



UNIVERSITY of  
**LOUISIANA**  
L A F A Y E T T E

**Picard  
Center**

# The Leader in Me

**2016-2017 EVALUATION REPORT: PHASE 1**

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Prepared for:



**United Way of Acadiana**



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## **School Systems**

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## Executive Summary

*The Leader in Me (TLIM)* is based on Franklin Covey's whole school transformation<sup>1</sup> program, which relies on leadership and life-skills education to create a culture of individual student empowerment. In Acadiana, TLIM program was initially implemented at two schools in Lafayette Parish in 2009 Judice Middle School and Plantation Elementary. In 2010, Lafayette's J. Wallace James Elementary and Acadia Parish's Martin Petitjean Elementary implemented *TLIM* as well. Within three years, Martin Petitjean earned recognition as a *Lighthouse* school, the first in Louisiana and now one of 346 exemplary programs worldwide. As of this reporting period, TLIM program has expanded to 35 schools across Acadiana and to 3,269 schools worldwide. The United Way of Acadiana has spearheaded TLIM program by entering into partnerships with local school systems and underwriting initial program costs.

This report is the first of a three-phase study of the program's impact on 20 Acadiana public schools in which TLIM has been implemented for at least two years. Using publicly available data, the current study examines the differential effect of TLIM by comparing academic performance and student behavior before and after the implementation of the program. In general, it appears the TLIM has a moderate effect on the academic performance of children in participating schools, especially after two years in the program.

An overview of this phase's specific findings include:

- Schools in which TLIM has been implemented have significantly higher scores on the **Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)** indicator, a norm-referenced curriculum-based assessment that is considered predictive of future reading skills, including letter names, sounds, and phonological awareness:
  - Cohort 1 schools (those implementing TLIM beginning 2012) demonstrated a 12% increase in percentages of DIBELS benchmarks; and
  - Cohort 2 schools (those implementing TLIM beginning in 2013) demonstrated a 21% increase in the number of students achieving DIBELS benchmarks three years after implementation, suggesting a latency effect of the program.
- Cohort 3 schools (those implementing TLIM beginning in 2014) demonstrated large and sustained increases of  $\approx 30\%$  on English Language Arts benchmarks and 27% on math benchmarks in the first academic year of TLIM implementation.
- Cohort 1 witnessed a 15% increase in students on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) *English Language Arts* benchmark across the period

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.franklincovey.com/Solutions/education/TLIM.html>

measured by two years before and two years after full implementation of TLIM as well as an 8% increase in *Math LEAP*.

- No effects were discerned for changes in student conduct or attendance.

## **Background Information**

The Leader in Me (TLIM) program is a school-wide initiative in which academic institutions (K-12) attempt to increase students' lifelong behavior and achievement by targeting school culture and academics. The program also seeks to provide students with the skills necessary for success, including self-reliance, responsibility, and problem-solving. TLIM is based on the underlying belief that all students have the capacity to lead their lives effectively (Fozi & Ritchie, 2011). Influenced by Stephen Covey's successful platform *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989), TLIM challenges students to take charge of their learning to achieve personal and academic success. This foundation for change emanates from the integration of the *7 Habits* into all aspects of the school experience.

According to Covey, the seven habits of highly successful people are:

- Be Proactive
- Begin with the End in Mind
- Put First Things First
- Think Win-Win
- Think First to Understand, Then be Understood
- Synergize
- Sharpen the Saw

The targeted result is a profound impact on the community as students, teachers, and school administrators infuse the program's components in areas beyond the school.

*The Leader in Me* program in Acadiana, initially implemented in 2009, in two schools, Judice Middle and Plantation Elementary, in Lafayette Parish was soon expanded to include Lafayette's J. Wallace James Elementary and Acadia Parish's Martin Petitjean Elementary in 2010. Within three years, Martin Petitjean earned recognition as a "Lighthouse" school, one of only 50 nationwide, 346 worldwide, and the first in Louisiana. Since 2010, the program has expanded to 35 schools across Acadiana. The United Way of Acadiana has spearheaded TLIM program by entering into partnerships with local school systems and underwriting initial program costs.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

