



THE LAE VOICE

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Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

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LAE LAUNCHES *TIME TO LEARN* INITIATIVE DURING 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The student testing craze in Louisiana has gone too far. Not only do state-mandated standardized tests waste time and money, they also take away from teachers' opportunities to provide imaginative lessons and distract students from meaningful learning. Louisiana's children should have access to unique classroom experiences that ignite a love for learning; instead, their teachers' creativity is often stifled due to pressure to prepare for tests.

Are you fed up with the emphasis our state places on testing? If so, stand with LAE in its support of the following anti-testing actions:

- ✓ Diminishing the "teaching to the test" concept by insisting upon fewer state-mandated standardized tests. This would free up valuable classroom time, allowing educators to focus on what is most important: instilling a love of learning in their students.
- ✓ Placing a stronger emphasis on locally-developed assessments that provide better and faster feedback to help drive real improvements in teaching and learning.

- ✓ Restoring the approach known as "grade-span testing" to give educators more time to teach and connect one-on-one with students, especially those most in need of extra help.

Here are a couple of easy ways you can make a difference in LAE's efforts to reduce the amount of time spent on testing.

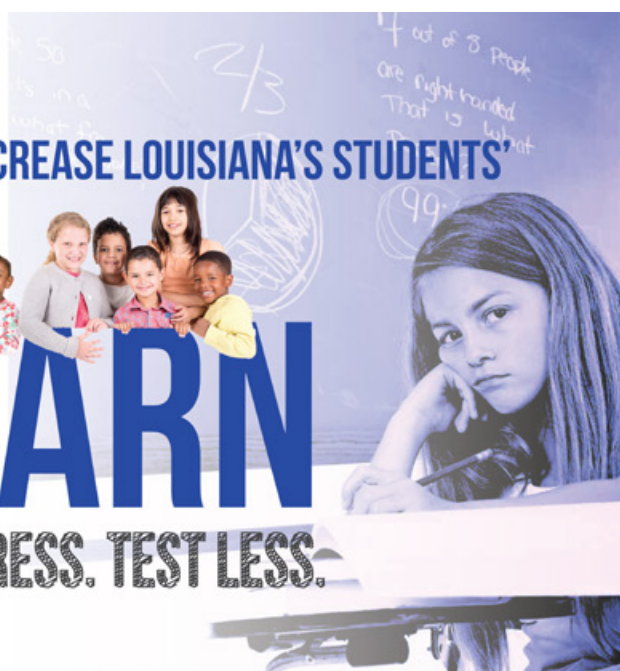
- 1.) Share your story. Send us a quick testimonial on how testing has impacted your students so we can share these authentic stories with policymakers. You can email us at laecommunicationsdept@gmail.com.
- 2.) Stay vigilant. Make a commitment to stay updated on LAE's efforts and future calls-to-action regarding this important effort. Follow the campaign facebook page, LAE's Time to Learn Campaign, to stay updated on upcoming calls-to-action.

If we work together, we can convince lawmakers to explore meaningful reform that will lessen the undue stress that comes with testing.

HELP THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS INCREASE LOUISIANA'S STUDENTS'

TIME TO LEARN

REDUCE STRESS. TEST LESS.





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Debbie Meaux, President

The road to improvement often seems long and filled with obstructions. This is especially true during legislative season, but LAE will not let these obstructions stand in the way of the good work association leaders continue to do for members. Much has been accomplished to find a new path in building a **BOLD** LAE focused on "**B**uilding, **O**rganizing, **L**earning, and **D**emanding respect for educators. I have previously talked about our groundbreaking Teaching and Learning Center and its aim to build leaders through relevant professional development courses, but we're expanding our focus this year to a larger issue—Louisiana's testing obsession.

LAE continues its efforts to fight for the issues that our members tell us are most important to their schools and communities. A major focus in 2016 was a series of Community Conversations where LAE leaders had an opportunity to dialogue with parents, educators, and community members at-large surrounding the needs of local public schools. From these conversations, the association found that equity, school accountability, testing, and community schools were of most immediate interest to communities. LAE has addressed all these areas with meaningful actions. Our Teaching and Learning Center provides pieces of training on cultural competency with a focus on educational equity. The Louisiana Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, a coalition of public education stakeholders, is continuing its work to bring the community school concept to our school districts. Next fall, Westside Elementary in Lafayette Parish will be our first "community school" in Louisiana. This legislative session, LAE is actively pursuing a set of bills that will reign

in the testing obsession that has taken over our educational environment – an obsession that stifles our teachers time to teach, our children's love of learning, and our communities' faith in their schools. These bills aim to lessen the testing burden and make the results more practical and utilitarian in building an educational plan for each child's success in the new school year.

