

A White Paper for the Forum:

**How Louisiana Can Lead the Nation in
Educational Progress**

Shaping the Agenda for Louisiana's Leaders

**January 9, 2003
Noon-2:00 p.m.**

**Claiborne Building
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

Statement of Purpose

The following document is intended to: (1) list the education goals of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); (2) provide information about Louisiana's progress toward meeting these goals; and (3) identify the challenges and/or needs Louisiana must address to meet the goals.

While a number of examples recognizing Louisiana's progress are stated in this document, it should be noted that the examples are representative of a larger number of successful education reforms currently underway in the state.

SREB Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma – or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance – and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

(Source: www.sreb.org)

The Early Years (Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd Grades)

I. SREB Goals

- A. Goal 1 – All children are ready for the first grade.
- B. Goal 2 – Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.

II. Research Facts

National studies indicate the following:

- A. **States that offer quality preschool programs see lasting socio-educational benefits and investment returns, particularly for children growing in poverty.** Preschool completers have higher intellectual performance in upper grades; are less often placed in special education classes; display significantly higher K-12 school and college completion rates; are less often arrested; are less dependent on welfare assistance; and have higher monthly earnings.
(Source: Lasting Benefits of Preschool Programs, ERIC Digests, 1994)
- B. **Taxpayers get back \$7.16 for every \$1 they spend on high quality preschool.** The benefits come from higher taxes paid by preschool program participants because of higher earnings and savings as a result of fewer children needing special education, remedial education, welfare assistance and criminal justice.
(Source: Schweinhart, L.J., H.V. Barnes, and D.P. Weikart. (1993). Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. [Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 10]. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press. PS 021998)
- C. **How states shape educational experiences of young children has significant socioeconomic and civic implications.** Quality early childhood education programs have: (a) well-qualified teachers in each classroom; (b) parents who are engaged as school partners in educating children; (c) equipment available to support the developmental needs of children; (d) low student-to-teacher ratios and small classes; and (e) proven curricula and learning processes.
(Source: Improving Children's Readiness for School: Preschool Programs Make a Difference, But Quality Counts!, SREB, 2001)
- D. **Young children who are given appropriate and regular healthcare (i.e., dental, vision, hearing, mental, regular vaccinations) are more likely to experience educational gains in school.**
(Source: Improving Children's Readiness for School: Preschool Programs Make a Difference, But Quality Counts!, SREB, 2001)
- E. **Students who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade quickly fall behind their classmates and approximately 70% never catch up.**
(Source: The Reading Foundation website, www.ksd.org/ksd.org/htmls/Reading/readfndn.ht)

III. Louisiana's Data

A. Good News

1. 80% of Louisiana's at-risk four year-olds are currently enrolled in Louisiana's preschool programs (SREB).
2. Through federal funding, Louisiana has reduced by half (from 14,000 to 7,000) the number of at-risk students without access to preschool education.
3. In an independent study this year by nationally renowned early childhood education expert, Craig Ramey, the LA 4 preschool program was highly rated for requiring small class sizes

(maximum of 20 students), certified teachers in each classroom, a 1:10 instructor to student ratio, before- and after-school care, and an independent evaluation of the program.

4. The study of the spring 2002 LA 4 pilot further found that almost 50% of students made significant improvement in math, language and print skills after only five months in the program.
5. As a result of Louisiana's K-3 Reading and Math program, there has been a 15% increase in the number of third graders reading on or above grade level (from 65.5% in 1998 to 80.9% in 2002).
6. Louisiana was one of five states to participate in the Harvard Graduate School of Education and National Governor's Association Institute for Literacy this past summer. The state was chosen in part because of its demonstrated successes in linking higher education with K-12.
7. A new PK-3 certification structure now exists. Louisiana universities have redesigned their education courses and programs to address the certification structure and needs of young children.
8. The Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) currently provides health care coverage to more than 450,000 previously uninsured children in Louisiana.

B. Challenges/Needs

1. Louisiana currently has 7,000 at-risk four-year-olds without preschool access.
2. Currently the state is funding LA 4 and private pre-K primarily with federal dollars. The state will need to move toward securing more permanent funding for early childhood education.
3. Lack of funding for facilities at the district level limits access to early childhood programs.