*The Leader in Me* purports a new "Mindset" for learners, under which all students are viewed as capable leaders of their own future, as opposed to a bell curve distribution, which

assumes that some children will do very well and others are destined for failure. Essentially, the Mindset are a series of paradigms through which schools attempt to reduce discipline problems by instituting positive, responsible behavior support programs (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Humphries, Cobia, & Ennis, 2015) and by promoting leadership (Austin, Suddreth, & Nye, 2016) and personal agency (Pajares, 2006). TLIM, with its emphasis on personal responsibility, self-control, and cooperation, focuses on positive behavior support programs. Humphries, Cobia, & Ennis (2015) found evidence for a relationship between the level of TLIM implementation and noted a reduction in disciplinary incidents. Soutter, Seider, & Malhotra (2016) also investigated and noted a positive relationship between TLIM and youth development, specifically youth agency. One dimension of youth agency can be defined as the belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and achieve goals (Bandura, 1993), and therefore, TLIM's emphasis on self-efficacy may lead to the students' personal expectations of higher academic performance. Furthermore, research studies are beginning to investigate both behavioral and academic dimensions of the program. The link between TLIM and both, behavioral and academic improvements, are worthy goals of any comprehensive examination.

## Research Design

This report is the first of three phased studies designed to evaluate TLIM program's impact on students' behavior, engagement, and academic performance. During Phase 1, a retrospective longitudinal approach using publicly available academic and behavioral data compares school performance before TLIM adoption to school performance two years post-adoption. Phases 2 and 3 delve deeper, as we propose to concurrently examine not only school performance but also implementation fidelity, teacher attitudes, school climate, and student performance. The degree to which an intervention is delivered as intended (implementation fidelity) is critical to successful translation of evidence-based interventions into practice (Breitenstein, et al., 2010). This report will lay the foundation for the next two phases.

The primary methodology is a quasi-experimental interrupted time series using school-level data. This study is limited to two sources of information: 1) school-level reports currently available from Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and 2) previous research reports from the Picard Center. The data have been carefully edited to present a realistic picture of changes in TLIM schools. As with any longitudinal data, changes in state, district, or school policies may make significant changes in the output. Because of the inability to control the intervening forces, the relationships may not be as conclusive. This study will concentrate on trends investigated with more comprehensive data in Phases 2 and 3. The primary measures used for this study include Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Louisiana Education Assessment Program (LEAP, fourth grade), Truancy, Attendance, and major discipline measures. One possible measure, the Louisiana School Performance Score (SPS), was excluded as a study variable due to an inconsistent calculation over the last ten years as Louisiana refined the measure. Public

data was unavailable for demographic subgroups, so results are limited to the whole population only.

## **Evaluation Questions**

1. What are the trends in academic achievement before and after school entrance into TLIM initiative?
2. What are the trends in student behavior measures before and after implementation of the TLIM initiative?

School-level data will depend on only six (Cohort 1) or seven (Cohorts 2 and 3) schools, limiting the complexity of the analysis. T-tests will determine significant differences between two points in time within the cohorts. Time-series regression analysis will test multiple year trends when appropriate. A probability level of less than 0.05 will be standard for all tests.

## **Cohort Design**

School cohorts delineated TLIM implementation and served to create comparison groups for the long-term study. The goal was to create relatively similar groups with approximately the same number of schools (see Appendix A). Cohort 1 included those schools implementing before August 2013. Remaining cohorts followed implementation years (i.e., Cohort 2, August 2013; Cohort 3, 2014; Cohort 4, 2015; Cohort 5, 2016). As previously done by Humphries, Cobia, and Ennis (2015), schools with at least two years of implementation became Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 of the study group. Data were collected from Cohorts 4 and 5 as baseline measures but were considered too early in implementation for this research project. Cohort 1 consisted of six schools while Cohorts 2 and 3 represented seven schools each for a total of 20 Acadiana schools.

## **Methodology**

Recognized in the research community, causation is difficult to ascertain, unless subjects are randomly assigned to conditions, and extraneous variability is identified and controlled. While the researchers believe the results presented in this report are an essential step to understanding the effects of TLIM, there are limitations to this study; specifically, changes in data availability and quality limit report accuracy. Meta-analytic techniques were used to compare measures from various sources. Researchers had to choose valid comparison data from past reports and state data. Additionally, data consistency from year to year proved to be a challenge. To ensure privacy, the Louisiana Department to Education responsibly redacted and reduced data accuracy in certain categories. For example, public data reports may reflect a category representing 2% of the students as <5%. Researchers used various means to determine the most accurate measures to replace the redacted information. Still, redacted information reduces data accuracy.



