



THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 14, No. 1 August 2017



Welcome Back!

The return of school brings a fresh beginning and renewed emphasis on learning. As an education professional, you hold a unique place in the lives of so many children. Remember the powerful role you play throughout the year. Roll up those sleeves and get ready for success in 2017 and beyond! Welcome back!

THE NEA FOUNDATION RECOGNIZES BATON ROUGE TEACHER WITH NATIONAL AWARD

Dr. Tia Mills, an exceptional student services educator at Eden Park Academy in East Baton Rouge Parish, is one of 38 public school educators who will receive the California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C.

LAE nominated Mills after she received the association's coveted *Teacher Image Award* at the LAE Representative Assembly this past spring.

"I can't think of a more rewarding career than one where you have the opportunity to impact the educational experiences of kids," says Mills.

Each year, the Salute to Excellence in Education Gala draws almost 1,000 supporters of public education to applaud these awardees. At the gala, the educators are truly the stars, celebrated throughout the night with music, performances, videos, and more.

The evening gives educators well-deserved recognition for their hard work, personal dedication, and profound influence.

Of the 38 state awardees nominated by their National Education Association state affiliates, five finalists will be announced at the beginning of the school year. These individuals will receive special recognition at the gala along with a \$10,000 cash prize. The nation's top educator will be revealed at the gala on February 9, 2018, and will receive an additional \$25,000.



Louisiana's 2018 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence Winner Dr. Tia Mills

Congrats, Tia! Your colleagues are very proud!



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Debbie Meaux, President

Wow! Here we are on the brink of another school year. I can feel the thrill that comes with the preparation of the classroom, and ultimately the welcoming of the first student. I'm excited for educators across the state, but I'm especially excited for the members of the LAE - we have a lot of great things happening.

Association membership is on the rise and with good reason. Not only did we experience two major legislative victories during the 2017 Legislative Session (keep reading to find out more), but members are more motivated than we've seen in a long time.

Through the LAE Teaching and Learning Center, LAE leaders are working closely with association staff to provide their colleagues with the services and supports they need. We are extremely proud of our effort to expand our outreach to early career educators to provided them with the resources they need to perform their jobs well. Through this focus, LAE is fostering a strong community for young professionals to collaborate, support, and connect with their peers.

This summer, dozens of LAE members from across the state participated in a

dynamic summer leadership conference in Marksville. Attendees, who spent three full days networking, learning, and planning, left ready and willing to spread the good news surrounding the progress of the association.

Through a partnership with the National Education Association, participants from across the country visited Baton Rouge for the annual *Education Summer* initiative. Nearly 100 eager school employees from states spanning the U.S.'s southeast region attended the week-long internship to learn about the power of union advocacy. The group used their new relationship building and organizing skills as they visited with educators to discuss the LAE's mission: advocating for a more powerful educator voice.

The LAE has made major strides in its effort to restore the long-lost respect of Louisiana's talented education professionals.

We've worked to change the narrative surrounding the true goal of education: instilling a love of learning in every Louisiana child. We stand behind the reality that our educators' working

conditions are also our students' learning conditions; if we want successful students, we need to nurture confident, supported educators by treating them with the respect that they so rightfully deserve. Our ongoing "Thank a Louisiana Educator" campaign has managed to do this. LAE will continue to feature educators sharing what it means to have an impact on students' lives. We invite you to do the same. Check out our campaign Facebook page to find out more: @ThankaLAEducator.

LAE members, along with the thousands of others serving in Louisiana's schools day after day, are my inspiration. You are children's connection to a vital and productive future. You put the joy in their intellectual endeavors. You breathe life into your classroom giving your students what would otherwise be a standardized process. You bring the world to children's feet. You dream alongside them, igniting their imaginations and helping them realize their potential.

This school year, let us continue our daily work of honoring the young minds we serve. I call upon you to join LAE in its mission to bring back the respect, joy, and professionalism in public education. My wish for the 2017-18 School Year is that you join us in championing the profession. *À tous, je vous souhaite la meilleure année comme professionnels!* (To each of you, I wish the best year of your career!)

In Solidarity,
Debbie Meaux
LAE President

ATTENTION: LAE BOARD VACANCIES

The following seats on the LAE Board of Directors were recently vacated. 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. In order to be eligible for office, you must have at least three years of LAE membership as of the date of appointment.

If you are interested in applying, please send your letter of intent and resume to Laurie Guillot at lguillot@lae.org by August 18, 2017. The next LAE Board meeting is scheduled for August 19, 2017, and the seats will be appointed at this meeting.

District 1, Seat C: *Allen, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto, Jackson, Jeff Davis, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Union, Vernon, and Webster.*

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.*

LAWMAKERS PASS A BUDGET, REDUCE STUDENT TESTING TIME, AND ESTABLISH AN ASSESSMENT REVIEW COMMISSION DURING THE 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

After months of debate, Louisiana lawmakers finally approved a fiscal year 2018 spending plan. State representatives narrowly approved a controversial budget plan on a 56-46 vote - more than ten Republican legislators left the wishes of the caucus to reject the proposal. State senators voted 26-9 to accept the proposal that fully funds higher education (for the first time in a decade) and TOPS. The plan adds a modest increase to special programs under the Minimum Foundation Program. Governor John Bel Edwards referred to the final product as a "compromise."