IV. Website Links

- A. Early Childhood Education Initiative: www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood
- B. Education Trust: www.edtrust.org
- C. Education Week: www.edweek.org
- D. Louisiana Department of Education: www.louisianaschools.net
- E. National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org
- F. Southern Regional Education Board: www.sreb.org
- G. The United States Department of Education: www.ed.gov

Middle School/High School (4th through 12 Grades)

I. SREB Goals

- A. Goal 3 – Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
- B. Goal 4 – All young adults have a high school diploma—or, if not, pass the GED tests.
- C. Goal 5 – All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.

II. Research Facts

National studies indicate the following:

- A. **States are taking key action steps to improve achievement and close gaps in middle and high schools.** These action steps include: (a) employing clear, high and consistent achievement goals among students; (b) providing coherent, connected curricula that are aligned with performance standards; (c) providing academic safety nets including tutorials, counseling and after-school programs; and (d) having highly qualified teachers in all classrooms.
(Source: Quality Teaching Matters...A Lot, Education Trust, 2002; Student Readiness for College: Connecting State Policies, SREB, 2002)
- B. **Gaps in the curriculum and school experiences at key transition points impede student progress: from elementary to middle grades, from middle grades to high school, and from high school to college.**
(Source: Student Readiness for College: Connecting State Policies, SREB, 2002)
- C. **By the end of grade 4, African-American, Latino and poor students of all races are about two years behind other students.** By the time they reach grade 8, they are about three years behind; by the time they reach grade 12, 17-year-old African-American and Latino students have skills in English, mathematics and science similar to those of 13-year-old Whites.
(Source: Thinking K-16, Volume 5, Issue 2, Closing the Gap: Done in A Decade, Education Trust, 2001)
- D. **Despite the above findings, there are states in which African-American and Latino students outperform White students.**
(Source: Thinking K-16, Volume 5, Issue 2, Closing the Gap: Done in A Decade, Education Trust, 2001)

III. Louisiana's Data

A. Good News

- 1. A certification structure for grades 4-8 has been established within Louisiana to ensure that middle school teachers will possess deeper content knowledge when working with middle school students.
- 2. Louisiana showed dramatic improvements on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) during the most recent reporting cycle: (a) most improved state in the nation in 4th grade math in 2000; and (b) one of five most improved states in 4th grade reading in 1998.
- 3. Act 1124 of 1997 encourages students to establish a focused program of studies at the high school level that will prepare them for postsecondary education and/or the world of work.
- 4. Over 100,000 Louisiana 8th and 10th grade students in 100% of the eligible school districts participated in the Education Planning Assessment System (EPAS) designed to assist students and their parents in academic preparation for postsecondary education and plan future career goals.

5. The Louisiana Department of Education has developed a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Model designed to provide organized services to students at the middle and high school levels.
6. The Louisiana Department of Education has engaged in a number of professional development programs such as Supporting Academic Growth of Educators (SAGE), Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS), and Developing Educational Excellence and Proficiency (DEEP) in Math/Science to provide teachers with new tools to raise student achievement.
7. Louisiana has recently been awarded a 5 year, \$12.5 million grant - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) - to increase the number of low income students who graduate from high school and go on to enroll and succeed in college.
8. GED credentials granted to Louisiana adults increased by 22% in the last decade.
9. The TOPS program and recently adopted university admissions requirements are encouraging more students to complete a college preparatory core curriculum. The number of Louisiana's students completing the core increased from 65% to 72% (1995-2001).
10. There are currently 50 Louisiana Community and Technical College WorkKeys sites aimed at preparing non-college-bound students for industry-based certification and future employment.

B. Challenges/Needs

1. Although Louisiana students have made significant gains in recent years, the performance of 8th grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is significantly below the national average in reading and math.
2. Interim state data for 2001-2002 indicate that most middle and high schools are experiencing difficulty in improving student achievement to meet state school growth targets established for 2002-2003.
3. Louisiana has not yet developed a clear and coherent statement on middle school education that provides direction and leaves no doubt about the purpose of middle school, the type of curriculum that is necessary for high school success, and the student outcomes that should be achieved.
4. Twenty thousand ninth grade students, representing 34% of Louisiana's high school population, dropped out before completing high school (1999).
5. An academic achievement gap currently exists among white and minority students in Louisiana that must be addressed.
6. A more productive use of the senior year in high school is needed.

