



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

LEA Assistance Program
SL 2005-276, Sec. 7.24

(SB 622, the 2005 Budget Bill)

Date Due: May 15, 2006

Report #41

DPI Chronological Schedule, 2005-2006

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Executive Summary

The School-Based Management and Accountability Act of 1995 authorized the selection and training of State Assistance Team members to serve schools designated by the State Board of Education as low-performing. There was a realization that just labeling schools was not sufficient. Schools that were so labeled were provided the support and guidance necessary to improve student academic performance through the work of the teams. The State Assistance Team Program has worked very well for our schools over the past six years.

Even though the State Assistance Team Program has served us well, we now have an expanded need to develop a District Assistance Program. There are two major functions of the District Assistance Program: one is to help LEAs improve their performance composite scores and the other is to assist districts not meeting the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The NCLB requirement that all schools and districts make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) has significantly increased the number of schools and districts requiring assistance. Since there are not enough resources for the State to assist an expanding number of schools, there now is a focus on building capacity at the district level. Enhancing and strengthening the capacity at the central office level will enable district staffs to better support their own struggling schools. District assistance is particularly beneficial to districts with limited resources.

The need for assistance to school and LEAs is likely to continue to increase as we move to a new growth model next school year and because of the increased demands brought about by the requirements of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The State currently does not have the capacity or resources to deliver the amount of assistance needed to adequately address the needs in the State.

During this school year (2005-06), assistance is being provided to the 16 Leandro districts that are receiving Disadvantaged Student Supplemental (DSS) Funding. There are 43 LEAs designated to be in District Improvement under NCLB. Five of the LEAs receiving DSS funds are also in District Improvement under NCLB and are receiving support through the LEAAP Program. This leaves 38 districts that are in District Improvement for NCLB that are not receiving adequate services. The districts receiving support and assistance are:

1. Edgecombe County Schools
2. Franklin County Schools
3. Halifax County Schools
4. Hertford County Schools
5. Hoke County Schools
6. Hyde County Schools
7. Lexington City Schools
8. Montgomery County Schools
9. Northampton County Schools
10. Elizabeth City-Pasquotank
11. Public Schools of Robeson County
12. Thomasville City Schools
13. Vance County Schools
14. Warren County Schools
15. Washington County Schools
16. Weldon City Schools

This report responds to the questions delineated in the enabling legislation. Information in this report is gleaned from the ongoing work with the designated LEAs.

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LEA Assistance Program (LEAAP) 2005-06

LEAAP is designed to provide varying degrees of support, guidance and services to LEAs. The level of services is determined by their performance in the ABCs of Public Education and/or No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The primary aims are to improve student academic performance and to build internal capacity in the central office and school leadership for positive change and continual growth. Services and assistance provided to LEAs by DPI will be extended and reinforced by (a) encouraging and promoting the partnering of LEAs to share best practices, programs and strategies; (b) clustering LEAs located in close proximity that have similar needs and demographics; and (c) calling upon partners such as the Center for School Leadership Development. The number of districts served will depend on the availability of resources and will be offered in the order that requests are received. The state is required by federal guidance to provide assistance upon a district's request.

I. Criteria for selecting LEAs and schools to receive assistance

Federal Eligibility Criteria:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| First Priority | LEAs with the greatest percentage of schools in corrective action for which an LEA has not carried its statutory and regulatory responsibilities regarding corrective action or restructuring. |
| Second Priority | LEAs with the greatest percentage of schools identified as in need of improvement. |
| Third Priority | Title I LEAs that request additional support and assistance. |

State Eligibility Criteria:

A. Level I – Guided Assistance (Mandated)

- LEAs:
 - entering District Improvement under NCLB;
 - missing the greatest percentage of their AYP targets; and
 - having ABCs' composites in the lowest quintile when ranked according to all LEAs.

B. Level II – Collaborative Assistance (Voluntary)

- LEAs:
 - failing to make Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) for one year; and
 - having ABCs' composites in the second lowest quintile when ranked according to all LEAs.

C. Level III – Consultative Assistance (Voluntary)

- LEAs:
 - failing to make Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) and not meeting the criteria outlines in Levels I and II; and
 - having the internal capacity to develop, implement and monitor a plan to address their specific academic needs.

