

THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 18, No. 4 September 2021

LEADING IN THE LEGISLATURE: A 2021 UPDATE OF LAE'S LEGISLATIVE WINS

An Act of Our Own:

LAE is celebrating a historic, 2021 legislative session, filled with more wins than ever in recent history. Most notably, the association successfully passed Act 392. The Act guarantees teachers a daily, 45-minute, uninterrupted planning period, effective July 1, 2022. This gives parishes a year to study and adequately plan how to effectively enforce the planning periods that we passed. Additionally, it exempts educators in LaFourche parish from the Hwy. 1 bridge toll. LAE worked closely with Senator Katrina Jackson on SB 128, which passed back in June, and upon the governor's signature became Act 392.

Marcus Thomas, LAE's Director of Governmental Relations, said that the next challenge entails tackling duty-free lunch for K-12 educators. LAE is on the task force established to explore cost-effective ways to implement duty-free lunches in Louisiana school systems. It costs roughly \$2 million dollars a day for duty free lunch, but LAE will revisit the designation in the next legislative session.

Act 392

- A daily, 45-minute, uninterrupted, planning period.
- Effective July 1st, 2022
- LAE heard your horror stories, and next up is duty-free lunch.
- LAE is on the task force created to explore cost-effective duty-free lunch.

Making Way for More Educator Pay: Another association success came in the form of pay raises. Thanks to LAE's testimony at the March 2021 BESE Meeting, the Board adjusted the pay increases after the association discovered additional funds. As a result, pay raises doubled for educators & support professionals (from \$200/\$400 to \$400/\$800). LAE is committed to ensuring educators in Louisiana rise to the Southern Regional Average in pay.

"Education and justice are democracy's only life insurance."

-Nannie Helen Burroughs



Kill Bill:

LAE successfully killed SB 22, which would have raised the retirement age of educators from 62 to 67 years old. The contribution of educators to the next generation of our society is priceless, and expecting them to work for an additional 5 years was not an option.

Bills LAE Supported:

- **HR 133:** Urges the BESE not to allow student growth to be reflected in teacher evaluations.
- **HCR 39:** Creates a task force to explore educator recruitment and retention issues.
- **Act 386:** Makes kindergarten attendance mandatory.
- **HR 126:** Demands the Department of Education re-evaluate # of teacher trainings.
- **Act 353:** Brings trauma-informed instruction for at-risk students via in-service training.

Serious Support:

There were several causes the association supported in the legislature, including HR 133, which urges BESE not to allow student growth to be reflected in teacher evaluations, HCR 39, which creates a task force to explore educator recruitment and retention issues, and HR 126 which demands that the Louisiana Department of Education reevaluate the number of teacher trainings.

Two initiatives LAE supported became acts. Act 386 makes kindergarten attendance mandatory, and Act 353 brings trauma-

informed instruction for at-risk students via in-service training.

Bills LAE Opposed:

- **HB 312:** Would have charged teachers an \$80 fee for certification, and re-certification in relation to criminal history review.
- **HB 556:** Would have created funding for students not in public schools.
- **HB 256:** (Vetoed) Would have required educators to give permission to payroll deduct dues each year and allow outside education associations to payroll deduct in collective bargaining locals. Vetoed by the governor.

In contrast, LAE strongly opposed HB 312, HB 556, and HB 256. HB 312 would have charged teachers an \$80 fee for certification and re-certification in relation to criminal history review. The association always fights for public school funding. If HB 556 would have passed, it would have created funding for students that are not in public schools. Finally, LAE opposed HB 256, which was vetoed. If the bill had passed, it would have required educators to give permission to payroll deduct dues each year and allow outside education associations to payroll deduct in collective bargaining locals.

The Louisiana Association of Educators continues to keep our members in mind as we advocate in the best interests of educators, students, and schools. The fight continues, and we are up for the challenge that the next legislative session may bring.



From the **PRESIDENT'S DESK**

Dr. Tia T. Mills, President

It's that time of year, LAE! Educators across our great state have returned to shape minds and assist with building society's future citizens! For some school districts, digital learning continues as an option for students. Others are providing in-person instruction. Regardless of the choice, we want to ensure maximized learning with all safety protocols in place.

