



ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

**State of Louisiana Action Plan to Help More of its Young People Graduate from High School,
Ready for College, Work & Life**

Name of Summit State or Community: Louisiana

Date and Location of Summit: October 28, 2008

Geographical Area Covered by Action Plan: Statewide

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I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State's or Community's Dropout & College-Readiness Challenges

1. What is your state's or community's current graduation rate? (please cite the source and methodology)

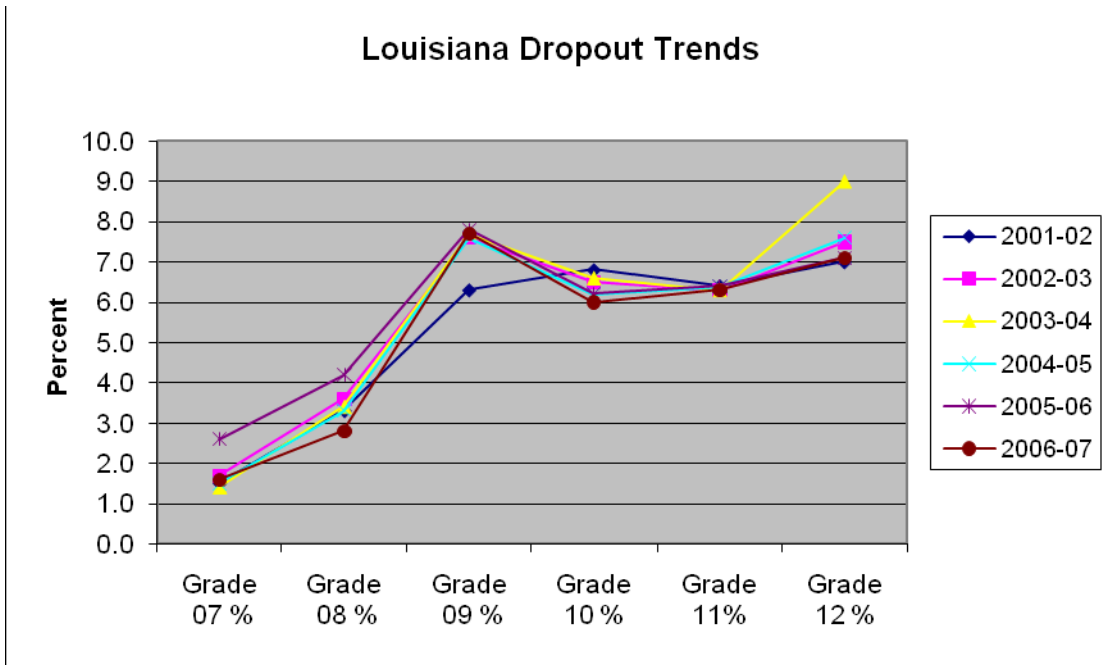
According to State Department of Education officials, Louisiana had a 64.8 percent graduation rate in the 2006-07 school year.

2. What does both national and local data indicate about your state's or community's graduation and college-going rates over the last few years (e.g. over the last 2, 5 and 10 years)? Have the schools' rates been improving or getting worse? How do your local statistics compare with your state and the nation as a whole?

Louisiana's goal is to increase the graduation rate to greater than 80% by close of the 2015-16 school year. The state expects to see a significant increase in the graduation rate over the next three years due to its highly successful "Ninth Grade Initiative."

The following dropout trends represent the number of students "flagged" as dropouts by school districts out of the total number of students per district at each grade level. The information was taken from the Louisiana Department of Education's web site and compiled by the Picard Center for Child Development at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

	Grade 07 %	Grade 08 %	Grade 09 %	Grade 10 %	Grade 11%	Grade 12 %
2001-02	1.5	3.3	6.3	6.8	6.4	7.0
2002-03	1.7	3.6	7.6	6.5	6.3	7.5
2003-04	1.4	3.4	7.7	6.6	6.3	9.0
2004-05	1.5	3.3	7.6	6.2	6.4	7.6
2005-06	2.6	4.2	7.8	6.2	6.4	7.1
2006-07	1.6	2.8	7.7	6.0	6.3	7.1



3. Please describe what efforts have or will be taken to better understand the issues from key perspectives, such as parents and young people themselves. Explain what data analysis, surveys, interviews or other efforts have or will be implemented to build your knowledge base of who drops out, from which schools, when, and why. What is known, and what do you still seek to learn?