Researchers made every attempt to create complete datasets. However, when data were unavailable or suspected unreliable, only the best available data were used in the presented results. Limited data equate to limited ability to provide a statistical evaluation.

Additional years of this study will give researchers more evidence of potential effects of the program with longer trends to rule out alternative causes of behavioral and academic changes. Until then, the reader should be aware that at least some of the results outlined in this report might be the results of other programs or strong leadership in TLIM schools.

## Participants

Enrollment in TLIM schools accounts for approximately 32% of the students in the four-parish area. The majority are enrolled in Lafayette Parish Public Schools (LPSS) (see **Table 1**). The total 2016-17 study population of the public schools was approximately 18,500 students. Overall, 53% of TLIM students were minority and 79% economically disadvantaged<sup>2</sup>. Lafayette Parish had an identical distribution minority to that of TLIM overall. St Martin Parish TILM schools had slightly more economically disadvantaged students (83% TLIM, 80% District). The greatest disparity occurred in Vermilion Parish where minority students comprised 79% of TLIM schools as compared to 30% district-wide and 97% of TLIM qualified as economically disadvantaged compared to 69% for the district.

**Table 1 Study Group Descriptors by Parish and Total Group**

	ACADIA	LAFAYETTE	ST. MARTIN	VERMILION	TOTAL
<b>TLIM STUDENTS</b>	3,139	12,929	1,442	1,022	18,532
<b>DISTRICT %</b>	31.6%	42.4%	17.6%	10.5%	31.8%
<b>TLIM MINORITY</b>	43.0%	52.9%	59.9%	79.1%	53.2%
<b>DISTRICT MINORITY</b>	33.1%	53.3%	51.7%	30.1%	45.8%
<b>TLIM % ECON DIS</b>	83.4%	76.5%	83.1%	96.6%	79.3%
<b>DISTRICT ECON DIS</b>	76.5%	70.4%	80.4%	69.3%	72.7%

## Academic Achievement

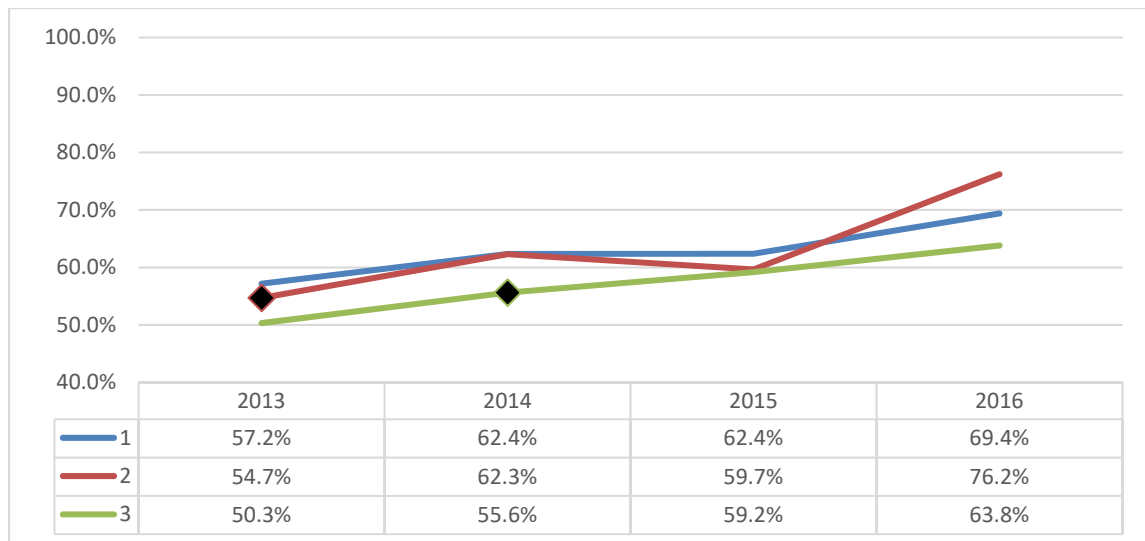
### DIBELS and DIBELS Next

Academic achievement is an essential outcome of TLIM program. Students are taught to take control of their personal goals and to be responsible for their own achievements, a central goal of the program. During Phase 1 of the study, two tests, DIBELS (University of Oregon Center of Teaching and Learning) Kindergarten to third grade) and LEAP (fourth grade), are examined to determine academic changes in achievement.

<sup>2</sup> Compiled from State of Louisiana Department of Education estimates.

