

RECOVERY

School District

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Baton Rouge Achievement Zone

Community Engagement Process for School Transformation

Engaging Local Stakeholders

- **Goals & Objectives**
- **Baton Rouge Achievement Zone**
- **Focus Group Findings**
- **Community-Based Priorities**
- **Community-Charter Organization Introductions**
- **Next Steps**

Goals & Objectives

Engaging parents, local leaders and a cross-section of community members in the work of turning around chronically underperforming schools is central to the mission of the Recovery School District. We accomplish this through:

- Facilitation of rich dialogue with local stakeholders to create a set of shared values and desired outcomes.
- Create mechanism to gather stakeholder feedback on approved charter school organizations.
- Incorporate feedback to ensure successful launch of school transformation models.



Baton Rouge Achievement Zone

Baton Rouge Achievement Zone Goals & Objectives



- Collaborate between state, district, and community to create high-quality schools for all students.
- Empower parents with choice among high-quality schools.
- Unleash the power of educators.
- Create rigorous learning environments that prepare ALL students for college and careers.
- Recruit organizations with proven results to create great schools.

Baton Rouge Achievement Zone Schools

School	2012-2013 Enrollment	Grades	2010-11 School Letter Grade	% Minority	% Free/Reduced School Meals
Dalton Elem. School	330	PK-5th	F	99.5%	90.1%
Lanier Elem. School	330	PK-5th	F	100%	93.3%
Glen Oaks Middle School	210	6th-8th	F	100%	91.3%
Prescott Middle School	244	6th-8th	F	99.6%	87.5%
Crestworth Learning Academy	165	6th-8th	D	100%	90.6%
Capitol High School	270	9th-12th	D	98.8%	89.1%
Istrouma High School	374	9th-12th	F	99%	97.7%

Baton Rouge Achievement Zone Advisory Board

Goal

- BRAZAB is a broad, diverse group of stakeholders from across Baton Rouge community, developed to create ecosystem for change in the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone (BRAZ)

Role

- Work as liaison to foster dialogue with BRAZ communities on values and priorities for transformation of public schools in the BRAZ

Key Deliverable

- Development of community-based priorities for school transformation in the BRAZ

Community Engagement Process in the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone

Step 1:

Convene
BRAZAB

Step 2:

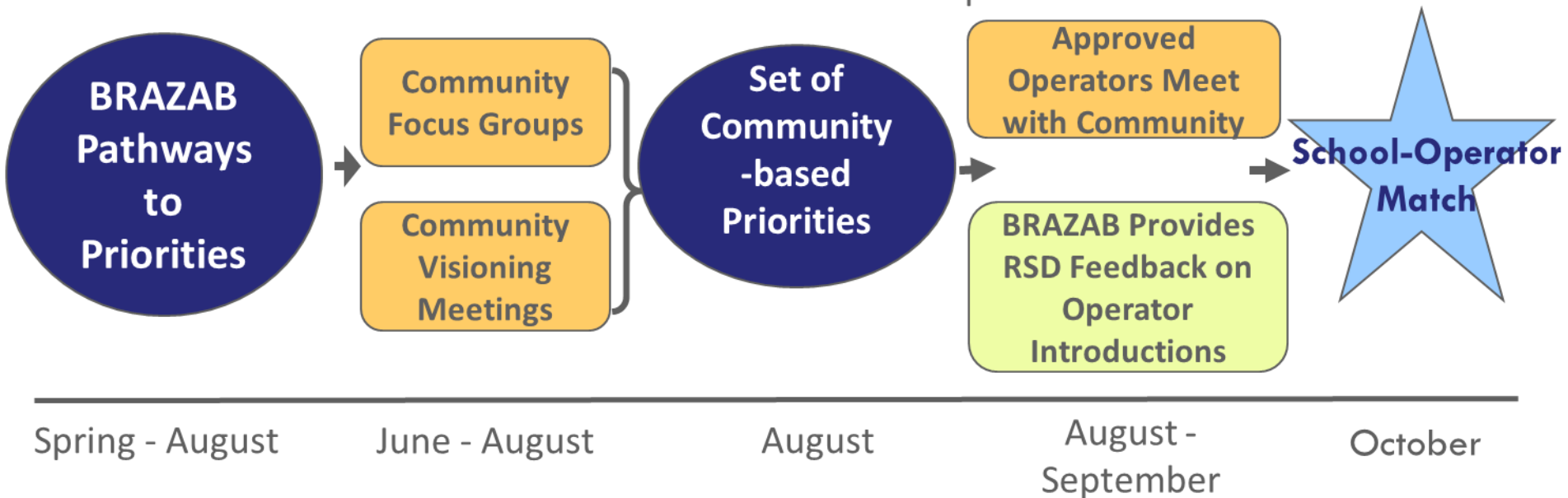
Work with BRAZAB to
develop community-
based priorities

