



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LOUISIANA'S PLAN FOR ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXCELLENT TEACHERS FOR ALL STUDENTS

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is pleased to submit to the U.S. Department of Education the following plan that has been developed to address the long-term needs for improving equitable access to great teachers and school leaders in Louisiana. This plan responds to Education Secretary Arne Duncan's July 7, 2014, letter to State Education Agencies (SEAs), as augmented with additional guidance published on November 10, 2014. Louisiana's plan complies with (1) the requirement in Section 1111(b)(8)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that each state's Title I, Part A plan include information on the specific steps that the SEA will take to ensure that students from low-income families and students who belong to racial minority groups are not taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the agency will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the agency with respect to such steps; and (2) the requirement in ESEA Section 1111(e)(2) that a state's plan be revised by the SEA if necessary.

Louisiana is committed to improving student outcomes across the state by expanding access to excellent teachers for all students. This includes students who are economically disadvantaged¹ and/or who are a racial minority. In Louisiana, these students constitute the majority of the state's public school student population. As such, this plan does not provide for a redistribution of high-quality educators from low-need to high-need local education agencies (LEAs), schools, or classrooms. Rather, this plan provides for a comprehensive approach to teacher recruitment, certification, and improvement across the state, with an emphasis on schools and classrooms with the greatest need. The plan builds on practices of "high-poverty" and "high-minority" LEAs with rich concentrations of excellent educators and addresses challenges in "high-poverty" and "high-minority" LEAs where students have more limited access to excellent educators.

This approach is built on the belief that Louisiana students are just as smart and capable as any in America. Recognizing this, Louisiana has committed to preparing its students to read, write, and perform math tasks on par with students nationwide. Specifically, Louisiana will steadily raise expectations for student achievement over the next ten years, so that all students are prepared for college or a career of their choice upon graduation from high school. By the year 2025, A-rated schools will average "mastery" or "level four" performance. Today, schools rated "A" at a minimum average "basic" or "level three." A "level four" or "mastery" is the standard for college and career readiness. To guide this transition, the LDOE produces [annual reports](#) with detailed student performance data at the district and school levels.

Louisiana educators are integral to this plan: they make this commitment a reality in classrooms across the state through engaging lessons and a commitment to growth for all students. Teaching to high standards is complex work and requires supportive school leadership and a collaborative work environment in which teachers come together to focus on the technical challenges of their craft. To support teachers, the LDOE has released a comprehensive suite of curricular tools

¹ Students eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, awaiting foster care, migrant, and incarcerated children.

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and supports, including the [ELA](#) and [Math](#) Guidebooks, and [the Instructional Materials Review Process](#). [Louisiana Teacher Leaders](#), a group of over 5,000 outstanding educators, receive and deliver professional development to teachers in every public school in Louisiana. Finally, Louisiana educators have been held to higher standards and received more frequent feedback through the State's educator evaluation and support system, [Compass](#), legislated by Act 54 of 2010. LEA and school leaders play an important role in teacher success, too. These school leaders have the ability to create productive work environments in which teachers have time to collaborate with peers, and the ability to make critical workforce decisions, such as whom to recruit and hire. In Louisiana, school and LEA administrators have been granted broad authority to make workforce decisions around hiring, termination, reductions in force, and tenure, legislated through Act 1 of 2012. To support LEA and school leaders, the LDOE published the [Louisiana Principals' Teaching and Leadership Guidebook](#), the [High School Planning Guidebook](#), and the [Early Childhood Guidebook](#).

LEA and school leaders have begun to work more closely with teacher preparation programs, too, to collaboratively ensure that teachers are ready for day one in Louisiana's classrooms. Through [Believe and Prepare](#), the LDOE, in partnership with the Board of Regents (BOR), has provided opportunities for LEA and preparation programs to establish or strengthen partnerships that ensure that new teachers are meeting district workforce needs and are ready for the challenges of today's classrooms. Further, BOR has worked with teacher preparation programs over the past several years to ensure that teacher preparation curricula address Louisiana's standards for students and for educators.

The LDOE has dedicated staff and funding to support LEAs and schools in these endeavors. Network Support teams have provided direct support to LEAs on a range of instructional issues. Additionally, these teams assist LEAs in yearlong planning process, guided by the [District Planning Guide](#), to ensure that fiscal decisions support student achievement and educator growth. Through [Believe and Succeed](#), the LDOE has provided grants to empower LEAs, nonprofits, and individuals to turn around existing "D" and "F" schools and to create new, high-quality schools for students who would otherwise attend underperforming schools.

Despite these tools and supports, students' access to excellent teachers varies from parish to parish. This is true for parishes with high concentrations of students who are economically disadvantaged or who belong to a racial minority group. Some parishes that are "high-poverty" and "high-minority" are struggling to attract, develop, and retain excellent educators. In 14 "high-minority" and "high-poverty" parishes, student outcomes² are below the state average (ranging from 37 percent to 64 percent of students scoring "Basic" and above in 2013-14; the state average was 68 percent).

When considering teacher effectiveness, student growth data is used in this report. Specifically, transitional student growth data, which is calculated using the LDOE's value-added methodology, is used. Student growth data is used because it is the only teacher effectiveness measure that is consistent across all schools and LEAs; it is calculated using the same methodology for all teachers with state assessment data and, therefore, enables comparison across the state.

