

The LAE Voice

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Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

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LAE'S STATEWIDE CONFERENCES GALVANIZE MEMBERS FOR UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE SESSION

LAE's effort to fight the onslaught of attacks on public education recently hit the road with a series of regional conferences across the state. Kicking off in February, the conferences offered members, leaders and staff the opportunity to dialogue and plan strategies for dealing with some of the most pressing issues facing Louisiana educators in the upcoming Legislative Session. Discussion topics included

upcoming threats and LAE recommendations for Value-Added, teacher tenure, retirement and proper funding. LAE members in attendance found the conferences to be informative.

"The meeting was very enlightening. I know that it will be important for us to come together this session on the current evaluation process for teachers,"

said SBAE member Vicki Lagman.

"It helped prepare me for what's to come in the future. We have to get ourselves together and get ready," said EBRPAE member Jocelyn Stewart.

LAE would like to extend a special thank you to all who joined us for these important meetings.



LAE President Joyce Haynes welcomes members to the regional conference in Lafayette.



LAE members in Monroe learn about upcoming legislative issues.



Concerned LAE members offer input at our Belle Chase meeting.

SPECIAL GROUPSITE DEVOTED TO UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

In order to keep you up to speed on the issues addressed at the regional conferences, we are in the process of setting up a special groupsite - www.groupsite.com - devoted to upcoming legislative issues including Value-Added, retiree benefits, budget cuts and RSD charter schools. Through this site, we will communicate vital information and updates for you to utilize when you meet with your legislators.

All conference attendees and Legislative Contact Team members will receive invitations to join this special group. Please be on the lookout for an e-mail invitation and don't miss your chance to learn more about LAE's 2011 legislative initiatives, priorities and potential attacks. We need you to stay informed as we move forward in our fight for our professional rights.



KNOW YOUR RETIREMENT THE FALSE PENSION CRISIS: KNOW THE FACTS

Article by Shane Riddle, LAE Government Relations Specialist

As the 2011 Regular Legislative Session approaches, LAE anticipates the introduction of various pieces of legislation dealing with retirement. As all levels of government face revenue shortfalls and officials try to manage budget crises, there is a growing - but false - perception that public employee benefits are a huge threat to the economic well-being of local and state governments. Increasingly, we hear calls for public employee pensions to be eliminated or severely cut back. Certain groups and even many politicians purport that the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL) is nearing bankruptcy. Our members need to know that the reports we are hearing about the crisis in public pensions are simply not true and create a false "crisis."

The truth is, as of February 28, 2011, TRSL earned a 21.4 percent market rate of return and added \$2.1 billion to system assets, bringing the total value of assets to more than \$13.2 billion. For the 25 years ending December 31, 2009 - a period that has included three economic recessions and four years when median public fund investment returns were actually negative - public pension funds' median investment return was 9.25 percent. TRSL has a 30-

year actuarial rate average of 8.55 percent, which exceeds the target rate of 8.25 percent.

A report recently released by the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College erroneously suggests that TRSL will run out of money to pay benefits as early as 2018. Unfortunately, this study does not take into account and omits important factors, like underestimating TRSL's asset projection and omitting payments made to amortize past pension costs. This "study" creates a false picture of the retirement system's financial health.

In a recent letter to the editor at *The Wall Street Journal*, Jim Mosman wrote, "Teacher defined benefit pensions are smart, effective tools to help keep teacher recruitment and retention costs as low as possible, providing modest, dependable retirement security at about half the cost to taxpayers of other pension models. Just like the teachers they serve, these pension systems deserve respect - not factually incorrect criticism - for the important role they play in preserving and enhancing the quality of our nation's education system."

Just recently, Senate Bill 12 was filed by Senator Butch Gautreaux. This bill proposes a second tier of benefits (Tier 2) for state and statewide retirement systems, including TRSL, at the option of the employer. Participation in Tier 2 would reduce retirement benefits while increasing costs to the employee, and would apply to all school district employees. LAE was surprised to learn that TRSL was included in Senate Bill 12 without consultation with the TRSL system or with the LAE before they were placed as part of the bill. Also, LAE has major concerns on how the legislation would affect those parish school districts that would choose not to participate in the Tier 2 scheme.

In the coming days and weeks, please make it a priority to meet with your legislator and request that they keep the promise to protect TRSL and the defined benefit plan. It is important that we give legislators the real facts. For more information and facts go to www.lae.org.