Step 3:

Gather feedback
from BRAZAB and
BRAZ community on
alignment of
approved operators
with community
priorities

Step 4:

RSD uses feedback
to inform siting
decisions



Phase 1: Building Capacity

With BRAZAB members coming from so many different backgrounds, and with varying levels of engagement in the work of school transformation, it was important that we take the time to build the collective knowledge base of the group by providing education, training, and creating a space for dialogue on key issues, including:

- Vision & Mission of Recovery School District
- RSD Theory of Action
- Goals & Objectives of Baton Rouge Achievement Zone
- Key elements of school turnaround strategies
- What it takes to create great schools for all kids

Building Capacity

Baton Rouge Achievement Zone Advisory Board Development Includes:

- Regular Monthly Meetings
- Day-Long Training Session with BRAZ Partners (NSBR, TFA, Stand for Children, LAPCS)
- New Orleans School Tour & Stakeholder Discussion
- Formal & Informal Visits to Current BRAZ Schools
- Dialogue with Superintendent Dobard
- Development of Sub-committees
- BRAZ Parent Meetings

Phase 2: Pathway to Priorities



BRAZAB worked with the RSD to develop a set of community-based priorities for school transformation in the BRAZ through the following efforts:

- Focus group dialogue
- Community Visioning Meetings
- Development of community-based priorities for school transformation in the BRAZ



Focus Groups

Focus Groups

Working in collaboration with professors from Southern University and Louisiana State University, the RSD convened a series of focus groups of local stakeholders designed to explore attitudes and perceptions on:

- Challenges & obstacles impeding the school improvement efforts in the BRAZ
- Community values on public education
- Goals and objectives for school transformation

The RSD used the data provided through these focus groups to facilitate discussion in two community visioning meetings.

Focus Group Results

Through the facilitated conversations four major themes emerged:

1. **Leadership in Education:** High quality leaders and principals are one of the most important factors in success of schools
2. **Creating Great Schools for All Kids:** Set high expectations for student success
3. **Empowering Parents:** Give parents the tools to be successful, engaged parents
4. **Schools Connected to Community:** Create space and opportunity for community to support schools



Community-based Priorities

Community Visioning Meetings

We held two community-wide meetings in the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone to solicit feedback and generate discussion on the four themes for community priorities articulated through the focus group data.

The feedback from these community meetings provided a deeper understanding of key priorities that are important to the BRAZ community in the work of school transformation.

The data collected through these community meetings served as an anchor to help guide the conversation in the introductory meetings between approved charter organizations and community stakeholders. Additionally, these priorities will inform the RSD and selected charter school operators as we seek to successfully launch schools.

Leadership in Education

Priorities:

- School leaders and teachers have a collective vision, shared goals, and expectations for success.
- Hire quality principals and teachers who are committed to the success of their students; have high expectations for themselves and their student; and communicate those expectations to staff, parents, and students.
- Create space for parents and community to share in the success of the school.
- School leaders and staff understand the culture of the community – both the legacy and traditions that are important to families and the challenges that families and students may face.

Creating Great Schools for All Kids

Priorities:

- Create expectation of greatness for school leaders, teachers, and students.
- Schools are safe and caring environments.
- Schools build trust with parents and students.
- Develop students academically, foster critical thinking skills, and build character in students.
- Support diverse extra-curricular activities including athletics, arts, music, drama, and more.
- Prepare students for college, and career and technical training.

Empowering Parents

Priorities:

- Schools work to increase parental involvement, but are prepared to educate students even when it doesn't exist.
- Be flexible and meet parents where they are.
- Provide parent liaisons to help develop consistent relationship building opportunities with parents.
- Schools should be innovative and consistent in the ways they communicate and interact with parents.
- Provide parent education opportunities and help them map out what success looks like for their children; give parents the tools needed to ensure their students are on track.

Connected to Community



Priorities:

- Honor legacy and tradition of schools and community.
- Establish community liaisons to help foster and develop relationships with school communities that build a foundations for student success.
- Work with community to develop additional resources to support student learning, mentoring, health care, and career training opportunities.
- Develop students who are civically engaged in their communities.



Community- Charter Organization Introduction Meetings

Phase 3: Operator Engagement

Goals & Objectives:

- Create opportunity for community leaders and charter school operators to have meaningful dialogue on expectations for creating great schools in Baton Rouge.
- Mechanism for RSD to gather feedback from community leaders on potential school operators and community-based priorities.
- Inform decision-making on school siting by the RSD Superintendent.

