



Louisiana Department of Education: Creating the High Schools of the Future for Louisiana

Executive Summary

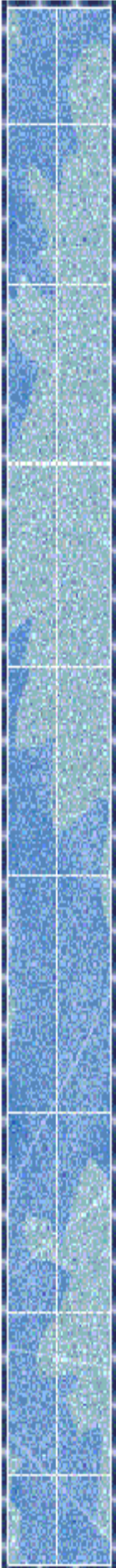
Louisiana is embarking on a process to rethink the very nature of its high schools. *Creating the High Schools of the Future for Louisiana* will be a multi-year process to mobilize State leaders, each local school system, and stakeholders to reshape the high school experience to better address the needs, and support the success, of the 193,000 high school students we serve annually.

In the past 15 years Louisiana has made great strides toward improving the quality of education for its K-12 students. It adopted a standards, assessment and accountability system that is rated among the top 10 in the country by the Princeton Review, Education Week and the Fordham Foundation. It set goals for all its school districts and schools to meet by 2014. It created a Commission on Teacher Quality and adopted many of the recommendations. It developed model curriculum tied to content standards and instructional materials designed to improve classroom teaching. And it is beginning to see the fruits of these efforts in its elementary schools and to a certain extent in its middle schools. The state also has a Master Plan for Postsecondary Education and a strategic economic development plan, Vision 2020, both of which are aligned and coordinated with its K-12 education goals and initiatives.

A Commission on Secondary Education, created in August 1999 via Executive Order by Governor Mike Foster, made a series of policy recommendations to improve high school education in the state. A number of programs and initiatives, including TOPS, Career Options, Diploma Endorsements and Pre-GED/Skills Options Program are in place and focus on high schools. However, according to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's 2001-02 annual performance report, *Reaching for Results: Picturing our Progress*, "Most high schools are not seeing the gains—and some are dropping—because they have not taken accountability and reform seriously yet."

The challenge for Louisiana today is to ensure that high schools are able to deliver on the promise to prepare all students for success so that they can graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college, careers and community life.

Taken from a school to a student level, we see a dramatic and challenging pattern. At this writing, 84% of Louisiana's high schools fall below 100 on the School Performance Score (SPS) index—in stark contrast to the goal of having all high schools achieve an SPS score of 120 by 2014, only eleven years away. Only 24% of the high schools in the state offer Advanced Placement courses. Just 12.9% of high school students rated proficient or advanced in English Language Arts; in mathematics, 17.9% were proficient or advanced. While the national mean score on the ACT is 21, Louisiana's students' mean score is 19.6. According to the report of the Secondary School Redesign Commission, of 100 Louisiana kindergarten students – 45 will not graduate from high school.



The state's ambitious goals, supported by a myriad of programs, policies, and legislation, lay the foundation for formulating and communicating an effective vision for how high schools should change. This new vision must propel schools and parishes to embrace data, align practices, and set a course for *sustained* change that will help each school and each student meet the state and nationally set goals for success. At the State level this vision *must*:

- Be compelling.
- Reflect consensus among stakeholders and the public about a course of action.
- Address the true purpose of high school in the 21st Century and the structures that support that purpose.

Only a few states nationally have taken on high school reform in a systemic manner. There are valuable lessons to be learned from their experiences. Louisiana can benefit from this experience, but ultimately must capitalize on the conditions it has fostered for reform and chart its own course for high schools. This paper, *Creating the High Schools of the Future for Louisiana*, lays out current state policies and programs that affect high schools and suggests some steps Louisiana could take to craft a new vision for high school education in the future. It is designed to support the opening of a dialogue on Louisiana's high schools.



Introduction

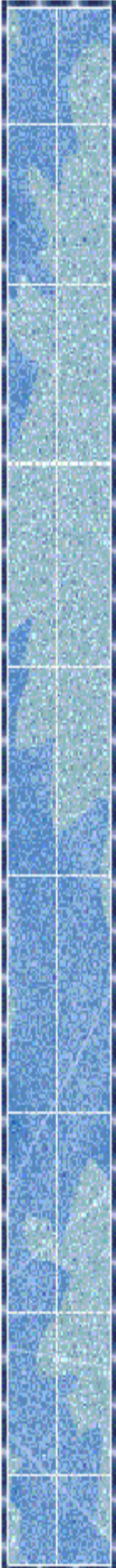
At a time when the needs of our youth and the demands of society, the workplace, and life have changed dramatically, high schools have been slow to respond. Nationally, the data on dropouts, student performance, attendance, and post-high school preparation and success paints an alarming picture for many of our young people—our nation’s future. The Education Trust, which has conducted an extensive analysis of high school data, has noted that graduation rates have hovered at 75% for about 30 years. The performance of 17 year olds in reading is down. Achievement of 17 year olds in math and science is up, but those gains are largely attributable to improvements between grades 5 and 8, not from gains during the high school years. Math and science achievement falls below that of young people in most developed countries. While the gap in achievement, graduation, and college attendance between white high school students and minorities narrowed during the 1970s and 1980s, it widened again in the 1990s and the trend is continuing.¹ Data from the 2003 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that fewer 12th graders are proficient in reading (36%) and more are below basic (26%) than when the test was last administered in 1998. The gap between white and Asian-American students and their African-American and Hispanic counterparts remains wide. Clearly our high schools are not working for large numbers of students.

From the data on Louisiana’s high schools and students set out below, it is apparent that right now the state mirrors the national experience, and, on some indicators, such as graduation rates, it falls below the national average. Although improvements have been made at the margins, most secondary schools throughout the country remain impervious to significant change. As the Education Trust has observed, “the data suggests an object at rest in a world that is rapidly rushing by.”² The American high school experience is sorely in need of rethinking and redesign.

States have a significant role to play in transforming the American high school experience. States set policies that have a major impact on students and their schools. Governors, legislators, state school board members and state superintendents of education command media and public attention when they speak on education. Even when state budgets are tight, leaders have opportunities to target limited federal and state funds toward key priority areas. In addition, the new role of states in setting standards and administering assessments has given leaders enormous influence and responsibility.

To add to the pressure on states to improve the quality of their high schools, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that all high schools:

- Steadily increase students’ test scores and graduation rates, ensuring that 100 percent of students meet proficient levels of achievement by the spring of 2014,
- Annually test—in the subjects of reading, math, and, eventually science—all students in at least one grade (10-12). States must include limited-English-proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities in the testing, providing appropriate “accommodations” when necessary—for example, allowing more time, or giving students tests in their native language,
- End the practice of counting alternative graduation certificates, such as the General

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- Education Development program (GED), as comparable to graduating from high school,
 - Define graduation rates in a rigorous and standardized way (for example, the percentage of ninth graders who graduate from high school four years later), and
 - Employ only “highly qualified” teachers in core academic subjects by the end of school year 2005-06.³

In the past 15 years Louisiana has made great strides toward improving the quality of education for its K-12 students. It adopted a standards, assessment and accountability system that is rated among the top 10 in the country by the Princeton Review, Education Week and The Fordham Foundation. In accordance with the provisions of No Child Left Behind, it has set goals for all its school districts and schools to achieve by 2014. It created a Commission on Teacher Quality and adopted many of the recommendations. It developed model curriculum tied to content standards and instructional materials designed to improve classroom teaching. And it is beginning to see the fruits of these efforts in its elementary schools and to a certain extent in its middle schools.

