



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

May 20, 2022

Louisiana Legislative Auditor
Mr. Michael Waguespack
1600 North 3rd Street
P.O. Box 94397
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9397

Mr. Waguespack,

The department has reviewed the performance audit review report entitled “Impact of Teacher Qualifications and Pay on Teacher Retention and Student Performance Louisiana Public School Teachers.” The department is providing this letter in response to the report. With that intent, please consider the following:

There are few contributors more important to the academic success of a student than teacher quality. We appreciate this from a body of educational research, but also from our personal experiences as students, parents, professionals, policy-makers, and community members. Teaching is a noble profession and the beginning of other careers. Moreover, teachers do heroes work - often without the recognition of respect, support, or financial reward. What do they make? They make a difference.

In the State of Louisiana, and across our country, we must elevate the teaching profession. We must consider policy and practice adjustments to recruit talent, retain educators, and reconsider staffing and compensation models for the twenty-first century. Teachers are valuable professionals.

We should listen to classroom teachers, better understanding the conditions for which they work and exploring concrete ways to improve those conditions. By doing this, and making necessary adjustments, we are more likely to retain teachers. Further, satisfied teachers would serve as recruiters for future educators. Today, unfortunately, too few of our teachers are encouraging students, friends, and neighbors to consider careers in education. Even in our colleges of education, we note about 500 fewer education graduates annually as compared to just ten years ago.

In terms of recruiting, we should continue our development of high-school pathways for future teachers. We have recently made significant progress, working alongside local school systems, to expand these options for high school students. We should also consider seamless opportunities for degreed individuals to enter the teaching profession from other career pathways. This should include supporting them with mentorship, instructional coaching, and a direct line to certification and/or permanency through performance reviews. Further, we might turn to partnerships for teaching apprenticeship pathways and/or non-traditional credentialing avenues. We must also consider flexible staffing for today's mobile workforce in lieu of expectations that all teachers must be full-time employees. Finally, we should continue to explore alternative options to ensure students have access to the highest quality instructors



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which could, in the future, integrate additional technology while maintaining student privacy. The future is not the past; we must make adjustments to succeed.

For retention, we must be more proficient within local settings to improve workplace environments. At present, the education profession loses far too many employees far too soon. Teachers deserve school leadership they find supportive, opportunities to develop professionally, schools where their voices are heard, classroom conditions suited for success, non-administrative career pathways, and professional, differentiated compensation targeted toward need. We can't simply hope these retention requisites into reality; instead, we must be thoughtful, deliberate, and urgent in their implementation at every level of governance and management. These challenges will not be easily solved, nonetheless, they deserve the attention and action of leaders and policy-makers throughout Louisiana.

We have a renewed commitment to education within the State of Louisiana. This is true for a number of reasons but is evident from solutions-oriented educators working to recover learning loss and accelerate academics, community leaders with high expectations for school improvement, and policy-makers engagement in the arena. Still, student success is presently dependent on teachers. The best policy will fail without adult capacity for implementation. Programs will have marginalized value without competent effective educators. Educators matter and data indicate Louisiana needs an additional 2,000 teachers, at present, to staff all classrooms.

Students, in a state with long-standing educational challenges recently exacerbated by a pandemic and storms, deserve a high-quality teacher in every classroom. We exist to educate students but we cannot exist without teachers. Sadly, over several decades, we have too frequently left our teachers behind. We must all do better together. For them. For our students.

Our administration believes that children are our highest priority and educators are valued professionals. We appreciate the interest in this issue and thank you for the courtesies extended to the department to provide a response.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cade Brumley

State Superintendent of Education

Louisiana Believes