"While it still imposes cuts across state government, it does so in a responsible way that adequately funds our needs without negatively impacting the most vulnerable among us," Governor Edwards said. "This budget also continues a practice that my administration began this fiscal year, whereby funds are set aside in reserves from state agencies to address possible cuts throughout the fiscal year. Equally important, this budget contains no new taxes. It is a responsible spending plan that reverses years of mismanagement and for the first time in a decade, offers some stability to our state"

Despite an official 2018 budget, the state still faces major financial turmoil. Looming just over the horizon is the 2018 expiration of a temporary fifth penny of sales tax. This reduction will cause a massive "fiscal cliff" of more than one billion dollars. It's important to understand, lawmakers had ample opportunity to address this major issue during the regular session, but many chose to ignore any opportunity to establish a long-term solution to the state's structural budget crisis.

Budget issues aside, Louisiana lawmakers passed two important, LAE-backed pieces of legislation to address the state's student testing craze. One measure, sponsored by Rep. Bernard Lebas



(House Resolution 166), will establish a commission to survey, review, and make recommendations concerning the amount of time spent testing. This commission will also determine where tests may be duplicative or unnecessary.

A second measure, HB 616 (now Act 364 of 2017), will limit all standards-based assessments for public school students to no more than two percent (2%) of the minimum number of instructional minutes per year (equates to a minimum of 1,274 minutes). This limit would apply to all standards-based tests except college entrance/college credit exams, advanced placement exams, baccalaureate exams, and industry-based credential exams.

Additionally, Act 364 requires each public school governing authority to review all benchmarks and interim assessments on a regular basis to ensure that they are aligned with the appropriate state



content standards. School governing authorities must also be able to identify each test's use in improving instruction, and that test results are available to parents upon request. Most importantly, the act requires that the time associated with the administration of tests be minimized so that teachers can maximize instructional time throughout the school year.

Association leaders stand firm in the belief that schools should engage students in meaningful classroom experiences that foster creativity and critical thinking; the current "teach to the test" culture is not acceptable. Through its continued focus on the *Time to Learn* initiative, LAE aims to get local communities engaged in its positive testing reform efforts. This fall, make plans to join parents, teachers, school employees, and public school advocates in your community for an open conversation concerning student testing and what we, as a community, can do to push for positive testing reform in our state's public schools. (The list of dates and locations is provided on the following page of this newsletter.) Be sure to visit www.timetolearnla.org to learn more about the initiative and ways you can get involved with the campaign.



The LAE celebrated its annual Educator Appreciation Day at the Louisiana Capitol. Members joined the LAE Lobby Team to enjoy popcorn and drinks to remind Capitol visitors to celebrate Teacher/ESP Appreciation Week. Those who attended also took part in the legislative process by listening to bill debates. Members in attendance met with their state representatives and senators to discuss pressing public school issues.

The LAE Lobby Team will continue to monitor policy issues and will explore possible pieces of legislation to submit to the next annual session beginning March 12, 2018.

SAVE THE DATES

AND PLAN TO JOIN MEMBERS OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS FOR A SERIES OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON

STUDENT TESTING



Baton Rouge - 9/21
McKinley Alumni Center

Alexandria - 9/26
Kees Park Community Center

Shreveport - 9/28
Haven Learning Center

New Iberia - 10/3
Westgate High School

Monroe - 10/5
Ouachita Parish Library

Hammond - 10/12
Greenfield Baptist Church

Lafayette - 10/16
Lafayette Public Library

Lake Charles - 10/17
College Oaks Community
Recreation Center

LaPlace - 10/19
LaPlace Elementary School

Louisiana's children should have access to unique classroom experiences that ignite a love of learning; instead, their teachers' creativity is often stifled due to pressure to prepare for tests.

This fall, make plans to join parents, teachers, school employees, and public school advocates for an open conversation concerning student testing and what we, as a community, can do to push for positive testing reform in our state's public schools.

REGISTRATION: 5:30 p.m. CONVERSATION: 6 - 7:30 p.m.

For more information, visit
lae.org/communityconversations

LAE'S 2017 SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON BUILDING, ORGANIZING, LEADING, AND DEMANDING FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

"Change is inevitable. Growth is intentional." This was the mantra of the LAE's annual summer leadership conference.

Member representatives from Acadia, Ascension, Baker, Caddo, Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, Monroe City, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Helena, St. Landry, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. John, St. James, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, and Vermilion parishes gathered in Marksville, Louisiana to learn how to best advocate for their schools and the students they serve. Trainings focused on developing effective strategies for membership growth, leadership engagement, early-career educator recruitment, LAE's Time to Learn campaign, and community schools.

