



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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D.D. Council Quarterly Report
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Division of Educational Improvement and Assistance

1. Accessible Instructional Materials

The IDEA 04 requires that textbooks and related core instructional materials be provided to students with print disabilities in specialized formats in a timely manner. Specialized formats include Braille, audio, digital text, and large print. In alignment with this requirement, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is participating in the Accessible Instructional Materials Consortium (AIM). This project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), provides funding (\$4.9 million) for 15 states and CAST, a leading education research and development organization, to launch the AIM Consortium to improve the quality, availability, and timely delivery of accessible instructional materials to K-12 students with print disabilities. Our state's project is entitled Louisiana Accessible Instructional Materials (LA-AIM). LA-AIM is designed to bring about needed changes within state structures that will improve access to the general education curriculum for all students and reduce student achievement gaps. LA-AIM will focus on the following:

- Development of a statewide system that will identify student needs for core instructional materials in alternate formats.
- Development of a centralized partnership among stakeholders such as the Louisiana Instructional Materials Center, Louisiana Assistive Technology Centers, and school book depository.
- Development of a statewide, shared inventory system that can track core materials that have been converted, loan materials to students, and can be used to project student need thus order materials in advance, when possible.
- Development of a series of training modules designed to help parents, teachers, principals, and other school administrators understand the importance of identifying this particular student need, communicating the need, procuring and delivering the materials timely, and complying with state and federal regulations.
- Expansion of a professional learning community that supports ongoing collaboration and promotes educational excellence through access to general education curriculum.

2. Parent Workshops

The LDE's Division of Family, Career, and Technical Education is sponsoring two one-day trainings in June 2008 for parents of students with disabilities. Topics will include issues such as legal matters, technology and reading programs as they apply to students with disabilities. The tentative dates and locations are as follows: Saturday June 7, 2008, in Baton Rouge and Saturday June 21, 2008, in northern Louisiana. For further information, contact Shelia Campbell (225)-219-7374 or Maggie Brolin (225)-219-0363.

3. Transition

The LDE is hosting regional interagency summits to improve collaboration efforts among the schools, students, families, and community agencies. Meetings have been held in Region VI (Natchitoches) and Region VIII (West Monroe). Region VIII had the largest number of agencies represented including: Community mental health services, technical education, Rehabilitation Services (LRS), Families Helping Families, OCDD, the Social Security Administration, Special School District, and LA-Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Project (LA WIPA). Regional summits have also been scheduled in Region I (April 2, 2008) and Region IV (April 7, 2008).

The regional meetings are a part of the Louisiana state plan for transition that was developed in May 2007 at the Secondary Transition State Planning Institute sponsored by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). The LDE is sponsoring another team to attend the one year follow up institute in Charlotte, NC in May 2008. Our team will consist of members representing the Department of Education, Families Helping Families, Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, LA-Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Project, and East Baton Rouge Parish.

4. Louisiana State Improvement Grant 2 (LaSIG)

Of the top 20 schools in the state that are recognized for closing the achievement gap, seven (7) of the schools were LaSIG schools. They are:

- Caddo Parish: Pine Grove Elementary School
- Calcasieu Parish: John F. Kennedy Elementary School
- East Carroll Parish: Southside elementary School
- East Baton Rouge Parish: Ryan Elementary School
- Rapides Parish: Forest Hill Elementary School, L.S. Rugg Elementary School, and Martin Park Elementary school

5. Ensuring Literacy for All

ENSURING LITERACY FOR ALL is an initiative designed to address the educational needs of the state's youngest learners, students in pre-kindergarten through grade four. It is part of a larger statewide project called Ensuring

Literacy and Numeracy for All. The larger project will make every student in Louisiana a successful reader, writer, and mathematician. This literacy initiative will help the state meet its overarching goal of all students in Louisiana reading and writing, at or above grade level. To meet these important goals, focus will be provided on essential elements in all elementary schools: highly-prepared teachers, appropriate methods and materials, tiers of intervention, and responsive leadership.

ENSURING LITERACY FOR ALL will begin with volunteer participation selected through an application process. Preference will be given to existing Reading First Schools and the Literacy Pilot Schools who have already been proven to be pioneers in increasing student achievement in reading. The number of schools selected for year one implementation is dependent upon funding. The Department will select as many schools as can be supported with the fiscal and human resources necessary to guarantee success. Estimating the cost per school to be in the range of \$100,000- \$200,000, the Department hopes to secure funding to support approximately 150 schools in year one (2008-09 school year).