The first is a proposal to limit testing by the state and the district to no more than two percent of a teacher's teaching time/students' learning time. The bill, HB 616 by Polly Thomas, would also require testing audits by districts to prove their adherence to the statute. A second proposal aims to limit science and social studies testing to grade span (once in elementary, once in middle school, and once in high school). The bill, HB 572, is sponsored by Bernard LeBas. A final piece of legislation will require that student test results be made available to teachers in the subsequent year by August 31st, providing teachers with needed data on deficiencies of each child so they can plan accordingly. If passed, HB 203, will help teachers do their jobs more effectively. These are ambitious bills for which LAE is boldly lobbying, but we need your support. Our work to reduce testing and ultimately increase the time to learn is featured on our new testing website, www.TimeToLearnLA.org. Here, you can find upcoming actions to support LAE, talking points, and a platform to share stories about the effects of excessive testing. While these goals are lofty, it will be an ongoing mission of the LAE to be a leader in driving positive change to the state's testing regime. Our efforts will continue far beyond the end of the 2017 Session.

As a grandmother of a second grader, I cannot tell you how sad it makes me to know that next year my granddaughter, Emily, will be saddled with the overwhelming burden of knowing that her performance on tests will be part of determining the fate of her teacher, her school, and, to a degree, the educational future of her community. Childhood is a special time for every child. It should be a time of laughter and wonder, but today's testing culture stifles the joys of inquiry, discovery, and play and replaces these important avenues for learning with stressful test preparation, all for a measure that never accurately portrays the worth of a student or his/her teachers. It pains me to know that my precious granddaughter will face the pressure of becoming not only a data point on a testing report but also is at risk for losing a true love of learning due to test prep.

Do you have memorabilia that you or your parents kept from your elementary, middle, and high school years? If so, what do you find? As I examine my items (and those of my own children), I can't find a single test. Instead, I've saved the items that made me (and them) proud – artwork, booklets, stories and essays created by eager hands. It's the expression of our own hopes and dreams that inspire keepsakes, not comparison to the successes or failures of others. Today's testing craze has forced us to lose sight of what's most important – a child's joy of learning. Join me, and your colleagues from across the state, in sharing authentic stories that show how testing has impacted your students. We will use these stories in our testimony to convince lawmakers to examine state testing mandates. Beyond the session, we will use your experiences to drive our efforts on toxic testing reform in other ways.

In Solidarity,
Debbie Meaux
LAE President

LAE SUPPORTS NEW EDUCATORS DURING THEIR EARLY YEARS IN THE CLASSROOM

One of the top reasons educators say they leave the profession in the first five years is lack of support. LAE is actively seeking to change this by focusing on helping all early career educators make a smooth transition into the profession. In conjunction with the NEA, the association is focusing on the *New Educator Engagement, Recruitment, and Supports campaign*, an initiative which aims to adequately demonstrate the relevance of association membership to new teachers and other school employees at the start of their career. The overall focus is simple: building relationships with the next generation of educators.

Having grown up in today's political climate, many new school employees are unfamiliar with what it means to be involved in a professional association. This means they're unaware of the benefits of membership that they can use to not only expand their professional knowledge, but also to elevate their voices on issues impacting their classroom. So what are the issues that are most important to today's school employees? We're letting them tell us.

The association is actively surveying new educators in order to best understand what interests them. It is important to let their feedback drive certain decisions surrounding needed support and which professional development topics upon which the association will focus.. Organizers are using this information to personalize digital communications so that each new educator is only receiving information on resources that are of interest to them.

Several local LAE affiliates have started establishing new educator support groups, where teachers and other school employees with five years' experience, or less, come together in social settings.

These groups offer new professionals a chance to meet colleagues their age, while also giving them an opportunity to bond over common interests. The goal is to establish a cohesive group of colleagues who feel comfortable turning to each other for professional support.

We need members to get behind this work. Are you interested in coordinating a new educator program in your local? If so, contact state coordinator Kenton Cooper at kcooper@lae.org to get started.



Young educators from East Baton Rouge Parish gather with their colleagues at a St. Patrick's Day networking event.



One young educator braves the stage at LAE's April networking social.

WELCOME TO LAE'S NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS

LAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Effective July, 15, 2017

Education Support Professional, Seat D: **Natasha Joseph**

Administrator: **Walter Brown**

NEA Director: **Suzanne Breaux**

ATTENTION: LAE BOARD VACANCIES

The following seats on the LAE Board of Directors will become vacant as of July 15, 2017. We would like to fill these positions so that they are occupied until LAE's next election cycle set to take place in March of 2018. You must be an LAE member for at least three years to be eligible.