Operator Engagement



Meeting Composition:

- Eight approved charter operators
- 80 community stakeholders invited to participate
- Charter organization presentations and dialogue
- Stakeholders completed feedback forms on how each organization aligned with community-based priorities

Feedback: Operator 1

Strengths Noted :

- Program facilitates ability to use effective models from across the nation
- Comprehensive planning
- Literacy and math as focus areas
- Low student to teacher ratio and slow growth model
- Focus on ensuring financial resources to support their model
- Focus on strong K – 2 classrooms
- Data that will inform curriculum and instruction
- Goal of focusing on preparing students for success in middle and high school and college through early strong foundation in elementary
- High expectations for staff and students
- Co-teaching model
- Planning to develop talent through teacher teams with junior teachers paired with more experienced teachers
- Home visits to families is a strength
- Board has diversity in their experience working in the community

Feedback: Operator 1 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Path to realize the vision for the school needs clarity
- Coherent strategy for improving student achievement not clear
- Unclear how school will actually run, what is the organizational structure?
- More information needed about composition of school leadership team
- Concern that school will not attract enough students because of inexperience of leader
- What are the tangible goals for the school?
- What is strategy and process for ensuring strong staff on board?
- Lack of school leadership experience for school founder
- How will they engage with broader community?
- Will they understand the cultural issues of students they will serve?
- Unclear how parent feedback will be used
- With slow growth model how are students in older grades going to be provided strong program?
- Need more representation from local community on the Board

Feedback: Operator 2

Strengths Noted –

- Data collected on student progress daily and weekly
- Their plans for improving student achievement and focus on getting every child to graduate from college
- Track record of successful model with similar population of “at-risk” students
- Focus on creating an environment that makes learning fun & whole-child approach
- How they work to change the paradigm of the community & collaboration with community
- Focus on strengthening family, adult literacy program
- Leadership team and focus on retaining high quality leaders and teachers
- “Whatever it takes” mindset, clear theory of change
- Home visits the school teams conduct with families
- Parent surveys and parent data nights, Director of Parent Relations
- Art programming in their schools
- Interview and work with current school staff from school they are transforming
- Social and emotional support for students coupled with academic plans
- Prior experience expanding to other regions
- They meet needs of all students, including those with disabilities

Feedback: Operator 2 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Would like more information about their curriculum
- How familiar are they with the needs and challenges in Baton Rouge?
- More information needed on how they form a strong school team, how do they recruit good teachers?
- They will have potential challenges since they are from outside the Baton Rouge community
- How will they include parent feedback in their decision making?
- How do they involve hard to reach parents?
- Concerned about their desire to expand to other regions when they have been in many of their schools for 2 years.
- How will they overcome challenges of community buy-in?
- Do they provide information on their special education programming to parents?
- What is their approach to behavior issues?
- What does teacher professional development look like?

Feedback: Operator 3

Strengths Noted:

- Previous success with at-risk students
- Good staff resources
- High expectations for kids
- Individualized plans for meeting students' needs
- 1:1 student to computer ratio
- Resources for students with disabilities
- Strong school values and culture
- Preparation for Common Core
- Longer school day
- Planning for student transitions
- Parent's given direction for how to assist students at home
- Focus on hiring local talent for school teams
- Co-teaching model
- Plans to partner with local universities
- Community Liaison role
- Relationships with parents and the agreement they sign with parents
- Before school and after school care they provide

Feedback: Operator 3 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Plans for their school unclear
- More information on their action plans
- Can they duplicate the quality staffing they have in Los Angeles?
- What is their process for assembling a strong school team?
- What is their teacher professional development like?
- How will they raise awareness of Celerity in this community?
- Need to get Community Liaison on the ground now
- How do they implement parent feedback and respond to concerns?
- Parent representative should be on their Board
- Will they have challenges with the cultural and educational differences in Louisiana?
- How do their parents and teacher respond to the length of the school day?

Feedback: Operator 4

Strengths Noted:

- Firmly believe college is the next step, college visits are part of their model
- Family and students are front and center
- Work with individual student needs
- Rigorous teacher hiring process and teacher development, bar very high
- Goal setting, measurement, constant reinforcement
- Success in serving under-resourced student population similar to Baton Rouge
- Multiple blocks of literacy
- Social and emotional support to students and whole child approach
- Accept all students and have high expectations for all
- Advisory system is very strong
- Very strong parent engagement plan
- Calling students “scholars”
- Broad range of extracurricular activities
- Serving kids who need them most, open admissions
- Staffed with social worker and provide extra support for students
- Summer internships

Feedback: Operator 4 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Adding a grade each year will be too late for many of our children
- Unclear plan for how they will replicate in Baton Rouge
- What is the hiring process for school leaders?
- Will they be able to recruit high quality teachers in Baton Rouge?
- What are existing local partnerships?
- Who will you engage with the Baton Rouge community?
- How will you integrate community stakeholders into the school?
- Did not see any evidence of embracing the community
- How do you relate to parents about college if they haven't been to college themselves?
- Would like more information about discipline in classroom setting