II. Measurable goals and objectives of LEAAP

- An increase in the number of NCLB targets met.
- An increase in the performance of each subgroup.
- A reduction in the number of students scoring at achievement Levels I and II.
- Other objectives:
 - Assist the central office to support schools more effectively, efficiently, and equitably so that all schools are on track to make state and federal accountability goals.
 - Assist the LEA in making data-driven decisions to improve student achievement.
 - Conduct a needs assessment and provide the support and guidance needed to complete a comprehensive plan with short- and long-range goals.
 - Increase the LEA's own capacity to achieve continual district-wide student academic growth over time for all student subgroups.
 - Monitor the progress of the LEA during the implementation of the assistance plan or other support activities.
- Sub objectives include, but are not limited to, developing:
 - Knowledge**
 - greater understanding of the significance of planning
 - greater knowledge of best practices
 - greater knowledge of leadership and the roles of central office staff and school leaders
 - greater knowledge of the tools/processes used in monitoring instruction
 - Skills**
 - increased ability to use data strategically to establish district instructional priorities
 - increased ability to align resources and other district activities to support the instructional priorities
 - increased ability to monitor instructional program
 - Product**
 - a strategic plan or action plan focusing on needs in one or more of the following categories: Instruction and Accountability, Finance, Human Resources and Technology.

III. An explanation of the assistance provided

The LEA Assistance Program (LEAAP) as developed to serve school districts in need of assistance was not implemented as written during the 2004-05 or the 2005-06 school year. The LEAAP program requires that a needs assessment be completed as an initial step in the assistance process. The districts receiving the Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Funding (DSSF) were provided the targets to be addressed as well as a menu of options from which to choose researched-based strategies. The primary areas of focus for these districts are teacher recruitment and retention and reduction in the number of students scoring below grade level. The districts participated for a partial year in 2004-05 and the entire year in 2005-06.

**Districts Served by LEA Assistance Program
During the 2005-06 School Year**

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Edgecombe | 9. Northampton |
| 2. Franklin | 10. Pasquotank |
| 3. Halifax | 11. Robeson |
| 4. Hertford | 12. Thomasville City |
| 5. Hyde | 13. Vance |
| 6. Hoke | 14. Warren |
| 7. Lexington City | 15. Washington |
| 8. Montgomery | 16. Weldon City |

LEAAP team members were assigned to work with the local teams. The resources available supported the hiring of twenty-nine (29) part-time contracted team members to work with the sixteen (16) districts for a period of two years, the length of the pilot program. This averages less than two persons per district. For the 2005-06 school year, a three-member Review Team was established to assist the associate superintendent in monitoring the work of the school districts and to work with the traditional high schools located in the district being served. To assist with implementation of the program, the superintendents of the designated districts were asked to set up a local team that included, but was not limited to, the following personnel: the superintendent, the assistant superintendent or director of instruction, the finance officer, human resources director, and the testing coordinator. The LEAAP and local teams have regularly scheduled quarterly meetings throughout the year to discuss progress and problem solve. These meetings also afford the superintendents the opportunity to share strategies that are working well in their districts and to hear about other programs that are providing benefits in other districts.

Some of the other responsibilities of the LEAAP team members included

- attending orientation/training;
- assisting with the preparation of action and budgets plans;
- monitoring the implementation of the action plan;
- reviewing and approving budget amendments before their submission;
- assisting with progress reports;
- providing support and guidance as needed by the assigned LEAs;
- attending quarterly sharing/training meetings;
- maintaining a log of activities;
- making recommendations when appropriate;
- working with LEAs on preparation of progress reports and submission of other information;
- informing DPI supervisor of any barriers or challenges that required additional support;
- making an onsite visit at least weekly;
- working to support and build capacity in the central office staff; and
- providing input into the evaluation process for these two pilot years of LEAs receiving additional funding.

