

EDUCATION BRIEFING BOOK SUMMARY

*A Primer for Policymakers
on Louisiana PreK - 12 Education*

*The best time to plant a tree
is twenty years ago...
the second best time is now.*





Dear Readers:

Education's Next Horizon is a group of community leaders from across Louisiana who believe that education is the key to our future economy and quality of life. The purpose of Education's Next Horizon is captured in its name – to push forward the next horizon of school improvement in Louisiana. Our goal is to have schools “where each child will reach his or her potential.”

School improvement is complex and there is no magic bullet. However, we must determine our priorities. We believe that the next horizon of education should be built on the following observations:

- Louisiana can't improve what it can't measure. Louisiana's nationally-recognized accountability system should be preserved.
- The achievement gap between black and white students must be narrowed quickly.
- Investment in Early Childhood Education is among the most effective long-term economic development strategies.
- If a child can't read well, school success is unlikely. Louisiana must have literacy for all.
- The creation of a good learning environment for children means dealing with the more basic needs of health, safety, and connecting with a caring adult.
- Workforce development depends on our high schools and middle schools. High schools and middle schools must be redesigned to meet the future needs of Louisiana.
- The teacher is the most important single factor for student success. “On the job” professional development and improving working conditions of teachers are the keys to school improvement.

If public education is the key to Louisiana's future economy and quality of life, it is everybody's business. We will play our part in helping frame the debate for comprehensive systemwide reform and for building the local capacity of education and community leadership dedicated to school improvement.

Education's Next Horizon was formed to change the question governing the interaction between education leadership and the community as a whole from *What can you do for us?* to *What can we do together to educate all children well?*. We should sustain this work together across election cycles, political affiliations, and education factions.

Thank you for your support of our work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip A. Rozeman MD".

Phillip Rozeman, M.D., *Chair*
Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John W. Smith".

John Warner Smith
Chief Executive Officer



MESSAGE FROM LOUISIANA STATE SUPERINTENDENT PAUL G. PASTOREK

Dear Readers:

We have arrived at a new day for public education in Louisiana. Not long ago, we began the process of creating a blueprint for transforming how the Department of Education operates and in turn how we serve the people of this state.

Louisiana is a leader in many areas of school improvement. Our accountability system continues to be the standard nationwide. The growth of the LA-4 Cecil Picard Early Childhood Education Program has allowed more children to enter school ready to learn. We have begun our High School Redesign initiative, which will develop a 21st century model to produce students ready to compete in the global marketplace.

We continue to address the total student through health and family programs. Our teachers are engaged. More than twenty schools facing high poverty are meeting or exceeding state standards. These results tell me that improving public education for **all** children is already a reality in our state.

But we face great challenges. Public school enrollment has been declining. Although our test scores are improving, we still rank at or near the bottom in the nation. We are serving a population where two-thirds of our children are living in poverty. School improvement is a daunting task and there is much to do. But the good news is that dedicated professionals at the Department of Education and in every school district around the state are committed to providing world class schools for every child.

This Education Briefing Book Summary – published by Education’s Next Horizon – is a tremendous tool in outlining successes and identifying challenges faced by Louisiana. There are many important issues but none stands alone. School improvement issues are interrelated and best understood in context. This summary provides that context – allowing citizens, decision makers, and educational leaders to become more active participants in the rebuilding of public education.

We thank Education’s Next Horizon for their support of public education in Louisiana and for the effort given to this complex issue of Louisiana school reform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul G. Pastorek".

Paul G. Pastorek
State Superintendent of Education

Table of Contents

- DEFINING THE NEED FOR EDUCATION SCHOOL REFORM.....6**
- THE CHALLENGE: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN LOUISIANA7**
 - Introduction - Framing the Issue7
 - Major School Reform Initiatives 7
 - Governance 8
 - School Finance..... 8
 - Accountability and Standards8
 - Teacher and Education Leader Quality 9
 - Teacher Pay..... 9
 - Integration of Technology 9
 - Early Childhood Education 9
 - Literacy for All10
 - Coordinated School Health.....10
 - High School Redesign.....10
 - The Story of New Orleans: A Look At Charter Schools 11
- EDUCATION REFORM BRIEFS FOR POLICYMAKERS..... 12**
 - Setting the Context.....12
 - School Finance.....12
 - Accountability and Standards13
 - Teacher and Education Leader Quality13
 - Teacher Pay.....13
 - Integration of Technology14
 - Early Childhood Education14
 - Literacy for All14
 - Coordinated School Health.....14
 - High School Redesign.....15
 - The Story of New Orleans: A Look At Charter Schools 15
- ABOUT EDUCATION’S NEXT HORIZON 16**



This book is a summary of Education’s Next Horizon’s *Education Briefing Book: A Primer for Policymakers on Louisiana’s PreK-12 Education* covering nine major areas of past, present and future challenges in education. The full report can be obtained in an electronic format at www.ednexthorizon.org or you can request a free printed version by e-mailing jsmith@lanexthorizon.org or calling 225-383-3844.

DEFINING THE NEED FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Louisiana's Education Pipeline

A picture is worth a thousand words. This is the best way to describe this graph that displays the last half of Louisiana's PreK - 16 education pipeline. It is the picture of ultimate results – the final product of our education system. After all, the final product or goal of the education system is for all students to graduate and be prepared for a post-secondary education and/or career.

