

Developing Leaders in Louisiana



The University of Texas at Austin
Charles A. Dana Center

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Overview

Professional Learning of Louisiana Educators Benefits 700,000+ Students

Hardworking classroom teachers deserve deep ongoing professional learning and mentoring to ensure they are supported in their classrooms and can continue to grow in knowledge and pedagogy.

Since 2017, the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin has been working with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to equip Louisiana mentor teachers and mathematics content leaders with the knowledge and materials they need to effectively support current and new teachers in Louisiana.

The goal of this collaboration is to develop leaders within the system to ensure that Louisiana educators receive professional learning connected to the grade level, content area, and main curriculum they teach.

Toward this goal, the Dana Center developed and provided professional learning materials and sessions for mentor teachers and mathematics content leaders. The mentor teachers and content leaders were then able to turn around and deliver Dana Center–authored professional development sessions throughout their schools and parishes.

From 2017 to 2020, nearly 700 mathematics content leaders and more than 1,500 mentor teachers participated in this collaboration, benefitting over 700,000 Louisiana K–12 students.

New Roles for Educators in Louisiana

Mentor teachers are educators who have the knowledge and skills to effectively coach and support new and resident teachers in their district. The mentor teacher role is also an important step in the leadership pipeline for talented local educators.

Mathematics content leaders are educators growing deeply in mathematics content knowledge and pedagogy. These leaders also gained knowledge and skills to effectively implement high-quality curricular resources and to complete assessments. They also prepared to facilitate high-quality learning experiences for fellow educators.

Defining the Issue

The Critical Need for Leaders in Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Education recognized that teachers throughout their state wanted and needed to grow in their specific mathematics content knowledge. In addition, new instructors also sought strong mentor teachers who could support them in improving in their knowledge of content and pedagogy over the long term.

LDOE chose the Dana Center, along with Learning Forward, to develop and facilitate mathematics content leader and mentor teacher training over three years.

Throughout that time, the Dana Center worked closely with leaders at LDOE to develop sessions and tools that teachers in Louisiana could continue to use for many years to come as they grow professionally.

Elements for Success

Relationships Crucial for Trust and Sustainability

To ensure the work was supportive, and, ultimately, successful, the first focus was on building relationships among professionals from the Dana Center and LDOE—particularly among the professional learning facilitators and the educators in their courses, and among the educators themselves.

Dana Center facilitators and LDOE leaders worked intensively to translate LDOE’s goals for the mentor teachers and math content leaders into meaningful professional learning. Mentor teachers and math content leaders reported high levels of learning and confidence after their sessions, and noted several key elements that led to these successful outcomes.



Administrative Support

The LDOE leadership team was fully aligned and clear about their goals for the initiative.



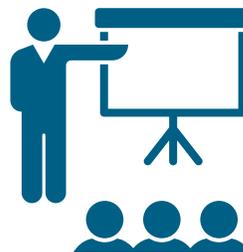
Relationships Among Educators

Educators reported that learning alongside their peers built confidence in their abilities.



Defined Cycle of Learning

A clearly outlined framework gave educators clarity on each phase of their learning journey.



Expert Facilitators

The deep experience and content expertise of the facilitators helped foster teachers’ trust in the materials and the process.

Outcomes & Impacts

Success in Growing Louisiana Leaders

Mentor teachers and the math content leaders reported overwhelming satisfaction and confidence from the professional learning sessions. The most impactful aspects of their learning centered around the collaboration and relationships they experienced.

LDOE Project Results

100% of mentor teacher survey respondents reported that they feel confident in building strong relationships with their mentees.

96% or more of math content leader survey respondents from various grade levels reported that they can apply the best practices they learned.

For additional findings on the successes of this work, as well as breakdowns by schools, please download the full report. The evaluation was completed by the Texas Advanced Computing Center at The University of Texas at Austin.

“ Personally, I have an enthusiasm about this. It is not just another training it is something that I look forward to and something that, when I leave, I have a toolbox of things I can use in my classroom the very next day. ”

—Secondary Math Content Leader

“ I love the interactive approach. The small group, whole group, and individual reflection opportunities were beneficial. ”

—Elementary Mentor Teacher



Lessons Learned

Applying Key Learnings for Future Work

The impact of COVID-19 on education has underscored the importance of supporting classroom instructors through high-quality professional learning and mentorship. With classrooms across the country adapting to new modes of instruction, educators need and want to continue growing in their knowledge of content and pedagogy.

This is why the Dana Center and the Louisiana Department of Education are continuing this collaboration. In 2020, the Dana Center expanded delivery of mathematics content leader training for Louisiana educators. The Center also began developing new science content leader training to initial groups of participants in summer 2020.

These trainings are now virtual, and they include strategies and supports for in-person classroom teaching as well as virtual and blended approaches. Relationship building and collaboration continue to be a major part of these sessions.

**To download the summative evaluation report,
please visit
www.utdanacenter.org/our-impact/impact-stories**



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