Chronology of Major Activities 2004-05

Date	Activity
2004	General Assembly provided \$500,000 to contract with LEAAP Team Members. A recommendation was made to double this amount, but was not granted.
July 29, 2004	Governor Easley authorized the expenditure of \$12 million to pilot the Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Funding (DSSF) Program. The eleven LEAs funded included Edgecombe County, Halifax County, Hertford County, Hoke County, Lexington City, Northampton County, Thomasville City, Vance County, Warren County, Washington County and Weldon City.
July –August 2004	Contracted with 29 LEAAP Team Members.
August 19-20, 2004	LEAAP team member orientation/training session.
September 3, 2004	Orientation Meeting with LEAAP Districts and Team Members. LEAAP team members began their work with their assigned school districts.
October 4-5, 2004	Action and Budget Plans brought to the State Board of Education for review and approval.
September 2004	Governor authorizes the expenditure of an additional \$10 million to fund five LEAs which included Elizabeth City/Pasquotank, Franklin County, Hyde County, Montgomery County, and Robeson County.
November 2, 2005	Orientation session held with the five districts and the LEAAP team members. Robeson County did not attend.
November 23, 2005	Special orientation session held for Robeson County and its LEAAP Team members. LEAAP team members began their work with this school district.
December 1-2, 2004	Action and Budget Plans for four of the five districts brought to the State Board for review and approval.
January 5-6, 2005	Action and Budget Plans for Robeson County brought to the State Board for review and approval.
January 25, 2005	LEAAP team members sharing and networking session.
February 9, 2005	At the request of the LEAAP team leader, visited with Thomasville City Schools to see how the DSS funds were being expended and the positive collaboration that had been established between the local team and the LEAAP team.
March 2005	Progress Report submitted by the districts.
March 2005	Monthly LEAAP updates to the State Board began.
April 13, 2005	LEAAP team members meeting.
April 29, 2005	Visited Thomasville City to visit the remainder of the schools.
June 2, 2005	LEAAP team meeting.
June 14-15, 2005	Exit conferences with LEAAP team members.
June 2005	Exit survey sent to districts to complete.

Chronology of Major Activities
July – March, 2005-06

Date	Activity
July 2005	Established a Review Team to monitor the work of the LEAAP teams and progress of the districts.
August 3, 2005	LEAs prepared their action and budget plans for submission to the State Board of Education for approval.
	Action and Budget Plans for eleven of the sixteen Leandro districts taken to the State Board for approval on First Reading.
August 5, 2005	Information meeting with Local and LEAAP Team members.
August 10-12, 2005	LEAAP Team members – Professional Development.
September 2005	Action and Budget Plans for the remaining five Leandro district taken to the State Board for approval on First Reading.
October 4, 2005	Quarterly meeting with Local and LEAAP Team members.
October 13, 2005	Orientation meeting with high schools (high schools located in the Leandro districts that were on Judge Manning's and the Governor's list). Superintendents, central office staff, board members and high school administrators participated.
October 14, 2006	High School Assistance meeting (Associate, Review Team and other staff). Decided to focus on the core areas and school leadership.
December 8, 2005	LEAAP Team members meeting.
January 13, 2006	LEAAP and Local Team members quarterly meeting (morning). Judge Manning as special guest.
January 13, 2006	LEAAP Team members meeting (afternoon).
March 17, 2006	LEAAP and Local Team member quarterly Meeting (morning).
March 17, 2006	LEAAP Team members meeting (afternoon).

**Services Rendered to NC School Districts by LEAAP Review Team Members
2005-2006**

Date	Activity
October 2005	Met with 10 LEAAP Teams to discuss roles and responsibilities of the Review Team and procedures for monitoring districts' Action Plans.
November 2005	Conducted four follow-up visits to monitor implementation of Action Plans, CORE area training, and leadership training. Provided specific recommendations and strategies for school improvement (Lexington City, Weldon City, Hertford County, Warren County). Attended leadership training sessions provided by the LEAAP Team members in Montgomery County.
December 2005	Conducted four follow-up visits to monitor implementation of Action Plans, Core Area Training, and leadership training. Provide specific recommendations and strategies for school improvement (Plymouth High, Northampton, Lexington City, and Weldon City).
January 2006	Held seven meetings with superintendents, central office staffs and LEAAP team members to monitor the Action Plans and review revisions to those plans (Franklin, Hyde, Elizabeth City/Pasquotank, Robeson, Washington, Halifax, Vance, Edgecombe, Washington, Northampton).
February 2006	Held four meetings with LEAAP team members and central office staffs to review the districts' Action Plans (Lexington, Thomasville, Vance, Halifax). Conducted eight monitoring visits, which included review of school-level Action Plan and classroom monitoring. Provided specific recommendations and strategies for school improvement (Plymouth, Northeastern, Weldon City (2), Warren County, Northampton West (2), and Hertford County).
March 2006	Met with central office staffs concerning instructional organization and budget (Warren). Participated in meeting with LEAAP team members and central office staff (Montgomery County).

