Dear Fellow Educators,

In 2006, for the second year in a row, Louisiana was ranked number 1 in the nation by Education Week for its efforts to improve teacher quality. We take pride in the fact that our state has set high standards for improving classroom instruction, and recognize that none of the progress we have made to date would be possible without the strong commitment of Louisiana’s educators.

The Louisiana Department of Education is committed to supporting teachers’ efforts in the classroom. A key element of that support is professional development. Access to effective professional development is the right of every teacher in this state. The department’s Office of Educator Support develops and administers programs that provide Louisiana teachers the opportunities they need to advance their careers and take their classroom performance to higher levels.

Our goal is to empower our teachers to be effective teachers and effective leaders for educational excellence, in the classroom and in the community at large. Our challenge is to provide all teachers with professional development experiences that are needs-driven, curriculum-focused, job-embedded, and relevant—and that allow us to achieve our goal.

This Teacher’s Guide to Career Planning outlines the components of effective professional development, explains how teachers can create personal plans for professional growth, and describes the many opportunities for professional development available in our state. My hope is that this guide can help you achieve personal satisfaction and professional success.

Louisiana’s future is in the hands of your students. Your ability to succeed in the classroom bears directly on their ability to succeed in life. We all have a stake in your classroom success, and I pledge to do everything I can to support it.

Thank you for all you do, and I wish you the best.

Sincerely,

Cecil J. Picard
Louisiana State Superintendent of Education
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Professional Development Payback

“We’re learning that you get the biggest payback by working with people, investing in people— that gives you the payback you want in student achievement.”

— Diane Marcantel, district personnel director and director of school improvement, Allen Parish
Teaching as a Lifelong Career

Becoming an effective teacher is a journey, not a destination. In professional development, there is no finish line, nor is there a single route to career fulfillment. While most teachers new to the profession go through a standard certification process (see “Professional Development Requirements for Teachers in Louisiana,” page 8) and recertification every five years, the shape your career takes can be significantly different than that of other teachers in your grade or subject area.

If you can effectively assess your own interests, goals, options, and needs in the classroom, you can take control of your career and steer it down paths that bring you the most personal satisfaction. This booklet is designed to help you do just that.

Some teachers choose to concentrate on promoting learning in the classroom throughout their careers, some stay in the classroom and assume leadership roles by serving as mentor or master teachers, and some choose to move from teaching to administrative leadership at the building or district level.

All these opportunities are expanding as never before. Louisiana is a national leader in education improvement and reform, and recognizes the critical importance of good teaching to student achievement. Yes, that means more attention paid to teacher performance, but it also means a powerful continuum of professional support for teachers throughout their careers. To do the best for every student, Louisiana has dedicated itself to giving teachers the tools they need to improve instruction, assume leadership roles in school, and advance their careers.

The Continuum

For example, the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP) provides new teachers with mentoring support critical for the successful launch of their careers. The Grade-Level Expectations Educational Model initiative (GLEEM) gives teachers a better understanding of the GLEs and the state’s Comprehensive Curriculum. Bridging the Gap Through Universal Design for Learning helps teachers address the challenge of making the general curriculum accessible to students with disabilities.

Online programs such as Effective Instructional Technology (EIT), Proficiency Express, and others help teachers use technology in the classroom and in professional development. There is an array of conferences, seminars, and workshops available to broaden teachers’ perspectives and open up opportunities.

Building Blocks for Lifetime Success

The Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (see at far right on the next page) are the building blocks teachers need to achieve professional fulfillment and lifelong career success. Different teachers use them to create different paths to career advancement. Some teachers might decide to move into school administration; others may decide to develop leadership skills while maintaining the base as a classroom teacher.

The one thing all successful approaches to professional development have in common is a dedication to continuous improvement of the skills that are critical for promoting and supporting student achievement.
Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching

Louisiana has outlined the elements necessary for classroom success. New teachers must demonstrate competence in these areas, and established teachers improve their performance and further their careers by continually improving these specific skills (see “Building Blocks for Lifetime Success”). They are as follows:

Domain I: Planning
- The teacher plans effectively for instruction.

Domain II: Management
- The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning.
- The teacher maximizes amount of time available for instruction.
- The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities.

Domain III: Instruction
- The teacher delivers instruction effectively.
- The teacher presents appropriate content.
- The teacher provides opportunities for student involvement in the learning process.
- The teacher demonstrates ability to assess and facilitate student academic growth.

Domain IV: Professional Development
- The experienced teacher plans for professional self-development.
- The new teacher plans for professional self-development.

Domain V: School Improvement
- The teacher takes an active role in building-level decision making.
- The teacher creates partnerships with parents/caregivers and colleagues.
In 2004, researchers studying the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ National Board Certification program (see “Continuing Professional Development,” page 22) reported the most convincing evidence that promotion of teacher quality increases student performance.

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession, achieved through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes a teacher between one and three years to complete. Candidates have described the certification process itself as a profoundly important professional development experience.