IV. Website Links

- A. Education Commission of the States: www.ecs.org
- B. Education Trust: www.edtrust.org
- C. Education Week: www.edweek.org
- D. Louisiana Department of Education: www.louisianaschools.net
- E. Middle Web: www.middleweb.com
- F. Southern Regional Education Board: www.sreb.org

Postsecondary Education

I. SREB Goals

- A. Goal 6 – Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
- B. Goal 7 – The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.

II. Research Facts

National Studies indicate the following:

- A. **Nationwide, 945,131 students completed the GED tests with a national average pass rate of 69.6%.** One out of every seven high school diplomas issued each year in the United States is based on passing the GED Tests. Approximately 40% of the GED recipients who attempt higher education obtain a certificate or degree.
(Source: www.readiowa.org/GED , www.acenet.edu , www.nationalreview.com)
- B. **Average annual earnings for a person with a Bachelor's degree are \$52,462, Associate degree \$35,972, high school diploma \$28,816 and some high school \$22,969.** A person with a baccalaureate degree alone can expect to bring in more than \$1 million in his or her lifetime.
(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001)

III. Louisiana's Data

A. Good News

1. The *Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education: 2000* is designed to increase student access and success rates.
2. Enrollment in Louisiana colleges and universities has increased 19.3% between 1996 and 2002. Minority enrollment has increased 19.4% between 1996 and 2002.
3. Louisiana's student retention rates (freshman to sophomore) have increased from 70.8% in 1996 to 75% in 2002.
4. The number of college graduates in Louisiana has increased 14.5% from 22,718 in 1995 to nearly 26,000 in 2002.
5. The proportion of 18 - 24 year olds enrolled in college increased from 22% to 24% (1989-1999).
6. First-time full-time students completing a bachelor's degree within five years of high school graduation increased from 28% to 32% from 2000-2002.
7. Louisiana's population aged 25 to 65 with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 20% in 2000 to 23% in 2002.
8. Enrollment in Louisiana's community colleges has increased by nearly 30% in the last two years.
9. Louisiana's electronic learning program has increased dramatically from 44 courses with 800 students in 1996 to 731 courses, 13 degree programs and more than 13,000 students in 2002.
10. The Options program, implemented statewide in Fall 2002, allows students 16 years or older who are at risk of dropping out of school to enter into a program that helps them prepare for the GED or job skills training. Students who complete the Options program are not counted

as dropouts. More than 42 percent of adults in Louisiana have, at least, some postsecondary education.

11. In 1998, Louisiana established the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to increase the quantity and quality of Louisiana's trained workforce and to create a strong bridge from high school to four-year universities. Currently, the state has seven community colleges enrolling more than 28,000 students and 42 technical colleges that enroll over 18,000 students.
12. Louisiana is, for the first time, working closely with business and industry to identify training and skill areas for employees, both current and future. Examples include investing \$50 million in the Incumbent Worker Training Program (second only to California), the Occupational Forecasting Conference, and industry-based certifications.
13. The graduation rate in Louisiana public four-year universities increased nearly six percentage points between 1996 and 2002 while the national rate declined three percentage points.
14. Louisiana State General Purpose dollars for public four-year institutions per full-time equivalent (FTE) student increased more than 36% since 1996.

B. Challenges/Needs

1. Continued support for full implementation of the Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education is necessary.
2. Continued alignment of university research with economic development will enhance the state's ability to meet the expectations of Vision 2020.
3. The state should create more awareness and support for community and technical colleges among educators and the public.
4. The state needs a comprehensive, coordinated evaluation system for literacy program investments.
5. There is a growing shortage of nurses, certified teachers, and skilled workers in Louisiana, making it imperative for community and technical colleges, colleges and universities, and other training providers to increase recruitment, retention and graduation rates in these areas.
6. Louisiana State General Purpose dollars for all postsecondary education per FTE college student are 20 percent below the SREB average.
7. Louisiana needs a uniform, comprehensive, work-readiness assessment program that is subscribed to by both employers and training providers.