As part of its research for the Louisiana's Promise state summit, the Picard Center provided two reports. The "Louisiana Dropout Profile" provides an in-depth analysis of dropout risk factors. Data profiles were also provided for each school district. In addition, the center conducted a focus group study of former dropouts. Five focus groups were conducted among the dropout population in Louisiana regarding their knowledge, perceptions and attitudes about dropout prevention and risk factors associated with dropping out; indicators and causes; and preventative methods and preferences. The study was designed to give a voice to the target group and to contribute to the development of solutions which will help more young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life. Copies of the state dropout profile and the focus group study are enclosed.

II. Rallying Your State or Community: Getting Buy-In to Address the Crisis

1. What key data and message points have you developed around the issue to secure commitment from your community's and state's leaders? What's the impact of the crisis on your economy, state or city budget, social services, employers, post-secondary institutions, etc? If you don't yet have these data and message points, what are your plans to obtain them?

The “Louisiana Dropout Profile” provides key data and message points needed to communicate the severity of the dropout problem. The attached presentation by Dr. Billy Stokes of the Picard Center provides excellent talking points on dropout research findings and impacts. Information provided by the Louisiana Workforce Commission is also used. This data points to the impact of the dropout problem on the skills capacity and supply of the state’s workforce.

2. Who is serving or can serve as your state or community champion and chief spokesperson around the high school dropout issue? If multiple spokespeople are needed, which leaders – elected officials, business leaders, other local influential’s – will be recruited?

The State Superintendent of Education is the leading spokesperson on the high school dropout issue. District Superintendents, who were instrumental in convening more than 800 community leaders to attend the state summit, are helping to mobilize community support and participation in the regional summits. Education’s Next Horizon, a business led not-for-profit organization dedicated to PreK-12 school improvement, is co-leading the district action planning process.

3. What is your state’s or community’s vision statement for your young people, related to their successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work? What is your quantifiable long-term goal (e.g. 5-year) for your dropout and college-readiness challenges?

The vision of the Louisiana Department of Education is to “create a world-class education system for all students in Louisiana.” The department’s mission is three-fold:

- *Higher academic achievement for all students*
- *Eliminate the achievement gap between race and class*
- *Prepare students to be effective citizens in a global market*

The state’s long-term goal is to achieve a graduation rate of greater than 80% by close of the 2015-16 school year. Louisiana is also one of eight states selected to participate in the College & Career-Ready Policy Institute. The institute is developed by Achieve, Inc. in partnership with the National Governor’s Association. The institute is assisting states in developing overall college and career readiness goals and high-impact indicators connected to strategies for achieving the goals. Louisiana was selected because of its significant progress and national leadership in developing accountability standards to measure school performance and student achievement.

III. Identifying Solutions: Considering and Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Local Dropout Challenge

The Alliance advocates four focus areas that we believe to be key in addressing the dropout issue at the state and local levels: **transforming schools** including through increasing curricular rigor and relevance, **supporting young people** through wraparound services, **developing effective policies**, and **employing data systems** as a dropout prevention tool.