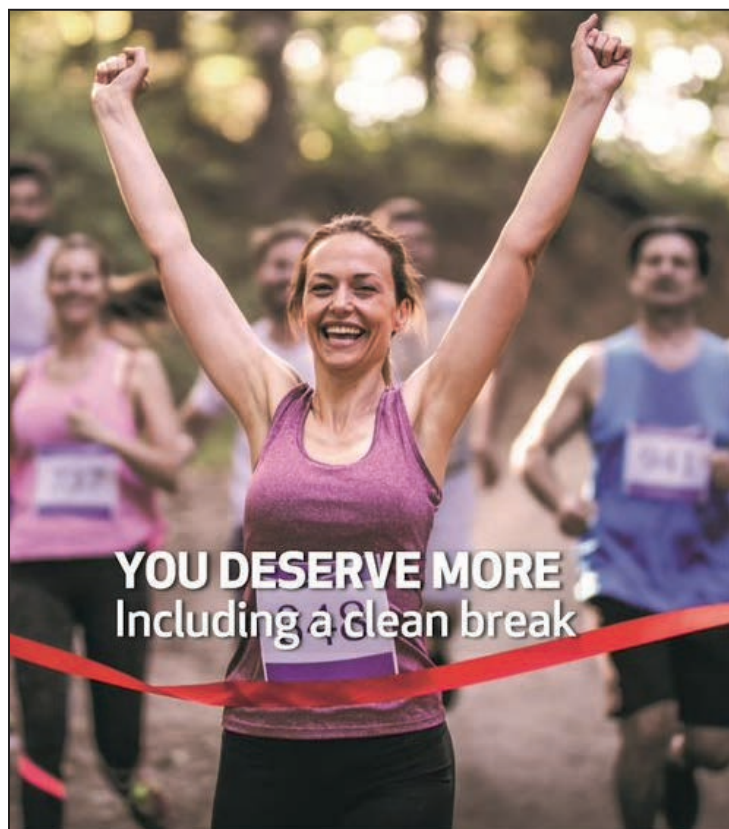
As COVID-19 continues to be a prevalent part of our lives, it is important for you to be aware of the numerous variants. These variants are strands of the virus that have mutated in various forms. I implore you to please follow the CDC recommendations, wash your hands

regularly, practice social distancing, wear a mask as often as possible, and consider the option of vaccination. While it will not completely prevent the transmission of COVID-19, the aforementioned items are the best mitigation efforts at this time. With so many people depending on you, it is imperative that you are educated on the steps to take to ensure everyone's safety.

As I stated last year, this is not a political issue. This continues to be a human issue across our state and nation. We must consider lives and protect each other at all costs. Being a survivor, I know that the situation could've been extremely different for my biological and union family. The LAE COVID Taskforce is closely monitoring the situation and will be providing information to our members in the weeks ahead.

During my travels across the state, I've had the ability to see a lot of new and seasoned members. We have a lot of supporters—many believe in the work we do. Family, commitment, and strength are what LAE is all about. The relationships we have are near and dear to us, with more to come. As the new school year progresses, know that LAE continues to have your back. The vacations and summer breaks may have come to an end. However, there is a group of students who look forward to seeing your smiling faces and warm hearts. So... lights, camera, action! You and our students are the stars of the show! Have a great 2021-2022 school year!

In Solidarity,
Dr. Tia T. Mills



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PRESIDENT, DR. TIA MILLS & VICE PRESIDENT D'SHAY OAKS ANNOUNCE BID FOR LAE RE-ELECTION!



At the August 26, 2021 Board of Directors meeting, Dr. Tia Mills, LAE President, and LAE Vice President, Mrs. D'Shay Oaks, announced their intent to seek re-election, per *Constitution and Bylaws Article IV Section 5*.



A RESILIENT RETURN: HOW TO AVOID EDUCATOR BURNOUT AND PROTECT YOUR PEACE IN THE PANDEMIC

Pushing Through the Pandemic:

As educators, administrators, staff, and students throughout Louisiana return to school amidst uncertainties, one thing is certain, resilience has carried us through the past year. Louisiana educators have risen to the occasion and put themselves at risk, while being required to change teaching formats, learn new technologies and tools to incorporate into their lessons, and nurture their students during the

ongoing pandemic. Although social distancing measures have been essential to mitigating the spread of COVID-19, they have also proven disruptive to the learning process. Learning loss and the mental health of students has been discussed, but it is important to also consider the negative impact that teaching through a public health crisis has had on Louisiana educators.