A Commission on Secondary Education, created by the Governor in 1999, made a series of policy recommendations to improve high school education in the state. A number of programs and initiatives, including TOPS, Career Options, and Diploma Endorsements are in place and focus on high schools. However, according to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s 2001-02 annual performance report, *Reaching for Results: Picturing our Progress*, “Most high schools are not seeing the gains—and some are dropping—because they have not taken accountability and reform seriously yet.”

The challenge for Louisiana today is to ensure that high schools are able to deliver on the promise to prepare all students for success so that they can graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college, careers and community life.

A few states around the country, notably California, Maine, Rhode Island and Vermont have begun to systematically examine their policies affecting high schools and to rethink the purpose, organization and educational ideas that dominate high school today.

As Louisiana focuses the spotlight on its high schools and commits to transforming and strengthening high school education in the state, it will join the handful of states in tackling the most difficult challenge in education today. As it has in the standards movement, Louisiana can be a leader for the nation in redesigning high schools for the success of all students.

This paper provides a glimpse at the state of Louisiana’s high schools today, outlines the major policies and programs currently in place that affect high schools, and suggests some next steps the state might take to support the redesign of its high schools and thus achieve its policy goals.



Louisiana High Schools Today

Louisiana has 292 public high schools and 146 public “combination” schools⁴ serving about 193,000 students⁵ in grades 9-12.⁶ There are currently 66 public school districts, including the 64 parishes and the Cities of Monroe and Bogalusa. Baker and Zachary Community Schools will bring the total number of districts to 68 in school year 2003-04. Eighty-two high schools were designated as Title I schools in 2002-03.

Of public high school students, in 2002-03 about 30% of them were 9th graders; 25% were 10th graders; 23% were 11th graders and 22% were 12th graders. Seventeen percent of 9th graders (over 10,000) are retained, more than double the retention for the K-12 system as a whole. Currently, the largest drop in student participation takes place after 9th and 10th grades. There were about 32,466 students 14-21 years of age who were designated as special needs students under IDEA as of December 2002—although not all of these students are in high school.

In terms of performance, in the 2001-02 school year, 35 of the state’s high schools and combination schools (11%) fell below the state average of 75.7% on their School Performance Scores; 107 (33%) were at the state average; 130 (40%) were above the state average, but below 100 SPS, and 51 (16%) were at 100 SPS or greater. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s goal is that all schools will achieve a SPS of 120 or better by 2014—only 11 years from now.⁷ Currently only 16% of schools serving 9-12th graders have an SPS of 100 or better.⁸ Thirty-six high schools have been identified as “in need of improvement.”

While 81% of public 10th graders passed the English GEE in 2002 and 70% passed the Math GEE on their first attempt (up from 2001), the cut score was set at “Approaching Basic” level.⁹ In Spring 2001, only 12.9% of high schoolers were rated proficient or advanced in English Language Arts, 42.7% were at basic and 44.5% were at unsatisfactory or approaching basic. In math 17.9% were proficient or advanced, 32.7% were at basic and 49.3% were approaching basic or unsatisfactory.¹⁰

In 2000-01, Louisiana student’s mean score on the ACT was 19.6. The national mean was 21, with 36 being the highest score possible.¹¹ However, it is important to note that 80% of Louisiana’s high school students took the ACT, compared to 38% of students nationwide. The level required for a TOPS Tech scholarship was 17 in 2002, 20 for TOPS Opportunity, 23 for TOPS Performance and 27 for TOPS Honors. In 2002, 60% of Louisiana’s test takers scored a 17 on the ACT, the level required for TOPS Tech.

Currently 44% of students meet the threshold for a Career Technical Endorsement and 28% of these students score at or above BASIC on the GEE 21.

Only 32 systems offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, involving 24% of the high schools in the state—the lowest percentage of students in the nation earning AP credit. Louisiana has less than 1% of its high school students engaged in dual enrollment postsecondary/high school programs.¹²



According to the report of the Secondary School Redesign Commission, of 100 Louisiana Kindergarten students--¹³

- About 45 do not graduate from high school,
- 29 go directly to work, the military (52% of high school graduates)
- 26 go directly (or within one year) to college (48% of graduates)
- 9 graduate from college within 6 years. (16% of graduates)

As the above statistics suggest, although 91.1% of 12th graders graduated in 2000, the dropout rate is quite high. Some students have left the system by the start of high school and of the students who enter ninth grade, about 66% of them graduate. There is also a large graduation gap between African American and white students. Although 47.7% of public school students are African American, they comprise only 39.3% of graduates. In contrast, 48.9% of students are white and whites make up 57.1% of the graduates. And the gap is even higher for students with disabilities with only 21% exiting high school with a diploma.¹⁴ If population trends hold, it is estimated that public schools will soon be majority African-American and increasingly disadvantaged economically. The gap in standardized tests scores and graduation rates for students in these two categories will need special attention as the state and its schools strive to meet Adequate Yearly Performance targets under the No Child Left Behind Act.

In November 2002, the Skills Gap Task Force published its report, *Right Here, Right Now!* The report compared the post high school preparation of the Class of 1999 with education and skill levels needed in the 21st century. It found:

- 28% graduated & entered 4-year public or private colleges while projections are that only 20% of the workforce will need a 4-year college degree
- 5% graduated and entered 2-year colleges, proprietary schools or apprenticeships while projections suggest 65% of workers will require an associates degree or advanced training
- 33% graduated and entered the labor market directly while projections suggest that only 15% of jobs will require minimum skills, and
- 34% dropped out of the system before completing high school or left the state, far more than projections suggest the labor market can absorb.



A Strong Foundation for Reform

Louisiana has laid down a strong foundation for high school reform with its state content standards for academic and career programs, subject area benchmarks, grade level expectations, Graduation Exit Exam, year 2014 goals for schools, instructional supports for teachers and the changes being made in response to the Teacher Quality Commission. In addition, the bar is being raised for high school quality through the accreditation criteria for high schools developed by the Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. These are briefly described below.

Standards

State content standards and subject area benchmarks have been developed in math, language arts, science, social studies, foreign languages, the arts, physical education, health and career areas. There are also content standards in Agriculture, Business, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Health Occupations. Standards for Trade and Industry are in development. In addition, in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) the state is developing grade-level expectations of what students should know and be able to do in four core content areas for grade K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

Assessments

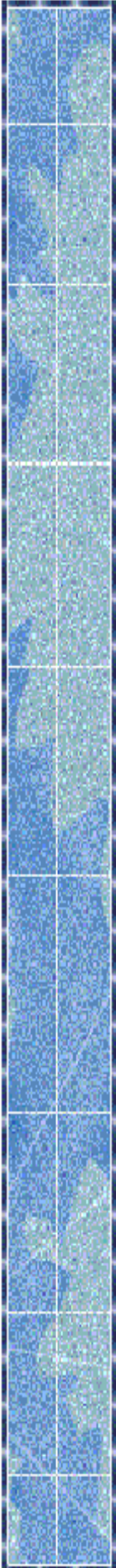
The state's Graduation Exit Exam for the 21st Century (GEE 21) is administered to students in grades 10 and 11. It measures performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Passage is a graduation requirement. Louisiana is one of only 18 states to administer an exit exam. The GEE complements the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP)—a high stakes test for students in grades 4 and 8. Passing LEAP is required for promotion into high school. The GEE and LEAP assessments are criterion reference tests (CRT). In addition, a normed referenced test (NRT) is administered to 9th graders. In Spring 2006, the NRT will be augmented with additional items that measure state standards. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) conducts studies to determine the degree of alignment between the state's content standards and the state tests.