Since we only had twenty-nine part-time LEAAP team members to serve during 2004-05 and 2005-06, we are not able to provide adequate services to the forty (40) LEAs in improvement because of No Child Left Behind. This is one of our limitations; there are many more schools and LEAs requiring assistance than there are resources available to support the need. Additional resources are needed in order to set up a program that meets the needs of the LEAs and schools requiring assistance.

The assistance process is rewarding, but also difficult at times. Not all local personnel accept assistance or recommendations willingly. Sometimes attendance by LEAs at established meetings is not as consistent as it should be. In 2005-06, a LEAAP Review Team was established to conduct monitoring visits to improve effectiveness and bring more accountability.

IV. Findings based on implementation of the various aspects of the District Assistance Program

Effective Practices

- A formal evaluation is in process and should be completed December 2006.
- Practices that are identified through the evaluation process that prove to be effective in improving student achievement will be disseminated to all LEAs.
- Strategies that improve teacher recruitment and retention will also be shared.
- Sharing and distribution of these practices should occur at the conclusion of the evaluation process.

Funding/Resources

- Funds available (\$500,000) were adequate for 2004-05 because the team members did not serve an entire year, but is not sufficient to support this program for the entire 2005-06 school year. The funding amount should be increased because the number of schools and districts requiring assistance is increasing annually.
- The Agency does not have enough human resources to provide the service, technical assistance, coaching and other follow-up support required to implement an effective district assistance program statewide and meet the other demands for school assistance.
- Funding resources are also needed to train team members to serve and provide technical assistance effectively.
- By the end of February 2006, the LEAAP budget was in deficit. This year, ten high schools located in the Leandro districts are also receiving services. State Assistance Team funding is being used to subsidize the LEAAP budget.
- Supporting the deficit with Assistance Team funds may not be possible next year because of the anticipated increase in schools to be serviced under the new growth model for state accountability.

Training Selection/Preparation

- LEAAP Teams should include persons with expertise in curriculum, accountability, finance, human resource management, and who demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills.
- Teams serving districts can be of variable sizes (two – four members), depending on the expertise of the team members, on the size of the district, and the level and intensity of assistance required.
- Resources should be available to provide quality training for team members (two-four weeks).
- Geographic location is sometimes a barrier in selecting and hiring team members.
- Even though team members bring experiences and knowledge, training is critical to establishing a process for assistance, a common philosophy and knowledge base and delineation of expectations.

Local Team Needs

- Local Teams should be provided training that includes
 - roles and responsibilities of effective central office staff members;
 - data analysis;
 - making data-driven decisions;
 - monitoring school/classrooms; and
 - knowledge of researched-based best practices.

V. Budget

2005-2006 LEA Assistance Program (LEAAP) Projected Cost

Statutory Reference: Senate Bill 622, Section 7.24 authorizes the use of appropriated funds (\$500,000) to provide assistance to the State's low-performing LEAs and to assist schools in meeting adequate yearly progress in each subgroup identified in the NCLB Act of 2001.

REVENUES	Funds Available	Actual Expenditures	Projected Expenditures	TOTAL
Direct Appropriation Current Year (reflects agency-wide 1% reduction)	\$495,000			
Carryover Unspent Funds Previous Year	364,806			
Total Funding Available	\$859,806			
OBLIGATIONS				
Salaries for 27 Contracted Team Members: Contracted Members		\$ 501,005	\$ 292,733	\$ 793,738
Operating Support:				
Training		14,183	1,700	15,883
Non-Employee Transportation		98,577	50,895	149,472
Non-Employee Subsistence		25,409	10,341	35,750
Support Costs		2,157	212	2,369
Total Operating Support		140,325	63,148	203,473
Projected Cost of LEAAP Teams 2005-06		\$ 641,330	\$ 355,881	997,211
Deficit to be funded from Assistance Team				\$ (137,405)

2005-2006 Assistance Team Projected Cost

Statutory Reference: Senate Bill 622, Section 7.23 authorizes the State Board of Education to use funds appropriated to the State Public School Fund for Assistance Teams to low performing schools.

