirements of a school improvement plan. The ten components of a schoolwide plan include the following:

- (1) Comprehensive needs assessment;
- (2) Schoolwide reform strategies;
- (3) Instruction by highly qualified teachers;
- (4) High quality and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals;
- (5) Strategies to attract high-quality highly qualified teachers to high-need schools;
- (6) Strategies to increase parent involvement;
- (7) Plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs to local elementary school programs;
- (8) Measures to include teachers in the decisions regarding the use of academic assessments in order to provide information on, and to improve, the achievement of individual students and the overall instructional program;
- (9) Activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty mastering proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement standards are provided effective, timely additional assistance which shall include measures to ensure that student difficulties are identified on a timely basis and to provide sufficient information on which to base effective assistance; and
- (10) Coordination and integration of federal, state and local services and programs.

Analysis of School Improvement Process and Planning

As the focus on school improvement for state education agencies moves from mostly a compliance approach to a playing a greater role in service delivery/capacity building, there are immediate opportunities for infusing the CLSS into the LDOE school improvement process. A thorough analysis of school improvement process and planning was a challenging opportunity; but the cooperative spirit and institutional knowledge provided by the SI Section Leader and SI Staff made the research and analysis possible.

The LDOE SI Staff provides excellent guides that are comprehensive and valuable guides for districts and schools:

- School Improvement: Tools for Success - comprehensive "how to" document that walks the school improvement team (district or school) through the steps to developing the school improvement plan;
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment: Users Guide – comprehensive evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
Data are collected from numerous sources and instruments, such as:

- Focus groups (staff, parents, students)
- Interviews (administrator, counselor, instructional staff)
- Observations (school, classrooms)
- Questionnaires-online (administrator, instructional staff, parent, student)

Data are analyzed across the following school process constructs:

- Climate
- Culture
- Family and Community Relationship
- Leadership
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Professional Development
- Coordinated Resources
- System Issues

The LANA (Louisiana Needs Analysis) measures school performance (rather than academic productivity) using four indicators: LEAP scores, GEE scores, attendance rates and dropout rates. The aggregate of these indicators provides a baseline to project a school's Growth Target.

- School Improvement Training: Louisiana Department of Education Initiatives Best Practices – the US Department of Education and the LDOE endorse the use of scientifically based research strategies to achieve the identified objectives of a school improvement plan. This guide provides detailed information on the five best practices approved for use in Louisiana schools.

Recommendations for Integrating CLSS and School Improvement Process

The following recommendations are provided based on the components of a schoolwide plan and they provide the most immediate opportunities for infusing CLSS into school improvement. The recommendations will be more effectively received if there is ongoing dialogue and meeting opportunities for the SI Staff and the H & W staff.

- Component 1: Comprehensive needs assessment / LANA
 - Questionnaires
 - Revise and/or add questions to the questionnaires for administrator, instructional staff, parent and student.
 - Concentrate on the following domains/sub domains: climate, culture family/community relationship, leadership, and coordinated resources.
 - Interviews
 - Revise and/or add questions to the interviews for administrator, counselor and instructional staff.
 - Concentrate on the following domains/sub domains: climate, culture family/community relationship, leadership, coordinated resources.
- Component 6: Strategies to increase parent involvement
 - Focus on family and community involvement (vs parent involvement.)
 - Add CLSS language throughout section.
 - Add specific resources and example activities provided by H & W staff.
- Component 7: Plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood

- programs to local elementary school programs
 - Focus on preschool and expand focus to include other transition opportunities in school (elementary to middle, middle to high.)
 - Add CLSS language throughout section.
 - Add specific resources and example activities provided by H & W staff.
- Component 9: Activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty mastering proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement standards are provided effective, timely additional assistance which shall include measures to ensure that student difficulties are identified on a timely basis and to provide sufficient information on which to base effective assistance
 - Provide an overview of CLSS in this section so the school improvement team understands the three component model of school improvement: instruction, learning supports and management.
 - Provide information and examples of the learning supports intervention content arenas and the continuum of interventions.
 - Provide contact information for schools who wish to learn more about CLSS.
- Component 10: Coordination and integration of federal, state and local services and programs.
 - Provide an overview of CLSS in this section so the school improvement team understands the mapping of resources as an essential first step in coordinating and integrating federal, state and local services and programs.
 - Provide contact information for schools who wish to learn more about CLSS.