1. Please identify your highest-priority strategies and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **transform the schools** that the majority of your local dropouts attend. For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

High School Redesign 9th Grade Initiative

As a major dropout prevention effort, 54 high schools received 3-year competitive grant awards in July of 2007 to redesign their 9th grades with a focus on personalization. Many of these schools spent 2007-08, the first year of the grant, planning for activities to be implemented in 2008-09. Some schools; however, did fully redesign their 9th grades this past year, initiating 9th Grade Academies or other types of small learning communities, mentoring or advisory programs, literacy and/or catch-up programs, Freshman Transition Skills Courses, and various other strategies. After only one year, schools have achieved significant improvements on measures of student engagement and performance. An additional 20 schools will receive 3-year 9th Grade Initiative grants in 2007-08, with plans to continue to fund at least 20 more schools every year for at least three more years.

Catch-up Programs in Reading and Math

In early 2006, the High School Redesign Commission recommended that all schools be required to provide extended instruction for all students in grades 7-9 who are two or more years behind in reading or math, using research-based curriculum designed to accelerate the achievement of struggling adolescents. Because of the extremely high costs and complexities of implementing this recommendation statewide, two-year catch-up pilot programs in reading and math were conducted in selected schools during 2006-08 to determine the potential effectiveness of catch-up programs and to inform future policy decisions regarding such programs. Ten (10) schools participated in the reading catch-up study and 16 schools that participated in the math catch-up study. Results of the pilot studies have been presented to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for further action.

The Distinguished Educator Program

The Distinguished Educator Program was established in 1999 with the passage of R.S. 17:10.4. Distinguished Educators assist schools in strengthening their curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. The primary goal of Distinguished Educators is to creatively and assertively assist struggling schools in reaching and surpassing their Growth Targets under the Louisiana School and District Accountability System. Distinguished Educators act as external change agents to facilitate school improvement.

In carrying out this role, Distinguished Educators help the school staff to identify and eliminate barriers to change as well as promote necessary school consensus for change. The individual serving as a Distinguished Educator will be required to share his/her leadership skills and expertise with schools that are striving to improve student achievement. This includes providing comprehensive on-site assistance to parents, teachers, and administrators, as well as assisting school sites in strengthening their curricula, instruction, and assessment practices to bring about positive educational change in low achieving schools.

2. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **support young people**. How will more young people, particularly those most in need, receive wraparound supports in and out of school, such as tutoring, afterschool programs, mentors, social services, health care and others? For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already

underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

LA ePortal

The LA ePortal is an innovative tool that enables users to plan and monitor their academic progress from middle school through postsecondary education and into the workforce. The web-based interface has the potential to improve student access; revolutionize student engagement and articulation; foster re-engagement for out-of-school students; and empower Louisiana residents to take proprietary interest in and responsibility for their academic development. The LA ePortal facilitates academic and career pursuits to assist citizens in the many transitions they encounter as they navigate the lifelong learning continuum.

LA ePortal, accessible at www.laeportal.com, rivals any similar website in the nation with its comprehensive array of resources and user-driven tools. The ePortal enables users to: create and save 5 Year Education Plans online; build personal portfolios and resumes; take career pathway assessments; tour colleges; browse Louisiana company profiles; and much more. After acquiring over 140,000 K-12 users by the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the LA ePortal team launched Version 2.0 of the system on October 1, 2008. Among its many new updates and features, Version 2.0 allows all Louisiana residents, including college students, out of school youth, and job seekers, to create their own customizable ePortal accounts.

The Paired School Initiative

The Paired School Initiative was developed as a pilot initiative in 2007 to provide an opportunity for High Priority/High Needs Schools to be partnered with Pacesetter Schools in which the schools' faculty and administrators would dialogue and share strategies for success and work collaboratively to solve common problems. The Paired School Initiative creates a situation in which educators participating in the initiative will gain knowledge and skills from one another to support an increase in student academic success through dialoging, paired-school visits, and collaborative problem-solving. The State Department of Education will provide support, assistance, and resources for the processes of:

- a. Assessment*
- b. Gap analysis*
- c. Planning*
- d. Organizational development with a focus on leadership and central office*
- e. Training and professional development*

Jobs for America's Graduates Louisiana (JAG-LA)

Jobs for America's Graduates Louisiana (JAG-LA) Program is an affiliate of the Jobs for America's Graduates Program (JAG), the nation's largest dropout prevention and recovery program serving middle school youth to 21 years of age. JAG-LA provides an educational setting that promotes academic and skills attainment, civic responsibility, leadership development and social awareness, which are necessary to become a responsible citizen and productive worker.

