



August 18, 2021

Ms. Sandy Holloway, President
Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 94064, Capitol Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

Dr. Cade Brumley, Superintendent
Louisiana Department of Education
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5243

Dear President Holloway and Superintendent Brumley:

Due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic, the 2020-2021 school year was extremely challenging for students, families, and teachers. Unprecedented natural disasters, including Hurricanes Marco, Laura, Sally, Beta, and Delta in 2020 and the winter storm of February 2021, drastically disrupted the school year in multiple parishes. Students across the state were subjected to different levels of in-person instruction, online instruction, and instruction in a hybrid format of both in-person and online instruction.

The disorder of education due to COVID-19 and extraordinary weather events during the 2020-2021 school year resulted in inaccurate and unreliable educational outcomes and misleading measures that should not be a basis for evaluating teachers or students. It is almost impossible to create a metric that considers the repeated disruptions, unanticipated loss of instruction time, and emotional trauma due to COVID.

During Monday’s BESE retreat, the board agreed to seek a waiver from ESEA accountability and reporting requirements for the 2020-2021 school year from the United States Department of Education. The Louisiana Federation of Teachers and School Employees applauds and supports this decision. In doing so, BESE acknowledged that using unreliable data in a punitive way was not in the best interest of our schools, teachers, or students.

We must base our decisions on the most accurate and relevant data, paying particular attention to the needs of the low-income, Black, and brown communities across Louisiana hit hardest by Covid-19 and the recession.

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However, to address the structural inequities and shortcomings exposed by the pandemic, we must begin by raising up the employees who taught, fed, transported, and cared for our students, not penalize them for their heroic efforts.

In the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session, the Louisiana Legislature, recognizing the negative impact the pandemic and natural disasters would have on test scores, passed Act 53 by Sen. Cleo Fields, prohibiting the use of student tests results in evaluating teacher performance and student placement.

During the 2021 Regular Session, the Louisiana House of Representative unanimously adopted HR 133, authored by then Rep. Gary Carter, to “urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to take all necessary actions to provide that no measure of student growth be used in the evaluation of teachers for the 2020-2021 school year”.

The Louisiana Federation of Teachers and School Employees stands with other education stakeholders in requesting Dr. Brumley and the BESE to petition the USDOE to grant accountability waivers for the 2020-2021 school year and to ensure that assessments provide information to parents, educators, and the public about student performance and to help target resources and supports.

Thanks to you both for the vital roles you play in the education of Louisiana’s children.

Sincerely,



Larry J. Carter, Jr.

President

Louisiana Federation of Teachers and School Employees