Educators Overloaded and Overwhelmed:

There is no question that the past year of the pandemic has taken its toll on educators at all levels. In a Spring 2021 article, *NPR* contributor, Kavitha Cardoza shed light on how many teachers felt they were at their breaking point. Mary Ellen Flannery, writer for *neaToday* agreed, in an article entitled “and pointed out the pivotal role unions play in protecting educators from burnout. As we tackle another challenging school year, the lessons learned since the onslaught of COVID-19 can help educators better preserve themselves this time around. The knowledge we have gathered, allows LAE to fight more strategically for educator needs and better resources in our schools, such as duty-free lunch periods, teacher-led trainings, and protections to keep us all safe in schools.

Russia Williams-Lang, a LAE member and teacher at Forest Heights Academy in East Baton Rouge Parish, said: “Teaching during the pandemic made me feel a level of nervous and anxious I’ve never experienced before in my career.” Being pregnant most of the school

year, Williams-Lang found herself constantly stressed about her safety, her baby’s safety, and the personal well-being of her students.

“Teaching during the pandemic has been extremely draining, mentally, and physically,” recounts Myca Parker, a teacher at Norco Elementary School in St. Charles Parish. So many unknowns made teaching through the Covid-19 crisis especially difficult for Parker, a novice, but promising educator.

Kayley Williams, a kindergarten teacher at Donaldsonville Primary School in Ascension Parish, said that she felt like she was moving at warp speed last year, trying to keep up with the many changes that COVID-19 brought, and keep her students healthy. She found she did not have many ways to cope with the stress but appreciated time to herself without distractions to deal with the trauma of everything going on.

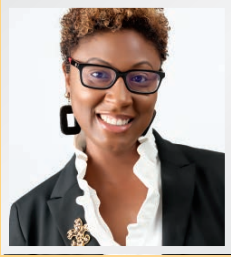
Strategies For Success:

As we embark on a new school year, what can our members do to avoid teacher burnout and keep their mental health intact? LAE asked these educators their recommendations, and they weighed in

with some great nuggets to stay peaceful. Here are some reminders to manage stress, and tips on what to do when you are feeling overwhelmed.

- 1. Keep Your Cup Full:** As the adage goes, you cannot pour from an empty cup. Self-care is trendy in today’s times, but educators often neglect themselves, or find it hard to prioritize and commit to consistently setting aside time to nurture their own self-care. But taking care of yourself is a key part of effectively caring for the students and families our members serve. Russia’s advice to her fellow educators this year: “Remember to take care of yourself and make time for yourself.” She recommends actively scheduling time to do something special for yourself at least once a week to be mentally and physically healthy for students. Decide to engage in regular self-care strategies so you can pour into others without your well going dry. Try to eat well, and get plenty of rest, as often as possible.
- 2. Stay Mindful:** Mindfulness strategies in the classroom can be beneficial for student engagement and alleviating conflict. However, the same strategies are helpful for educators too. Starting your day with meditation or positive affirmations, getting in tune with Mother Nature by taking a hike or afternoon bike ride, or trying out a new fitness class, such as yoga or pilates, to work on your core and breathing, are just a few examples of how one can take active steps to become more mindful about health and wellness. For others, it can be as simple as catching up with loved ones on the phone or meeting up with friends for dinner. Parker mentioned that her school practiced “Mindfulness Mondays” last year, where students were given a moment to meditate, release, and set intentions for the week ahead. She stated: “I found this useful for both staff and students because it helped everyone begin their week with a clear mind to keep our minds off of the constant negativity going on around us.”
- 3. Just Breathe:** Another aspect of mindfulness is breathing exercises. The benefits of intentional breathing practices are well-documented. A recent lifestyle piece on the Resilient Educator website, a virtual space for teacher resources, highlights the significance of breathing exercises and reveals the science behind breathing practices in relieving educator-related stress. Essentially, if you are not consistently practicing your breathing, you probably are not doing it right. “Most people hold tightness in the diaphragm and breathe shallowly, into their chests,” their editorial team explains. This causes the body to stay in a chronically stressed state, with the sympathetic nervous system activated and cortisol running rampant through the body,” the article continues. However, learning how to fix your breathing is easy, and can change your life. Plus, there are plenty of exercises to choose from based on your breathing abilities, and time allotment. Williams supports the notion of intentional breathing and recommends that educators remember “to breathe throughout the day when everything around you feels like it’s falling apart.” When a moment of stress comes over you, remember to take a moment and just breathe.
- 4. Rely on One Another:** The best asset you have in your corner is your support system. Whether that is your family, colleagues, significant other, or friends, asking for help and utilizing your base will benefit you in the end. The people you work and live with, typically know you best. It can be difficult to ask them for help or lean on your co-workers for support, but remember, we are all in this together. We use phrases like “It Takes a Village”, and “Teamwork Makes the Dream Work”, as we describe guiding children, but it should apply to educators as well. Working through tasks together can reduce anxiety and make tedious tasks more bearable. Do not forget to tap into administrative opportunities at your school, and union sponsored events and workshops from LAE. NEA and LAE offer a wide spectrum of teacher-facilitated trainings on an array of subjects to build skills and coping strategies. Visit lae.org for more information.

