

Response: Louisiana's School Design Request for Information

Organization Name: UnboundEd

Background

The mission of UnboundEd is to support the practice and learning of educators so that teachers serving students living in poverty and inequity are using aligned curriculum well. At UnboundEd, we aim to harness the power of strong standards-aligned instruction to accelerate students not yet at grade-level by supporting educators to select, implement and adapt high-quality curriculum materials to meet their students where they are today. Through our work, we want to ensure that all children are growing against high grade-level standards every day, even when they enter their grade with knowledge, vocabulary, and skill gaps.

UnboundEd is inspired that the state of Louisiana has also prioritized working to ensure that all students—regardless of where they live—have access to schools that prepare them for college and career. We understand that students in Louisiana are being held accountable to higher level standards, and they have already been given increased access to quality materials to help them reach mastery. In order for students to make the shift to higher standards successfully, though, educators must have the skill and the will to lead them. Even if there is a strong curriculum, teachers often struggle with content knowledge and thus aren't able to realize the intent of the higher standards and quality materials. Furthermore, teacher leaders often lack the knowledge and/or the time to develop their teachers effectively.

UnboundEd is in a unique position to help Louisiana educators make this shift because our approach will build off of Louisiana's current strategy and offer the key next steps of building content knowledge and pedagogical skills. We believe that we can change practice to this end at all levels - district leaders, school leaders and teachers - through enacting our three-pronged approach in the state.

First, UnboundEd currently provides on our website sequenced, aligned OER curricular materials to teachers and school leaders; in addition to curating, sequencing, and tagging EngageNY [lessons and units](#), our team developed [content guides](#) and [audiovisual resources](#) that aim to deepen content knowledge through explanations of the higher standards and rationale behind the EngageNY curriculum. Given that some of this curriculum (Eureka Math, in particular) is already widely used in Louisiana, we are excited about the opportunity to increase content understanding and develop pedagogical skill in educators across the state. Many of the UnboundEd team members were the leaders and designers behind the EngageNY curriculum and professional development Institutes; these content teams are now developing tools that will help teachers understand how to help students who enter the year below grade level attain critical prerequisite skills that will allow them to master the high grade level standards. We will increase awareness and effective use of all of these resources by working directly with educators in Louisiana.

Second, UnboundEd creates and delivers adult learning experiences for teachers and leaders on an ongoing basis. Through our national Standards Institutes (SI), we provide immersive development opportunities for educators; the main aim of our SIs is to support and prepare educators to consume, adapt and implement instructional materials to meet the needs of their students at varying levels of readiness - without diluting the expectations of the standards. Standards Institutes allow us to expose participants to the mindsets, knowledge, and skills needed to make the transition to higher standards. We will increase the number of Louisiana educators who experience Standards

Institutes by working with the state to identify a cadre of educators from Louisiana districts who are ready to attend UnboundEd-led SIs and then turnkey the training in their own systems. We will support this cohort of educators through a diverse series of professional development opportunities that aim to 1) ensure content internalization and 2) develop effective adult facilitation skills. This capacity building effort will allow us to lift up the local talent already in Louisiana and avoid sending external coaches to do the work for the schools. We believe this approach best aligns with the Louisiana state strategy and beliefs in the potential of local talent.

Third, UnboundEd works to ensure districts and schools have calibrated, ongoing support provided through partner organizations. By utilizing strategic alliances with aligned “last-mile” technical assistance partners to provide district and school based support for the implementation of high quality standards-based content and aligned instructional practices, we are able deepen the impact of our core work by ensuring more districts, partner networks, teachers, and leaders know about and use appropriately the tools UnboundEd develops. Because we are already accustomed to working with partner organizations, UnboundEd is uniquely ready to collaborate with other industry experts and low performing Louisiana districts/schools to design the innovative and community-relevant school improvement solutions that will ensure Louisiana’s dramatic improvement efforts touch all districts, all schools, and all students

Evidence of Track Record

During UnboundEd’s first year of operation, we have obtained data that shows educators benefit and learn from our curriculum, Standards Institutes, and local initiatives.

The EngageNY curriculum, which members of the UnboundEd team originally developed, is highly visible content with a massive audience, having been downloaded over 45 million times since its release. In 2011, there were under 2,000 viewers, on average, each day. By early 2016, there were nearly 18,000 viewers of EngageNY each day¹. It is also rated by EdReports.org as one of the only OER curriculum highly aligned to the new standards.

Two different measures indicate that our Standards Institutes work. First, we have piloted knowledge surveys to ascertain whether or not participants master objectives taught at each institute. On the knowledge survey at the July 2016 Standards Institute, 46% of participants scored at least 80% on the pre-test, and 76% of participants scored at least 80% on the post-test, which is a statistically significant improvement.