Division Meetings

On November 30, 2011, the combined staffs of the Division of Student and School Learning Support participated in a day-long retreat away from the DOE building. The contractor facilitated the meeting, with the assistance of LSSSI staff and CLSS staff. The purpose of the meeting was to improve communication among the division staff; begin resource analysis / mapping process; determine multiple data requests from the DOE to the districts (in order to reduce redundancy among DOE offices/divisions/sections); and to form work groups to lead the division efforts moving forward.

Approximately 30 staff members attended the meeting and focused efforts on the following:

- Areas of major responsibility
- Staff assignments to areas of responsibility
- Analysis of data requests made to districts
- Mapping resources across five sections (programs and services)
- Work groups assignments for mapping, data integration and communication

While the Appendix contains the complete report from the division meeting, the professional development evaluations provided positive feedback among staff, citing especially the opportunity to communicate openly and to learn the depth and breadth of programs/services offered by the division. The participants have held informal and formal meetings based on the connections made at the retreat, resulting in improved communication and integration of work to reduce redundancy and fragmentation.

The mapping committee has met on three occasions post retreat; they have begun the arduous task of reviewing and revising the resource map as well as the data integration information. This work is a prerequisite to the work of the data integration committee and communication committee.

Office of Assistant Superintendent - Federal Programs Support

As a follow up to the extensive work of the division in building a comprehensive plan across the division, a meeting was held on January 25, 2012, with the Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Federal Programs Support, Division Director for the Division of Student and School Learning Supports, and Section Leader for the H & W Section. The purpose of the meeting was to review the findings to date and to make recommendations for future implementation. The Assistant Superintendent provided clear next steps to the staff around expectations for advancement of the CLSS initiative for the LDOE. The recommendations aligned with the contractor's recommendation for advancing the work and for integrating the work into the innovations efforts as outlined in the LDOE Race to the Top – Phase III approved application.

Connections to Federal Title I Legislation

In the discussion with the Assistant Superintendent, the following connections were discussed which provide clear alignment opportunities with CLSS and the federal policy goals of the The Elementary and Secondary Act as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. The act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, embodies four key principles—stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility for states, school districts and schools in the use of federal funds; more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been demonstrated to work. The act also places an increased emphasis on reading, especially for young children, enhancing the quality of our nation's teachers, and ensuring that all children in America's schools learn English. In keeping with these principles, and as this guide describes, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act affects virtually every program authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—ranging from Title I and efforts to improve teacher quality to initiatives for limited English proficient (LEP) students and safe and drug-free schools.

In particular, Section 1117 of the NCLB Act, entitled *School Support and Recognition*, requires - in part – the basic tenets of a CLSS as outlined in this contractor's report. Following is an excerpt from Section 1117 of the NCLB Act, with special emphasis noted in italics:

Section 1117:

(a)(1) IN GENERAL

Each State shall establish a *statewide system of intensive and sustained support and improvement for local educational agencies* and schools receiving funds under this part, in order to increase the opportunity for all students served by those agencies and schools to meet the State's academic content standards and student academic achievement standards.

(a)(5) SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS

(A) COMPOSITION- Each *school support team* established under this section shall be composed of persons knowledgeable about scientifically based research and practice on teaching and learning and about successful schoolwide projects, school reform, and

improving educational opportunities for low-achieving students, including — (ii) *pupil services personnel*;

(B) FUNCTIONS- Each school support team assigned to a school under this section shall (i) *review and analyze all facets of the school's operation, including the design and operation of the instructional program, and assist the school in developing recommendations for improving student performance in that school*;

(ii) *collaborate with parents and school staff and the local educational agency serving the school in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a plan that, if fully implemented, can reasonably be expected to improve student performance and help the school meet its goals for improvement, including adequate yearly progress under section 1111(b)(2)(B)*;

Connections to Trailblazer Initiative

On three occasions during the contract period, H & W staff and the contractor met with leadership from the Office of Innovations, including the Deputy Superintendent of the Office of Innovations, and additional staff members. The discussions centered on the strategic connections between CLSS and the Trailblazer Initiative, a cornerstone initiative of the Office of Innovations, and a key piece of Louisiana's Race to the Top (R2T) Plan, approved by the federal government and funded for \$17.4 million.

