REBUILDING FOR LEARNING:

Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Students

Scholastic's *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative is a strategic and personalized approach designed to move school improvement efforts forward in developing a comprehensive and cohesive system to address barriers to teaching and learning. The aim is to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school and a strong start toward being productive societal contributors. The immediate goal is to help school leaders "rebuild" systems and practices to better enable learning for all children.

Initially, the *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative was conceived as a way to provide support for Gulf Coast schools after the 2005 hurricanes. However, during Scholastic's initial research for the initiative, it became obvious that Gulf Coast districts were not the only ones facing serious "learning infrastructure" problems impeding teaching and learning. Education leaders across the country are struggling to

>reduce student dropout rates and delinquency
>reduce teacher dropout rates
>re-engage students in classroom learning
>narrow the achievement gap
>eliminate the plateau effect related to student achievement,
>reduce the growing list of schools designated as low performing

Clearly, districts in every state are at a crossroads in their continuing efforts to improve schools. From this perspective, the initiative was reconceived as a nationwide endeavor. Thus, while *Rebuilding for Learning* certainly will be serving educators from the Gulf Coast region, *Scholastic* is excited about expanding the scope of the work to make strategic investments focused on enabling *all* children to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO LEARNING IS ESSENTIAL

Most schools strain to address the various challenges faced by students, their families, and school staff – challenges that often seriously interfere with learning and teaching. The notion of "barriers to learning" encompasses both external and internal factors that negatively affect student motivation and ability to benefit from classroom instruction. These factors include the wide range of problems stemming from restricted opportunities associated with poverty and disability, neighborhood violence, difficult family conditions, inadequate physical and mental health care, acquiring English as a second language, experiencing crises and disasters, and more.

Currently, student and learning supports are so highly fragmented and marginalized in policy and practice that the resources allocated to address barriers to learning are not playing a cost-effective role in improving schools. Schools, districts, and state education agencies need to redeploy existing resources and programs that are allocated for addressing barriers to learning and must weave these together with the invaluable resources that can be accessed from students, family members, and community stakeholders.

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INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the *Rebuilding for Learning* initiative, leaders of national, state, and large district education agencies and organizations will be provided with professional development and technical assistance resources to help them *substantively rethink and comprehensively restructure* how they address barriers to learning and teaching. Those who choose to move forward with systemic changes for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. will be provided ongoing learning opportunities to guide planning and implementation.

The intent is to enhance school improvement capacity building by offering information, guidance and support through the auspices of Scholastic and the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools.

This includes

- In person professional input and interchange (e.g. Rebuilding for Learning Institute and on-site technical assistance)
- Online professional development and guidance (e.g. continuing education and online technical assistance)
- Print and online supplemental resources

District or state teams interested in participating can negotiate to receive a *Rebuilding for Learning* planning grant. The grant serves as a catalyst for engagement with this work. It covers participation by district or state teams in the *Rebuilding for Learning Institute*. Specifically, the grant covers travel and accommodations costs for Institute attendees. It also covers staff time, and stipends for participants.

Participating teams that demonstrate a serious commitment to *Rebuilding for Learning* by moving toward developing plans for their schools or states and need assistance with aspects of plan consultation or implementation would be eligible to apply for an implementation mini-grant that supports additional technical assistance from *UCLA* and/or members from the *Rebuilding for Learning Team.*

> *Rebuilding for Learning Institute* – Orients school leaders to the need for student learning supports, the full continuum of essential school-community interventions, and the core principles and tenets of a comprehensive learning support system. Participants leave the Institute with an emerging "blueprint" that enables them to more deeply investigate student learning supports and the feasibility for instituting change in their districts or states.
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> *Rebuilding for Learning Online Institute* – Available to Institute participants, this resource allows users to probe deeper with theory and practice content. The online resources are especially designed as aids for moving forward.
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> *Technical Assistance* – Institute participants pursuing implementation of comprehensive learning support systems have access to the initiative's team of specialists who are available to provide strategic guidance as districts move from planning to implementation.
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> *Rebuilding for Learning Core Materials* – Provides information on student learning supports policies and practices. Core materials include the *Rebuilding for Learning Institute Handbook*. The handbook is provided to all institute participants.