LAE WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NAILA HOLMES



Naila Clay Holmes has been hired as the new Executive Director of the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE). A Baton Rouge native, Ms. Holmes has returned home to lead the charge advocating for educators across Louisiana. Prior to her arrival, June 15, 2021, Holmes worked as the Director of Human and Civil Rights at the Virginia Education Association (VEA), an office she was instrumental in creating four years ago.

Holmes brings a diverse educational background to the association, with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Master of Arts degree in Public Administration from Southern University. She went on to complete another master's degree in Education at Union University in Tennessee, and has since served in multiple capacities, including as a secondary educator, community organizer, manager, and facilitator. While in Virginia, she focused on building partnerships with organizations, empowering educators, and supporting Uniserv staff.

During her tenure at VEA, Naila C. Holmes served as the Director of Field Support, Organizing, and Minority Engagement and interim-director of Teaching and Learning. She was the co-creator and coordinator of the VEA Teachers of Color Summit. Her passion inspired her to craft poignant content for symposiums and the foresight to establish professional development workshops, including Empowering Locals to Promote Inclusive Policies, and the VEA Summit on Racial and Social Justice and Our Schools.

Naila replaces Dr. Craig Carter, as executive director. Within her new role, Holmes describes herself as a relational manager and says she has already begun to invoke personal connections with members and staff, and wants to create a more inclusive work environment both internally and externally.

Throughout her career, Holmes has taken a special interest in mentorship, and has been cultivating the next generation of leaders for over 15 years. She mentions: Advocacy is my passion, especially young girls and women". When asked about her new position, Holmes stated that she was excited to return to Louisiana and get reacquainted with political figures and community leaders. Holmes is most looking forward to expanding the LAE's membership, engagement, and visibility in the educational sphere, and continuing to build upon the momentum of the association's recent, historical legislative wins.

KETURAH GREEN NAMED NEW COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AT LAE



Keturah E. Green has joined the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) as the Director of Communications. A Baton Rouge native, and former Communication Instructor of 7 years at Southeastern Louisiana University's Department of Communication and Media Studies, Green brings a wealth of knowledge to the LAE team. With a strong communication background and diverse skill set focused in event planning and public relations, Green has honed her abilities in areas ranging from rhetoric and communication law to persuasion, and gender and race relations. Southeastern is also her alma mater, and she culminated her undergraduate studies in 2012 with an honors degree in Organization Communication, graduating Cum Laude and being awarded Most Outstanding Graduating Senior in Communication. Shortly after, Green completed an M.A. in Organizational Communication from the university in 2014 and was hired to teach upon completion of her masters.

Starting with LAE at beginning of June, Green believes that her previous experiences have prepared her for the opportunity.

When describing the scope of her new role, Green stated: "I hope to continue to grow as the association evolves and serve as a powerhouse advocate for educators and students in the state of Louisiana." She also plans to help propel the organization forward and meet its communication goals, by working to increase social media engagement, enhance LAE's following and visibility, and provide a resurgence of viewership to the association's official newsletter, The Voice.

During her professional and college career, Keturah Green acquired numerous accolades and scholarships. Among her highest achievements as an educator, was receiving the Influential Educator Award, presented by SLU's Division of Student Affairs, and the Southeastern Chapter of the NAACP's Woman of the Year Award in 2019. She took pride in being Gamma Beta Phi Co-Advisor, and the Chair of Vonnice Borden Speech and Theater Festival, an outlet for creative high school students to compete and potentially place in various theatrical categories for the State Literary Rally.

As a college student, Green was highly involved on campus and has carried that philanthropic spirit with her in life. Outside of the workplace, she is committed to service and volunteerism. Green is currently serving her second term on the Alumni Association's Gold (Graduates of the Last Decade) Council, as Programming Chair, and the Vice President of the African American Alumni Chapter. In these various leadership positions, Keturah Green is most passionate about giving back to the communities that have groomed her and paying her expertise forward to help individuals become more effective communicators.

