

THE LAE VOICE

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Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

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WELCOME BACK!

August brings the return of school and a renewed emphasis on learning for the new school year. As an education professional, you hold a unique place in the lives of your students. Remember the powerful role that you play, and continue to be strong for the children who depend on you. Roll up those sleeves and get ready for another rewarding school year. LAE leaders wish you success in 2014 and beyond! Welcome back!

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS MEMBER TO RECEIVE THE CALIFORNIA CASUALTY AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE



California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence Recipient Crystal Williams Gordon.

East Baton Rouge Parish Association of Educators member Crystal Williams Gordon has been selected to receive the 2015 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence. Gordon is among 39 public school educators who will be honored at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala to be held in Washington, D.C., on February 13, 2015. The gala attracts nearly 1,000 of the nation's leaders from public education, philanthropy, and the private sector.

From the 39 state awardees, five finalists will be selected to receive \$10,000. At the conclusion of the Washington, D.C. gala, one finalist will be named the nation's top

educator and receive an additional \$25,000. The NEA Foundation and the National Education Association jointly present the awards.

"We give these awards annually to honor and promote excellence in education. Educators like Crystal are critical to their students' academic success, and they deserve national recognition," said NEA Foundation President and CEO Harriet Sanford.

LAE President Debbie Meaux awarded Gordon with the association's annual teacher of the year award — the *LAE Teacher Image Award* — at the 2014 LAE Representative Assembly; association leaders then nominated her for national recognition. Winning the award has given Gordon the opportunity to travel to Peru next summer. During her 10-day trip, she'll have the opportunity to learn more about the country's education system.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Debbie Meaux, President

As we say goodbye to the summer and hello to the start of another school year, we look ahead to months filled with success and accomplishment. I hope you had some time to relax and decompress during your much-needed time off. Let me be the first to welcome you back to your classrooms and to the start of a promising new school year.

This summer began with an ending: the closing of Louisiana's 2014 Legislative Session. You can rest assured that members of the LAE Lobby Team were at the Louisiana State Capitol in full force, interjecting a vital voice into the discussion — the voice of public school educators. Several important developments resulted from this year's busy session. Teachers will see the continuation of a small, but needed, pay boost for the 2014-2015 school year. Education retirees can expect to begin receiving small cost-of-living adjustments in their retirement paychecks. A committee to study the reliability of the value-added method will reconvene in order to help balance the fairness and validity of the state's teacher evaluation system.

Our battles surrounding fair due process rights finally caught the attention of Governor Jindal and his staff who worked with LAE leaders and other education stakeholders on a piece of legislation to correct the flawed aspects of the law governing due process dismissal procedures (Act 1). After weeks of negotiations, the legislation passed a process that we can live with; however, we still have strong philosophical issues with certain aspects of the law. LAE leaders will continue to work to correct the flawed aspects of Act 1 and any other laws affecting public school employees.

We can now turn our focus away from politics and back toward the most important issue at hand: providing Louisiana's children with the best educational opportunities possible. We want to help you do this in the 2014-2015 school year, which is why we've made it our goal to focus on providing you with quality professional development opportunities in the coming months. The leaders of the LAE want to help you become knowledgeable, strong thought-leaders in your profession. LAE leaders are currently in the process of organizing a one-of-a-kind professional development

opportunity set to take place on Saturday, October 18, 2014. The training, *Educating the Whole Child: A Toolkit of Best Practices for Great Louisiana Public School Educators*, is designed to introduce you to best practices being employed in today's classrooms. Special guest speakers Dr. Kate Dickson from The Danielson Group and Robert Schaeffer from The National Center for Fair & Open Testing will join us for this one-day event. I hope you will mark your calendars and make plans to join us for this exciting opportunity!

As we embark on the 2014-2015 school year, I hope you will continue to support the LAE by being a champion for the association. Your membership offers strength to our association. Your support places us in good standing with the public, and this will help us in our efforts to make an impact on our communities. Your continued professionalism, care, and love for Louisiana's public school children has been — and continues to be — my beacon of hope. Continue to stand strong with the LAE and help us promote the change needed to strengthen public education for all children in our state. I will continue to stand ready to be a sentinel for you and your needs as a Louisiana educator. I promise to continue to fight for the appropriate measures that will reward our public school employees for the phenomenal work being done in our exceptional neighborhood schools.