DIBELS is a grade-normed, standardized curriculum-based assessment of pre-literacy and literacy skills that are highly predictive of future reading outcomes. Louisiana has a long history of using DIBELS assessments (Versions 3-6) (University of Oregon). The state fully transitioned to the most current version, DIBELS Next (Dynamic Measurement Group), by 2012 (the year of Cohort 1 implementation). While DIBELS (University of Oregon and Dynamic Measurement Group) is purported to have equated scaled scores between the previous and the current versions (DIBELS, DIBELS Next), reports from the University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning and Picard Center researchers indicate dramatically higher benchmark requirements on DIBELS Next. The transition between versions compounded problems between the University of Oregon and DIBELS scoring methodologies. These changes resulted in unreliable data, causing researchers to omit school level scoring before 2012. These potential “false positives” may result in fewer Louisiana students achieving the threshold and more being identified as in need of intervention, and reducing the visual influence of the TLIM on enrolled students across the two assessments. Student level analysis should clear up these issues in Phase 2 and 3 of this research project.

As demonstrated in **Figure 1**, there is clear evidence of an increase in the percent of children on DIBELS Next benchmark between implementation and the last assessment administration. Cohort 1 (blue line) saw a significant increase (12%) in students on benchmark between 2013 (the year after full implementation) and 2016. Cohort 2 (orange line) witnessed the largest and statistically significant increase from the implementation, year of 2013, to 2014 and, after a year of no growth, saw another significant increase to 76% on the benchmark in 2016. Cohort 3 schools (grey line), while gradually increasing, before and since implementing in 2014, has not yet experienced statistically significant increases in percentage on DIBELS benchmark. This modest increase of on benchmark students does not reflect a convincing increase in the dataset of seven schools.



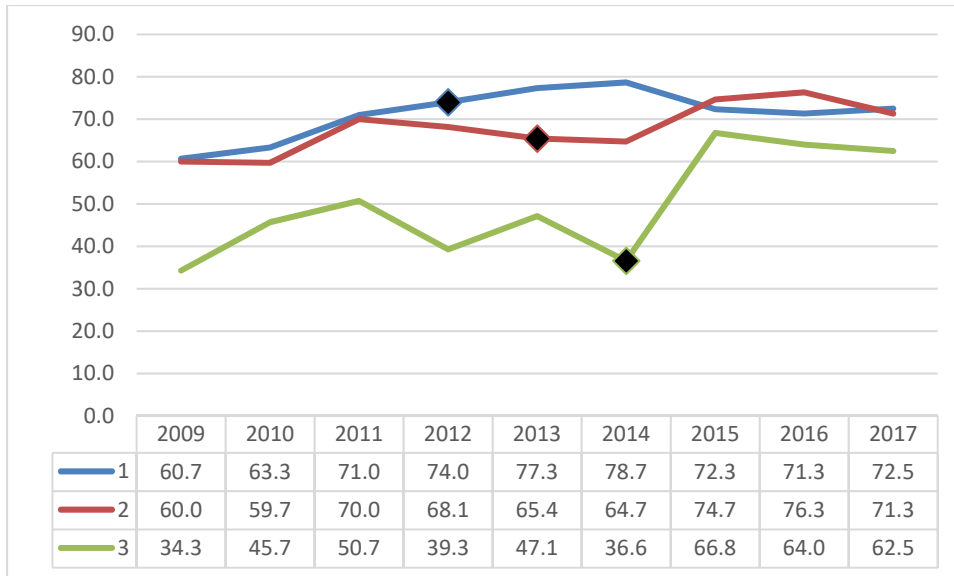
**Figure 1 Average Percent of Grades K-3 Students on Benchmark at Fall DIBELS Administration by Cohort**

