



Education's Next Horizon is pleased to announce the creation of the Louisiana Center for Afterschool Learning (LACAL).

LACAL was recently awarded a three-year statewide afterschool network grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, thanks in large part to the generous matching contributions from the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership. Louisiana now joins 38 other states that have developed statewide afterschool networks.

The mission of LACAL is to innovate learning in the out of school hours by ensuring a coordinated and uniform focus on high quality afterschool programs across Louisiana that improve outcomes for young people and support working families. Over the next three years, LACAL will pursue the following goals:

- Create a sustainable structure of statewide, regional and local partnerships, particularly school-community partnerships, focused on supporting policy development at all levels
- Support the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources that are needed to sustain new and existing school-based / school-linked afterschool programs
- Support statewide systems to ensure programs are of high quality

LACAL will prove to be a strategic support and intervention strategy in Louisiana's efforts to close the achievement gap and improve high school graduation rates.

LACAL is directed by **Dara Shackelford**. Before joining Education's Next Horizon, Dara was director of policy and research at the Afterschool Partnership. She holds a J.D. from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law and is a graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill.

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