In Solidarity,
Debbie Meaux
LAE President

2014 LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE SESSION RECAP



The sun sets on Louisiana's 2014 Legislative Session.

Louisiana's 2014 Legislative Session brought many ups, downs, and successes for the LAE. The education budget for the 2014-15 school year will continue to see the increases from last year due to the approval of the 2014 MFP Resolution (SCR 55). The increase in the MFP per pupil base will rise to \$3,961 for the first time in six years. The overall state budget

continues to rely mostly on unrealized revenue and one-time money, which will cause an even larger problem in future years unless lawmakers come up with a plan to raise additional revenues to sustain vital services like higher education, K-12 education, and health care. State aid to the higher education system in Louisiana has been cut nearly \$700 million since 2008. Concerns remain surrounding the approved budget's continued expansion of the state's controversial voucher program, which will increase again this year to pay tuition for students to attend non-public schools.

BESE'S SECOND ATTEMPT AT MFP PROPOSAL WINS LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL

A \$3.6 billion financing plan to pay for Louisiana's public schools for the 2014-15 school year received final legislative approval. The formula, known as the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), sets a base per-student funding level of \$3,961 and pays for 695,000 students. The plan approved for 2014-2015 will increase spending for public school programs by \$15 million – this includes costs for career education courses and special education. Also rolled into the permanent formula is a \$70 million boost that lawmakers gave to school districts through last year's general fund appropriations, in addition to dollars to cover an increase in the number of public school students.



Members of the LAE Lobby Team discuss legislator votes on some of the 2014 session's most controversial education bills.

The Senate Education Committee derailed the first proposed plan after Senator Conrad Appel objected to BESE's inclusion of an automatic growth factor that could have locked the legislature in to boosting the per-student payment by 2.75 percent annually in later years. BESE stripped the language in a revised plan addressing several concerns LAE Lobby Team members had surrounding the original proposal's language. Some of the major revisions to the plan included restrictions on the use of increases in MFP funding to include teacher pay raises; adding a requirement that charter schools be subject to the 70% instructional expenditure requirement; and clarification on career development allocation language for traditional public schools and charter schools.

In the spirit of compromise, the LAE is pleased with the majority of the revisions to SCR 55. We remain concerned about the 2.75% provision and the ability of the language in the MFP to provide increases in future years.

GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL TO REVAMP DISMISSAL HEARING PROCESS FOR TEACHERS

HB 1277 is now Act 570 of 2014. The legislation sponsored by Representatives Jeff Thompson and Randal Gaines was a compromise bill created when the LAE, representatives from Governor Jindal's office, and other education stakeholders came together in the beginning of the session in an attempt to correct the



Legislators gather for the opening ceremonies of the 2014 Legislative Session.

flawed aspects of Act 1's governing due process dismissal procedures. Changes made to the law allow for a professional "third party neutral" to hear teacher appeals rather than a three-member panel tilted against teachers — a change that makes the due process procedure more of an arbitration process. While LAE leaders are happy with these changes, they still have strong philosophical issues with other aspects of the law, specifically the portion that takes away the due process rights of a

teacher who receives a final (summative) “ineffective” rating from the Compass teacher evaluation program.

VALUE-ADDED MODEL TO RECEIVE EXTENSIVE REVIEW

Representative Frank Hoffman’s HB 415 officially became Act 240 of 2014. The bill requires BESE to use its accountability commission to establish an advisory subcommittee for the purpose of making recommendations relative to the evaluation system established under Act 54 of 2010. The committee must issue a report within 60 days prior to the start of the 2014-2015 school year on the utility of the value-added method (known to most as VAM).