◆ Implementation year

## **The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and iLEAP**

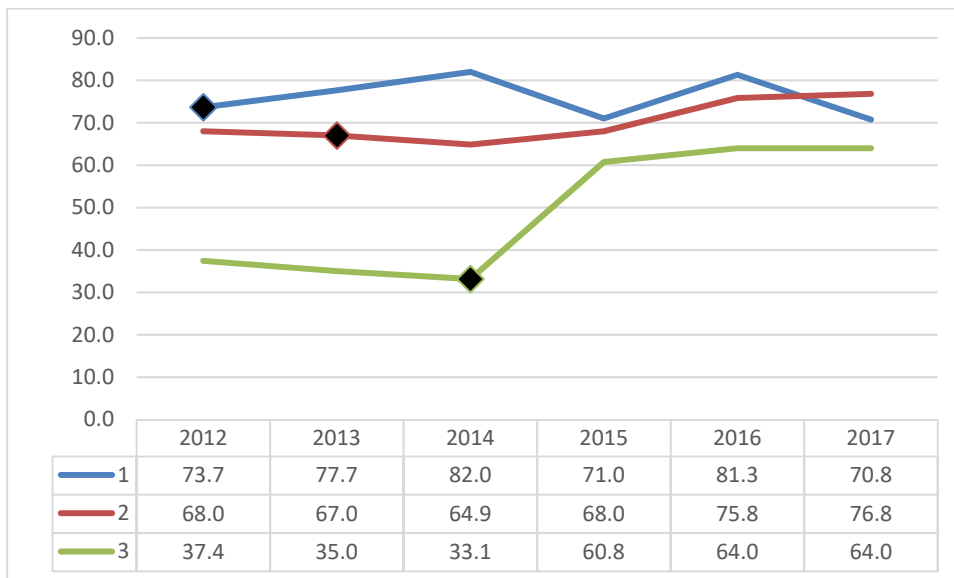
The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) is an ideal tool for measuring “between subjects” school-wide changes, as it is administered annually at only two grade levels (4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>). LEAP is the state’s high stakes test which measures how well students have mastered the state approved content standards in grades four and eight. These tests are also part of the state’s criterion-referenced testing system that predicts how well students will perform on similar tests in the future and how well individual students are progressing across the curriculum. LEAP places pressure on both students and the schools to perform and results in letter grades for both. LEAP assesses four subject areas: English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. However, LEAP is only given at the end of the two grades (4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>). In order to determine ongoing performance, the iLEAP (Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) is given at grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. A major difference is that the LEAP is given and dated in the spring while iLEAP is administered in the fall. For example, Cohort 1 implementation starts August 2012, while the 2013 LEAP occurs at the end of the same school year (see **Figure 2**). LEAP is an ideal tool for measuring “between subjects” school-wide changes, as it is administered annually at only two grade levels (4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>).

Non-significant differences between cohort 1 and 2 for the implementation year and the next LEAP administration is understandable and may be attributable to similarities between schools. At the same time, cohort 3’s significant difference, 37% to 67%, from the other two cohorts’ at implementation is surprising and may be attributable to variances between schools indicated by the sawtooth pattern of performance prior to implementation. The subsequent increase might be considered an anomaly if the seven schools in the cohort had not achieved like high percentages of benchmark scores for the following two LEAP test periods that approximated those of cohorts 1 and 2. Cohort 1 enjoyed gradual growth in percentage of students on benchmark from 2009 (61%) to 2014 (79%) before dropping to the low 70% range for 2015, 2016, and 2017 LEAP tests. Cohort 2 was on a downward trend in the two years before TLIM implementation with a drop from 70% to 65% (not statistically significant) but two years after implementation rose significantly to the 75% on the benchmark in 2015. By a strict interpretation of the test, cohort 2 did not experience statistically significant growth from 70% two years before implementation to less than 75% in 2015. However, variability in the percentage on benchmark combined with the small study group may be partially responsible.



**Figure 2 Average Percentage of Grade 4 Students on or above LEAP English Language Arts Benchmark**  
 ◆ Implementation year

Prior to 2012, public data for the LEAP math were not available; thus, LEAP math analysis began in 2012. Cohort 3’s LEAP math benchmark performance indicates dramatic growth from 37% two years prior to TLIM implementation (2012) to 64% in 2016 (**Figure 3**). Cohort 1 experienced too much variability in percentage on the benchmark to interpret statistically significant growth reliably. Cohort 2 did not exhibit a significant growth in percentage on math benchmark until the third LEAP test after implementation (rising from 68% in the year before TLIM to 76% in 2016).



**Figure 3 Average Percentage of Grade 4 Students on Benchmark or Above on LEAP Math**  
 ◆ Implementation year

The academic measures presented above answer the first research question: *What are the trends in academic achievement before and after school entrance into TLIM initiative?*

There are many signs of significant academic growth before and after TLIM program implementation. The first two cohorts experienced significant growth on DIBELS benchmark. Cohort 3 experienced significant and sustained growth on benchmarks for both LEAP subjects. Results for Cohort 1 and 2 were less conclusive but did provide evidence of statistically significant, albeit more modest growth, over a more extended time.