Jobs for America's Graduates-Louisiana (JAG-LA) is a dropout prevention and recovery program that delivers a unique set of services for at-risk students to

help them earn a high school diploma, and for out-of school youth, to assist them in earning a GED. Services are provided by a Job Specialist and are centered around the national JAG competencies which include: career development, job attainment, job survival, communication skills, work place skills and life survival skills. Information on JAG-LA participants is entered daily in the JAG National Database System, which provides an accurate measure of success for the JAG-LA programs. The program also provides 12 months of post-graduation follow-up services, with the graduate pursuing postsecondary education and/or entering the workforce in a quality job leading to a career. Focusing on job readiness, teamwork, and leadership is what makes each JAG-LA graduate a potential asset to an employer. JAG was implemented in Louisiana in 1995.

Positive Behavior Support in Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Education is currently in the second year of its 18-month contract with Louisiana State University (LSU) to coordinate and provide the training of all Louisiana public schools in Positive Behavior Support (PBS). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) gives people a new way to think about behavior. PBS is based on understanding why problem behaviors occur – the behavior’s function. This approach to behavior can occur on a school-wide level, in a specific setting, classroom, or with an individual student. PBS is the application of evidence-based strategies and systems to assist schools to increase academic performance, increase safety, decrease problem behavior, and establish positive school cultures.

On an individual level, PBS uses functional behavior assessments to understand the relationships between a student’s behavior and characteristics of his or her environment. The functional behavior assessment identifies multiple strategies to effectively reduce problem behavior including changing systems, altering environments, teaching skills, and focusing on positive behaviors. The PBS process results in the creation of effective intervention plans that will impede problem behaviors, teach new skills, and create support systems for the student.

Child Welfare and Attendance

The Louisiana Department of Education maintains “Supplemental Publication 523” (Reference Guide for Child Welfare and Attendance), which contains a wealth of information regarding issues regarding both discipline and attendance, including the revised statutes regarding compulsory attendance. It is presently being revised by the Division of Student Learning and Support; the latest information is available from the Division. The publication is available for review and/or downloading at the Department of Education’s website, www.Louisiana.schools.net In addition, the Louisiana Association of Child Welfare and Attendance (LACWAP) is an outstanding association of the school districts’ Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance, which each year hosts summer and winter conferences. Presentations and networking afford all participants the opportunity to become aware of current best practices with regard to improving attendance, eliminating truancy, and reducing the dropout rate.

Educational Mission to Prepare Louisiana's Youth (EMPLoY)

On January 9, 2009, the State Department of Education outlined the details of a new pilot program to address the dropout problem. The initiative overhauls the state's Pre-GED/Skills Options Program. Fourteen school districts will participate in the EMPLoY program, aimed at better preparing at-risk students for careers and post secondary education opportunities. This program is being launched in partnership with the Governor's Office, Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana Technical College System, Department of Correction, Office of Juvenile Justice, and Department of Social Services.

The components of the pilot program are based on the successful Jobs for America's Graduates, or JAG, model. JAG has produced exceptional results in Louisiana with 90 percent of the at-risk, in-school students graduating with a diploma and 94 percent being placed in a full-time job. Results of the JAG dropout recovery program indicate that more than 50 percent of students receive a GED. Students participating in the JAG program are mentored toward earning a diploma or a GED, a work-ready skills certificate, a marketable skill, and work experience. Louisiana currently operates 40 JAG programs in 22 areas.

