



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

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

*LEA Assistance Program
Session Law 2005-276, Section 7.24
(SB 622, the 2005 Budget Act)*

Date Due: December 15, 2007
Report #22
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2007-2008

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Introduction

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. The State Assistance Team Program worked well for schools in the past; in recent years there was an even greater need, particularly in response to the Leandro ruling, to develop a District Assistance Program. There was a dual intent: to help LEAs increase their capacity to assist schools in their district and to improve student performance overall in the schools. This latter goal was particularly important in meeting the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The NCLB requirement that holds all schools and districts accountable to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) has significantly impacted the number of schools and districts requiring assistance. Since there are scarce resources in the State to assist an expanding number of schools and districts that fail to meet AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject, there was a greater need for building capacity at the district level.

This report focuses on the LEA Assistance Program in 2006-07. In July 2006, the State Board of Education approved a policy (HSP-C-028) defining the District Assistance Program to provide varying degrees of support, guidance and services to LEAs. The policy stated that "Services and assistance provided to LEAs by the Department of Public Instruction (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 School of Mathematics and Science, and the Teacher Academy." The number of districts served will depend on the availability of resources.

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Legislative Charge

Session Law 2005-276
Senate Bill 622

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

LEA ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

SECTION 7.24. Of funds appropriated to the State Public School Fund, the State Board of Education shall use five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for the 2006-07 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.

LEA Assistance Program (LEAAP)

2006-07

LEAAP was designed to provide varying degrees of support, guidance and services to LEAs. The level of services was determined by their performance in the ABCs of Public Education and/or No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The primary aims were 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 were 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 depended on the availability of resources and were offered in the order that requests were 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 percent 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 number of schools identified as in need of improvement.

Third Priority- Title I LEAs that need additional support and assistance.

State Eligibility Criteria:

A. Level I – Guided Assistance (Mandated)

- LEAs
 - entering Year 3 of District Improvement (Corrective Action);
 - having the greatest percent of Title I schools in Corrective Action

B. Level II – Collaborative Assistance (Voluntary)

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

C. Level III – Consultative Assistance (Voluntary)

- LEAs
 - failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and not meeting the criteria outlined 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.
 - To 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 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) program required that a needs assessment be completed as an initial step in the assistance process. The findings identified through the needs assessment process were then used to develop the assistance plan for the LEA. The districts developed action and budget plans to address their needs identified by the needs assessment process. The assigned LEAAP team members provided support and assistance as the districts implemented their plans.

Districts Served by LEA Assistance Program During the 2006-07 School Year

Category I

Districts assigned LEA Assistance Team members - The districts entering Corrective Action (third year in district improvement) and having the greatest percent of Title I schools in corrective action:

1. Bertie County Schools	7. Hertford County Schools
2. Bladen County Schools	8. Hoke County Schools
3. Columbus County Schools	9. Robeson County Schools
4. Clinton City Schools	10. Rowan-Salisbury Schools
5. Forsyth County Schools	11. Wayne County Schools
6. Granville County Schools	

LEAAP team members were charged with assisting the assigned districts in meeting the measurable goals and objectives of the District Assistance Program. Those goals included

- an increase in the number of NCLB targets met,
- an increase in the performance of each subgroup, and
- a reduction in the number of students scoring at achievement Levels I and II.

They were also charged with carrying out the State Board mandated sanction for the districts in corrective action: Align instruction with and fully implement the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*, including providing appropriate professional development.

To achieve these ends, LEAAP teams participated in training for team-building, development of interpersonal skills, coaching and mentoring, data analysis, making data-driven decisions, and effective planning. Teams worked with local leadership teams to establish their intervention plans focused on academic growth and subgroup performance.

The superintendents of the 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 had regular meetings throughout the year to discuss progress and problem solve.

Some of the other responsibilities of the LEAAP team members included

- assisting the districts in establishing instructional priorities based on data,
- aligning strategies to instructional priorities,
- providing or brokering professional development to support the strategies,
- developing budget plans to support strategies and professional development needs,
- examining the alignment of professional development to the instructional goals,
- using walkthroughs to assess the effectiveness of the instructional program,
- providing support and technical assistance, and
- monitoring the implementation of the assistance plan.

Chronology of Major LEAAP Activities

Date	Activity
July 1, 2006	General Assembly provided \$500,000 for LEAAP.
July 21, 2006	An LEA Assistance Program (LEAAP) data work session featured Chairman Howard Lee to deliver remarks and set the tone for 2006-07 and Dr. June Rivers from SAS Institute to provide EVAAS training.
September 18 - 22, and 25 -29, 2006	Extensive LEAAP orientation and training conducted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in collaboration with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) at Edvantia.
November 13, 2006	Eleven districts entering Corrective Action were notified by letter that they would be receiving an LEAAP assistance team.
November 29, 2006	An orientation session for local district's teams to explore data with their LEAAP team members was conducted; training in roles of the central office staff was also provided.
December 14, 2006	Data gathering and training in developing an assistance plan was held in Raleigh for LEAAP team members; curriculum management audit standards were distributed and discussed. The timeline for assistance was disseminated.
December 22, 2006	Memo specifying the State Board of Education sanction applied to the districts in corrective action was disseminated to all districts in corrective action.
January 8-12, 2007	Teams set up and conducted entry conferences with Title I schools in corrective action in each of the assigned districts.
January 16-19, 2007	A calendar of regular meetings of local and LEAAP team members was established; work on needs assessment was begun.
February 9, 2007	Quarterly meeting for LEAAP teams and local teams was held.
February 16, 2007	Teams were required to submit two sets of the completed needs assessments for each district.
March 10, 2007	First monthly LEAAP progress report submitted.
April 20, 2007	Quarterly LEAAP team members meeting.
May 25, 2007	Second progress report submitted by LEAAP teams.
June 22, 2007	Final quarterly LEAAP team meeting.

IV. Findings

Effective Practices

- The first evaluation report of the DSSF presented to the State Board of Education in 2007 found that the LEAAP teams had limited guidance on how to assist the DSSF districts and this resulted in confusion about their role. The authors of this evaluation report further reported that the issue that most affected the implementation of DSSF was that the teams provided conflicting information to the districts.
- When the DSSF funding was extended in 2006-07, the teams no longer worked with the individual pilot districts. Rather, three full-time employees were assigned to the districts to monitor and aid the districts with their planning.
- LEAAP teams were reassigned to yet a third mission in 2006-07: that of assisting selected districts with the largest numbers of schools requiring corrective action under NCLB. These changes of mission affected the coherence and consistency of the district assistance model and the constraints on the department's resources and capacity were not overcome in 2006-07.

Funding/Resources

The excess expenditures were covered with a transfer from the Assistance Team budget (i.e., based on S.L. 2006-66 SECTION 7.6(B), which allows the SBE to use funds appropriated to establish a consolidated assistance program. The justification was based on a request to realign the budget to cover year to date expenditures for the LEAAP teams.

V. Budget

Expenditures for 2006-2007

Contractual Services	500,283.75
Workshop/Conference	20,094.35
Non-Employee Transportation and Lodging	156,647.34
Printing, Data Processing	1700.90
Educational Supplies	389.56
Total	679,115.9

VI. Recommendations for the continuance of this program

The LEA Assistance Program ended in June 2006. There are no recommendations for continuance

VII. Any other information the State Board deems necessary.

There is no additional information.