Feedback: Operator 5

Strengths Noted:

- Demonstrated results
- Preparing teachers for Common Core
- Development of well rounded students
- Focus on students being college ready
- National network but individual schools empowered
- Longer school day and parent access to teachers after hours
- Data driven
- High performing, passionate teachers and high teacher retention
- Afterschool programs that engage the community
- Relationships with universities
- Home visits to families prior to start of school
- Encourage close relationships with parents
- Their desire to have a school in East Baton Rouge

Feedback: Operator 5 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Unclear how they will implement their program in Baton Rouge
- More information on their program specifics and how they were able to get to strong academic results
- Are their staff and leadership reflective of the community they serve? Does not appear to and this is a concern.
- Their letter grades are not that high in Louisiana
- Who will they partner with in the Baton Rouge community?
- Did not see a focus on building the community or embracing the community
- Will they partner with Baton Rouge Community College and Southern and not just LSU?
- How is parent feedback implemented?
- What is their gap in financing their operations?
- Do they hire teachers outside of TFA?

Feedback: Operator 6

Strengths Noted:

- Successful record of improving student achievement with similar students
- Clear plan for turning around a school
- Successful recruitment of passionate and high quality staff, screening involves demonstrated lessons, focused on effective teachers on staff
- Focused on family involvement, Family Coordinator position
- Organization is focused on replicating in a community in which it is most needed
- Thoughtful in their scaled approach to replicating in new region
- They work with the community and find out what matters
- Work to eliminate barriers to success outside the classroom
- Look for talent in the community to hire
- Staffing structure has Principal only focused on academics
- Partner with community organizations
- Staff welcome students as they enter school building
- Home visits, community cookouts
- Reflect children's community in the school's operations
- Educational trips for students to broaden their experience with the world
- Pre-K model

Feedback: Operator 6 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Are they ready to replicate in another state- do they have the bandwidth?
- What is their curriculum and classroom model?
- Would like more specifics about their plans
- Will they be successful with different culture in Louisiana?
- Are they successful with full turnaround or is their ability more from start-up of new school?
- What professional development do they provide to teachers and staff?
- How do they engage parents in school success?
- How will they ensure buy-in from Baton Rouge community?
- Do they have clear understanding of social and emotional concerns of students in our community?
- How will they work to have diversity in their student body?
- How do they recruit students?
- More information needed on inclusion and their special education programming

Feedback: Operator 7

Strengths Noted:

- Target Teach curriculum
- Experience serving students with disabilities in New Orleans
- Leaders have experience in Baton Rouge
- Performance incentives for staff as part of evaluation process
- Plan to partner with community organizations
- Plan to track student performance
- Administration will spend majority of time in classrooms observing teaching to help with teacher success and development
- Partnering with Families Helping Families
- Clear passion
- Social workers on site to nurture students and parents

Feedback: Operator 7 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Unclear plan for their new school in Baton Rouge
- Unclear how they will develop their staff
- Unclear they are ready to expand outside current school in New Orleans- need to focus on improving current school
- How will they ensure they are hiring a strong teacher team?
- Unclear how they will have strong infrastructure for daily operations
- What extracurricular activities will they offer?
- How will they use parent feedback?
- What is the effectiveness of the curriculum they use?
- Would like more information about their special education programming/services

Feedback: Operator 8

Strengths Noted:

- Enthusiasm and commitment to the whole child
- Experienced leadership team
- Research based approach
- Comer model
- Leadership team holds high expectations for students
- Plan to hire local talent
- Grandparents day and ways in which families are included
- Make parents feel they are partners with the school
- Saturday school and connecting with universities

Feedback: Operator 8 (cont)

Questions/Areas of Concern Noted:

- Need to show history of success for both current schools before moving to BR
- Clear commitment to high expectations not evident
- Can they identify and hire talent outside of New Orleans?
- How are they holding teachers accountable?
- No clear plan for engaging the Baton Rouge community
- May underestimate the differences between New Orleans and Baton Rouge
- How will they get community buy-in in Baton Rouge?
- How do they implement parent and community feedback?
- How are their graduates doing?
- How will they bridge cultural and lifestyle differences between New Orleans and Baton Rouge?
- What is their classroom, discipline structure?
- What is their hiring process?
- Do they have a social worker on staff?
- What specifically are their high expectations for students & how are they measured?
- More data would be helpful to see



Next Steps

Communicating 2014-15 Transformation



- **Discussion of Transformation Plans with School-based Staff**
- **Notification of Parents and Families**
- **Notification of Selected Charter Organizations**
- **Public Announcement of Siting Decisions**
- **Collaboration with Community Stakeholders to Ensure Smooth Transformation for 2014-15 and beyond**

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