6. Literacy Conference

The Second Annual Louisiana Literacy Conference will be held in New Orleans on April 22-24. Included on the conference agenda are sessions related to literacy access and students with disabilities.

7. Literacy – Significant Disabilities

For the past two years, a primary focus of the LDE's Significant Disabilities Leadership Committee has been literacy access for students with significant disabilities. Committee members have supported both state and district level activities (e.g., professional development workshops, study/work groups) related to promoting literacy access for students with significant disabilities. Efforts are underway to develop guidelines for districts in infusing the needs of students with significant disabilities into their overall reading/literacy efforts. For further information, contact Nanette Olivier at 225-342-0520.

8. Dyslexia Task Force

A Dyslexia Task Force has been established by the LDE to update Bulletin 1903 (Regulations for the Implementation of R.S. 17:7(11), 17:392.1, and 17:392.3. - The Louisiana Law for the Education of Dyslexic Students) and possibly revise the law). For further information, contact Debra Dixon at 225-342-0576.

9. Alternate Core Task Force

An Alternate Core Task Force has been established to make recommendations for Reading First Schools (and possibly others) where students with disabilities are not making progress in the core reading program. For further information, contact Debra Dixon at 225-342-0576.

10. Autism State Team

The purpose of the newly formed State Autism Team is to develop the infrastructure that will ensure that students with autism receive a quality education in Louisiana schools. A core group of this team began meeting September of 2007. Members include parents of students on the autism spectrum as well as an adult with autism, university personnel, district administrators, educators, psychologists, Families Helping Families, members of the LA Chapter of the Autism Society of America, Department of Health and Hospitals, and staff from the LDE. Initial concerns that the group will be address include 1) a statewide needs assessment, 2) professional development activities, and 3) strategies to ensure adequate advertising and dissemination of information. For further information, contact Janet Mora at 225-342-0520.

11. Policy

The IDEA State Plan is on public review. The LDE will ask the Board of Elementary and Secondary to approve Bulletin 1706 (Regulations for Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act) as a Notice of Intent.

12. Report from the Task Force on Alternative Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities.

The following recommendations from the Alternative Diploma Options Task Force are being present to BESE at the April 2008 meeting.

1. Louisiana will allow students who are eligible for LEAP Alternate Assessment Level 2 (LAA2) to be awarded a standard high school diploma if they have (1) *successfully completed the required Carnegie Units* and (2) *score at the approaching basic or higher level on the required components of the LAA2*. The LAA2 comes directly from Grade Level Expectations (GLE) and the test format has been modified to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities making this option most appropriate. Additionally, students with disabilities who pursue this pathway will be eligible for a LAA2 waiver. Students who pass two of the three required components of the LAA2 will be eligible to waive part of the graduation requirement if they have documentation that their disability directly impacts the section that they did not pass. The waiver is similar to the GEE waiver that is currently available.

2. Louisiana would offer an alternative pathway to a standard high school diploma that includes passage of the Graduation Equivalency Development (GED) test and completing the required Carnegie units to receive a standard high school diploma.

- To be eligible for this pathway, students must have failed at least one of the required components of the GEE. The student must continue to take the GEE and all available retests through the senior year.

- Written permission must be received from the parent and/or student.
- The student must attend classes the entire senior year, and complete of all course work with passing grades. Course work shall include GEE remedial classes and GED preparatory classes.
- Students will be allowed to take the GED test as a substitute exit exam.

3. Louisiana would offer an Occupational Diploma that allows students to pursue the general education course of study with a focus on occupational skills and participation in statewide assessment.

- Courses would be aligned with general education courses of study to meet the requirements of NCLB with an emphasis on the essential skills required for employment.
- Students would participate in the GEE in the 10th and 11th grades. If the student has failed the GEE, the decision to retake the GEE would be an IEP Team decision.
 - If the student will not retake the GEE, GEE remediation will not be provided.
 - If the student will retake the GEE, the student will be provided GEE remediation.
- The required electives would focus on career pathways and would include existing courses such as Career and Technical Education Courses, Career and Technical Education Internships, and Transition Services.
 - Students would participate in Community-based Training or have documentation of previous work experience.
 - Students would complete a minimum of 270 hours of documented, successful, independent, paid employment to meet the requirement this diploma.

4. Louisiana will continue to offer the Certificate of Achievement as a non-standard diploma for students with significant cognitive disabilities participating in LAA1.