As with any longitudinal study, it is not possible to definitively attribute cause without randomized assignment of students to conditions. In the case of TLIM, it is also more difficult as there are no universal standards for levels of implementation. Additionally, there may be other supplemental programs being concurrently administered on the enrolled schools, such as Louisiana A+ Schools (Arts Infusion), or Fast Forward Reading for children identified as low performing. Notwithstanding, the results reported here support a hypothesized relationship between school-wide participation in the program and student achievement. Such a relationship may be further confirmed (or not) by support a broader student-level dataset that allows matched comparisons across years. Three additional data elements, dosage, demographic variables and a measure of fidelity to implementation, may also help illuminate the nature of the relationships between TLIM engagement, academic performance, and student behavior.

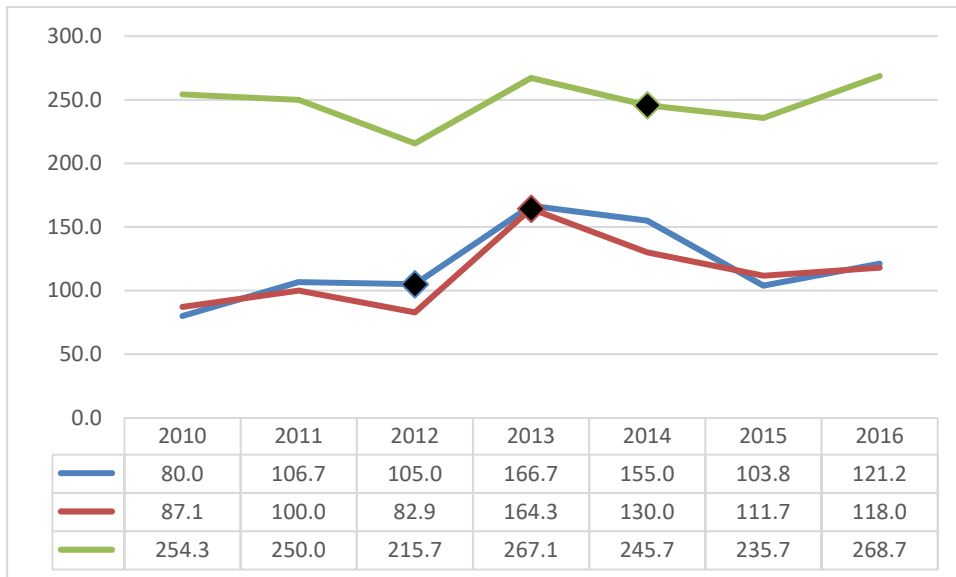
## Behavioral Measures

Unlike the selected academic measures, there is less reliability when recording behavioral measures. One teacher or school may be more inclined to accept a behavior that another might find offensive. The introduction of TLIM program may better define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; thereby, increasing reported behavioral incidents. Furthermore, TLIM's natural concentration on academic measures may place behavioral issues at a lower level of importance in some schools. Using public data, this report is limited to defined categories of serious offenses, many of which are more appropriate to older students not yet studied for TLIM (e.g., dropout). However, three behavioral measures available from the LDOE<sup>3</sup>, include major discipline events, truancy, and attendance.

Major behavioral incidents were defined for this study as those leading to some form of suspension or expulsions. Combining multiple measures into one moderates some data variability. Cohort 1 experienced a significant surge in major incidents in the year following complete implementation, rising from 83 to 164 incidents per school (see **Figure 4**). However, cohorts 2 and 3 may indicate a systemic change rather than previously reported by cohort 1. After the school year beginning in August 2013, cohorts 1 and 2 reduced major behavioral incidents to levels observed prior to TLIM implementation. Cohort 3 increased slightly but not significantly after initial implementation.