School Performance Scores

Each school receives a School Performance Score (SPS), which is based on CRT, NRT, attendance and dropout rates. Schools are categorized as advanced, proficient, basic, approaching basic or unsatisfactory. There are rewards and recognition in place for schools that meet or surpass their Growth Targets and corrective action policies for those that don't.

Adequate Yearly Progress

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that each state and district issue annual report cards. The report cards must include information about student progress and whether students are making Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP. Each state develops its own definition of AYP that all of its schools and districts must meet. The state test must be the



primary factor in the definition, but other indicators may also be included. States must also establish measurable, annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvements in AYP. For high schools, Louisiana has defined AYP as the percent of students proficient on the GEE21 and NRT, and attendance and dropout rates. BESE has set six incremental goals for schools to meet between 2003 and 2014. The first, to be met in 2004-05, requires that 47.4% of each school's students be proficient in English and 41.8% in Math.

State and district report cards must also show the progress of subgroups within the student population as a whole that meet AYP, including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and limited English proficiency and students from major racial and ethnic groups. Each subgroup must meet or exceed the measurable annual objectives set by the state for each year, and at least 95% of students in each of the four subgroups must be included in the assessment.

A school that fails to make AYP for two consecutive years must be identified for school improvement. Thirty-six high schools in Louisiana have already been identified as "in need of improvement." A Title I school designated as "in need of improvement" faces rigorous corrective action including restructuring and student choice. There are 82 Title I high schools in the state. The Act also requires that information on AYP be provided to the public in an understandable and uniform format.¹⁵

[Education Goals](#)

In June 2003, the Board revised its goals to align with the requirements of No Child Left Behind. The Board expects each school to achieve a School Performance Score (SPS) of 120 by 2014 and has set incremental goals and annual measurable objectives for NCLB subgroup analysis. The SPS is aligned with AYP and is computed using the same indicators, i.e. student performance on the GEE21 (CRT) and NRT and attendance and dropout rates. The new goal replaces the state's previous 10- and 20-year goals for its schools.

[Curriculum and Instruction](#)

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) is evaluating the curriculum in each of the local districts and is developing model curriculum.

The state mandates that teachers of required subjects provide instruction in the skills and competencies embodied in the state's content standards. The state also mandates that student performance standards established by the state must be included in appropriate courses and levels.

There are several state-developed tools to assist teachers in improving instructional practice. *Making Connections: Teaching, Learning and Technology in Support of the Louisiana Content Standards* is an interactive, searchable, database-driven website that provides K-12 lessons linked specifically to the Louisiana content standards and K-12 Educational Technology Standards. *Teacher-to-Teachers* is a set of integrated materials designed for use by high school teachers. The materials include 40 videos—10 each in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies and accompanying lesson plans.

Quality Teaching

In April 1999, the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) formed a Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality. Its mission was to improve teacher quality in Louisiana by recommending policies that would lead to a cohesive PK-16+ system to hold universities and school districts accountable for the aggressive recruitment, preparation, support and retention of quality teachers. The Commission made 60 recommendations. In October 2001 the Commission was reconstituted as the Blue Ribbon Commission for Education Excellence and charged with overseeing the implementation of the Teacher Quality recommendations.

Some of the Commission's key recommendations that affect high school reform are listed below along with action taken to date to implement the proposals. The Commission called for:

- *Identification of core knowledge for teachers.* Colleges and districts from across the state should work together in consortia to identify core knowledge that teachers must possess to teach the K-12 content standards, pass the PRAXIS examinations, and meet NCATE accreditation requirements and effectively teach higher achieving students. By March 2002, core knowledge was identified for math, English/language arts, science, social studies, the Arts, technology and the learner in the learning environment.
- *Establishing Teacher Preparation Redesign Committees at all colleges and universities* to align university curriculum with the core knowledge for teachers. By March 2002, all universities established redesign committees.
- *Establishing Blue Ribbon Professional Development Schools at all colleges and universities to provide positive learning environments* in which preservice teachers, experienced teachers and university faculty work together to produce higher achieving K-12 students. As of March 2002, all have at least one professional development school.
- *Creating a Teacher Cadet Program* supported by universities and school districts that allow high school juniors and seniors to take electives for high school/university credit that introduce them to the teaching profession. The program is now offered as an elective program at 40 active teaching sites with eight college partners.
- *Developing materials and counseling high school students on pros and cons of entering and remaining within the teaching profession.* The Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) Program is in place at both middle and high schools across state.
- *Including district teacher certification rate in formula when developing the state District Accountability System.* Twenty percent of the district's performance score in 2002-03 will be based on the number of certified teachers in the district (5%) and the number of uncertified teachers in low performing schools (15%).
- *Developing a content-focused certification structure.* A new certification structure with more content focus has been approved, and universities are redesigning

programs using the new structure, including grades 7-12.

- *Developing a Teacher Preparation Accountability System.* A new Board of Regents policy requiring the creation of such a system was approved in September 2000 and implemented in April 2002 to evaluate universities based on teaching success of their graduates.
- *Developing report cards for teacher preparation programs.* Reports on all universities for both public and private programs were issued in April 2001 and 2002.
- *Redesigning university teacher preparation curriculum to align with standards.* Board of Regents adopted a new policy and Title II ESEA grants were used to develop the new preparation programs.

Principal Induction Program

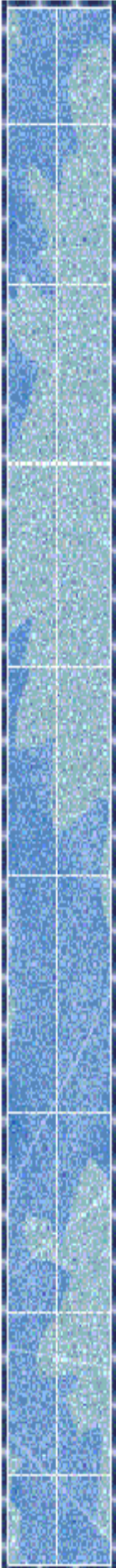
This program provides professional development for first and second year principals and first-year assistant principals. It is funded with 8(g) resources. Over 100 high school principals and assistant principals have participated.

State and Regional Accreditation

All public high schools are approved by the state and must adhere to the policies and procedures in Bulletin 741, Louisiana's Handbook for School Administrators, which includes all state laws, policies and regulations. The Commission on Secondary and Middle Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits high schools in Louisiana. The Commission is comprised of elected members and their respective state committees. The Louisiana Secondary and Middle School Committee is located at Louisiana State University and is responsible for providing the leadership for implementing and monitoring accreditation protocols and services. Current accreditation standards were adopted in 2000 and will be updated in 2005. In order to be accredited schools must apply and be recommended by the state committee. High schools must meet standards in the areas of beliefs and mission, governance, leadership, human resources (including staffing and class size criteria), financial and physical resources, guidance and other services, curriculum, instructional design, library media services, and assessment. Schools must also participate in and commit to a school improvement program, which is a three-phase process involving planning, peer review, and implementation. A school must host a peer review team at least once every five years.¹⁶

Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education: 2001

The Board of Regents is "constitutionally charged to plan, coordinate, and exercise budgetary responsibility for all public postsecondary education in Louisiana. It serves as the representative of public postsecondary education and is responsible for providing advice and recommendations concerning postsecondary education to the governor and the legislature."¹⁷ The Board developed a Master Plan in 2001, which will be updated in 2006. While different types of postsecondary institutions have their own Board of Supervisors, the Board of Regents provides overall leadership to the system. The system includes the Community and Technical College System, the State University System, the Southern



University System, the University of Louisiana System, and Professional Schools, Specialized Institutions and Units, plus a number of other four-year colleges.