LAE CONGRATULATES NEWLY ELECTED DISTRICT 7 REPRESENTATIVE, SUZANNE BREAUX



LAE would like to congratulate Suzanne Breaux on her recent election victory. In a special election run-off, LAE member Suzanne Breaux (Vermillion Parish Schools), beat Kelly Allen, M.A. (St. Mary Parish Schools) for the District 7 Board of Trustees seat.

Breaux is an educational diagnostician with the Vermillion Parish School Board and has been an educator for over 19 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in education from LSU, and a master's degree from McNeese State University in educational leadership.

She was sworn in at the August TRSL meeting, and will serve the remainder of a four-year term, ending December 21, 2022. Other current TRSL members in District 7 work in Acadia, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Mary, and Vermillion parishes.



LAE'S TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER PARTNERS WITH GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY AND SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY & A&M COLLEGE TO OFFER VIRTUAL SUMMIT FOR HBCU STUDENTS ACROSS LOUISIANA

Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE), in partnership with Grambling State University (GSU) and Southern University, offered the second virtual Collegiate PRAXIS Summit this past spring that focused on helping education majors at Louisiana's historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) and uncertified teachers prepare for the assessment required to become a full-time classroom teacher. GSU, Southern, and Xavier students as well as uncertified teachers and Education Support Professionals participated in the eight-session event from April 27 through May 13. The partnership on this project with Grambling and Southern supports the ongoing resources they provide to their future educators.

LAE President Dr. Tia Mills said she is thrilled that the association to support those students who have made a career commitment to serving Louisiana's school children.

"While life continues to be turned upside for so many, we can't overlook the fact that college students are still in need of support as they continue to make their final preparations to enter classrooms

across Louisiana," Dr. Mills said. "Today's digital world provides us with an opportunity to interact with students of all educational levels so we can continue to meet their needs, even if we can't be there with them in person."

Made possible by the association's professional development arm, The Teaching and Learning Center and the LAE's national affiliate, The National Education Association (NEA), the virtual course was facilitated by LAE members and provided test-taking tips, best practices, and independent assignments for participants.

In addition to the Praxis-prep course, LAE's Teaching and Learning Center recently expanded its offering of other virtual professional development courses for educators across the state. Topics include Behavior De-escalation Strategies, Supporting Students in Uncertain Times, Best Practices for Student Engagement in Virtual Instruction, and Classroom Management. For more information on these and all other courses offered by LAE's Teaching and Learning Center, please contact Dr. Harris at sharris@lae.org.

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- Interested parties must submit a letter of interest & resume.
- Respond by October 22, 2021 at 4:30 pm.



Please send your letter of interest & resume to:
mcarpenter@lae.org

SUMMER OF NO GAMES: LAE STAFF ACROSS THE REGION PREPARE FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The Tokyo Olympians were not the only ones hard at work this summer. While many educators took a much-deserved respite this summer, the association staff did not play any games in ensuring members were taken care of. Association staff also put on some fun events in the process. In addition to the 2021 legislative session, and the LAE Representative Assembly, which was held virtually in July, LAE representatives all over the state have been doing the work all summer, to create a brighter future for our constituents this school year.

In June, Region 8 partnered with The Baton Rouge Rougarou's where (ESPS) and educators from all over Louisiana were invited for a free night at the ballpark. Dr. Mills, LAE President, was honored by being invited to throw the first pitch to kick off the event. While the game was delayed due to inclement weather, it was a night to remember, and an enjoyable time for the teachers who came out and got to experience the VIP treatment. Renita Whittrack, Uniserv Director of Region 8, stated: "Our members are the most important players on our team. We are always willing to go to bat for them!"

LAE members and staff out of Caddo Parish were present at Senator Cleo Field's Press Conference on the Mandatory Kindergarten Bill (SB 10) which has now been passed into law as Act 38. The press conference, held on June 23, 2021, at Shreve Island Elementary School in Shreveport, LA, brought education stakeholders together to understand the importance of the bill. The event drummed up enough support to see Act 386 come to fruition.

Region 6 Locals in Concordia and Evangeline Parish held Rejuvenation Retreats over the summer to get ready for the year ahead and get back to the basics of true leadership.

Lakilia Bedeau, Region 6 Uniserv Director said: "It was a great way to kick off the school year, on a positive note. As the Uniserv Director, I believe the foundation must be laid before the work can truly begin." Topics covered included: characteristics of a leader, teamwork exercises, and how to properly conduct a S.W.O.T. Analysis for optimum results. There is power in numbers, and at the core of a solid union is a faction of strong locals equipped with the tools to be effective leaders.