² Measured by percent of students scoring Basic or above in 2013-2014.

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Students' access to teachers with effective or higher student growth data varies, as well. In 14 "high-minority" and "high-poverty" parishes, ten had a greater portion of struggling teachers³ than the state average (ranging from 11 percent to 29 percent of their teachers⁴, compared to 9 percent across the state). These teachers' students are falling below academic growth expectations.

However, teachers in other "high-poverty" and "high-minority" parishes are producing extraordinary achievement gains. This is particularly evident in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. In 2013-2014, schools in Orleans Parish, a "high-poverty" and "high-minority" LEA, employed the greatest portion of *Highly Effective*⁵ teachers of any parish in the state (35 percent of teachers in Orleans Parish were *Highly Effective*, compared to 18 percent statewide). Teachers in East Baton Rouge, a "high-minority" parish, also earned *Highly Effective* ratings at a greater rate than teachers in the rest of the state⁶ (23 percent in East Baton Rouge Parish, compared to 18 percent statewide). A substantially higher-than-average proportion of these teachers' students consistently and substantially exceed academic growth expectations. Certain rural parishes that are "high-poverty" or "high-minority" also have high concentrations of excellent teachers. Students in St. John the Baptist Parish, East Feliciana Parish, and Iberville Parish all achieved growth in student performance at "Basic" and above from 2012-13 to 2013-14 and have a greater portion of *Highly Effective* teachers than the state average (27 percent, 22 percent, and 19 percent respectively, compared to 18 percent statewide).

Louisiana's state equity plan is built on the successes of these "high-poverty" and "high-minority" parishes that are recruiting, supporting, and retaining excellent educators. To create this plan, the LDOE's state equity plan workgroup took the following steps:

1. Defined key terms and data metrics for plan
2. Reviewed data from state databases to identify equity gaps
3. Discussed root causes for equity gaps based on data and conversations with stakeholders
4. Identified key strategies to target equity gaps
5. Set measurable targets and created a plan for measuring and reporting progress and continuously improving this plan

Scan of State-Level Policies, Initiatives, and Currently Available Data

To begin, the LDOE performed a scan of current policies and initiatives that Louisiana has been implementing in recent years, as noted above, as well as a review of relevant and available data. This scan was conducted in collaboration with multiple teams within the LDOE. Specifically, LDOE staff reviewed:

³ As defined by an *Ineffective* transitional student growth data rating.

⁴ This calculation accounts for teachers with transitional student growth data.

⁵ *Highly Effective* is defined as receiving a highly effective transitional student growth data.

⁶ Evaluation ratings of teachers in all parishes are available in the Compass Annual Report, available at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/teaching/compass-final-report>.

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- Current licensure standards, requirements and barriers
- Implementation and data related to Compass, Louisiana's teacher evaluation and support tool, including transitional student growth data
- Implementation and data related to the Recovery School District and Believe and Succeed, Louisiana's school turnaround models
- Available data identified as relevant to the development and implementation of Louisiana's equitable access plan

SECTION 2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The LDOE believes that a successful state plan for teacher and leader equity in Louisiana could not be developed in isolation or solely in cooperation with LEA leaders. Rather, the plan's success will depend in large part on the long-term involvement of other stakeholders, including teachers, school and LEA leaders, institutions of higher education, civic school leaders and education advocates. As described below, the LDOE has involved stakeholders from the beginning and will continue to do so through public engagement opportunities and smaller workgroups. To ensure that the LDOE develops a comprehensive plan for better preparing teachers for the workforce so that all students can learn, the Department solicited feedback from stakeholders – in over 50 engagement opportunities including public forums and focus groups, workgroup meetings and conversations with education leaders. (See Appendices A–C for details about the stakeholder engagement process.)

Prior to starting its work on the state equity plan, the LDOE knew that there was a great need for engaging LEA and school leaders in supporting teacher preparation and certification in Louisiana. To learn more about teacher recruitment, certification, and preparation needs and opportunities, the Department in July 2014, in partnership with the Board of Regents (BOR), [surveyed teachers statewide](#) about their own experiences with preparation and in the classroom. Principals and personnel directors shared their experience hiring and supporting new teachers, and preparation program faculty shared their collaborations with partner schools and LEAs. Over 6,000 educators participated in the survey.

Those results have been released in the LDOE's [Partners in Preparation: A Survey of Educators & Education Preparation Programs](#) report. This report shares ideas from educators, including the Believe and Prepare pilots, as to how LEAs and preparation programs can collaborate to improve teacher recruitment, preparation, and certification practices.

The LDOE then led several engagement opportunities with educators across the state to gather their feedback on teacher preparation and certification practices and how they can be strengthened. These public events have not only informed LDOE-led grant opportunities, they have also informed the strategies to address student equity in this plan.

These engagement opportunities are detailed below:

- In October 2014, the LDOE in partnership with Keystone Consulting Group, held 32 focus groups with teachers, LEA and teacher preparation program leaders in eight major cities across the state to share with them the findings of the survey and discuss challenges and potential solutions. Over 200 stakeholders attended these