The work of the Board impacts high schools in two very important ways: admissions criteria and teacher preparation. Master Plan: 2001 sets benchmarks for admissions to postsecondary institutions. The Plan calls for four-year institutions to establish admission's criteria by 2005 that, at a minimum, includes the completion of the Regents' high school curriculum (currently the TOPS curriculum), plus high school grades, class rank and standardized test scores. It has established four recommended levels of admission: Selective I, II, III (based on varying levels of the above criteria) and Open Enrollment, which requires a diploma from a BESE approved high school, a GED or its equivalent, or an appropriate score on an Ability to Benefit test. As noted above, the Board joined with BESE "to refashion how prospective teachers at the elementary and secondary level are recruited, prepared and retained."¹⁸ This collaboration has resulted in the identification of core knowledge for teachers, the redesign of teacher preparation programs, and the development of a Teacher Preparation Accountability System.

Vision 2020: Master Plan for Economic Development

The Louisiana Economic Development Council, created by the legislature in 1996, has developed a strategic plan, Louisiana: Vision 2020. It is built around a vision of Louisiana as a place with a vibrant, balanced economy; a well-educated workforce; and a quality of life that places it among the top ten states in the nation in which to live, work, visit and do business. The Council prepares an annual action plan with benchmarks and provides a report on progress to date in three areas: education, the economy and quality of life.

Goal 1 is Education. The Council has set 11 objectives set for this goal. Those affecting high schools include the following:

- To improve the reading and math skills of every student by high school graduation,
- To have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom,
- To have student completion rates approaching 100 percent for PreK-12 and post-secondary education,
- To raise minority achievement levels to close the achievement gap between minorities and whites at all levels of education, and
- To make workforce education and technical training programs widely available at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

State Policies Affecting High School Redesign

The state has numerous laws and policies on the books, which directly affect high schools. These include requirements on instructional time, participation of school staff in decision-making, scheduling, class size, guidance, school leaving age, libraries, substance abuse education and graduation. These policies affect a district or school's ability to redesign the high school experience.

Instructional Time

The state requires districts to provide 182 days of which the equivalent of 177 days must be instructional time. This equates to 63,720 minutes per year of instructional time. It allows seniors to be dismissed up to 10 days prior to end of school year. In order to be eligible to receive grades, high school students must be in attendance a minimum of 80 days per semester or 160 days a school year for schools not operating on a semester basis. Students attending high school classes operating in 90 minute blocks of instructional time must be in attendance 80 days or its equivalent in order to be eligible to receive grades. While the law specifies number of minutes of instructional time, local districts and schools have flexibility to design schedules in different ways. For example, some districts have gone to a four-day per week schedule; others are making extensive use of block scheduling options.

Participation of staff in decision-making

Under state policy, each school is required to be administered on a democratic basis with teachers and other staff members participating in the development of policies.

Scheduling

The minimum length of a high school class must be no less than 55 minutes of time in a 7-period day. Schools are required to provide parents/guardians with a list of course offerings and graduation requirements prior to student registration.

Class Size

The maximum enrollment in grades 4-12 is set at 33 students per class with certain exceptions. It is recommended that teachers have a student load of a maximum of 150 students in a six period day and 180 in an eight period day.

Guidance

Each secondary school must provide guidance counselors at a ratio of 1:450 or a major fraction thereof.

School leaving age

The school leaving age is set at 17 years, except that students between 16 and 17 may withdraw from school prior to graduation with the written consent of parent, tutor or legal guardian.

School facilities

Each secondary school must have a library and a librarian.

Substance Abuse Education

Each high school is required to provide a minimum of 8 contact hours of substance abuse prevention education each year for grades 10-12 and 16 hours for grade 9.

Graduation requirements

In order to graduate, all students must pass the GEE and complete a minimum of 23 Carnegie units, including 15 required units and 8 elective units. Elective units can be earned at technical colleges, as well as in high school. Students can also receive high school credit in lieu of coursework if they pass a proficiency exam. The minimum course requirements for a Standard Diploma are:

- 4 units of English, including English I, II, III
- 3 units of Math
- 3 units of Science, including Biology
- 3 units of Social Studies, including American History, Civics and Free Enterprise
- 0.5 units of Health
- 1.5 units of Physical Education
- 1 unit of a computer-related elective required by Career Options Law
- 7 optional electives

High School Credit for Taking Post-Secondary Courses

Louisiana's high school students may participate in college courses, special programs, and college courses in vocational education when they meet the following criteria.

- For college credit in Vocational Education – the high school must have established a protocol for receiving reports on student attendance and grades every six- or nine weeks; the student must meet the entrance requirements established by the college, and receive approval from the high school principal.
- For College Courses - the high school must have established a protocol for receiving reports on student attendance and grades every six- or nine weeks; and the student must meet the entrance requirements established by the college. In addition, the student must earn at least two or three college credit hours per semester and a course of two college hours can be counted as no more than one unit of credit toward high school graduation.

In the May 2003, BESE approved a series of Diploma Endorsements, reflective of the required 23 Carnegie Units, in the following areas:

	<i>Standard Endorsement</i>	<i>Career Technical TOPS Opportunity Endorsement</i>	<i>Career Technical TOPS TECH Endorsement</i>	<i>Academic Endorsement</i>
Core Academic Courses, PE and Health	15 credits	15 credits	15 credits	15 credits, plus 1 additional unit of either Math, Science or Social Studies & 2 units of Foreign Language
Computer related elective	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit
Other Electives	7 units	1 unit of Fine Arts and 2 units of Foreign Language, plus 4 optional	4 or 6 units	3 units
Complete Area of Concentration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, core courses may count
GEE 21	Pass English & math, plus either science or social studies	Pass all four with score of Approaching Basic	Pass all four with score of Approaching Basic	Pass all 4 components of GEE with score of Basic or above OR one of the following combinations with the English Language Arts score at Basic or above: 1 approaching Basic, 1 Mastery or Advanced, and 1 Basic or above, OR 1 Approaching Basic and 2 Mastery or Above.
GPA & ACT	None	Meet TOPS Opportunity requirements	Meet TOPS TECH requirements	Meet TOPS Opportunity GPA and have an ACT score of 23
Other		Have a BESE approved industry-based certification OR 3 Carnegie credits in a Career Technical area that articulate to a postsecondary institution, either by actually obtaining the credits and/or being waived from having to take such hours; AND Have a minimum of 90 hours of work-based learning experiences	Have a BESE approved industry-based certification OR 3 Carnegie credits in a Career Technical area that articulate to a postsecondary institution, either by actually obtaining the credits and/or being waived from having to take such hours AND Have a minimum of 90 hours of work-based learning experiences	Complete a senior project OR an AP course with score of 3 or higher on exam OR 1 Carnegie unit in an IB course with a score of 4 or higher on the exam OR have 3 college hours of non-remedial, articulated credit in a core area.



