



PROMISE POSTING



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LOUISIANA'S PROMISE UPDATE Fall 2009

The Louisiana's Promise statewide initiative on dropout prevention was launched a year ago this week with a state summit that attracted more than 800 community leaders from the state. The leaders came together to begin to tackle the dropout problem in their communities. The state summit was followed by seven regional summits held earlier this year. Community leaders from each school district met to begin the process of identifying local solutions to the dropout problem. Representatives from each district leadership team met again in late June to discuss progress and available support services and to share best practices.



As a follow-up to these efforts, Education's Next Horizon commissioned the Picard Center for Child Development to conduct an evaluation of the Louisiana's Promise community engagement and action planning process and to make appropriate recommendations. The evaluation was generously supported by a grant from the **Louisiana Association of United Ways**. To download a full copy of the *Louisiana's Promise Update Fall 2009*, visit our website at www.ednexthorizon.org. The following is a summary of key findings and recommendations:

LOUISIANA'S PROMISE ACTION PLANS

Common Statewide Themes

Action plans revolve around the Foundation Principles: 1) Early Detection and Community Support Systems, to identify and prevent potential dropouts; 2) Truancy and Attendance, to monitor a basic warning sign; 3) Connecting School to Future, to make education relevant to students; and 4) Local Community Ideas and Objectives, to provide a supportive environment. Among the themes seen widely across the state are:

Early Detection and Community Support Systems

- Early interventions
- Implementation or continuation of DEWS or other early warning system

Truancy and Attendance

- Parent education and accountability
- Public awareness and education about truancy and dropout situation
- Consistent data collection and review
- Partnership with law enforcement (DA, police, judges)

Connecting School to Future

- Work-study or school-to-work programs
- Credit recovery
- Relevant curriculum
- Mentoring (by community and business leaders or other students)
- Job shadowing and internships

Local Community Ideas and Objectives

- Community, business, and ministerial outreach
- Evaluation or continuation of current programs

RECENT FINDINGS

Results of Louisiana's Promise Dropout Action Plan Survey

The Dropout Action Plan Survey sought to assess the opinions of district Leadership Team members about the district action plans. Survey participation was voluntary and confidential. The effective sample size in the data analysis is 100. Among the key findings:

- A plurality of respondents believed that all Foundation Principles needed improvement.
- A plurality felt that Early Detection would require the most help to implement.
- A plurality cited support from the business community as the kind of help the program would need to improve graduation rates.
- Seventy two percent (72%) said their team had met 0-2 times since the Statewide Summit in October 2008.
- A clear plurality felt that school-based intervention from teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses was the most effective strategy for improving Early Detection.
- Fifty-three percent (53%) felt that parent education programs such as parenting classes were the most effective strategy for improving Community Support.
- A plurality felt that school-based career education was the most effective strategy for improving Connecting School to Future.
- Fifty-seven percent (57%) predicted that within the next five years their district graduation rate would still be below the 80% target.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teams must commence their action plans. Louisiana's Promise can help by identifying key local issues to address and holding teams accountable for their performance.
- Teams should meet more often and take meaningful action, whether or not they have 100% attendance. Louisiana's Promise can encourage these meetings.
- Teams must initiate contacts with the local community. Louisiana's Promise can help by providing form letters, offering a press release for local news outlets, and communicating with state-level industry groups.
- Teams should publicize the harm of high dropout rates to their own communities when seeking to raise local awareness and participation.
- Teams should understand why students in their own districts leave, in order to implement effective remedies.
- To improve commitment, team leaders should consider recruiting members using a detailed action plan listing meeting times and actionable steps well in advance. They should also take more initiative to "sell" the action plans.
- To improve efficiency and accountability, team leaders must assign specific duties to team members.
- The LDE should consider helping teams more, such as by providing speakers for local meetings, increasing public recognition of the dropout problem, and outlining "best practices" for local teams.
- Louisiana's Promise should consider giving teams greater guidance and providing up-to-date statistics, meeting facilitators, speakers, clear expectations, and research-based best practices.
- Louisiana's Promise should address issues arising from the delegation of team leader responsibilities.



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