ANTI-PAYROLL DEDUCTION BILL DEFEATED; OTHERS FALL BY THE WAYSIDE

The House Labor and Industrial Relations Committee struck down HB 451, one of the “payroll deduction” bills of the 2014 session. HB 451 was an anti-labor/public employee/commerce bill designed to tie the hands of organizations that collect membership dues via payroll deduction. The legislation would have prohibited public employees from withholding payroll deductions for professional association fees. After the defeat of HB 451, similar pieces of legislation to prohibit payroll dues deduction failed to receive hearings.

It’s important to note that the face-to-face contacts, phone calls, and emails from LAE members to legislators made a huge impact on the committee’s decision to oppose such a blatant attack on educators and public workers. LAE Lobby Team members will continue to stay vigilant on such attacks, as extreme organizations like the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry will continue to pursue dirty political tactics to stifle public employee voices.



LAE members review the schedule for one of LAE’s 2014 lobby days.

TEACHERS NOW ALLOWED TO ACCEPT GIFTS FROM STUDENTS

Representative Johnny Berthelot’s HB 500 is now Act 172 of 2014. The law allows public employees from Pre-K to secondary schools to accept gifts from students and former students as long as the value does not exceed \$25. The aggregate value of all gifts from any one person cannot exceed \$75 in a single calendar year. The LAE appreciates Representative Berthelot for authoring the legislation.

LAE LEGISLATION TO CLEAR UP INCONSISTENCY IN LAW REGARDING SCHOOL EMPLOYEE ARRESTS BECOMES LAW



Baker Association of Educators President Vernon Wells sits alongside Senator Troy Brown as he introduces Senate Bill 608 to legislators.

LAE affiliate, the Baker Association of Educators (BAE), worked closely with Senator Troy Brown to bring SB 608 to the legislature. The proposal clears up an inconsistency between the criminal code and state education laws, wherein law enforcement officers can use their personal

discretion to immediately arrest an educator based on an accusation (made by a student or a parent) of a minor offense when the educator is attempting to maintain classroom discipline. The LAE believes that the public arrest of an educator without actual proof of wrongdoing causes a scene inside of a classroom, brings embarrassment to the educator, demeans his/her dignity, and undermines his/her ability to teach and keep discipline within the class. The legislation breezed through the session and was signed into law as Act 723 of 2014. The new law now requires that a law enforcement agency issue a summons for any educator accused of a minor charge, as opposed to allowing an officer to make an immediate arrest.

OTHER EDUCATION BILLS OF NOTE

- HB 533, sponsored by Representative Alan Seabaugh, was signed into law



LAE members take a quick moment away from lobbying to smile for our cameras.

as Act 515 of 2014. It prohibits including test scores of a student who has ten or more unexcused absences in a semester in the value-added model or any other measures of student growth used in the teacher evaluation program. Members of the LAE Lobby Team send thanks to Representative Seabaugh for authoring the bill and working with the LAE on amendments to the bill.

- HB 717, sponsored by Representative Dorothy Sue Hill, was signed into law as Act 659 of 2014. The new law expands the definitions under extended sick leave laws to include personal illness relating to pregnancy, illness of an infant (child under the age of one), and required medical visits relating to an infant or maternal health. It also deletes the requirement that a teacher be absent for more than ten consecutive days before utilizing extended sick leave.
- SB 179, sponsored Senator Blade Morrish, was signed into law as Act 482 of 2014. The new law revises the current Course Choice program to align with the constitutional issues addressed in a recent ruling by the Louisiana Supreme Court on the funding of Course Choice programs.

RETIREES TO RECEIVE 1.5% COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

Several important cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) bills are now laws. Through SB 19 (now Act 103 of 2014) and SB 21 (now Act 104 of 2014), TRSL and LSERS retirees will receive a 1.5% increase in their

retirement paychecks beginning August 1, 2014. These two pieces of legislation are tied to HB 1225, which was also signed into law (as Act 339 of the 2014). The new law will revamp the way COLAs are given in future years and will provide retirees with a COLA every other year based on the investment earnings and funding ratio of the system. Some investment earnings would go toward the reduction of the state's unfunded accrued liability before making it into the experience account (COLA-funding mechanism). The COLA will increase per-check-pay by almost \$29 for TRSL retirees and about \$14 a month for LSERS retirees.