Naila C. Holmes, new Executive Director of the association, and Keturah Green, who joined LAE's management team in June as Director of Communications, got to work right away. Holmes has been busy traveling and meeting with members throughout Louisiana and is getting reacquainted with her hometown. In a short time, Green has met with staff, connected with NEA communication affiliates, and gotten acclimated to the job by collaborating with the press and the local community to create fresh LAE content.

Finally, Dr. Mills wrapped up her Back-to-School President's Tour. Over the course of 4 weeks, President Mills has traveled through 7 Uniserv Regions, and visited 16 locals in: Bogalusa, St. Helena, St. Mary, Bienville, Concordia, East Baton Rouge, St. John, Lafayette, Webster, Acadia, Rapides, St. Martin, Monroe City, Lasalle, Caddo, and Ouachita school systems.

The work that LAE has done this summer, highlights how committed the association is laying the groundwork for a solid school year. LAE will continue to lead the charge in representing the educators, students, schools, and regions we serve. Stay connected with LAE and our local affiliates to participate in the future events and workshops to come.



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LAUNCHES ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCELERATION “COMEBACK” CAMPAIGN

BATON ROUGE, La. – The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) today announced the launch of “Louisiana Comeback,” a coordinated campaign to recover and accelerate learning lost due to the previous year’s challenges. LDOE is asking school systems across the state to join the “Louisiana Comeback” by committing to invest a portion of their Elementary and School Relief funds into three primary areas:

- Attendance and Well-Being
- Recovery and Acceleration
- Professional Learning

“I’m excited to see the tremendous progress our students will make by school systems collectively focusing their funds, time and effort into areas that bolster student achievement,” said Dr. Cade Brumley, State Superintendent of Education. “Louisiana school systems have received about \$4 billion dollars of stimulus funds to support efforts like these, and we need to use our one-time resources well. We must utilize the dollars to get us through this tough time and prepare our state to be better post-pandemic.”

Attendance and Well-Being

“Louisiana Comeback” aims to encourage the creation of engaging, belonging, and risk-free environments for students. LDOE believes that instituting well-being policies enhances intrinsic motivation, decreases disciplinary problems, increases academic achievement, improves school satisfaction, and leads to thriving individuals, communities, and nations. Simply stated, those who feel better can learn better.

Recovery and Acceleration

“Louisiana Comeback” incentivizes schools to invest in activities that recover and accelerate student learning, reducing instructional loss from the past two school years and helping put students back on track. For example, the campaign promotes massive efforts around tutoring, literacy intervention, graduation planning, and afterschool and summer programs.

Professional Learning

LDOE maintains that literacy outcomes improve when students are provided with high-quality core instruction and explicit literacy interventions and extensions based on individuals’ needs. Therefore, “Louisiana Comeback” suggests schools implement policies that allow teachers to have regular and devoted time to collaborate around their craft as well as professional learning opportunities.

Comeback Campuses

LDOE will recognize schools that make significant gains by designating each a “Comeback Campus.”

These improvements in student outcomes include:

- Increases in percent of students scoring mastery and above on the statewide assessment
- Decreases in percent of students scoring unsatisfactory on the statewide assessment
- Increase in student ACT scores

Schools that receive the “Comeback Campus” designation gain a variety of benefits, such as:

- Access to additional funds to scale evidence-based activities
- Opportunities to participate in research study of best practices
- Round table discussions with the State Superintendent
- Opportunities to lead sessions for educators at state and national conferences
- Official recognition ceremony with banner
- Recognition on School Finder

Fiscal Dashboard

LDOE is developing a fiscal dashboard to report how the state and school systems are budgeting and spending pandemic relief funds and ensuring:

- investments have a collective impact – from the state to classrooms
- planning is outcomes, strategic and priorities-based
- transparency and accountability remain the top priority

For more information, visit [Louisiana Comeback’s website](#).

THE LAE VOICE

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the pieces.**

*The storm is over, but we are
just getting started.*



Louisiana
strong



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UPCOMING EVENTS

October 25

LAE Board of
Directors Meeting

November 7
Daylight Savings
Time Ends

November 11

Veteran's Day
(Observed/LAE Office Closed)

November 24-28

Fall Break
(LAE Office Closed)

December 21-
January 3

Winter Break
(LAE Office Closed)

*LAE Headquarters CLOSED