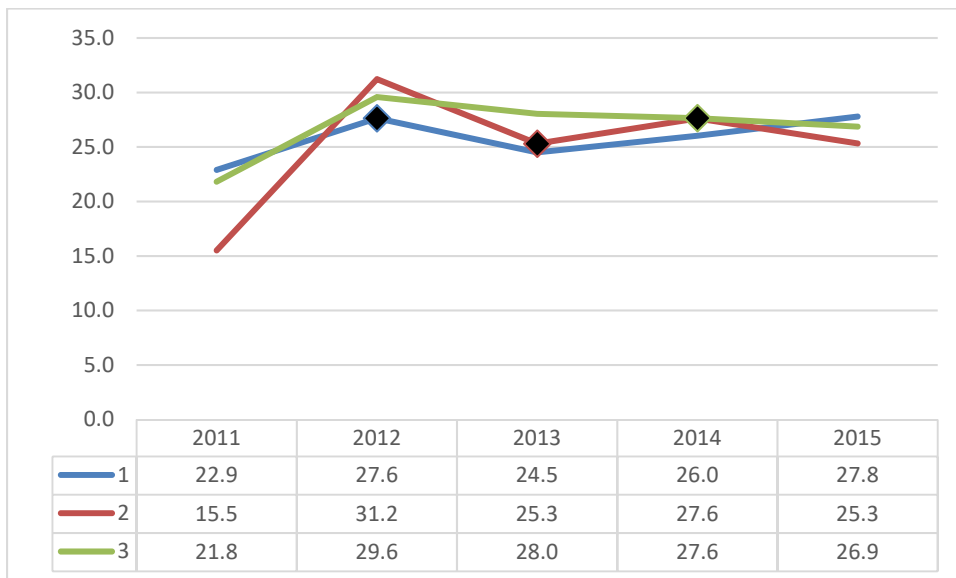
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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/district-state-data-reports>

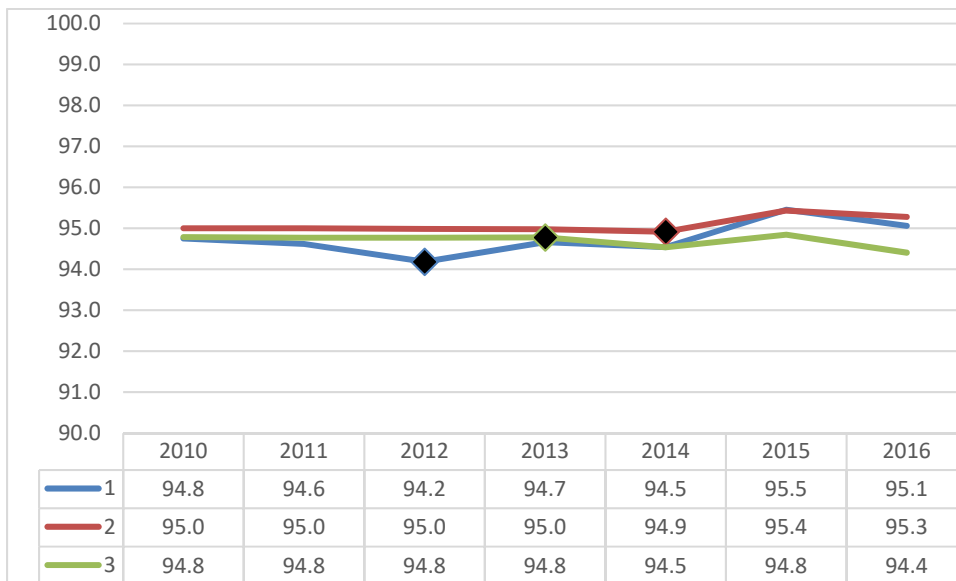


**Figure 4 Number of Major Discipline Events (Suspensions and Expulsions) Per School by Cohort**  
 ◆ Implementation year

Truancy policies became stricter in time for the 2012 school year (Derry, 2010). As a result, there was a dramatic and sustained rise in reported truancy in the 2012 school year and thereafter. Cohorts 1 and 2 experienced insignificant post-implementation dips in truancy (see **Figure 5**). As this is a single data point, it is unclear if truancy reduction is a program effect or a random fluctuation. In phases 2 and 3 truancy will be tracked in participating and control sites to determine if this phenomenon is sustained. At this point, there is no support for a TLIM program effect on truancy.



**Figure 5 Average Percent of Truancy by Cohort**  
 ◆ Implementation year



**Figure 6 Percent Attendance by Cohort**

◆ Implementation year

Attendance would be critical to the success of TLIM program. There is a necessary assumption that school attendance is beneficial on both behavioral and academic levels. The challenge is that overall attendance in the study group averages around 95%. With an absolute limit of 100%, there is not enough variance to see an effect of TLIM program. In Cohorts 1 and 3, it is possible to observe an increase in attendance after TLIM implementation (see **Figure 6**). However, the variance is not strong enough to support a statistically significant effect of TLIM program.