The gaps in the Louisiana education pipeline are the result of leaks from PreK-16. The final half is certainly dependent on the results of preparation in grades PreK-8. The pipeline is dependent on many factors independent of the education system itself. Many socioeconomic factors contribute to the results.

Our school systems face the challenges of poverty every day. Our schools serve the highest percentage of low income students in the nation. The 2005-2006 percentage of low income students in public schools (less than 185% of poverty level) in Louisiana is over 60%; the national average is 46%.

There is no lack of potential remedies to the leaks in the education pipeline – if the public will is there to tackle the problems. We must invest in remedies to give children learning opportunities early in life by continuing to expand investments in quality early childhood education and literacy in early elementary years. We must develop ways to better engage students in higher elementary and middle school grades to prepare them for success in high school. And we must make a real effort to redesign high school with attention to the four “R’s” – rigor, relevance, relationships, and remediation.

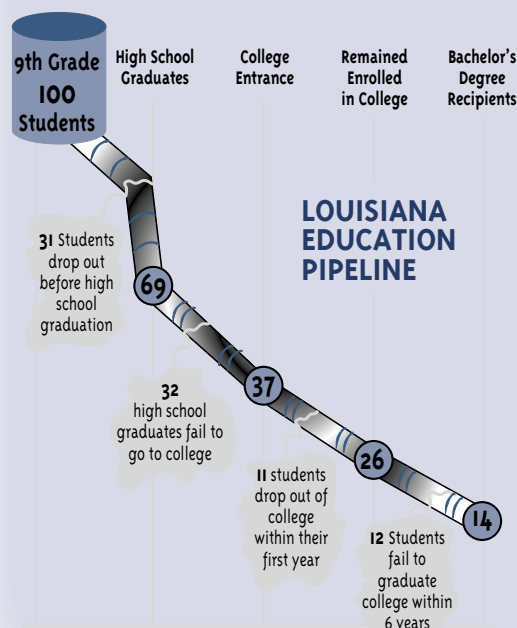
Louisiana's education pipeline is a depiction of the end game. There are leaks in the pipeline where Louisiana loses a large number of students. These breaches illustrate where Louisiana is losing valuable human capital essential for growth and progress.

The publication “Miles to Go Louisiana” by the Southern Education Foundation sums it up best.

“Education has never been more important to the future of Louisiana. An educated workforce is now vital to increasing economic prosperity, opportunities and quality of life for a state. Fifty years ago, a high school graduate earned 66 cents for every dollar made by a college graduate, while a high school drop out made 51 cents. In 2002, high school graduates earned only 48 cents to every college graduate's dollar and high school dropouts earned 29 cents.”

HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE RETENTION RATES

Ninth Grade To Bachelor's Degree (2004)



Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Louisiana has the most extensive and concentrated network of oil and gas pipelines in the world. We wouldn't put up with losing 85% of the oil through leaks in the pipeline along the way.

The education pipeline is our most important one. In this pipeline, we are losing over 30% of children before high school graduation and another 30% of students who do not seek post-secondary education.

THE CHALLENGE: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN LOUISIANA

INTRODUCTION — FRAMING THE ISSUE

Louisiana has made great strides in implementing statewide school improvement strategies over the last decade. In this area, our state boasts success in the development of nationally recognized accountability and teacher quality efforts. Our state ranks among national leaders in education technology efforts and early childhood education initiatives. Individual school districts, schools and teachers create pockets of excellence across Louisiana.

Despite the successes, Louisiana still finds itself ranked near the bottom of the list of states in school climate and results-based education rankings. Louisiana's effort to improve schools comes against a backdrop of poverty, natural catastrophe, and high levels of adult illiteracy. These are long term conditions requiring long term solutions.

There are many challenges to be addressed in public school improvement in Louisiana. The *Education Briefing Book* establishes a common reference for discussion about public education – preserving institutional memory of recent school reform efforts and outlining future opportunities. Education's Next Horizon's Briefing Book provides information about the:

- Structure of Louisiana education – governance, finance, accountability
- History and timeline of Louisiana's school improvement efforts
- Analysis of the present condition of Louisiana education
- Perspective on future challenges in school improvement

The book provides the context for the next horizon of school improvement in Louisiana. The key priority issues of school reform must be addressed because they are key to Louisiana's future economy, quality of life, and future opportunities to break the cycle of poverty.

MAJOR SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVES

The purpose of the *Education Briefing Book* is to focus on priorities of school reform through the lens of the past, present and future. Based on the research done in preparing this Primer, the following bullet points summarize the most notable school reform concepts facing Louisiana over the next decade.

- Louisiana can't improve what it can't measure. Louisiana's nationally recognized accountability system provides the standards and assessment. It should be preserved.
- The basic tenet of accountability is our schools must do first things first – give **every** child the basic reading and math skills required for a successful future.