Through the pilot program, 550 Tier 1 students will be given an opportunity to participate in the EMPLoY program in both rural and urban districts across Louisiana. Tier 1 students are those functioning at a seventh-grade level or higher who possess the reading skills required to succeed in the program, a determination made through the Test of Adult Basic Education. The primary difference between the JAG program and the EMPLoY program is the collaboration between agencies that will allow education leaders to more accurately identify local and regional workforce demands and industry support for work-study opportunities along with the capacity for training in high-demand careers at nearby LCTCS institutions. The EMPLoY programs will emerge around those informed factors.

The 550 Tier 1 students engaged in EMPLoY this school year will receive instruction through five essential components:

- Basic Skills Training toward a GED - intensive use of scripted curriculum that has been developed by the Department in cooperation with the Recovery School District and aligned with GED/State Curriculum.*
 - Soft Skills Training and ACT Work Keys Assessment for attainment of a Work-Ready Certificate.*
 - Dual enrollment in Technical College and/or Industry Based Certification training. The goal is to enroll 500 students in spring 2009 with help from the Louisiana Technical College System.*
 - Participation in work-based learning (paid work experience). The Louisiana Workforce Commission, as well as business and industry partners, will assist in placing students in jobs.*
 - Each student will be provided an adult mentor.*
3. Please identify your highest-priority policies or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **develop effective policies** at the local or state level that encourage high school completion and college readiness. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12

months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

As was stated previously, Louisiana is one of eight states selected to participate in the College & Career-Ready Policy Institute developed by Achieve, Inc. in partnership with the National Governor's Association. The institute is assisting states in developing overall college and career readiness goals and high-impact indicators connected to strategies for achieving the goals. Louisiana was selected because of its significant progress in developing accountability standards to measure school performance and student achievement. Indicators will include high school graduation rates and supporting measures related to grade proficiency levels, as well as college and career readiness indicators.

4. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **employ data systems** that identify those young people most at-risk for dropping out and drive appropriate supports and services. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Louisiana has a Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS) that identifies students who exhibit characteristics of dropping out. This is a reporting system for grades 8-12 that tracks student attendance, discipline, achievement, and age for each school district. The system provides detailed student level data as well as district and school level data. The system employs "triggers" that show the number and percent of students identified as a potential dropout for more than one factor. This is a "state" data management system. Local school districts are not required to use DEWS, but do have district tracking systems.

IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources, and Tracking Progress over Time

1. What group or committee will coordinate and sustain the work outlined in this action plan? What leaders does it have from various sectors – business, education, nonprofit, government, faith, etc.? (Please submit group's roster along with this plan.) Who else is needed? Who convenes the group, how often, and what sub-groups or committees does your effort need?

The state dropout prevention initiatives are coordinated by the State Department of Education. In addition to state-level strategies, programs and policies, the Louisiana's Promise initiative consists of regional and district level action planning.

Regional Summits

As a follow up to the state summit, eight (8) regional summits are being held starting in January 2009. The purpose of the regional summits is to convene community leaders to facilitate local discussion and work toward the development of school district action plans to address the dropout problem. The action plans will consist of strategies in one or more of the Louisiana's Promise foundation principles:

- *Early warning systems and community support*
- *Attendance and truancy*
- *Connecting school to the student's future*

The regional summits are co-convened by Education's Next Horizon and the Regional Service Center Directors of the State Department of Education. A calendar of the regional summits is attached.

Education's Next Horizon is a statewide not-for-profit organization that brings a community and business perspective to PreK-12 education improvement. Their mission is to frame the debate for system-wide reform and to connect Louisiana's education, government, and business leadership as a force supporting school improvement. The organization was the lead sponsor and organizer of the state summit.