Joyce Haynes, President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

working educators of this state, just last year nearly 35 thousand Louisiana public school students graduated from high school; nearly 16 thousand students entered college as first-time freshmen. Because of you, current high school drop-out rates are on a decline – the largest in a decade! But we still have a long way to go.

We must convince our state legislators to find the courage to fulfill what's been set forth by the constitution of this great state. A constitution which defines its goal for public education as: providing learning environments and experiences at all stages of human development that are humane, just and designed to promote excellence so that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his or her full potential. Our elected officials need to start living by these standards; after all, it's their job to provide for the education of the future of the state by establishing and maintaining a strong public education system.

These are unique days. The current realities facing public education are astounding. I never thought I'd see the day when our government would attack public education instead of support it. What's happening to students in Louisiana is not the fault of the people who work in the system – this "blame game" needs to stop.

In the wake of what is being predicted to be a challenging legislative session, we need to start spreading the truth about public education; the truth about our due process rights, the truth about our retirement, charter schools and Value-Added.

Value-Added is a flawed assessment tool that uses our students' test scores to determine our professional fates. You cannot determine the effectiveness of a teacher by looking at their Value-Added scores. These scores can make a good teacher look bad and a bad teacher look good. Value-Added scores swing wildly from year to year and even though these scores are supposed to adjust for factors like poverty, they don't. Research has found that the same teachers received better Value-Added scores when they taught more academically advanced students. We all know that it is fundamentally wrong to end someone's career based on a statistical model that's incorrect one-quarter to one-third of the time! I encourage you to visit www.nea.org/home/42390.htm and read the article, "Just the Facts, Please!" to get the truth on such key areas of contention.

We need to start spreading these truths as well as the truth about the successes we see in Louisiana public schools every day. Thanks to you, the hard

To help us in this fight, LAE has joined forces with a new, innovative think tank called the Coalition for Louisiana Public Education. This group brings together leaders from LSBA, LASE, LASS, LRTA, LFT, a current state representative, a former BESE member, researchers/writers Dr. Barbara Ferguson and Charles Hatfield, as well as Mike Deshotels, former LAE Executive Director and author of the Louisiana Educator Blog. It is vital for us to work in conjunction with other groups who have the same interests as we do; we are all fighting to save public education, we all want to have a voice, we all want to collaborate about what should be happening and how it should be happening in public education. For more information on this new endeavor, visit www.lae.org. Together, we will persevere through the adversity we face.

Amazing things happen when people persevere. Albert Einstein didn't speak until he was four years old and didn't read until he was seven. He was

once described as mentally slow, unsociable and adrift in his foolish dreams. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for lack of ideas. Babe Ruth, considered by sports historians to be the greatest athlete of all time and famous for setting the home run record, also holds the record for strikeouts. Dr. Seuss' first children's book, *And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street*, was rejected by twenty-seven publishers. The twenty-eighth publisher sold six million copies of the book.

When I think about the incredible things that you do each and every day, it inspires me, it motivates me. Now is the time for us to start thinking about who we are as educators and what we've done. We need to start sharing our successes in order to inspire our colleagues, our families and our friends and show them that we can be more than we are now. I have confidence in the dedication and creativity of the members of LAE.

What can you do right now to drive change; to spark action? You can talk to your friends, your family and your colleagues; spread the word at your churches, your beauty shops and your PTA meetings. We need you spread our message; we need you to share our stories and our truths - with anyone and everyone who will listen. We must once again unite our members and the state of Louisiana to fulfill the promise of public education – it's why LAE exists and **YOU** are LAE! I see so many possibilities and opportunities that lie before us. There is so much on the horizon, so much more to believe in, to aspire to, and to dream about for our children and our grandchildren. It's that time in our lives. Now is the time to **demand** great public schools for every student in Louisiana and take back our profession! This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time to **STAND UP** for public education, our kids and our profession!!

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."
- Helen Keller

Stay strong,
President Haynes

TECH TEACHERS: CLASSROOMS OF THE FUTURE

Education for Careers is a 10th grade course offered to Southwood High School students in Caddo Parish. This course is designed to assist students with exploring careers and developing skills necessary to make meaningful decisions about their career choices. Throughout the year, students work to develop skills that apply to all occupations. The class is taught virtually by CAE member Alan Germany. Each classroom consists of two cameras and two 60 inch monitors. Mr. Germany has the capability to remotely operate cameras in both classrooms; he can zoom in, out and pan the cameras as needed.



CAE member Alan Germany stands in front of his virtual class of students from Southwood High School in Caddo Parish.