- The achievement gap between black and white students must be narrowed quickly. Public schools provide the opportunity for children to break the cycle of poverty.
- There is no magic bullet. The next horizon of school reform will require connecting multiple strategies and initiatives to improve Louisiana's schools.
- Investment in Early Childhood Education is among the most important long term strategies for school improvement and economic development in Louisiana.
- The “teacher effect” is the most important single factor in student success. Teacher preparation, retention and “on the job” development are keys to school improvement.
- Great schools require great principals. Good teachers will not work for bad principals. Investment in successful leadership models is a best practice strategy.
- If a child can't read well, that child will likely not be successful in their school career. Louisiana must have literacy for all.
- The creation of a good learning environment for children means dealing with the more basic needs of health, safety, and connecting with a caring adult.
- As a state, Louisiana's goal should be getting the right people in the right seats on the bus. Policies should promote the concept that we need to have the best teachers and education leaders where they are most needed.
- The working conditions of teachers are the hidden killer of education transformation. These working conditions – effective and supportive leadership, opportunities for “on the job” professional development, and adequate facilities and resources – are the most important factors in retention and job satisfaction of teachers.
- Our schools must reflect the learning style of our students. The use of current technology in instruction can open a closed mind.
- Workforce development depends on our high schools and middle schools. High schools and middle schools must be redesigned to meet the future needs of Louisiana.





- High School Redesign is built around the 4 “R’s” of relationships, relevance, rigor, and remediation. All are required.
- The goal of the charter school movement is to create great new independent **public** schools.
- Public schools are the public’s schools. Education is everybody’s business.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of Louisiana’s schools begins with significant decision making authority vested in local school boards. The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) are tasked with budgeting and fiscal control of state and federal funds; preparing the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP); and formulating and administering policies. The newly created Recovery School District – a school district created by BESE to give the Louisiana DOE discretionary authority to take over individual failing schools – operates with the same general authority as a local school system but with no authority to levy taxes.

Ultimately, the legislature provides education specific law in Title 17 and has final fiscal authority through the approval of the state budget (www.legis.state.la.us).

The challenge for Louisiana is the development of great leadership at all levels of governance – governor, legislator, school board, and school superintendents. The **challenge of governance in Louisiana** is as follows:

- Leadership of the governor on identified priority issues of school improvement in the face of multiple competing interests.
- Development of legislation that highlights the priority of school improvement in the face of multiple competing interests.
- Development of policy directives matched with funding that support the most important issues of school improvement in Louisiana.
- Development of local school boards with a good understanding of important education issues, school finance, and appropriate school board–school superintendent relations.

SCHOOL FINANCE

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) exercises budgetary and fiscal control over state and federal funds for preK-12 education and prepares the MFP for presentation to the legislature. The legislature has the option of approving the formula as sent by BESE or sending the formula back to BESE for modification. The legislature does not have the authority to make line item changes in the MFP budget.

Revenues to fund public education in Louisiana come from the state (47%), local school district (39%) and federal government (14%) sources as follows:

State sources – Predominantly from the Minimum Foundation Program adopted by BESE to allocate funds equitably on a per pupil basis. Other state sources include the Louisiana Education Excellence Fund, 8(g) funds, Louisiana school reform programs and state grant funds.

Local sources – Predominantly through local property and sales taxes requiring the vote of local communities.

Federal sources – Predominantly through Title 1-6 programs and funding for Special Education. Other federal sources include various other federal entitlements, *No Child Left Behind* funding, and competitive awards from federal discretionary programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STANDARDS

The Louisiana School Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Program is ranked number 2 in the nation in 2008 by *Education Week* and for several years has been identified as a model for other states to follow. This system measures both overall performance and growth or improvement of schools.

The key concepts for education accountability in Louisiana are maintenance of excellence, pursuit of continuous improvement and focus on assessment literacy.

The **challenges of accountability and standards in Louisiana** are:

- Maintain the commitment of policymakers and education leadership to the state’s accountability system and resist efforts to water down the standards.
- Constant reassessment of the state’s accountability system through the lens of reduction of unintended negative consequences in the current system. Examples include the often-noted criticism of schools “teaching to the test” while ignoring the development of basic life skills or the negative impact on school performance scores from students never enrolled.
- Better use of the data generated on districts, schools and students to promote academic improvement opportunities for school districts, schools and the individual student.

TEACHER AND EDUCATION LEADER QUALITY

The “teacher effect” is the most important single in-school factor of student success. In 2008, Louisiana’s efforts to improve teacher quality were rated number 5 in the nation by *Education Week*.

The future of school improvement in Louisiana lies in a commitment to excellence in teacher preparation, recruitment and retention for all schools.

The **challenges of Teacher and Education Leader Quality in Louisiana** are:

- Develop instructional models and incentives to build great principal and school district education leadership.
- Develop policies that attract high quality teachers to urban and rural schools in high poverty areas and identified shortage areas (math, science, special education.)
- Develop state sponsored pilot strategies designed to support performance based compensation systems that reward teachers and administrators based on their roles, responsibilities, and performance.
- Invest in site-based professional development through master teachers and mentoring as noted in whole school reform models LINCS and TAP.
- Concentrate on efforts to provide accountability at the university teacher preparation level as currently available in Value-Added Teacher Preparation initiatives and LaTAAP.

TEACHER PAY

In 2007, Louisiana met the goal of meeting the regional average for teacher pay of the 16 member Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states with an average teacher salary of \$46,400 annually. Louisiana has made a significant effort to be competitive in teacher pay with our neighboring Southern states and must maintain this competitiveness over the long term.

The debate now must center on teacher pay equity within the state and the connection of teacher pay with the objectives of school improvement for all schools In Louisiana.