Planning of the regional summits is guided by a core group of representatives of Education's Next Horizon, the State Department of Education, and the Picard Center for Child Development. The core group developed the following mission, goals, and objectives for the regional summits:

Mission: *Create a community movement around increasing graduation rates*

Goals:

- *Develop and implement plans for school and community improvement in the three foundation principle areas.*
- *Increase the high school graduation rate in Louisiana to greater than 80% by end of 2015-2016 school year.*

Objectives:

- *Hold Louisiana's Promise regional summits in every Louisiana Department of Education region by the end of March 2009*
- *District Community Leadership Teams develop an initial plan with outcome measures around one or two of the foundation principles by the end of May 2009.*
- *Bring dropout prevention "top of mind" in every community in Louisiana.*
- *Active District Community Leadership Teams with sustained effort through 2015.*
- *By the 2010-2011 school year, District Community Leadership Teams have implemented an action plan in their foundation principle area(s) of focus.*

2. *What financial, human, and other resources are needed in order to begin acting on this plan? What resources are currently available, what will potentially need to be blended, and what new resources will need to be sought to do this work? Who might help secure additional resources to fill the gaps, and/or what funders (or others) may be approached? Are you setting a resource goal along with the outcome goal?*

State-level resources are identified by the State Department of Education on an annual basis and requested through the state budget and appropriations process. District-level resources are identified and secured through state and local appropriations. Total district needs will not be known until all action plans are completed. Education's Next Horizon has established a Louisiana's Promise page on its web site (www.ednexthorizon.org). The site contains planning guidelines and resource publications. All district action plans will be posted to the site. It is conceivable that Education's Next Horizon may need funding to staff a position dedicated solely to follow-up and coordination of community action plans.

3. How will your community or state evaluate its dropout prevention efforts to ensure it is making a difference? What is the plan to monitor and track the progress being made on its developed goals? How will you maintain visibility around the local dropout prevention issue by reporting to the public on the progress being made?

Through the College and Career Readiness Policy Institute initiative, Louisiana will develop goals and benchmarks that “stretch” current graduation and career readiness goals. Indicators and benchmarks will also be developed for each goal. Similarly, district goals and measures contained in district action plans will be tracked locally. The regional summits core planning group will periodically convene local community leaders to discuss action plan progress and issues.

In December 2008, Education’s Next Horizon began meeting with newspaper editorial boards in the state’s major media markets to secure their help in raising public awareness of the dropout issue and in mobilizing community involvement. The outreach will continue in 2009. Education’s Next Horizon will also use its electronic newsletter to periodically communicate status reports and significant new developments to over 700 community leaders on its statewide distribution list.

V. Staying Connected to the America’s Promise Alliance: Identifying Long-term Interests, Priorities, and Points of Alignment

1. Across its work, the Alliance has committed to paying special attention to certain strategic priorities. Together, we are always looking for states and communities that share similar interests and that may provide effective models for policy and practice, investment opportunities and other points of alignment. Please describe if your action plan has strategies specific to:
 - a. Focusing on the middle school years, especially providing service-learning and career exploration opportunities in and out of school
 - b. Improving young people’s access to quality health care, including promotion of SCHIP and Medicaid public health insurance programs
 - c. Creating community hubs (e.g. schools, afterschool programs, community centers) where coordinated wraparound supports are available to young people and their families
Engaging parents and caregivers to increase graduation and college readiness rates
 - d. Supporting young people in foster care so they graduate from high school prepared for college, work and life
 - e. Developing young people’s financial literacy

If your plan does not include any of the above but your state or community has strong interest in developing one or more of these strategies, please note accordingly.

Most of the above strategies are carried out through various dropout prevention programs at the state level. The availability, need, and interest in these initiatives at the community levels will not be known until the district action plans are completed and submitted.

2. How can the America’s Promise Alliance best support your state or community with the implementation of this dropout prevention plan? The Alliance is interested in hearing how we can best assist you in your dropout prevention efforts, including resources we can provide, relationships we can facilitate, and any other needs your community may have.

America’s Promise can best support Louisiana by providing planning, technical and financial resources for the coordination and implementation of district-level plans. Specific resource needs will be identified upon completion of the district action plans.