IV. Website Links

- A. ACT News Release: www.act.org/news/releases
- B. American Council on Education: www.acenet.edu
- C. The Grapevine: www.coe.ilstu.edu/grapevine
- D. Louisiana Board of Regents: www.regents.state.la.us
- E. National Center for Educational Statistics: www.nces.ed.gov
- F. National Council Licensure Exam: www.ncsbn.org
- G. National Review Online: www.nationalreview.com
- H. SREB Data Exchange: www.sreb.org

Educational Accountability

I. SREB Goals

- A. Goal 8 – Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
- B. Goal 9 – Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance – and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
- C. Goal 10 – Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
- D. Goal 11 – The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
- E. Goal 12 – The state places a high priority on an education *system* of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

II. Research Facts

National studies indicate the following:

- A. **Good teaching matters. . . more than anything else. National studies pertaining to teacher quality indicate that a high-quality teacher is critical when improving student achievement.** Students taught by three effective teachers for three years in a row outperform students taught by three ineffective teachers for three years in a row by 49 percentage points. Students taught by three ineffective teachers for three years in a row never catch up. A higher percentage of students in high poverty schools are taught by teachers who: lack certification, are new to the teaching profession, and/or performed lower on SAT/ACT tests.
(Source: *Boston Public Schools, "High School Restructuring," March 9, 1998*)
- B. **Effective accountability systems help ensure coordinated improvement at every level and facet of education.** Accountability should shine a spotlight on school performance, make rewards meaningful, assist schools before applying sanctions, use tough sanctions when warranted for persistently low-performing schools, create incentives for students, and give students a fair shot to reach high standards.
(Source: *Achieve, Inc., www.achieve.org*)
- C. **The urgency for improved student achievement is requiring a "new breed" of school leaders.** The new breed of principals will need to have comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement. They must also know how to work with faculty and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement as well as how to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices.
(Source: *SREB, "Preparing a New Breed of School Principals: It's Time for Action, April, 2001*)
- D. **Some of the indicators used in assessing the quality of colleges and universities include: retention and graduation rates, licensure pass rates, institution and specialized program accreditation rates.** First-time freshman retention rate of 71.9% increased less than one percentage point between 1996 and 2001, while the graduation rate experienced a decline of three percentage points dropping to 41.2%. The passing rate for first-time test-takers on the registered nurses National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) in 2000 was 83 percent.
(Source: www.act.org/news/releases and www.ncsbn.org)
- E. **The goal of accountability is "to help raise student achievement for all while closing the gap between high and low performers."**
(Source: *Achieve, Inc., www.achieve.org*)

III. Louisiana's Data

A. Good News

1. Louisiana now has accountability systems at all levels of education: school accountability, school district accountability and higher education accountability. Schools, districts and universities are rated according to academic performance, quality and improvement.
2. Governor Mike Foster and the Louisiana Legislature have put nearly \$1 billion in new money into pre-K to 12 education programs since 1996. The bulk of the new money was invested in programs and initiatives that support Louisiana's education reforms.
3. The state provides school improvement funds and technical assistance to all schools in need of improvement. It supplies special Distinguished Educators to the state's lowest performing schools that fail to improve and monetary rewards to schools that meet or exceed their growth targets and that show academic growth among their at-risk populations.
4. Louisiana has increased the average pay of its teachers by more than one-third (over \$9,000) since 1995-96 at a rate that is second highest in the SREB region and nearly double the national average.
5. Ninety-three percent of K-8 schools have improved their performance since the state's School Accountability System began in 1999, and almost 70% met their school improvement goals during the last complete school improvement cycle.
6. Fourth and eighth graders have shown progress on LEAP since its implementation in 1999. Among first time test-takers, eight percent more passed fourth grade English, 12% more passed twelfth grade math, 10% more passed eighth grade English, and 15% more passed eighth grade math.
7. Independent expert analysis has determined that the level of "Basic" on Louisiana's LEAP 21 is actually more rigorous than "Basic" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test.
8. Louisiana's academic standards and its school and district accountability system are rated among the top five in the nation, according to *Education Week's* 2003 "Quality Counts" survey. *The Princeton Review* rated Louisiana's testing program 7th in the nation in 2002.
9. According to *Education Week's* 2003 "Quality Counts" survey, Louisiana's efforts to improve teacher quality rank among the top 12 in the country, up from 16 last year. A new certification structure now exists that requires teachers to possess majors in the area in which they are teaching and/or pass state content examinations in their areas of certification.
10. The Blue Ribbon Commission for Teacher Quality has had a major impact upon the development of new policies that have directly impacted PK-16+ education in Louisiana.
11. All universities in Louisiana have redesigned their teacher preparation programs to produce higher quality teachers who successfully address more rigorous PK-12 content standards, state teacher standards, NCATE standards, and PRAXIS expectations.
12. School districts are now being held accountable for placing certified teachers in low-performing schools.
13. The number of students enrolled in remedial courses in Louisiana colleges and universities has declined from 49% in 1996 to 33% in 2002.

