

Background

Within large school systems in Louisiana, there exist pockets of persistently struggling schools. A zone strategy concentrates resources—financial and human—and allows for one leader to manage the strategy for student learning within these schools. This focused management of schools should reduce, if not eliminate, distractions that pull zone school leadership teams away from the work of student learning. This level of focus on the core strategies that will improve student learning is essential to seeing progress.

Characteristics of a Strong Zone

In Louisiana, four districts have taken the bold step of creating a Transformation Zone. While each Zone is unique to its local context, there are characteristics common to all Zones across Louisiana and specific actions a zone will take within each characteristic:

1. **Goals specific to student achievement, graduation & school staffing:** Every Zone has school-by-school goals for student achievement that are publicly shared and approved by the advisory committee.
2. **Zone leadership responsible for achievement in all zone schools:** Each Zone is led by a senior executive in the district who is accountable for the goals in the Zone and is responsible for managing the principals at each of the Zone schools. This leader oversees all of the work in the Zone schools and is held accountable to the academic improvement of the schools.
3. **High-quality implementation of curriculum:** All Zone schools use Tier 1 curriculum in both ELA and math, and all ELA and math teachers in Zone schools receive professional development on the curriculum from a high-quality vendor. There is an ongoing plan to support teachers with curriculum implementation.
4. **Talent strategy that attracts and retains top talent in the zone schools:** The Zone strategy necessitates having best-in-class talent at both the teacher and the principal level and focuses on strengthening pipelines for teacher and leader development.
5. **External advisory committee to guide goal setting and oversight of progress:** Every Zone has convened an external advisory committee, led by an advisory chair and comprised of local civic and community leaders, who approve the goals of the Zone and monitor progress toward these goals.
6. **Expansion of high quality seats and consolidation of low quality seats:** The Zone leadership has a plan each year to reduce the number of seats in low-performing schools and expand the number of seats in high-performing schools.

2018-2019 Louisiana Transformation Zones

- Caddo Parish
- Calcasieu Parish
- East Baton Rouge Parish
- Jefferson Parish

Key Zone Activities

Zone districts engage in activities designed to support zone implementation, including: semi-annual convenings with Louisiana zone teams; quarterly calls with the state superintendent; and semi-annual reviews conducted by a third-party to determine zone alignment to the characteristics.

School systems interested in becoming a Transformation Zone should contact their Network leaders or districtsupport@la.gov.