Statewide Programs and Resources Available to All High Schools and High School Students

Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs)

There are eight Regional Education Service Centers that provide help to schools and districts in a number of areas, including: school improvement planning, curriculum development, professional development and school climate. They have district assistance teams and maintain a resource library.

Statewide Distributive Learning Network

The Network provides quality high school courses to students via audio/video conferencing, satellite, audio graphics, and the web.

Its current initiatives include the Louisiana Virtual School, Tele-Learning and Satellite Programs. It is also running an Algebra One Online Pilot targeted at students in rural and urban schools with a shortage of math teachers.

Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

Created by Act No. 1375 in 1997, the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students provides financial assistance to any qualified student who enrolls in a state college or university, a state vocational-technical institution, or a regionally accredited independent college or university in the state that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The intent of the law is to ensure that qualified students receive the financial assistance they need to pursue postsecondary education. Students must apply for federal financial aid prior to receiving funds under TOPS.

A uniform database tracks applications and student progress through their postsecondary experience.

There are four types of assistance programs. The qualifications for each vary and the amount of the award varies as well.

- TOPS Tech
- TOPS Opportunity
- TOPS Performance
- TOPS Honors

The Opportunity, Performance and Honors programs were part of the original legislation. The TOPS Tech Award was added later and differs from the others in that it may only be used at an eligible postsecondary institute for enrollment in a program for a vocational or technical education certificate or diploma. While a student can use a TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors award to attend a technical school, TOPS Tech can only be used for attendance at a campus of the Louisiana Technical College or a Louisiana public college that offers non-academic courses.

Career Options

Career Options was created by Act 1124 in 1997. It requires that:

- All 6th - 8th grade students complete six career awareness activities per year,
- All high school students complete a five-year educational plan, and
- All high schools establish at least one career major for students

Career majors allow for a specific sequence of courses that will prepare a student for a first job or further education/training in that field. In order to successfully complete a career major, students must have:

- 4 English credits
- 3 math credits
- 3 science credits
- 4 career related courses
- 1 basic computer course
- 1 related technical course

Currently, there are 68 state approved Career Majors offered throughout the state of Louisiana. These majors are organized under the US Department of Education career clusters. By state law, the career majors program must be evaluated on an annual basis.

It is estimated that in 2001-2002, 89% of eighth graders had completed a 5-year plan. A great majority of students in grades 9-12 updated their 5-year education plan, with the highest number occurring in grade 9 at 93.2% and tapering down to 70% in grade 12.

Seventy-one percent of 9th-12th graders were enrolled in a career major in 2001-02. The highest rate, at close to 75% was reported for seniors, with 9th graders at 69%.

The most popular career major in that year was Business and Administration, which was chosen by about 25% of all high school students, followed by Human Services at about 13%, Agriculture and Natural Resource Planning at 6.4%, Architecture and Construction at 4.2% and Education and Training at almost 3%.

Students responding to a student survey administered in 2001-02 said they were most influenced in their choice of careers by family (32%), teachers and guidance counselors (27%), friends (16%), and career awareness activities (14%). In a similar survey, parents who responded (nearly 26,000) were overwhelmingly positive about career majors.

Fifty-eight percent of high school students enrolled in a career major said they wanted to attend a four-year college after high school and 12% said they wanted to attend a two-year institution. Another 12% said they planned to enter the labor force and 6% said they wanted to enter the military.

In 2001-02, of the possible 95 different career majors defined under the 16 national career clusters, the Louisiana schools were offering 91 (96%) of such programs.

Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS)

Under the auspices of the Board of Regents, EPAS is available to all middle and high schools. Its purpose is to (1) help raise academic standards, expand college access and success for all students consistent with the Master Plan, (2) improve student preparation for

important transitions, (3) foster effective school improvement programs, and (4) improve articulation between secondary and postsecondary education/training.

EPAS was developed by ACT and is organized around four key service areas: assessment, instructional support, student planning and evaluation. There are three tools in the assessment component that gauge students' skills in English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning: Explore for 8th graders, Plan for 10th graders and the ACT Assessment for eleventh and twelfth graders. The individual reports generated from the assessment tools "provide teachers with clear targets for integrating these skills into classroom instruction and instructional resources are available in each skill area." EPAS also includes a "career exploration and planning component to help students relate what they are doing today in the classroom to future career and educational goals." The evaluation component "includes 'linkage' reports that monitor individual and group performance from eighth to tenth to twelfth grade."¹⁹

In 2002-03, 42,780 eighth graders, 37,424 tenth graders and 36,360 twelfth graders participated in EPAS. One of the striking findings of the EPAS Explore results for 8th graders is that 67% of students state they plan to go to college, but only 31% are planning to take a college prep high school program. Similarly, of the tenth graders who used the Plan tool, 76% said they wanted to go to college, but only 48% are on target for being college ready and only 41% said they have taken or are currently taking Algebra 1 and Geometry.²⁰

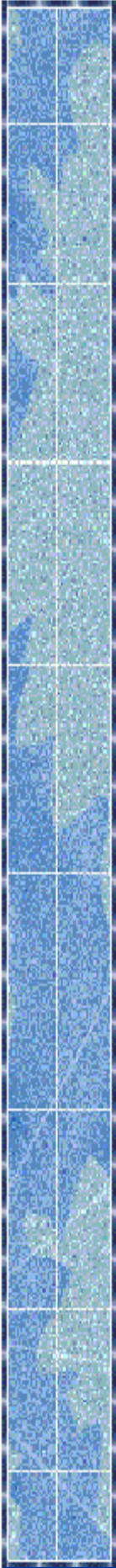
[Louisiana Work Ready! Certificate](#)

This certificate is a portable credential that signifies to an employer that an individual has certain fundamental skills necessary for success in the workplace in three areas: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. The Governor and the Workforce Commission approved the certificate in February 2003. There are three kinds of certificates: Gold for scoring a 5 or above in each of the core areas on the WorkKeys test; Silver for scoring a 4, and Bronze for those scoring a 3. WorkKeys is a test developed by ACTTM creator of the ACT college entrance exam. It measures skills in applied mathematics, reading for information, locating information, applied technology, business writing, teamwork, observation, listening and writing—and provides business and industry with a basic skills assessment related to the workforce. WorkKeys offers schools and businesses a Job Profiling Tool that determines the skill level needed for a particular job; the WorkKeys Assessment to determine the skill level possessed by the individual, and Instructional Support to raise the skill level of the individual. The State Department of Education has authorized local education agencies to purchase basic skill upgrade software that correlates with WorkKeys.

[Pre-GED/Skills Option Program/School](#)

The purpose of the Pre-GED/Skills Option Program is to provide a successful path for students who cannot earn a regular high school diploma. To be eligible a student must:

- Be 16 years of age or older and
- Have failed 8th grade LEAP 21 English language arts or math for one or more years, or
- Have failed English language arts and/or math, and science, or social studies



portion of the GEE, or

- Have earned not more than five Carnegie units by age 17, or more than 10 by age 18 or more than 15 by age 19 or
- Participated in out of level testing or alternative assessment.

□

Targeted Programs and Resources Affecting Some High Schools

Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS)

LINCS is a comprehensive, standards-based professional development process to design and implement standards-based, technology-rich lessons into the daily instructional program of classroom teachers.

Only schools with School Performance Scores below 100 (about 272 high schools) are eligible. Priority is given to those schools that have experienced a decline or plateau in their SPS, did not meet their Growth Target, have an academically unacceptable growth label, and/or have a SPS below the state average.