14. Composite ACT scores for Louisiana first-time freshmen have increased from 19.4 in 1996 to 20.1 in 2001.
15. Louisiana's academic program quality continues to improve. Mandatory professional program accreditation has increased from 84% in 2000 to 92.4% in 2002.
16. Louisiana continues to develop a comprehensive course articulation system among the postsecondary institutions. The number of courses which will now articulate has increased from 12 in 1996 to approximately 80 in 2002.
17. Louisiana's Board of Regents continues to monitor academic programs to minimize duplication. During the last program review (1996), 1,700 programs were reviewed and 336 programs were terminated.
18. Endowments to support outstanding faculty continue to draw private support. The number of endowed chairs has increased by 129% from 1996 to 2002. The number of endowed professorships has increased 221% in those same years.

B. Challenges/Needs

1. A total of 8,666 teachers were uncertified in Louisiana during 2001-2002. The percentage of uncertified teachers in Louisiana has increased each year (e.g., 14.23% in 1999-2000; 15.15% in 2000-2001; and 15.61% in 2001-2002).
2. Our state recognizes a need to retain effective teachers during and beyond their first three years of teaching (New Teacher Induction Programs that provide support to teachers in their first one to three years of teaching). A total of 43% of Louisiana's teachers left teaching in public school by the end of their third year of teaching; 25% of new teachers who graduated from Louisiana's teacher preparation programs left by the end of their third year of teaching.
3. Our state recognizes a need to recruit knowledgeable, nontraditional teacher preparation students into the teaching profession. Louisiana must provide better incentives and more easily accessible avenues for individuals who wish to pursue second careers to become certified to teach through alternate teaching pathways.
4. Louisiana does not offer nor provide significant incentives to lure effective educators into leadership positions nor provide appropriate professional preparation.
5. Louisiana is making progress in professional development through such mediums as Louisiana Integrating Technology (Louisiana INTECH), Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS), and Making Connections. However, there is still a need to identify classrooms in which learning is not occurring and to provide ongoing professional development for teachers in those classrooms.
6. Louisiana is making changes to its testing program to comply with the requirements of the "No Child Left Behind" Act. The state meets all of the overarching goals of the federal legislation and is exploring how to be deemed fully compliant by the federal government without undermining Louisiana's successful Accountability Program.
7. As schools move through corrective actions as per the Accountability Program, it will become increasingly necessary to define effective policies for dealing with failing schools.
8. Faculty pay at all levels needs to remain competitive.
9. The state must reinvest in universities so that current reform efforts can be fully implemented.

10. The state must continue to invest in Vision 2020 priorities.
11. Articulation of coursework from the Louisiana Technical College to Community Colleges and universities needs improvement.

IV. Website Links

- A. Blue Ribbon Commission for Educational Excellence: www.gov.state.la.us/educ/education.html
- B. Education Commission of the States: www.ecs.org
- C. Education Trust: www.edtrust.org
- D. Education Week: www.edweek.org
- E. Louisiana Department of Education: www.louisianaschools.net
- F. Southeast Center for Teacher Quality: www.teachingquality.org
- G. Southern Regional Education Board: www.sreb.org
- H. Teach Louisiana: www.teachlouisiana.net