The **challenges of Teacher Pay for Louisiana** are:

- Reassess the method of statewide distribution of teacher pay raises.
- Consider differential compensation concepts such as performance based compensation that is based on community and school needs, roles and responsibilities, and classroom performance.
- Connect teacher pay issues with efforts to improve teacher working conditions.



INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Over the last decade, there has been a marked reduction in the computer-to-student ratio but this does not reflect the problem of out of date equipment and lack of ubiquitous broadband Internet access in many schools.

21st century schools must reflect the learning style of the millennial generation.

The **challenges of Integration of Technology in Louisiana** are:

- Provide all schools with broadband Internet access.
- Build on the Louisiana Virtual School – an opportunity to expand opportunities for all students.
- Follow other aspects of society in the continual updates of technology – Reducing computer to student ratios is not enough.
- Invest in the continued integration of technology in the schools of Louisiana that effectively advance learning. Louisiana curtailed state investments in school technology in the first part of this decade. We must now make up for the reduction in federal funds with state or foundation funding in Louisiana’s effort to provide students with 21st century skills.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Louisiana has joined other Southern states as leaders in the development of high quality PreK programs with total funding in 2007-2008 of \$85 million per year, predominantly from general revenue funding.

Investment in early childhood education is supported by brain research, studies within our state on academic performance, and long term quality of life studies. The Business Roundtable described Early Childhood Education as an excellent long term economic development strategy for states.

The **challenges of Early Childhood Education in Louisiana** are:

- Provide adequate and stable funding streams for quality PreKindergarten initiatives like LA 4.
- Build on the capacity to open more classrooms for more children and develop a system to recruit and train quality teachers.



- Collaboration of PreKindergarten (LA 4), early learning (Head Start) and childcare services statewide to achieve high standards in all PreK programs, and develop more effective programs for more children.
- Focus on quality Early Childhood Education programs at schools such as LA 4, Head Star, and community childcare providers.

LITERACY FOR ALL

Louisiana's Literacy Plan: Literacy for All delineates a comprehensive literacy plan from PreK through adulthood.

The development of reading skills is a requirement for success in school and careers. That is why Louisiana's accountability system has "beamed the light" on literacy.

The **challenges in Louisiana to implement *Literacy for All*** are:

- Provide substantial supplemental funding over the next decade to implement the initiative.
- Develop the workforce of literacy leadership, interventionists, instructional coaches and teachers at every grade level.
- Design a system to focus more attention on literacy for struggling readers in middle and high school lends.
- Develop an environment of professional learning communities at the school level to promote implementation.
- Implement an instructional model to meet the needs of all learners.

COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) are working together to implement the Louisiana Coordinated School Health model based on the work of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Pilot programs are currently being tested in ten school districts.

Before children can concentrate on the needs involved in meaningful learning, lower level needs such as physiological well-being, health, safety, belonging and a sense of recognition must be met. This is the basis of a basic tenet of psychology – published as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Applying Maslow's Hierarchy

of Needs and hearing the voice of the community is the basis of Coordinated School Health.

The **challenges in Louisiana related to the development of a statewide Coordinated School Health program** are:

- Create an understanding for school administrators and teachers that Coordinated School Health (CSH) will be a benefit and not a burden. In this regard, CSH will provide more caring adults in schools and allow teachers to spend more time in instruction activities.
- Coordinate the initiative with state health initiatives like medical homes and LaCHIP.
- Create an understanding with health care workers that the school can be an adequate site to deliver health care and improve access to services. In this regard, Louisiana ranks in the top 5 of states in the number of children eligible for LaCHIP while providing very limited sites for healthcare access for these children.
- Develop funding mechanisms – preferably within current established funding streams in Medicaid, LaCHIP, Office of Mental Health, and school districts – to fund staffing with nurses, social workers, psychologists and nurse practitioners necessary to implement the Coordinated School Health initiative. In this regard, many southern states around us – Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee – have a mechanism within the Medicaid system to recognize schools as a provider of healthcare services.
- Develop technical assistance capacity within each school district where one person is responsible for Coordinated School Health and provides ongoing support for the district and health care providers. This work should include facilitation of meetings between education and healthcare stakeholders.

HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN

The High School Redesign Commission has established the following goals to be achieved by 2015:

- Increase the high school graduation rate to 80%, cutting the dropout rate in half.
- Assure that every student who graduates is ready for postsecondary education or for advanced job skill training or direct entry into the skilled workforce.
- Increase significantly the number of students who enroll in postsecondary education.

The **challenges of High School Redesign in Louisiana** are:

Ultimately, the success of Louisiana's high school redesign efforts hinges upon our ability to:

- Turn good state policies and programs into effective local practices.



- Acquire and maintain state-of-the-art technology in our state's high schools, and train educators to use new technologies in ways that effectively advance learning.
- Bridge the skills gap through the redesign of career and technical education.
- Consider employer/community perspectives when developing and revising curriculum.
- Make educators aware of state and regional economic development strategies and the role of high schools in achieving economic development goals.
- Persuade students and their parents of the need for all students to complete a more rigorous high school curriculum.
- Convince students that are at high risk of dropping out, and the parents of these students, of the value of a high school diploma.
- Generate student interest in high demand, high wage, skilled jobs and make students and their parents aware of the education and training required for these jobs.