REVENUES	Funds Available	Actual Expenditures	Projected Expenditures	TOTAL
Assistance Teams Direct Appropriation	\$ 2,944,069			\$ 2,944,069
Staff Development	1,250,000			1,250,000
Instructional Support	1,922,688			1,922,688
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR BUDGET	\$ 6,116,757			\$ 6,116,757
OBLIGATIONS				
Salaries & Contract Cost of 51 Team Members:				
Salaries & Benefits		\$ 2,220,229	\$ 1,443,149	\$ 3,663,377
Contracted Members		319,109	140,528	459,637
Total Salaries		2,539,337	1,583,677	4,123,014
Operating Support:				
Academic/Wkshp Services		10,704	1,000	11,704
Misc. Contractual Services		150,751	5,248	155,999
Maintenance Agreement		5,523	-	5,523
Room Rental		66,187	800	66,987
Equipment Rental		11,059	500	11,559
Non-Employee Transportation		469,224	151,622	620,845
Non-Employee-Subsistence		347,103	119,765	466,868
Support Costs		45,469	4,250	49,719
Equipment and Other		5,348	15,237	20,585
Total Operating Support		1,111,367	298,422	1,409,788
Projected Cost of Assistance Teams 2005-06		\$ 3,650,704	\$ 1,882,098	5,532,802
Total Revenues Remaining After All Obligations				\$ 583,955

VI. Recommendations for the continuance of this program

1. Continue the LEA Assistance Program and expand it to
 - meet the No Child Left Behind requirement for states to provide assistance to districts in LEA improvement. Currently there are 43 in this category, and
 - provide support and assistance to systems having limited staff capacity and resources to assist their own schools.
2. Provide additional funds in the future to support the growing number of LEAs requiring assistance.
3. Establish legislation to support the district assistance process and procedures similar to that which supports the state assistance team process.
4. Increase the funding for this effort to an adequate level to handle contractors, training, travel, quarterly meeting expenses, professional development for local teams and other needs.

VII. Any other information the State Board deems necessary

LEAAP was developed to support and provide assistance to LEAs with the lowest performance composites as measured by the ABCs of Public Education and to meet AYP as required by No Child Left Behind. The program developed and presented below grew out of the work with Hoke County and Weldon City. Also, six years of work with the State Assistance teams provided excellent information and experiences to help shape the LEA Assistance Program. The Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and School Reform Services was charged with the responsibility of taking all of this work, the model she developed for the Title I program along with the model developed by Dr. Sammie Campbell Parrish and designed one model to serve as the LEA Assistance Program. As with the Assistance Team program, refinements and minor changes are made along the way as experiences with the model dictate for the continuous improvement of the program. Changes can also be made based on input provided by the State Board of Education as this agenda item is discussed.

The LEAAP Assistance model as written in its final form is fully described on the subsequent pages. It provides for three levels of service and assistance in order to recognize and accommodate the varying levels of resources and capacity available in the LEAs. Based on our experience with the Leandro districts, there may be some further refining of the model prior to implementation with districts in NCLB District Improvement. The LEAAP Team members will serve the DSSF districts until June 2006, after which they will begin serving the districts in NCLB LEA improvement. If additional funding is provided to the DSSF districts in the future, they will continue to receive guidance and support in the writing of their annual action and budget plans as well as continue to have the quarterly meetings to share and problem solve.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2005

SESSION LAW 2005-276

SENATE BILL 622

AN ACT TO MAKE BASE BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT OPERATIONS OF STATE DEPARTMENTS, INSTITUTIONS, AND AGENCIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. INTRODUCTION AND TITLE OF ACT

LEA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SECTION 7.24. Of the funds appropriated to the State Public School Fund, the State Board of Education shall use five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for the 2005-2006 fiscal year and five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for the 2006-2007 fiscal year to provide assistance to the State's low-performing Local School Administrative Units (LEAs) and to assist schools in meeting adequate yearly progress in each subgroup identified in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The State Board of Education shall report to the Office of State Budget and Management, the Fiscal Research Division, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the expenditure of these funds by May 15, 2006, and by December 15, 2007. The report shall contain: (i) the criteria for selecting LEAs and schools to receive assistance, (ii) measurable goals and objectives for the assistance program, (iii) an explanation of the assistance provided, (iv) findings from the assistance program, (v) actual expenditures by category, (vi) recommendations for the continuance of this program, and (vii) any other information the State Board deems necessary. These funds shall not revert at the end of each fiscal year but shall remain available until expended for this purpose.

EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 46.6. Except as otherwise provided, this act becomes effective July 1, 2005. In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 11th day of August, 2005.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley
Governor

Approved 10:10 a.m. this 13th day of August, 2005