We also survey teachers who attend our Standards Institutes about how they apply the information and skills they learn in their schools and classrooms during the school year. We recently received the following data from 124 respondents who attended the July 2016 SI:

- 97% say what they learned at SI was relevant or very relevant
- 92% say they have shared the materials with colleagues
- 96% of teachers and 92% of leaders say attending SI increased their knowledge of the standards

In Lawrence, MA and Washington, DC, UnboundEd has created Communities of Practice (CoP) of principal managers, principals or principal equivalents, relevant members of their extended instructional teams, and local partners (coaches from ANET), who meet monthly to learn how to lead implementation of the college-ready rigor required by

¹<https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/the-popularity-of-the-open-ed-resource-engageny-by-the-numbers/>

the Common Core State Standards. Learning takes the format of group observations followed by debriefs facilitated by our team members. Local partners who have existing relationships with the attendees are able to reinforce what we cover and can take participants further and deeper into the content between meetings. Our data suggests that this initiative can move educator practice based on local context, which is highly relevant to possible implementation in LA.

After our first Community of Practice meeting this fall in Lawrence, MA, survey results revealed a Net Promoter score of 77; given that the gold standard on Net Promoter is 50, we are highly encouraged by this result. In Washington, DC, where we have had six meetings for approximately 20 participants between April-May and September-December, participants rated as greatly or noticeably their degree of improvement since the CoP launch in the following areas:

- Access to resources that support my organization's implementation of Common Core-aligned instructional rigor (100%)
- Familiarity with Common Core State Standards (95%)
- Access to one or more peers that I can talk to about my problems of practice as an instructional leader (100%)

This data is promising as we evaluate our professional development offerings in the context of Guskey's Five Critical Levels; experienced together over time in an arc of learning, we see great potential in changing practice by developing educator content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Organizational Model

One of UnboundEd's primary goals is to work with strategic partners to develop customized and scalable educator support models. Our approach in Louisiana will be anchored in building a cadre of people to own the work locally. Part One of this approach is described above; we will build educator knowledge and skill in a cohort of educators through Standards Institutes, who then turnkey the trainings in their home districts and/or schools.

To extend the impact of the trainings, in Part Two we will develop various Communities of Practice in schools and districts across the state, which are completely localized. Our focus in a CoP is also to increase educators' knowledge of the content of standards and develop their pedagogical practice. Using a modified version of the Instructional Practice Guide to observe classrooms with local educators, followed by debriefs guided by our staff, we will develop a shared understanding with teachers and teacher leaders on the extent to which standards are being enacted in classrooms. We will then design services based on the starting point of any given district or school, determined by a combination of the walkthroughs, debriefs, and teacher leader survey results.

Part Three is to deploy in Louisiana a new program model that in some ways combines Parts One and Two. We have begun this new model in collaboration with D2D to provide intensive, scalable support and reach more deeply educators in FL and MA. This model provides targeted, yet comprehensive job embedded, professional development that leverages Standards Institutes with wrap-around services co-designed by D2D and UnboundEd. Our current pilot will develop a diverse cadre of middle school math and ELA coaches in districts - approximately 60 coaches and 25 school leaders in each state - who can provide high quality, standards focused professional development to the estimated 600-800 teachers they serve. We will develop similar programs in Louisiana (with other partners or simply

along with local staff in Louisiana) that leverage unique skills and services of our partners and/or local staff while also filling the needs we see on the ground locally in districts and schools.

As described previously, UnboundEd already works with a multitude of partners who perform different functions in the quest of closing the achievement gap. In this way, we leverage the expertise and reach of other high performing education non-profits while keeping our focus relatively narrow on standards-aligned content and instructional practices.

Currently, we have six partner organizations that have been selected based on their reach and their capacity to deepen their own understanding of standards and curriculum to foster the effective implementation of higher standards nationwide as part of a PLC sponsored by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. Partners include Achievement Network, District2District (D2D), Leading Educators, New Leaders, New Teacher Center, and TNTP. We would look forward to working with our current partners as relevant in LA and would also be open to developing additional partnerships with new organizations.

State/District/School Partnerships

UnboundEd welcomes support in diagnoses from state, district, or school partners; if others help us identify an appropriate starting point, then we would not necessarily need to do our own diagnosis.

In addition, it enhances our success if the state/district/school has a method to hold employees accountable for doing the work that will be involved. UnboundEd provides expertise and does the work (which includes developing relationships and creating buy-in), but leaders in the state play a role in accountability that UnboundEd, as an outside entity, cannot.

We also welcome information from the state, district, or school such as student achievement data, school information as it relates to student achievement, and any information on educator practice would be useful. Furthermore, it's always helpful to know who the decision makers are in the systems in which we are working as well as any other individuals who can help us to move the work forward; this knowledge will help us create conditions for success.

To UnboundEd, an ideal partner or school district has:

- attempted to engage with high quality materials (higher standards and improved curriculum);
- developed and put into place a leadership team structure with clarified roles and responsibilities;
- set aside time to develop teachers and leaders;
- teachers and leaders who have the will to change and improve (if not the skill);
- accurately identified content and pedagogy as the right next area of focus for the system (i.e., on the arc of transformation, the school/district is ready to hone in on content and pedagogy rather than, say, culture first).