THE STORY OF NEW ORLEANS: A LOOK AT CHARTER SCHOOLS

The New Orleans public school system is now largely governed by BESE and the Recovery School District (RSD). Of the 80 schools open in Orleans Parish in the 2007-08 school year, 61 are operated by the RSD and 19 by the Orleans Parish School Board. Half of the schools in Orleans Parish are charter schools – a circumstance that puts New Orleans on the cutting edge of the charter school movement.

Charter schools are independent **public** schools.

The **challenges of the charter school movement in Louisiana** are:

- Vigilance in creating an environment that supports innovation in the charter schools of New Orleans.
- Constant focus on quality in charter schools at the charter selection process as well as accountability for results. BESE must enforce accountability by monitoring operators and revoking charters in failing schools.
- Address the supply side of initial start-up costs and sustainable funding as well as school facility access issues. At present, only Type 5 charter schools have stable funding. School facility access remains a future concern in New Orleans and other Louisiana school districts.
- Provide a level playing field for both traditional and charter schools based on the objective measurement of student achievement.
- Make a clear delineation of the responsibilities to individual students and parents by both charter and traditional schools.
- The charter school movement must be considered in the context of overall public school transformation for all children.



EDUCATION REFORM BRIEFS FOR POLICYMAKERS

SETTING THE CONTEXT

- Louisiana ranks among national leaders in early childhood initiatives, education technology efforts, and equity in school funding formula design.
- Since 1998, Louisiana’s 4th and 8th graders have shown significant improvement in reading and math and the average ACT score has increased.
- Over the past three years, total public school enrollment in Louisiana has been between 650-680,000 in 1,500(+) schools. This represents a 23% decline from 1992.
- Among the 51 states (including Washington, D.C.), Louisiana has the second highest poverty rate. Two-thirds of students in Louisiana live in low income households.
- Louisiana’s high school graduation rate trailed the national average. Over 30% of our students do not graduate from high school.
- Student retention, especially in the 9th grade, translates into a much higher likelihood of “dropping out” of high school.
- In 2006, nearly half of schools were required to participate in some level of academic assistance or school improvement program.

SCHOOL FINANCE

- Revenues to fund public education in Louisiana come from the state (47%), local school districts (39%) and the federal government (14%) sources as follows:
 - ◆ *State funding* – Predominantly from the Minimum Foundation Program adopted by BESE to allocate funds equitably on a per pupil basis. Other state sources include the Louisiana Education Excellence Fund, 8(g) funds, Louisiana school reform program, and state grant funds.
 - ◆ *Local school district funding* – Predominantly through local property and sales taxes with the vote of local communities.
 - ◆ *Federal funding* – Predominantly through Title 1-6 programs and funding for special education. Other federal sources include various other federal entitlements, No Child Left

- Behind funding, and competitive awards from federal discretionary programs.
- The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) exercises budgetary and fiscal control over state and federal funds for preK-12 education and prepares the MFP for presentation to the legislature. The legislature has the option of approving the formula as sent by BESE or sending back to BESE for modification. The legislature does not have the authority to make line item changes in the MFP budget.
- Basic components of the Louisiana School Finance system are:
 - ◆ Determine the cost for the basic needs of public education.
 - ◆ Equitable distribution of funds across all public school systems.
 - ◆ Provide incentives for local support.
- Funding through the Minimum Foundation Program is in the form of block grants to local school systems given the flexibility to make fiscal decisions as long as mandated program requirements are satisfied.
- The two mandated requirements for MFP funding are:
 - ◆ Districts required to spend 70% of their state and local funds in direct instructional expenditures.
 - ◆ Half of MFP funding above the amount local districts received the previous year must be used for certified personnel salaries when teacher salaries average is above the Southern Regional Education Board average.
- Louisiana has consistently been ranked in the top 10 nationally for school funding equity, and the courts have validated the equity of the formula.
- Federal funding comes from federal entitlements and federal discretionary programs predominantly through Title I and Special Education. Title I programs are designed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged based on poverty. Special Education allocations are made for assistance to children with disabilities.
- All school construction and maintenance is funded through local dollars.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STANDARDS

- The Louisiana School Accountability program has been ranked number 2 in the nation by Education Week for several years and has been identified as a model for other states to follow.
- The Louisiana accountability system measures both overall performance and growth or improvement of schools. On an annual basis, schools are given:
 - ◆ A performance level label of one to five stars or deemed academically unacceptable.
 - ◆ A growth label of exemplary, recognized, minimal, no growth, or school in decline.
- The assessment of Louisiana's schools is determined and weighed as follows:
 - ◆ 90% by student standardized test scores.
 - ◆ 10% by attendance in elementary school or a combination of attendance and dropout rate in middle and high school.
- Annual assessment of Louisiana students is done through the following test schedule:
 - ◆ LEAP test – High stakes test in grades 4 and 8. Failure to pass the test precludes promotion to the next grade.
 - ◆ iLEAP test – Aligned with content standards and grade level expectation in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9.
 - ◆ Graduate Exit Exam currently being replaced in the 2010-2011 school year with End of Course testing in grades 9-11.
- Beginning in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required accountability scores be reported in 5 student subgroups in English and Math. The subgroups are:
 - ◆ Students that are economically disadvantaged.
 - ◆ Students from racial or ethnic groups.
 - ◆ Students with disabilities.
 - ◆ Students limited in English proficiency.
 - ◆ All students in the school.
- The Louisiana Accountability System includes a system of assistance to low performing schools and districts as well as a recognition and reward program for schools showing significant academic growth.
- The system of school improvement, Academic Assistance, and the development of the Recovery School District offers an opportunity for prevention and remediation of failing schools in Louisiana.