After an intense three days of learning, networking, and strategizing, members walked away with viable plans to begin implementing in the new school year. Attendees were also

successful in contacting more than 500 of their colleagues to share information on the association's upcoming initiatives.

"The work was tough, but the results will be worth it," said trainer Antonio Pelt. "We look forward to working with members to drive their plans in recruiting others to be more engaged, active owners of their local LAE affiliates."

In an effort to continue the productive work initiated at summer leadership, LAE organizational specialists will host B.O.L.D. leader trainings across the state. If you are interested in taking the lead in promoting the association's efforts to build, organize, lead, and demand quality learning environments for Louisiana's schools, contact your local LAE staff representative. Go to lae.org/staff to determine your local representative.



NEA'S EDUCATION SUMMER FLEW DOWN SOUTH TO BATON ROUGE

For teachers and other school employees, the struggle to balance career and family is very real. In the name of advancing the education profession, nearly 100 dedicated public school advocates took time away from their homes and families to travel to Baton Rouge for an intense five-day training known as *Education Summer*. These passionate individuals came from across the United States to learn about the skills needed to be an effective education organizer – a commitment that will extend far beyond their visit to south Louisiana. Activists learned about planning effective meetings, the best techniques for having conversations about education advocacy work, and how to plan relevant association-sponsored events. They also brushed up

on their knowledge on association positions surrounding ESSA implementation, standardized testing, school/teacher evaluations, class size, and much more.

Attendees headed back home inspired and engaged with each committing to taking what they learned and applying it to field work in their local school districts. Most committed to becoming site leaders and planning back-to-school events for their local association; all vowed to getting others – educators, parents, and communities – involved in becoming stronger advocates for the students in their schools. Interested in becoming a 2018 *Education Summer* Intern? Go to nea.org/grants/62027 to learn more.

LOUISIANA EDUCATORS VOW TO HOLD STRONG AND FIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AT 2017 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

Public school educators from Louisiana were among the 7,000 men and women from all 50 states who gathered in Boston, Massachusetts, this summer to attend the National Education Association's 96th Representative Assembly (RA). The event, which hosts the top decision-making body for the nearly three-million-member NEA, set the stage for debates and discussions surrounding social justice, the challenges presented by the Trump-DeVos education agenda, and ending the proliferation of unaccountable charter schools.

In her annual address to the delegation, NEA President Lily Eskelsen García didn't sugarcoat the issues facing public education. She assured delegates of NEA's position surrounding Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' aggressive school privatization agenda.

"NEA can not support an agenda which ignores the needs of our most vulnerable children," Eskelsen García said. "Our members

will continue to fight for equity in our schools which ultimately stands to impact student success."

A major highlight at this year's event was the appearance of LeVar Burton, who received NEA's highest honor, the *Friend of Education Award*. In his speech, Burton, host of the long-running PBS children's series, "Reading Rainbow," fired on all cylinders, taking down Betsy DeVos, saluting the impact his mother (a teacher) had on his life, and passionately calling for adequate funding for public education and greater respect for educators.

Delegates worked hard to accomplish important union business, including the approval of a new policy statement in response to the rapid expansion of unaccountable, privately managed charter schools.

The statement draws a sharp new line between charter schools that have a positive effect on public education and those unaccountable, privately managed charter schools that hurt public schools and students. NEA will forcefully support state and local efforts to limit charter growth in order to increase charter accountability and slow the diversion of resources from neighborhood public schools to charters.

Delegates also took care of the important business of electing NEA leaders. President Eskelsen García, Vice President Pringle, and Secretary-Treasurer Moss were all re-elected to serve another three-year term, which they will begin on September 1.

Next year's assembly will be in Houston, Texas from July 2 – 5, 2018. For photos and additional highlights from the 2017 meeting, go to ra.nea.org.



Relax. Explore. Discover.



Grab a coffee and head online to check out NEA edCommunities - a place for teachers, school support professionals, and community members to share ideas and resources to improve student success.

Gain access to FREE, interactive online resources including:

Ideas for unique classroom activities

Innovative lesson plans

Professional development webinars

Education policy discussion boards

and much, much more!

edCommunities allows you to connect with colleagues across the nation on key educational issues to help you become a stronger professional for the students you serve!

Sign up TODAY at

www.mynea360.org

**SIP WHILE YOU SURF! THE FIRST 100 PEOPLE TO ENROLL WILL BE ENTERED INTO A DRAWING FOR A \$100 STARBUCKS GIFT CARD!

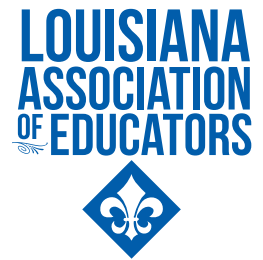
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UPCOMING EVENTS

September 4
Labor Day *

August 19
LAE Board Meeting

September 21 -
October 19

LAE Community Conversations:
Student Testing

September 9
Committee Day

October 21-22
Executive Committee

November 13
Veterans Day *

*LAE Headquarters AWSED

November 17-18
Board Meeting/Training