LAE EDUCATORS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT THE STATE CAPITOL DURING TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Educators took center stage at the Louisiana State Capitol on May 8 as LAE celebrated Teacher Appreciation Week. Members of the senate and house of representatives recognized LAE members for their contributions to Louisiana's school children. Senate President John Alario offered a senate resolution to recognize May 5 - 9, 2014 as National Teacher Appreciation Week. The resolution encouraged community members across the state to express appreciation to Louisiana educators for the impact they have on the lives of our children. Representative John Bel Edwards offered a similar resolution in the house.



LAE members promote NEA's Thank a Teacher campaign at Teacher Appreciation Day at the Louisiana State Capitol.



LAE representatives answer questions about association membership in the rotunda of the Louisiana State Capitol.



LAE members pose alongside Senator Alario after being recognized in by the Louisiana Senate for National Teacher Appreciation Week.

SAVE THE DATE FOR AN UPCOMING LAE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Make plans to join the LAE as we host *Educating the Whole Child: A Toolkit of Best Practices for Great Louisiana Public School Educators*. This one-of-a-kind professional development opportunity is designed to share innovative strategies geared toward teaching in 21st century classrooms. The one-day training will take place on October 18, 2014, from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sulphur High School in Sulphur,

Louisiana, and will feature an array of workshops for teachers, ESPs, administrators, and student teachers. Dr. Kate Dickson from The Danielson Group and Robert Schaeffer, Public Education Director of *FairTest*, will join us as special guests. Registration will open online in September; in the meantime, please keep October 18 open on your calendar and go to www.lae.org for more information.

LAE HOSTS ANNUAL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY IN BATON ROUGE

More than 100 LAE representatives from across Louisiana gathered in Baton Rouge for the 2014 Representative Assembly. Highlights from this year's annual member meeting included two days worth of discussion surrounding association business, Debbie Meaux's first RA address as LAE President, and a surprise appearance by former Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards.

Delegates took some time away from major business discussions to honor five deserving individuals with LAE Image Awards — the association's highest honor. East Baton Rouge Parish high school biology teacher Crystal Williams Gordon walked away with the 2014 LAE Teacher Image Award. School librarian Anita Green, also from East Baton Rouge Parish, was honored with LAE's 2014 Ancillary Personnel Image Award. Baton Rouge civil rights activist Reverend T. J. Jemison was posthumously awarded the 2014 LAE Human and Civil Rights Trailblazer Award; his son accepted the award on his behalf. Technology specialist Stacy Bodin from Vermilion Parish received the 2014 LAE Friend of Education Award, and LAE attorney Brian Blackwell walked away with the 2014 LAE President's Award.



2014 Image Award Recipients (from left): 2014 LAE Human and Civil Rights Trailblazer Award Recipient T.J. Jemison's son Ted Jemison, Teacher Image Award Recipient Crystal Gordon, Ancillary Image Award Recipient Anita Green, Friend of Education Award Recipient Stacy Bodin, and President's Award Recipient Brian Blackwell



The 2014 LAE Representative Assembly is called to order.

Thank you to all who attended!



President Meaux gives her first official RA speech as president of the LAE.



Former Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards addresses delegates.



President Meaux recognizes members of the 2014 LAE Board of Directors.

ATTENTION: LAE BOARD VACANCIES

The LAE Board of Directors is composed of association leaders who are active education employees and who have been elected by their peers to act for the association in between meetings of the Representative Assembly. You must be a member for at least three years to be eligible to apply for the below-mentioned vacancy.

Sixth Associational District, Seat A: Representing Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemine, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, St. Mary, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne

If you are interested in applying, please send your letter of intent and resume to Laurie Guillot at laurie.guillot@lae.org, by August 21, 2014. The next LAE Board Meeting is scheduled for **August 23, 2014**, and the seats will be appointed at this meeting.