He's also able to show movies, PowerPoint presentations and websites. Each room has a ceiling mounted projector to project on a screen, as well as ceiling mounted microphones so that Mr. Germany can converse with any student on the camera in the classroom.

Avoyelles High School students celebrated *Read Across America Day* in a virtual way! The school hosted, "Avoyelles High School Rocks the Seuss From Coast-to-Coast", a live video conference where students read and performed their own inter-



First graders in Tennessee "Rock the Seuss" with students at Avoyelles High School.

active version of "The Cat In The Hat" with schools from across the country. The video conferences allowed the students to actually become a part of the story. Each virtual presentation came complete with music, backdrops, props, costumes, audience participation, as well as follow up discussions with the remote schools. This exploratory elective activity was organized and implemented by LAE member Nancy Gingras in the Avoyelles High School Media Center's video conference lab.



Avoyelles High School students Elise Normand, Kylie Moreau, Dorian Turner, Madison Mayeaux, Chris Thames and Wesley Lemoine bring "The Cat in the Hat" to life.

THERE'S A NEW LAE AFFILIATE IN TOWN LAE OFFICIALLY WELCOMES LSUNITED TO THE ORGANIZATION!

LSUnited, the higher education organizing committee for Louisiana State University faculty, officially became an affiliate as the LAE Board voted to accept their constitution and bylaws. LSUnited - Baton Rouge Campus - is on track to become the first higher education faculty union within the LSU system, and we are honored and excited to welcome them to the LAE family!

LAE is currently helping to prepare the LSUnited

team for the upcoming legislative session. The group has formed its own Legislative Contact Team, led by member Dominique Homberger, and has established 2011 legislative goals.

The LAE team continues to guide LSUnited through the organizing process, helping to host regular informational meetings on LSU's campus. The organizing committee's goal is to get nearly 75% of the university's faculty and staff to join in order to

build a powerful shield against the current budget cuts facing Louisiana's higher education institutions this legislative session.

We look forward to standing beside our newest members at the State Capitol in the coming months as we advocate for Louisiana's public education systems in K- 12 and higher education. In the meantime, we encourage you to stay up to speed on LSUnited's progress and become a facebook fan.

READ ACROSS LOUISIANA AND AMERICA FUN!



LAE Board Member Ruthie Wright reads "The Cat in the Hat Comes Back" to a group of students at the Louisiana Boardwalk in Bossier City.



New Orleans Saints Cornerback Randall Gay reads alongside the Cat in the Hat and Thing 1 & Thing 2.



LAE member volunteer Gwen Hill reads to an eager listener.



Baton Rouge Mayor Kip Holden hanging out with the Cat in the Hat and LAE Executive Director Dr. Michael Walker-Jones.



LAE Board Member Suzette Riddle leads a read along at Indian Bayou Elementary's Read Across America celebration in Vermilion Parish.



LAE President Joyce Haynes kicks off Read Across Louisiana: Baton Rouge with a reading of "Green Eggs and Ham."



Winbourne Elementary School celebrates Read Across America Day!



LAE Board Member Pat Thomas joins students in Jessie D. Clifton Elementary School's Pre -K After School Enrichment Program as they read "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" to help them learn their colors and numbers.



Read Across Louisiana Bossier Coordinator Courtney Feliciano and BAE members Beverly Harlan and Kathy Barnett pose alongside Representative Henry Burns.



Kids listen attentively as LAE UniServ Director Terry Holden reads "Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Home" at the Northgate Mall in Lafayette.



LAE Board Member Enola Washington volunteers at the Mall of Acadiana for Read Across Louisiana: Lafayette.



KPLC-TV Sunrise Morning News Anchor Elizabeth Temple offers her star power to Read Across Louisiana: Lake Charles.



Members of the LSU football team and Senator Dan Claitor join in the fun!



OAE member Paula Williams volunteers to read with kids at the Read Across Louisiana celebration at the Pecanland Mall in Monroe.



CAE President Daryl Roberson, Booker T. Washington High School Counselor Dr. Elizabeth Sullivan, Former CAE President Carolyn Rhymes and LAE Board Member Emma Shepard at Read Across Louisiana: Caddo.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendar for the upcoming events.



April 24	Easter <i>*Please note: LAE Headquarters will be closed on 4/22 & 4/25</i>
April 25	Regular Legislative Session begins
May 2-6	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 8	Mother's Day
May 9	Deadline to submit RFP's for LAE Summer Leadership Conference
May 30	Memorial Day
July 25-28	LAE Summer Leadership Conference

SAVE THE DATE!!

The 2011 LAE Summer Leadership Conference

is set for

July 25 – 28.