## Conclusions

As with all non-randomized control studies in which a sampling bias may occur, results in this report should be interpreted with some degree of caution. There are limitations on data accuracy and the possibility of interaction effects of competing supplemental programs or instruction in longitudinal data. Notwithstanding, the data suggest that the TLIM program may affect academic measures. The measures are particularly convincing for DIBELS. The first two cohorts support an effect of TLIM, and the third may support an effect with next year's data. LEAP data has demonstrated some significant but somewhat conflicting results. Cohort 3 exhibited an immediate reaction to TLIM implementation compared to the other two cohorts.

TLIM effect on behavior is inconclusive at this time. The data provided and used for this evaluation on behavior indicators limited the Picard Center's ability to conduct an in-depth analysis and sub-analysis. This report is unable to support a conclusion of an effect of TLIM program on behavioral data. However, the lack of support for an effect on behavior does not mean there is none. Later research may be able to show the relationship.

The next two phases of this research project should include student-level data, which will allow more advanced modeling. Specific testing should include:

- *Demographic subgroups*: TLIM may have differential effects by subgroups such as ethnicity, poverty, and gender. If true, it is essential to consider these differential effects on performance gaps between subgroups.
- *Challenging student effects*: Subgroup analyses may identify students with specific issues or characteristics (e.g., those that do not reach academic benchmarks, second language learners, students with disabilities, or those with behavioral or attendance issues) and the impact of these characteristics on academic behaviors or performance.
- *Fidelity to implementation*: Within Phases 2 and 3, a measure of implementation fidelity will be developed and tested to determine the extent to which teachers within schools are delivering TLIM. This measure will be used as a moderator variable when examining the impact of TLIM on academic performance, school climate, and student behaviors.
- *Dosage effects*: In addition to *Fidelity to Implementation*, critical to intervention (e.g., TLIM) is the amount of treatment provided to participants. The amount of TLIM activities, classroom and home engagement, and level of teacher engagement will likely differ by school. Measurement and tracking of these ‘dosage’ differences will be used to determine the minimum exposure required to yield an effect from the program or explain why some participating schools do better than do others.
- *Additional variables*: There are measures unavailable in publically available data that will be available in student-level data. In particular, truancy, and assessment measures (Lafayette Parish now has an alternative to DIBELS) that can add to our understanding of the impact of TLIM. Furthermore, there are additional supplemental programs (e.g., LAA+ Schools, Do, Re, Me, Fast Forward, other supplemental curricular enhancements) that may moderate the effects of academic achievement. Accounting for these effects will provide a more accurate picture of TLIM.

This first phase of TLIM evaluation has produced some encouraging results on academic measures and some basic understanding of other measures as well. It lays a strong foundation for phases 2 and 3 of the study.



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## Appendix A

### Participating Schools

Site Name	Parish	Cohort	Year
Central Rayne Kindergarten School	Acadia	1	2012
Martin Petitjean Elementary School	Acadia	1	2010
Ross Elementary School	Acadia	1	2012
Judice Middle School	Lafayette	1	2009
Plantation Elementary School	Lafayette	1	2009
J. Wallace James Elementary School	Lafayette	1	2010
Carencro Heights Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Milton Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Ossun Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Woodvale Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Youngsville Middle School	Lafayette	2	2013
Ridge Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Ernest Gallet Elementary School	Lafayette	2	2013
Acadian Middle School	Lafayette	3	2015
Broussard Middle School	Lafayette	3	2014
Duson Elementary School	Lafayette	3	2014
Prairie Elementary School	Lafayette	3	2014
Scott Middle School	Lafayette	3	2014
Westside Elementary School	Lafayette	3	2014
James A. Herod Elementary School	Vermillion	3	2014
Iota Elementary School	Acadia	4	2015
Paul Breaux Middle School	Lafayette	4	2015
Lafayette Middle School	Lafayette	4	2015
Evangeline Elementary School	Lafayette	4	2015
Charles M. Burke Elementary School	Lafayette	4	2015
St. Martinville Primary School	St Martin	4	2015
Church Point Elementary School	Acadia	5	2016
Crowley Kindergarten School	Acadia	5	2016
Rayne High School	Acadia	5	2016
Carencro Middle School	Lafayette	5	2016
Breaux Bridge High School	St Martin	5	2016
Eaton Park Elementary School	Vermillion	5	2016