LAE MEMBERS ADD SOUTHERN SPICE TO THE 2014 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY IN THE “MILE-HIGH CITY”



NEA delegates take a moment to pose for a group shot at the 2014 NEA RA in Denver, Colorado. Photo courtesy of Donna Wilridge

Fifty-six LAE representatives were among the 9,000 school employees who attended the National Education Association's 94th Representative Assembly in Denver, Colorado, this summer. The NEA-RA is the world's largest

democratic deliberative body, with voting delegates from across the country. LAE delegates networked with colleagues from across the nation, weighing in on policies which will help shape the future of the NEA.

In addition to association-wide policy discussions and budget talks, one major topic of discussion focused on NEA leaders introducing a national campaign to put the focus of assessments and accountability back on student learning. The goal of the *End Toxic Testing* campaign centers around ending the “test blame and punish” system that has dominated public education in the last decade. The 9,000 NEA delegates voted to pass the measure that will, among other things, seek to end the abuse and overuse of high-stakes standardized tests and reduce the amount of student and instructional time consumed by them. The anti-toxic testing measure would also call for governmental oversight of the powerful testing industry with the creation of a “testing ombudsman” by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Consumer Protection Bureau, and the Federal Trade Commission. The position will serve as a watchdog over the influential testing industry and monitor testing companies’

impact on education legislation. The NEA will continue to push President Obama and Congress to completely overhaul ESEA, end mandates that require yearly testing, and lift mandates requiring states to administer outdated tests that aren't aligned to school curricula. You can log on to www.nea.org/home/59453.htm to sign an open letter to join this national campaign that places the focus of public education back on student learning.

Another highlight of this year's event was delegates voting for an all-minority, all-female officer team to head the national association. NEA members will have a historic new team advocating for their interests this coming school year. Lily Eskelsen García, a former state teacher of the year and elementary school teacher from North Salt Lake City, Utah, will take the helm as NEA President; Rebecca “Becky” Pringle, a physical science teacher from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was elected as NEA Vice President; and Princess Moss, an elementary school music teacher from Louisa County, Virginia, will serve as NEA Secretary Treasurer. In addition to electing three new leaders, NEA delegates also elected two members to the NEA Executive Committee. Earl Wiman, a Tennessee educator, was re-elected to a second three-year term, and George Sheridan, a veteran educator from California, was elected to a three-year term. The committee is responsible for guiding NEA policy and acts for the NEA Board of Directors.

For more news, photos, and video from the 2014 NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly, visit: www.nea.org/ra. The 95th NEA Representative Assembly will take place in Orlando, Florida, July 1-July 6, 2015.

NEA'S DEGREES NOT DEBT CAMPAIGN



The NEA recently launched an initiative to bring awareness to student debt. NEA's *Degrees Not Debt* campaign promotes the idea that every American deserves a fair shot at higher education. The NEA believes this can be achieved by increasing need-based student aid, making student loans more affordable, encouraging expanded loan forgiveness, and increasing institutional aid. Go to www.nea.org/degreesnotdebt to add your voice to the debate surrounding college affordability.

LAE ANNOUNCES LAE EASY ENROLL: ONLINE MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT SERVICE

HELP LAE SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE NEWEST SERVICE
OFFERED TO THOSE WISHING TO JOIN THE ASSOCIATION

Do you have a colleague who would like to become a member of the LAE? It's never been this easy to join the association. Potential members can join the association from the comfort of their own homes through *LAE Easy Enroll*, LAE's new online membership

enrollment process. Remember, there's strength in numbers! Help LAE leaders spread the word by encouraging your colleagues to join the association online. All they have to do is go to www.lae.org and click the “Join Now” button to get started.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

8/21: Deadline to apply for LAE Board of Directors

8/23: LAE Board Meeting

9/1: Labor Day - LAE Headquarters Closed

9/6: Committee Day

10/17-18: Executive Committee

10/18: Educating the Whole Child: A Toolkit of Best Practices for Great LA Public School Educators

11/1: LAE Board Meeting

11/11: Veterans Day - LAE Headquarters Closed

11/26-28: Thanksgiving Break - LAE Headquarters Closed