If you are interested in attending, go to www.lae.org for more information.



HOORAY FOR LAE TEACHERS AND ESPs!! National Teacher Day Will Be Celebrated on May 3, 2011!!



On National Teacher Day, thousands of communities take time to honor their local educators and acknowledge the crucial role they play in making sure every student receives a quality education.

LAE would like to send a HUGE THANK YOU your way! We truly appreciate all that you do!



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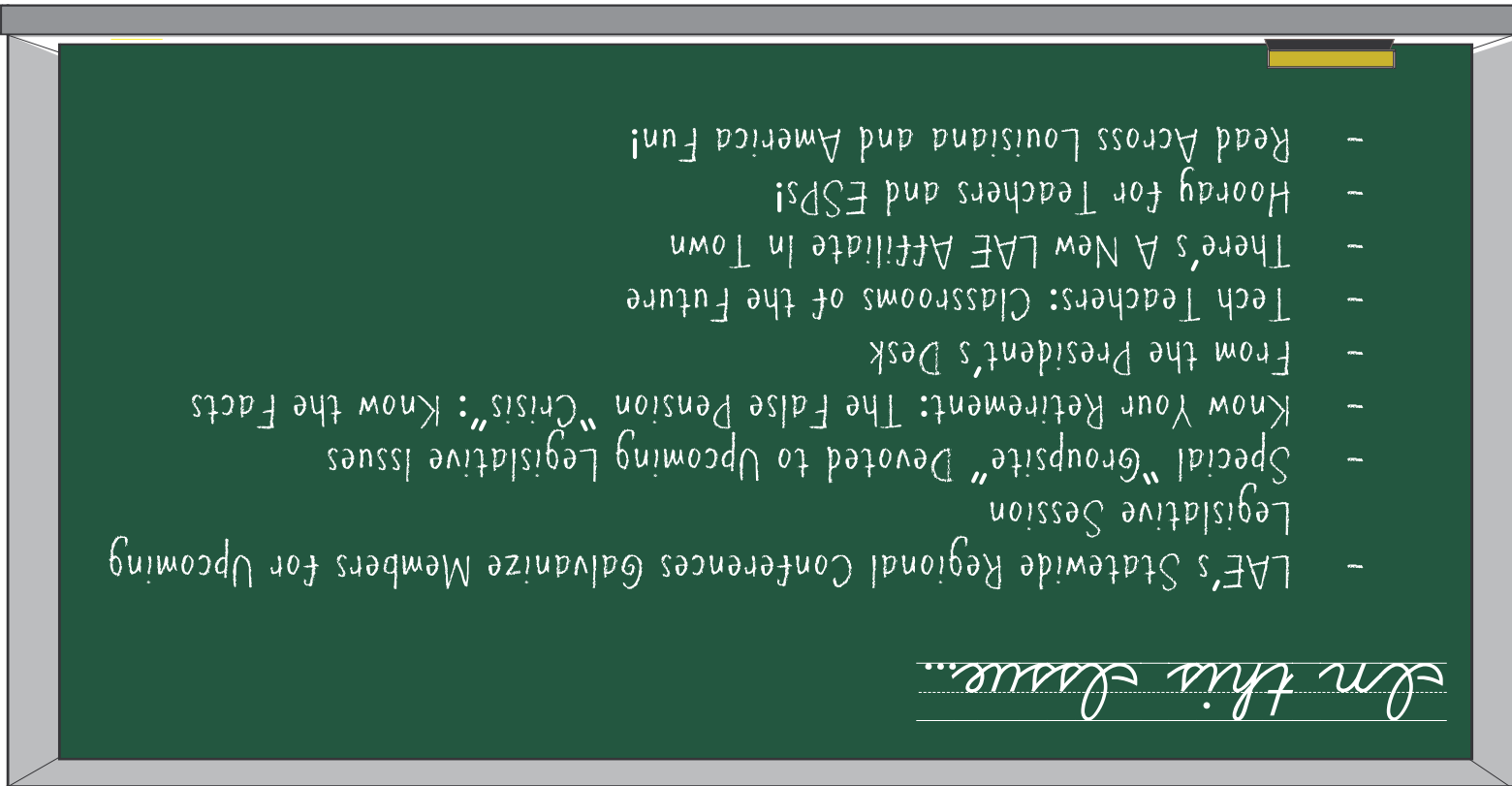
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LAE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Louisiana Association of Educators is to organize and empower local associations to promote quality public schools, strengthen the education profession, and improve the well being of members.



See this issue...

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