LINCS first started working with grades 9-12 during the 2002-03 school year. Regional coordinators provide support to district/school content leaders and teachers. Content leaders provide follow-up classroom activities for teachers. School Leadership Teams and Content Teams participate in intensive professional development. Whole faculty study groups meet regularly to increase content knowledge, plan lessons, study research, analyze student work and share ideas. Comprehensive program evaluation monitors program quality and progress.

AP Online

Using federal funds, Louisiana provides access to AP courses via the Internet for low-income students who attend Title I schools or who are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch. Courses are available through the Louisiana Virtual High School and other providers.

Alternative Schools/Programs

Revised Statute 17:416.2 requires that “any student suspended or expelled from school pursuant to the provisions of RS 17:416 shall remain under the supervision of the governing authority of the school system taking such action using alternative education programs for suspended and expelled students.” An alternative school is usually housed in a separate location, while an alternative program is usually housed at the regular school site.

Sixty-two of the school systems have alternative programs, but not all serve suspended and expelled students. Districts may apply for a waiver from the requirement for economically justifiable reasons. In 2000, 24 systems applied for a waiver.

Jobs for Louisiana’s Graduates

Jobs for Louisiana Graduates is part of the Jobs for Americas’ Graduate network. The program delivers counseling and support services to at-risk and disadvantaged high school youth and provides 12 months of post-graduation follow-up services. Currently, 18 high schools are participating in the program.

[Industry-based Certification](#)

The state Workforce Commission began the process of implementing industry-based certifications by working with representatives from the Louisiana Restaurant Association (ProStart), the Louisiana Automobile Dealers Association (ASE/NATEF) and the Louisiana Chemical Association (Process Operators). The Commission convened an interagency workgroup to endorse the previous work and to decide which occupational certifications to implement based on employer and industry demand and need. The work group includes representatives from the Departments of Education, Economic Development, Social Services and Labor, as well as the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

The work group members selected six additional certifications to pilot and promote within the state. These certifications are in the areas of PC maintenance and repair, network administration, web development and welding. They were selected based on several criteria: demand, portability, feasibility in terms of costs, availability of instructors and options for multiple levels of training that include entry level jobs. The certifications were chosen so that entry-level training could begin in high school and progress through postsecondary. Offering Industry-based Certification is optional to local school systems.

In the 2002-03 school year, 2912 students were enrolled in programs offering Industry-based Certification, and 1157 students were awarded certifications. Many programs require two years of work.

[Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund \[8\(g\)\]](#)

Under a 1986 Louisiana constitutional amendment, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act money is dedicated to the improvement of education in the state. Education grants are awarded on an annual basis and are utilized for the support and enhancement of elementary and secondary education. In 2001-02, one grant was made for middle school/high school redesign, but numerous grants have been made to high schools for specific programs and activities.

[High Schools that Work \(HSTW\)](#)

There are about 59 high schools that are using the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) HSTW framework to inform their redesign efforts. Four of the 20 LINC high schools are also HSTW sites, and HSTW is now being implemented under LINC.

HSTW is nationally recognized as a whole school reform framework with 10 core principles. "SREB expects high schools to show consistent progress until at least 85% of the students meet the three performance goals and until the school improvement framework is fully implemented. Active membership in the network is maintained by demonstrating significant progress toward fully implementing all Key Practices and achieving the reading, mathematics and science goals in 2004-06."²¹

HSTW maintains a classification system of the high schools it serves. To date of the 43 high schools it has assessed in Louisiana, no school has been rated *exemplary*; six have been

rated as *approaching exemplary*; four as *recognized*; 14 as *approaching recognition*; 17 as *assistance needed*; and one was unrated. To gain an *exemplary* rating a site must have at least 75% of its participating students meeting two or three performance goals.

Approaching exemplary sites have 50-74% of their participating students meeting each of the three performance goals. *Recognized* sites have at least 50% of participating students meeting at least two performance goals. *Approaching recognition* schools have at least 40% of their students meeting one or more performance goals, and sites rated as *assistance needed* have less than 40% of their participating students meeting any performance goal. Participating students are 12th graders who were involved for three or more years in vocational education courses and took the SREB assessment.

GEAR UP

The Louisiana Systemic Initiatives Program (LaSIP), in conjunction with the Board of Regents and BESE operates a GEAR UP program in 25 middle schools in 11 districts under a \$2.5 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education. GEAR UP's mission is to raise academic achievement of low-income students and increase the number who enter and succeed in college. Students also have a chance to "earn" additional college funds through an adaptation of Louisiana's START Savings Program. The most promising GEAR UP students are given *Rewards for Success* on an annual basis.

Federal Sources of Support for High School Redesign

- *Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)*. Funds to support comprehensive school reform are available under the No Child Left Behind Act. States make competitive grants to local districts. In Louisiana some of the support for these grants comes from CSR and some from the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE). There are two high schools that currently have Cohort 1 grants and 10 that have Cohort 3 grants.
- *Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (Perkins)*. The state received \$23,702,808 in Perkins Basic Grant funds in FY 2002. Fifty-six percent of these funds go to secondary schools and 41% to postsecondary programs. In addition, the state receives \$2,223,927 in Tech Prep funds.
- *Small Learning Communities (SLC) Grants*. These federal grants are available to local educational agencies to support the creation of smaller learning communities in high schools of 1000 or more. Although these grants go directly to school districts, states can encourage districts to apply and provide TA in grant writing and evaluation. New Orleans school district is a current recipient of a SLC implementation grant of more than \$800,000.

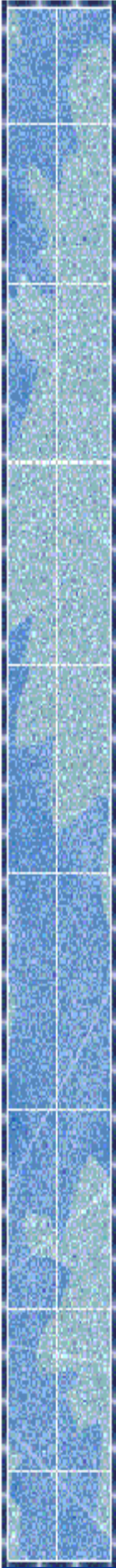


The Secondary School Redesign Commission

In August 1999, Governor Mike Foster via Executive Order MJF 99-42 appointed a Secondary School Redesign Commission and charged it with making “recommendations regarding state-level policies that must be enacted and/or changed in order to drive fairly immediate and significant improvements within the state’s secondary education system.” The Commission was also directed to examine “the connection between middle and high school; what goes on while in high school and the connections between school and work, and between high school and postsecondary institutions.” Co-chaired by Donna Contois (BESE) and Andy Kopplin (Governor’s Office), the commission included representatives from the legislature, BESE, Board of Regents, the LA Community and Technical College System Board, the Workforce Commission, K-12 educators, business leaders and community representatives.