Louisiana's Phase Three R2T application, the *Louisiana Education Reform Plan*, (LERP) addresses standards and assessments, the collection and use of data, school turnaround strategies, and effective support for teachers and school leaders. The four-year plan also outlines strategies to enhance the state's current STEM program. Reform activities already underway and detailed in the state's application include the implementation of Act 54 and the state's adoption and transition to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and CCSS-Aligned Assessments.

The LDOE has implemented district-level supports to advance the work of the LERP. LDOE Reform Teams were created and District Support Officers were hired as additional resources to build local education agency (LEA) capacity to implement reforms outlined by the LERP. For districts willing to lead the state in implementation of key educational reforms, the LDOE has developed and implemented the *Trailblazer Initiative* (TI.) The TI is a partnership between LDOE and LEAs intended to honor and support districts that have demonstrated their commitment to the LERP and to accelerate their work toward ensuring that more students are college- and career-ready. The TI currently consists of 32 LEAs, representing 50% of Louisiana's public school children, who are actively implementing the LERP at the district level.

Following is an excerpt from the LDOE Trailblazer documents, with special emphasis noted in italics:

The Trailblazer Initiative seeks to:

- define a new relationship between the state and districts that values *innovative problem-solving and collaboration*;
- establish a forum where *district and state staff can work together* to implement the LERP; and
- provide participating districts with access to *specialized services and resources* related to Louisiana's education reform efforts.

More specifically, the Trailblazer Initiative provides districts with the following assistance:

- *Capacity Analysis*
In the initial stages of the work, LDOE partners with districts to better understand district needs and assist in identifying reform opportunities aligned to those district needs.
- *Collaborative Planning*
Once the reform opportunities are identified, LDOE and district staff engage in a collaborative planning process to develop a clear strategic vision and plan to implement and build district capacity around key reforms.
- *Coordination of Service Delivery*
With a reform plan in place, the LDOE assists district to identify, leverage, and coordinate strategic and effective supports and services from the LDOE, partner districts and key stakeholders aligned to the reform plan.
- *Change Management*
LDOE partners with district leaders and key staff to develop strategies to inform, empower, and build staff's professional capacity to sustain the reforms. Additionally, as conditions within the district change, so too will the LDOE supports and services.
- *Relationships*
Central to all Trailblazer work is the relationship between the LDOE and the district. Each step in the work is designed to ensure it is collaborative, not focused on compliance and monitoring, and a national model for innovative state-district partnerships for enhancing teaching and learning.

Recommendations

Recommendations for contract Goal 2, focused on integration of CLSS internally into the Office of Federal Programs Support and externally to other LDOE goal offices, are provided below. These recommendations offer the most transformational opportunities for the sustainability of CLSS. In fact, the success of CLSS could and should be tied closely to the ongoing LDOE work in the Title I Division and in the Office of Innovations/Trailblazer Initiative. The aforementioned vision and tenets of Title I legislation provides the compliance requirement for incorporating CLSS. The LDOE's approved R2T application provides a service delivery model that is aligned with the CLSS vision and goals. In short, there are clear connections and unique opportunities for the CLSS work to be an integral part of the reform plan for LDOE.

Specific recommendations for Goal 2 include the following:

- Division of Student and School Learning Support
 - The division mapping team should serve as the core leadership for the integration efforts.
 - The mapping team needs to complete the mapping, revise the data integration questions based on the mapping, and meeting jointly with the data integration team to provide specific guidance around reducing/combining requests for data from school districts.
 - Quarterly, day-long division meetings should be held, where section teams have joint learning opportunities as well as separate time to work on section issues.
 - School Improvement Section leader should be encouraged to adopt the recommendations provided in this report specific to the integration of CLSS into the comprehensive needs assessment conducted by schools. (See page 9.)

