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United Way Supports Dropout Prevention

The Louisiana Association of United Ways recently awarded Education's Next Horizon a \$25,000 grant for Louisiana's Promise. The check was presented by Charmaine Caccioppi, President of the Louisiana Association of United Ways, to Dr. Phillip Rozeman, President and Chairman of Education's Next Horizon, and John Warner Smith, the organization's CEO. This is the second of a three-year funding commitment made to Louisiana's Promise by the Louisiana Association of United Ways.



School Districts Tackle the Dropout Problem

Louisiana's Promise continues to support school districts in their efforts to tackle the dropout problem and increase graduation rates. Dropout prevention planning workshops were recently completed in Assumption Parish, Monroe City Schools, and Morehouse Parish. Education's Next Horizon assisted the school districts in assembling community leadership teams and in planning and conducting the half-day workshops.

Each workshop resulted in a set of achievable and measurable goals and objectives designed to reduce dropout rates. Goals were formulated around the four Foundation Principles of Louisiana's Promise: (1) *Early Detection and Community Support*, (2) *Truancy and Attendance*, (3) *Connecting School to the Future*, and (4) *Local Community Ideas*.

The Monroe and Morehouse workshops were conducted with the assistance of the **United Way of Northeast Louisiana**. Planning data was provided through updated district dropout profiles prepared by the **Picard Center for Child Development**.

Assumption Parish Superintendent Earl Martinez assembled a strong team of community leaders, including school board members, businesses, parish government officials, and school leaders. "We are starting the school year with a focused approach to solving the dropout problem in Assumption Parish, and we fully expect positive results," Superintendent Martinez noted. The Assumption goals are as follows:

- Improve the effectiveness of the Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS).
- Reduce the truancy rate for unexcused absences to zero.
- Better prepare students for post-secondary options and career opportunities.

The Monroe City Schools team was lead by former Superintendent Julian Gray, who has since retired. In addition to taking steps to strengthen the administration and execution of its early warning system at all grade levels, Monroe's early warning objectives will include stronger support and intervention at the Pre-K grade level. A follow-up meeting on the plan is being scheduled with newly-appointed School Superintendent Kathleen Harris. Monroe City Schools developed the following goals:

- Develop procedures and guidelines to ensure that DEWS is administered efficiently and effectively.
- Achieve a 2% truancy rate and 98% attendance rate by 2014.
- Expose students to career and post-secondary options and prepare students to be college (two and four year) and career ready.
- Engage with community organizations and develop true partnerships through collaboration.
- Improve communication with key stakeholders.
- Strengthen partnerships with businesses.

Morehouse Parish Superintendent Tom Thrower also brought a diverse, well represented team to the planning table. More than 30 community leaders attended the initial workshop on June

17th. Morehouse has a model truancy program that achieves a 95% attendance rate. "By strengthening our early warning system with uniform procedures and improved communications, we can better respond to the needs of students who are most at risk of dropping out," said Superintendent Thrower. Morehouse Parish goals are:

- Annually reduce the number of students listed on the DEWS Report and Students Statistical Report (SSR) by 25%.
- Starting at middle school, develop ways to better engage students in relevant learning opportunities.
- Better prepare students for post-secondary options and career opportunities.

Louisiana's Promise is planning to assist Catahoula and Madison school districts with dropout prevention workshops in mid-October. To learn more about Louisiana's Promise, visit the website of Education's Next Horizon at www.ednexthorizon.org, or contact us at (225) 383-3844.



Changing the future of our community one child at a time.

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