The Commissioners made 28 recommendations. Their proposals included the following:

- *Review and modify as necessary current state Carnegie unit and course of study requirements to ensure a more focused and applied academic core, including the requirement that all students take a concentration consisting of at least four credits in a career/technical or academic area, plus two related credits including one computer technology credit (per the Career Options Law).*
- *Continue to use the 10th and 11th grade LEAP 21 as “gatekeepers” regarding the completion of a high school diploma by implementing those tests with the current planned rigor, and requiring that students pass math and English/language arts and reach a certain composite score for science and social studies.*
- *Consider phasing in end of course exams.*
- *Require all districts to provide high school teachers with a prescribed number of hours of training on how to teach quality “applied courses rich with content for all students.”*
- *Enhance two diploma enhancement options (i.e., career/technical enhancement and academic enhancement) that include the completion of a concentration of courses as well as performance indicators.*
- *Revise the TOPS program to provide greater benefits for students who obtain one or both diploma enhancements.*
- *Require all seniors to be engaged in at least one-half day of studies, dual enrollment programming, or other formal internship/work apprenticeships.*
- *Modify 4-year college entrance requirements so that the TOPS Carnegie units are the minimum entry requirements.*
- *Remove the ACT requirement for dual enrollment.*
- *Create a common set of state policies to support dual enrollment efforts.*
- *Hold postsecondary schools accountable for serving a certain % of high school students.*
- *Provide an accountability section within the MFP to help support funding for summer school, high school redesign, and other remediation efforts.*
- *Support more training for high school counselors.*
- *Lower the required student: counselor ratio.*

- 
- *Provide more state support for technical assistance and support for high school reform.*

Several of the Commission's recommendations have been acted upon. For example, during the 2000-01 school year, the Department of Education, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the School-to-Work Office, and the Community and Technical College System supported a professional development program designed to help schools plan and implement comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. Summer Institutes were held for a select group of schools to provide technical assistance in implementing the model. In addition a handbook was produced for schools, *Model for Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling*, which is available to all schools. Building on the Commission's recommendation to create a common set of state policies to govern dual enrollment, Statewide articulation agreements have been established between the Board of Regents and BESE in ProStart, Automotive, First Responder, EMT, and Teacher Cadet.



Moving Forward: Taking Reform to the Next Level

Louisiana has set ambitious goals for its high schools and high school students, and it has a wide variety of programs and policies in place that impact these goals. Now, the state needs a vision and a plan for how the institution of high school should change to meet its goals and help all students become successful. Indeed, the Secondary School Redesign Commission urged that there be “*more state support for technical assistance and support for high school reform.*”

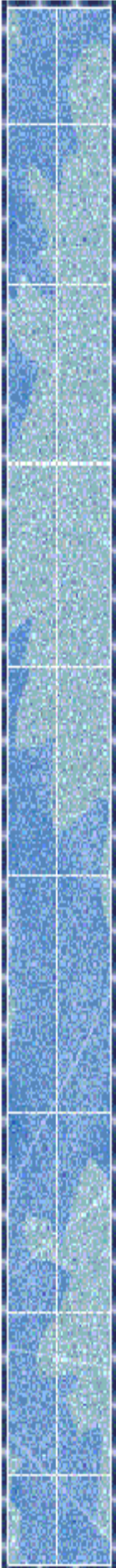
A new vision must be based on facts about the current state of high schools, the needs of adolescents, and an understanding of the knowledge and skills young people will need to be successful in society and the economy once they leave high school. But it must do more. It must be convincing enough to enable people to imagine more effective ways of educating high school students and compelling enough to give people the confidence that the changes will make a difference.

The comprehensive high school is the most common form of high school education in America today. The pervasiveness, structure and educational strategies of today’s high schools received a big boost in the 1950s from James Conant, President of Harvard University, at the time. After studying over 100 high schools throughout the country and taking into consideration the labor market demands of the 1950s, Conant made recommendations that were widely adopted. He envisioned that comprehensive high schools would have different expectations, different curriculum and different graduation requirements for students. He also expected these schools would offer differentiated courses to students going to college, those seeking a “general education”, and those who would directly enter the workforce after high school. His high school was based on Carnegie unit courses and seven period days. He thought a school of 400 students could offer such a curriculum, and it is unlikely that he ever imagined that his ideas would eventually lead to the kind of consolidation and expansion of high schools to institutions of 1000-2000 students.

The ideal of the traditional, comprehensive high school is so ingrained in our culture and experience that it is almost impossible to imagine another approach. At the high school level, the stakes are high for students and the concern about the consequences of changing high school, except at the margins, looms large in the nation’s consciousness. Many people, especially teachers and parents, worry that it is too risky to pursue an alternative to our current system for the majority of students. Yet, we know that the world has changed a great deal since the 1950s. Louisiana’s policies on standards, assessments, and accountability reflect an understanding of these changes. The labor market and employers’ expectations reflect these changes. The expectations of colleges and universities reflect these changes. And student’s aspirations for their own futures reflect these changes.

The question is: Will the state of Louisiana—its policymakers, educators and citizens—consider what it will take to change the institution of high school to also reflect these changes?

If it undertakes this mission, the state must consider that the entrance requirements and

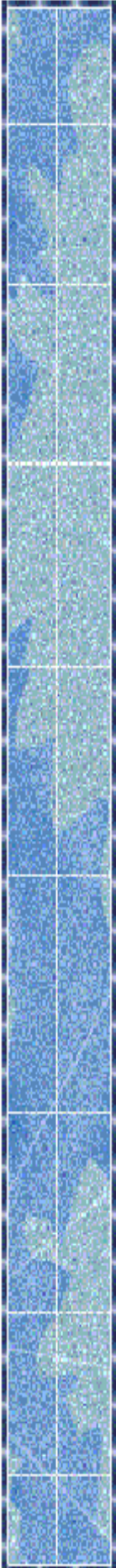


policies of colleges and universities have long had a tremendous impact on high school organization and course offerings. For example, the development of the Carnegie unit, which shapes today's high school curriculum, originated from the ideas and needs of colleges and universities. In the 1890s, two college-dominated committees of the National Education Association, the Committee of Ten and the Commission on College Entrance Requirements, first proposed the organization of curriculum into subject matter units. Then in 1905, Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with an endowment of \$10 million to set up a pension program for college professors. Foundation trustees included the Presidents of the nation's leading colleges, such as Harvard, Yale and Princeton. "They saw Carnegie's grant as an opportunity to reform education from the top down by raising "standards in American secondary and higher education through unifying and centralizing academic practice."²² They decided to create a definition of a "college" to determine who would be eligible for the pension. As part of this definition they said that a college should based admission on four years of high school preparation in certain subjects. They then developed "a standard measurement of time and credit for each subject—the Carnegie unit,"²³ and said that colleges should require 14 units for admission. They developed content descriptions for each unit and "put the weight of their influence behind the departmentalization of high school subjects, based partly on practice in higher education." To this day, most high schools are organized around Carnegie unit courses and subject matter departments, and most colleges base part of their admission criteria on Carnegie units. It is clear that colleges and university policies must be an integral part of rethinking the high school experience.

Louisiana will chart its own course to meet its own needs, but there are some important lessons to be learned from the experience of other states embarked on a similar mission. As noted above, four states are making a concerted effort to change their high schools: California, Maine, Rhode Island and Vermont.²⁴ The four states have based their reforms on their state standards, high expectations for all students and a belief that all students need to be prepared for postsecondary learning. Each state was especially concerned that high schools would need extra help and attention if their students were going to meet state standards.

In each of the four states, a commission or task force was created to examine the demographics and performance of high school students and out-of-school youth, including special education students.²⁵ Through hearings, conversations and research and analysis, these entities laid a foundation for change and engaged stakeholders and the general public in a broad dialogue about high school and the changes that need to be made. They developed a vision for the kind of high school education that would meet the needs of students, and outlined principles and practices to drive their vision. They did not describe a physical model of an ideal high school. Rather they identified a set of principles and practices that should guide reform, acknowledging the importance of local ownership and control and the fact that their principles and practices might be implemented in different settings—from redesigned traditional high schools to the creation of small, innovative schools.