TEACHER AND EDUCATION LEADER QUALITY

- In 2008, Louisiana's efforts to improve teacher quality were rated number 5 in the nation by *Education Week*.
- Key Louisiana initiatives in support of improving teacher quality include:
 - ◆ LaTAAP – System of new teacher mentoring support and assessment.
 - ◆ TAP – Innovative whole school reform initiative including utilization of master teachers, professional learning communities and performance based compensation.
- ◆ LINCS – Whole school reform effort based on school-based professional development and teacher support.
- Louisiana's alternate teacher certification pathways are among the most user friendly in the nation.
- Louisiana is a leader in the development of National Board Certified teachers. The state provides significant incentives for teachers to seek certification.
- The Louisiana Department of Education made a significant investment in the development of web-based professional development strategies including Louisiana First Online, Louisiana Educational Leaders Network, and the Louisiana Online Professional Development Initiative.
- Louisiana has created a unique initiative to provide accountability at the university teacher preparation level. This model assesses teacher performance by comparing predicted academic achievement to actual academic achievement of students. This comparison reflects the impact of new teachers from each university setting and allows universities to better evaluate and improve programs to prepare future teachers.

TEACHER PAY

- In 2007, Louisiana met the goal of meeting the regional average of the 16 member Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) with average teacher salary of \$46,400 annually.
- Despite reaching the SREB average as a state, 51 of the 68 school districts in the state fell below the target with 17 school districts greater than 10% below the target.
- Across the board pay raises outside the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) accentuate the variation of teacher pay within the state.
- Across the board pay raises reduce potential district flexibility to experiment with incentive programs and performance and needs based pay models.
- At present, Louisiana's teacher pay policy is almost entirely independent of consideration of performance, merit, or needs of individual school districts.
- The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in 32 Louisiana schools offers a pilot to evaluate some aspects of performance based pay.
- Price-Waterhouse notes that teacher working conditions are the "hidden killer of education transformation". Discussion of these issues such as consistent student discipline, paperwork duplication, and lack of time for teacher collaboration need to be part of the dialogue.
- The debate now must center on teacher pay equity within the state and the connection of teacher pay with the objectives of school improvement for all schools in Louisiana.

INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

- From 1996 to 2006, there has been a reduction of the computer to student ratio from 88:1 to 4:1.
- The computer to student ratio does not reflect the out of date equipment and lack of ubiquitous broadband Internet access in many schools.
- In the three years from 1997 to 1999, \$76.5 million of state funds were directed to classroom technology. From 2000 to 2006, only \$24.5 million of state funds were directed to classroom technology. In 2007, the state dedicated \$25 million to technology.
- From 1998 to 2005, federal funds used for classroom technology amounted to an average of \$11.1 million annually.
- Examples of technology initiatives include the Louisiana Online Professional Development Initiative, Louisiana Educational Leaders Network, End of Course Online Statewide tests, and Louisiana Virtual School.
- Louisiana Virtual School served over 4,000 students in grades 8-12 in 2006-07 school year.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Investment in Early Childhood Education is supported by:
 - ◆ Brain research – The greatest opportunity for developing learning function is before the age of five.
 - ◆ Studies on academic performance – Positive results of LA 4 PreKindergarten program documented in a Georgetown University study.
 - ◆ Economic development studies – Cost benefit studies indicates \$2.25 -\$5.20 direct savings and \$6.90-\$8.20 indirect benefit for every one dollar investment in PreKindergarten.
 - ◆ Long term studies on positive effects of PreK on adult life.
- Louisiana has joined other Southern states as leaders in the development of high quality PreK programs with total funding in 2007-2008 of \$85 million per year predominantly from general revenue funding.
- Early Childhood Education initiatives in our communities are:
 - ◆ *School based* – LA 4, Title I, 8(g) Early Childhood and the Non-public Schools Early Childhood program.
 - ◆ *Community based* – Head Start and community childcare providers.
- At present, early childhood development programs are primarily aimed at children who qualify for free and reduced price lunch programs (<185% of federal poverty level).
- Louisiana has now implemented a childcare services quality rating for daycare with associated tax credits for high quality daycares. Participation by childcare providers is on a voluntary basis.
- Of the estimated over 40,000 four-year-olds eligible for free and reduced lunch programs in 2006, nearly 16,000 were enrolled in LA 4 and over 8,000 were enrolled in the federal Head Start Program.

- Over 26,000 other Louisiana four-year-olds are enrolled in community based PreK programs.
- The payoff for investment in early childhood education is substantial – more children begin school ready to learn, and less money is spent on remediation, special education, unemployment, welfare, incarceration, and health care.
- The key words for future Early Childhood Education initiatives in Louisiana are funding, capacity, collaboration, and quality.