District 2, Seat C: *Representing Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, City of Monroe, Concordia, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Franklin, Grant, Iberville, LaSalle, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Richland, St. Helena, St. Martin, Tensas, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana, and Winn.*

District 3, Seat A: *Representing Acadia, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, St. Landry, and Vermilion.*

District 5, Seats B and C: *Representing Assumption, Iberia, Lafayette, and St. James.*

If you are interested in applying, please send your letter of intent and resume to Laurie Guillot at lguillot@lae.org by August 1, 2017. The next LAE Board meeting is scheduled for August 19, 2017, and the seats will be appointed at this meeting.

LAE HAS SERIOUS SOCIAL [MEDIA] SKILLS!

Check out the links to our pages below and like/follow - our accounts for fun memes, classroom tips, articles of interest, association news, legislative calls-to-action, educator networking events, professional development opportunities, and much, MUCH more. See you online!



Facebook fan page:
Louisiana Association of Educators



Pinterest profile:
Louisiana Association of Educators



Twitter handle:
@LAEducators



Instagram profile:
louisianaassocofeducators

LAE MEMBERS CELEBRATE READ ACROSS LOUISIANA 2017 LAE ASSISTS LOCAL AFFILIATE, THE EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS, WITH PLANNING EFFORTS FOR THE ANNUAL READING CELEBRATION



EBRPAE Read Across Louisiana Event Coordinator Renita Whittrack and President Tia Mills emcee the 2017 celebration at the Mall of Louisiana on Saturday, March 4.



Student athletes from Southern University serve as celebrity guest readers.



Deputies from the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Department visit with kids and LAE volunteers as they wait to read to kids.



LAE President Debbie Meaux joins in the reading fun.



Thing 1 and Thing 2 join local kids to read and take funny photos.



Volunteers from the EBRPAE gather for a photograph at the end of the day's festivities.

**SAVE ON AIRFARE, HOTELS, RESORTS, CRUISES, AND MORE
USING YOUR EXCLUSIVE ACCESS TO NEA MEMBER BENEFITS!**



Whether you're planning a family vacation or your dream getaway, NEA members can see and do more for less special access to prices not available elsewhere. NEA Members can earn NEA Travel Dollars to use as partial payment on cruises, resorts, hotels, and vacation packages. Go to www.neamb.com to find out how! You must be registered with NEA Member Benefits and signed in to your account to participate.

ASSOCIATION BUSINESS ADDRESSED AND MEMBERS HONORED AT ANNUAL LAE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

LAE representatives from across Louisiana gathered in Baton Rouge for the 2017 LAE Representative Assembly. Highlights from this year's annual member meeting included two days' worth of discussion surrounding association business, an address by Governor John Bel Edwards, and a reception honoring LAE's 40-year anniversary. Event attendees also took some time away from business to honor several talented individuals with the *LAE Image Awards*. East Baton Rouge Parish Teacher Tia Mills walked away with the coveted *LAE Teacher Image Award*. Vermilion

Parish Paraeducator Veronica Thibeaux was honored with the association's annual *ESP Image Award*. Civil Rights Activist Joe Gant received the *LAE Human and Civil Rights Trailblazer Award*. Former Louisiana Senator Ben Nevers was named LAE's 2016 *Friend of Education* and LAE Executive Director Lynda Guidry was honored with the *LAE Lifetime Achievement Award*.

Thank you to all who attended! Be sure your mark your calendars for our 2018 event scheduled for April 14 and 15.



The 40th annual LAE Representative Assembly kicks off with a special message from NEA President Lily Eskelsen García.



Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards joins President Debbie Meaux, Ben Nevers, Vice President Daryl Roberson, and Executive Director Lynda Guidry at the 2017 RA.



LAE Board members smile as president Meaux introduces them to the delegation.



Delegates and leaders, past and present, gather at the Longview House to celebrate 40 years of LAE.



Delegates celebrate LAE Executive Director Lynda Guidry's upcoming retirement.



President Meaux gives the annual LAE President's Address.



President Meaux joins LAE past presidents Mary Washington, Lawrence Narcisse, Joyce Haynes, and Carol Davis at a reception celebrating the association's 40th year.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

May 29
Memorial Day*

June 9
End of 2017
Legislative Session

June 12-14
LAE Summer
Leadership Conference

*LAE Headquarters CDS&D