The importance of creating a vision for the high school experience of the future based on the needs of today's young people cannot be overemphasized. People need a reason to make substantial change to important community institutions.



In each state, the Governor, legislators, and state education leaders used the bully pulpit to make the case for reform, raise public awareness, rally support and celebrate successes through State of the State and State of Education addresses, policy statements, legislative hearings, awards, recognition ceremonies, and other forums.

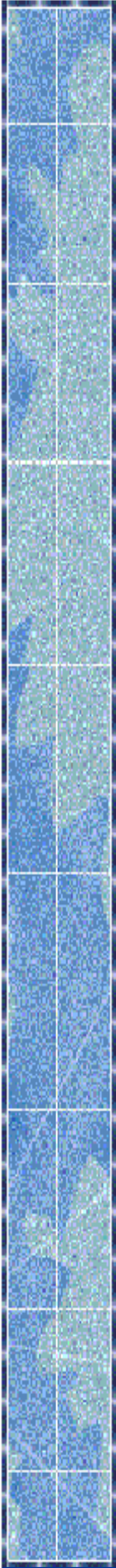
An important part of each state's efforts, especially in Maine, was a thorough review of policies and regulations affecting high schools to be sure that they were aligned with the new vision and goals. This review included a reexamination of state standards, graduation requirements, financing of school construction and renovations, the use of Carnegie units and the feasibility of moving toward competency-based instruction and assessment, and the options for creating choice, smaller schools and multiple pathways for students. The states also worked with their regional accreditation agencies to ensure that high school accreditation policies supported their new directions.

Another important contribution these states made to promote reform was to direct federal programs and grants such as Title I, Comprehensive School Reform, and professional development resources to support their efforts. Maine, in particular, decided to devote its entire Comprehensive School Reform grant monies to high school reform and obtained a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to do so. The state aligned its grant requirements to support its reform objectives. The Smaller Learning Communities grant program, which is run through local districts, rather than the state, can still be an excellent source of support for high school reform. Recently, Louisiana's State Superintendent sent a letter to all local Superintendent's urging them to consider applying for such funds. State officials can also seek the backing of national, state and local foundations to provide help to local schools and districts. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Kellogg Foundation are supporting high school reform efforts in Maine and in a number of local communities.

Once the four states had laid the groundwork for reform, each created an organizational focal point to support reforms through research, policy development, information dissemination, targeted technical assistance and networking. They learned that a strong, well-financed technical assistance effort was important and should be particularly focused on capacity building and instructional improvement. In Maine, a new Center was created; in California the Department of Education organized a new state office to oversee reforms, as well as other programs affecting high schools. Maine, in particular, found that in order to provide the level of support needed to advance reforms, such an organization must have autonomy, flexibility and stature, and be adequately resourced.

Based on Louisiana's current data, policies and programs; its goals and aspirations for its youth; and the experience of the four states who have initiated high school reform plans, there are a number of questions that state leaders need to consider as they start on the journey to transform Louisiana's high schools.

1. What are the needs of Louisiana's youth?²⁶
2. What is needed to ensure that Louisiana's youth will be successful in high school and beyond?
3. What should be the vision of the high school of tomorrow in order to meet these needs?

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4. What principles and practices are needed to buttress that vision?
 5. How can stakeholders and the public be effectively engaged in the redesign process?
 6. What resources can be used or sought out to support the process?
 7. How can state leaders best provide leadership for reform efforts?
 8. What policy and regulatory changes need to be made to support a new vision of high school?
 9. What kind of capacity and organization needs to exist at the state level to support reform?
 10. What kind of professional development is needed at the state and local level to support reform?
 11. What kind of linkages need to be made with middle schools and postsecondary institutions to promote a seamless K-16 system and ensure that youth are ready for high school when they arrive and ready for postsecondary learning when they leave?
 12. What kind of assistance will local districts and schools need to successfully implement reforms?
 13. What new approaches to high school education are being explored and implemented elsewhere that can be implemented in Louisiana?

These are not the only questions that state leaders will need to address, but they are some of the most important.

Conclusion

The state of Louisiana has laid the groundwork for high school reform. By systematically tackling the challenge of rethinking high school, to be sure a daunting task, state leaders can inspire local leaders, stakeholders, and citizens and other states to undertake this work. Most importantly it can create the conditions for achieving success for all of Louisiana's young people—and at its heart that is the ultimate goal and reward.

ENDNOTES

¹Haycock, Kati and Sandra Huang, "Are Today's High School Graduates Ready?" Thinking K-16, Education Trust, Vol. 5, Issue 1, Winter 2001, pp 1-7.

² Ibid. pp. 1-7.

³ Scott Jofus and Brenda Maddox-Dolan, *Left Out and Left Behind: NCLB and the American High School*, Washington, D.C. 2003 (Alliance for Excellent Education), p.2.

⁴ Combination schools have 9-12 students but can also serve younger students.

⁵ Data for 2000-01 School Year. Source: 152nd Annual Financial and Statistical Report 2000-01, Louisiana Department of Education, July 2002.

⁶ There are also 55 non-public high schools and 78 non-public combination schools in the state serving about 36,360 students in 9th-12th grade.

⁷ Policy adopted by BESE during its June 2003 Board meeting.

⁸ Source: *Reaching for Results: Picturing Our Progress, BESE Annual Report 2001-02*, p. 29.

⁹ Ibid. p. 23.

¹⁰ *Reaching for Results: 2000-2001 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*, Louisiana Department of Education, March 2002, p. 24.

¹¹ Ibid, p 30.

¹² Secondary School Redesign Commission Recommendations, March 2002, pp. 4-5.

¹³ Ibid. p. 1

¹⁴ Louisiana Education Quick Facts, 200-01, Louisiana Department of Education, April 2002.

¹⁵ Jofus and Maddox-Dolan, Op.Cit. pp 8-9.

¹⁶ For more information see the SACS website at www.sacs.org.

¹⁷ *Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education: 2001*, Board of Regents, State of Louisiana, p.30.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁹ *Epas: ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System Grades 8-12*, ACT Educational Services, Iowa City, Iowa

²⁰ Board of Regents Power Point Presentation.

²¹ Letter from Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President The Southern Regional Education Board accompanying *The 2002 SREB High School Assessment, Report #19000*.

²² David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Cambridge, MA (1995) Harvard University Press, and p. 91.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For a detailed description of the work of the four states see *Rethinking High School: The Next Frontier for State Policymakers* by Patricia W. McNeil (The Aspen Institute, New York, New York) forthcoming June 2003.

²⁵ Louisiana's *Blueprint for investing in Youth*, prepared by Louisiana's Youth Policy Network in collaboration with 10 state-level agencies, paid particular attention to out-of-school youth and youth aging out of foster care. Governor's Office of Workforce Commission, 2002.

²⁶ Data should include the number of adolescents of high school age in the state, the number in public and private schools, the number of out-of-school youth who have not graduated from high school, the projected number of students in the pipeline, the demographic mix (including ethnic, racial, limited English and special education), the number and type of high schools and alternative programs, performance of students on standardized tests, state graduation rates and so on. The data should be compiled for the state as a whole, by district, by school and disaggregated by income, sex, race, ethnicity and special needs. It should also assess the knowledge and skills youth will need to succeed after high school, information about college going, employment, and military service after high school, and the developmental needs of youth. The idea is to paint as clear a picture as possible of the state of the state's youth and their needs.