- Other Divisions in the Office of Federal Program Support
 - Prepare presentation for other divisions in the Office of Federal Program Support, based upon the input of the H & W Section Leader and the work of the entire division.
 - Schedule a joint meeting of all division leaders to meet with the Assistant Superintendent for guidance. Special emphasis should be placed on the integration of CLSS and the Title I, Section 1117 section as noted above.
 - Provide presentations to division leaders and division staff on the integration of CLSS and the work of other divisions.
 - Begin mapping exercises with each of the divisions, following the model established by the contractor for the initial mapping work for the Division of Student and School Learning Support.
 - Begin extensive combination mapping to cross-walk the resources of all divisions, specifically searching for ways to reduce redundancy and to streamline exorbitant request for data from school districts.
- Goal Offices in LDOE
 - Prepare presentation for goal offices in the LDOE, based on input of the division leaders from the Office of Federal Program Support.
 - Prioritize the order of presentations to the goal offices, considering the Office of College and Career Readiness (CCR) as the pilot office for integration activities.
 - Provide presentations to CCR staff on the integration of CLSS and the work of other offices, such as CCR.
 - Schedule a meeting with assistant superintendents and immediate staff leads to present work to date with CLSS and other goal offices.
 - Make specific efforts to integrate CLSS into the Office of Innovations and the work of the Trailblazer Initiative.

Goal 3: CLSS and LEA Resources

The third goal provided an opportunity to work one on one with H & W Staff. Assistance in developing a CLSS implementation tool kit for use at the district/school level was the focus on this goal. The H & W Section Leader assigned each staff member a primary and secondary CLSS Intervention Content Arena for in-depth development and benchmarking. Numerous planning and strategy sessions were held with H & W staff whose primary responsibility was to: (1) review the sample surveys provided by Drs. Adelman and Taylor and recommend changes to make the instruments more relevant to Louisiana schools; (2) research other LDOE staff across all offices that may have related resources to the content arena and develop a resource list; and (3) make connections with LDOE staff across the organization to reduce fragmentation of services to districts and schools.

Each assessment was vetted with the entire H & W staff with the lead staff member facilitating each session. Once the assessment was in final form, the Health & Physical Education Supervisor was the lead staff member for coordinating the final documents and developing an online survey format for each assessment. The supervisor went "above and beyond" to insure that each assessment reflected the most accurate information for use in schools.

The deliverable included a completed rubric for the following content arenas: Crisis Assistance & Prevention; Family Engagement; School & Community Involvement; and Support for Transitions. The following rubrics were completed prior to this contract period: General Survey; Student and Family Interventions; and Classroom Based Approaches to Enable Learning. All rubrics are included in the Appendix under Goal 3.

Concluding Comments

In a 2009 report entitled *Coherence in Statewide Systems of Support*, author Sam Redding said:

When a state education agency (SEA) undertakes to provide a statewide system of support for school improvement, it realizes that its organizational structure, resource streams, communication channels, and ways of interfacing with districts and schools fit like a straitjacket. ... While compliance monitoring requires precise definition, circumscription, certain boundaries, and standardization, school improvement demands agility, responsiveness, keen judgment, and differentiation.

Since 1996, Louisiana has made several very challenging, high-result changes, many of which are unprecedented. The LDOE has continued to push forward with the reforms to dramatically improve student achievement. In October 2011, the state announced a historic boost in the percentage of students who graduated from high school in four years. Louisiana's Cohort Graduation rate has reached an all-time high, exceeding the 70 percent mark. Louisiana has also posted a sharp decrease in drop-outs, declining by 26 percent in 2010. 42 of Louisiana's 70 school districts saw gains in the percentage of students at *Basic* and above from 2010 to 2011 on state achievement tests. This is up from the prior year, when 37 districts achieved gains. The LDOE has led the reform agenda with school districts to improve student outcomes with reforms addressing standards and assessments, improving data collection and use, turning around chronically low-achieving schools, and supporting teachers and leaders.

Likewise, the LDOE has begun the arduous journey of moving to a service model and the adoption of a CLSS is serving as a catalyst for the systemic change required for true transformation. This report outlines initial efforts to improve responsiveness to districts and schools. It is in no way designed to be conclusive in observations and recommendations. The work has just begun.

Instead, this report seeks to outline recent efforts in shifting the sometimes rigid world of a state education department . . .

. . . *from silos to service,*
. . . *from regulations to relationships, and*
. . . *from compliance to capacity building.*

And for the students and families of Louisiana, this effort represents a bold step toward achieving the vision: *World-Class Education. No Exception. No Excuses.*

Implementation of a Comprehensive Learning Supports System

Appendix – Goal 1

Implementation of a Comprehensive Learning Supports System

Appendix – Goal 2

Implementation of a Comprehensive Learning Supports System

Appendix – Goal 3