LITERACY FOR ALL

- The development of reading skills is a requirement for success in school and career. That is why Louisiana's accountability system has "beamed the light" on literacy and numeracy.
- *Louisiana's Literacy Plan: Literacy for All* delineates a comprehensive literacy plan across PreK-12. The entire plan can be accessed on the Louisiana Department of Education website at <http://www.doe.state.la.us/LDE/uploads/11190.doc>
- NAEP 2007 results show Louisiana's 4th grade students ranking 50th and 8th grade students ranking 44th among the states in reading.
- Improvements in literacy will require more dedicated time on task in reading – especially in schools in high poverty areas.
- Many, but not all, Louisiana elementary schools have implemented the research based Reading First model.
- Literacy instruction has a significant research base to help schools provide successful strategies.
- A benchmark progress monitoring instrument (DIBELS) is available to help schools measure the progress of individual students.

COORDINATED SCHOOL HEALTH

- Before children can concentrate on the needs involved in meaningful learning, lower level needs such as physiological well-being, health, safety, love and belonging and a sense of recognition must be met. This is a basic tenet of psychology – published as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and hearing the voice of the community is the basis of Coordinated School Health.
- The Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) are working together to implement the Louisiana Coordinated School Health model based on the work of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Pilot programs are currently being tested in ten school districts.
- Coordinated School Health is based on 8 primary components: Health Education, Physical Education, Health Services, Nutrition Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, Healthy School Environment, Health Promotion for Staff, and Family/Community Involvement.
- In 2006, the Louisiana Department of Education received one million dollars from Project SERVE to provide mental health services to school systems affected by the storms.

HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN

- The High School Redesign Commission has established the following goals to be achieved by 2015:
 - ◆ Increase the high school graduation rate to 80%, cutting the drop out rate in half.
 - ◆ Assure that every student who graduates is ready for postsecondary education or for advanced job skill training or direct entry into the skilled workforce.
 - ◆ Increase significantly the number of students who enroll in postsecondary education.
- Achieving the above goals requires, first and foremost, an immediate and concentrated focus on tackling the following key impediments to improving high school outcomes for all students:
 - ◆ Far too many students enter high school already substantially behind in reading and/or math.
 - ◆ Large numbers of high school students do not take the high school courses they need to prepare them for postsecondary education or entry into the workforce.
 - ◆ In many of our high schools, required courses are neither rigorous nor relevant.
 - ◆ Too many students do not have easy access, while still in high school, to postsecondary academic or advanced workplace training.
 - ◆ Many high schools lack the expertise and capacity necessary to move forward with high school redesign.
- Major steps have already been taken to address these issues through:
 - ◆ new BESE policies that require students to enroll in the more rigorous LA Core 4 curriculum and to take state end-of-course tests;
 - ◆ revision of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum and the development of new high school courses that are both rigorous and relevant;
 - ◆ competitive grants to school districts to support academic catch-up and remediation programs;
 - ◆ funding to support the expansion of dual enrollment programs and to increase AP course offerings through the Louisiana Virtual School; and,
 - ◆ state and regional conferences and other activities to help districts and schools build the capacity for redesign implementation.

THE STORY OF NEW ORLEANS: A LOOK AT CHARTER SCHOOLS

- In 2003, the Louisiana legislature enacted Act 9 to provide for the creation of the Louisiana Recovery School District. This legislation provides for the state takeover of failing schools at the discretion of BESE.
- After Hurricane Katrina, the legislature required BESE to take into the Recovery School District (RSD) any school in Orleans Parish below the state average. As a result, a vast majority of the schools in New Orleans entered the RSD.
- Schools in New Orleans may operate under a charter, the Orleans Parish School Board or BESE and the Recovery School District.
- The Recovery School District has three broad areas of responsibility – rebuild schools, operate schools, and charter schools.
- The New Orleans public school system is now largely governed by BESE and the Recovery School District (RSD). Of the 80 schools open in Orleans Parish in the 2007-08 school year, 61 are operated by the RSD and 19 by the Orleans Parish School Board. Half of the schools in Orleans Parish are charter schools – a circumstance that puts New Orleans on the cutting edge of the charter school movement.
- BESE has implemented a rigorous charter selection process through the independent National Association of Charter School Authorities (NACSA) and has the most rigorous accountability requirements for charters in the nation.
- Make a clear delineation of the responsibilities to individual students and parents by both charters and traditional schools.
- The charter movement has engaged Louisiana's universities, local and national non-profit organizations and local neighborhoods.
- Of the nineteen previous failing schools opened as charters in 2006-2007, seven (37%) were no longer failing after the first year of operation.



ABOUT EDUCATION'S NEXT HORIZON

WHO IS EDUCATION'S NEXT HORIZON?

Education's Next Horizon is a group of community leaders from across the state who believe education is key to the future economy and quality of life in Louisiana. The leaders are:

New Orleans area:

Phyllis Taylor
Bob Reily
Brian Reidlinger, Ph.D.
Sarah Usdin
Alice Thomas, M.Ed.

Houma/Thibodaux area:

Charlotte Bollinger

Baton Rouge area:

Jennifer Eplett Reilly
Christel Slaughter, Ph.D.
Gwen Hamilton
Robert Burgess
Sharon Kleinpeter
Stephen Moret
Dan Bevan

Central Louisiana area:

Curman Gaines, Ph.D.
Nancy Stich
Catherine Seymour, Ed.D.

Southwest Louisiana area:

Greg Davis
Robbie Bush
Billy Stokes, Ed.D.

North Louisiana area:

Phillip Rozeman, M.D.
Scott Hughes
Art Walker
Randy Ewing

Chief Executive Officer:

John Warner Smith

WHAT IS EDUCATION'S NEXT HORIZON?

- Statewide non-profit organization with complete focus on PreK-12 education.
- Platform for partnerships – a place to build networks between education, government and business leaders with a common passion to improve preK-12 education in Louisiana.
- A sustainable organization that transcends political affiliations, election cycles and education factions.
- An organization whose purpose is to build an education system that will “help each child in Louisiana reach his/her potential”.
- An organization formed to change the question that governing the interaction between the education leadership and the community as a whole from *What can you do for us?* to *What can we do together to educate all children well?*

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

The initial visionary was Paul Pastorek – who proposed the idea, recruited the initial core group, and led the launching of the enterprise before being named State Superintendent of Education.

Education's Next Horizon began with an attitude that “we didn't know all the answers”, which led the founding group to seek greater understanding by:

- Holding regional meetings in Louisiana's major metropolitan areas to gain input and ideas on education improvement from the people of Louisiana;
- Holding a series of two day retreats with education consultants of national renown – Michael Fullan, Rod Paige, Paul Hill, and Don McAdams;

- Meeting with leadership of other established and successful state education organizations – North Carolina, Georgia, Texas and Alabama – for input on establishment of the organization; and
- Holding discussions with key foundations, good government organizations and education associations in the state concerning the establishment of Education's Next Horizon.

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

Developed a scope of work around two objectives:

- Frame the debate for comprehensive systemwide reform at all levels – state, district, and school sites – by influencing policy through research and building coalitions for change.
- Build the local capacity of education and community leadership dedicated to school improvement by creating a platform for partnerships at state and local levels. This will include capacity building at the level of local school boards, school district leadership, and community leadership through the development of local education organizations.

First year's work built around the five “P's” – Priorities, Partnerships, Policy, Primer and Pilot Programs.

Priorities

- Developed a “Framework of Priorities” – Five Key Issues in the First Five Years. The priorities of Education's Next Horizon are as follows:
 - ◆ Early Childhood Education
 - ◆ Middle and High School Redesign
 - ◆ Accountability and Literacy for All
 - ◆ Turnaround Strategy for Failing Schools
 - ◆ Coordinated School Health

Partnerships

- Facilitate “listening tour” with school superintendents, high school principals and early childhood education coordinators in each region of the state.
- Facilitate sustainable connections with local education foundations working in Louisiana.
- Partner with Louisiana School Board Association and Department of Education in development of School Board Fellowship Program designed to raise the caliber of local school boards in Louisiana.

Policy

- Create Stakeholder Council Study Groups made up of education, government, and business leadership to gather and analyze information, debate solutions, and build consensus around public policy strategies to address critical education issues. This design, copied from the education reform work in North Carolina, has begun with a focus on the bookends of early childhood education and high school redesign. Education’s Next Horizon first Stakeholder Council will be as follows: Bridge the Skills Gap, Preparing Students to Graduate, and Early Childhood Education.
- Monitor and contribute to the discussion on priority school reform issues at the BESE and legislature education committee level.

Education Briefing Book: A Primer for Policymakers on PreK-12 Education in Louisiana

- Published in March of 2008 with a special focus on providing an understanding of Louisiana education reform for policymakers in the legislature and executive branches of state government, local school boards, and school administrators in school districts across the state. Primer updates will be published on an annual basis.

- The Primer is the story of public education in Louisiana – history, present status, and future possibilities. The book includes information about:
 - ◆ Structure of Louisiana education – governance, finance, and accountability,
 - ◆ History and timelines of Louisiana’s school improvement efforts,
 - ◆ Analysis of the present condition of Louisiana’s preK-12 education system,
 - ◆ Perspective on future challenges in school improvement.

Pilot Programs

- Future programs will be designed after an analysis of the group’s initial work in the 4 other “P’s” – Priorities, Partnerships, Policies, and Primer.

WHAT ARE OUR EXPECTATIONS?

- We will be a major voice and advocate for quality PreK-12 education in Louisiana.
- We will focus on research and development in PreK-12 education.
- We will build networks that can facilitate school improvement.
- We will preserve institutional memory beyond political affiliations and election cycles.
- We will stay focused on the mission – build an education system that will “help each child in Louisiana to reach his/her potential”.
- We will stay focused on the two objectives – frame the debate and build capacity at the local level.
- We will be sustainable – understanding education reform is not a short-term initiative.

EDUCATION'S NEXT HORIZON
THANKS THE GENEROUS UNDERWRITERS
OF THIS PROJECT



THE
BOOTH-BRICKER
FUND



GREATER NEW ORLEANS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Huey and Angelina
Wilson
Foundation

REILY
FOUNDATION



This book is a summary of Education's Next Horizon's *Education Briefing Book: A Primer for Policymakers on Louisiana's PreK-12 Education* covering nine major areas of past, present and future challenges in education. The full report can be obtained in an electronic format at www.ednexthorizon.org or you can request a free printed version by e-mailing jsmith@lanexthorizon.org or calling 225-383-3844.



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March 2008



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