A study of more than 600,000 student records in North Carolina found that math and reading test scores of students of National Board Certified teachers improved an average of 7 percent more than those of students whose teachers had tried to gain the certification but failed. The effect was even stronger for younger and lower-income students, whose test score gains were as high as 15 percent (Goldhaber and Anthony, University of Washington, 2004).

Teaching quality is a high priority in Louisiana. In 2006, the state’s efforts to improve teacher quality were rated number 1 in the nation by Education Week for the second year in a row.

The state’s commitment to foster teacher quality has made this a good time to be involved in career development. A wide variety of programs exists to help you be all you can be as a teacher. In Louisiana, professional development matters because it opens many opportunities for advancing your career.

It also matters very much for the success of your students. The reason Louisiana has committed itself to improving teacher quality is that research has shown a strong connection between teaching quality and student performance.

The Teacher Effect

In 1992, researchers June Rivers and William Sanders began collecting standardized test scores for some 6 million students in Tennessee, creating a data bank that tracked students’ progress year-to-year (Rivers and Sanders, Hoover Institution, 2002). It was quickly apparent that some teachers’ students consistently improved their test scores over the previous year. The connection between certain teachers and increased student performance was apparent independent of individual students’ ethnic group, class, or degree of parental involvement.

Sanders and Rivers called this connection “the teacher effect.” The effect of a good teacher on a student’s performance could still be detected for years after the student had left the teacher’s class. Just as dramatic was the effect of ineffective teachers. Students taught by ineffective teachers for three years scored some 50 percentile points lower on standardized tests than students taught for three years by high quality teachers.

Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond’s 2000 analysis of state-by-state data from the National Center for Educational Statistics found similar effects. (Darling-Hammond, Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 2000) “Teacher quality variables,” Darling-Hammond reported, “appear to be more strongly related to achievement than class sizes, overall spending levels, teacher salaries, or factors such as statewide proportion of staff who are teachers.”

Indeed, Rivers and Sanders found the teacher effect to be the most important single factor in student success. “The teacher’s effect on academic growth,” Sanders wrote, “dwarfs and nearly renders trivial all those other factors that people have historically worried about.” (Sanders, Blueprint Magazine, 1999)
High Quality Professional Development

Studies of the effect of professional development on student achievement have indicated that if professional development is effective in increasing teachers’ skills and commitment, their students will benefit as well.

A study of Dr. Douglas Reeves’ Making Standards Work program (M SW) in Ohio schools, for example, showed a clear connection between first-rate professional development and student success. M SW is a high-quality professional development initiative that meets all federal guidelines. It is research-based, focused on student achievement, and carried out in the context of on-the-job practice and evaluation. A study of 12 teachers serving 291 students in grades 3 through 5 showed significantly higher increase in student test scores among those whose teachers attended all eight M SW sessions than among students whose teachers attended two to four sessions.

Louisiana is moving to improve professional development because it believes that school improvement and student achievement come about when schools become a community of learners—engaging students, teachers, and principals in the process. Researcher Linda Darling-Hammond says that states that have made serious commitments to teacher quality and professional development see results in improved student performance.

“Of the 50 states,” she wrote in 2000, “North Carolina and Connecticut undertook the most substantial and systematic investments in teaching during the mid-1980s. Both of these states coupled major statewide increases in teacher salaries and improvements in teacher salary equity with intensive teaching mentoring and ongoing professional development . . . As a result, both states have posted large student achievement gains in mathematics and reading, despite an increase in the proportion of low-income and limited English-proficient students during that time.” (Darling-Hammond, Educational Policy Analysis Archives, 2000)

Rethinking Professional Development

Professional development matters because it is central to effective education. As the cause of school reform sweeps the country and educators rethink how schools work from top to bottom, rethinking professional development is inevitably part of the process.

“A culture shift has to take place,” says Gypsy Bryan, president of the Louisiana Staff Development Council, “going from teachers working in isolation to teachers working in collaboration for the good of the students.” Called “professional learning communities,” these collaborative groups of teachers are finding ways to learn from each other while focusing on the challenges they face in their own classrooms.

Bryan, who also serves as No Child Left Behind director of instruction for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, says that in the model used in her district, groups of educators involved in the teaching of a particular group of students come together regularly to answer four basic questions:

- What is it we want the student to know?
- How will we know when they’ve learned it?
- What do we do if they don’t learn it?
- What do we do if they do learn it?

“Teachers are coming together with that as a focus,” Bryan explains. “It’s not just meeting to meet; there’s a purpose for it.” She reports that most often, the collaboration takes on a life of its own. “The communication becomes more authentic and relevant,” she says, “and real learning arises from meeting the shared challenge.”

Steve Keyes, past president of the Louisiana Staff Development Council and staff development coordinator at Destrehan High School, believes collaborative learning is the best tool now available in professional development, as well as a potent agent for school improvement. “It’s a wonderful way for different teachers of a group of students to get down to the brass tacks of meeting the needs of these 30 children,” he says.

The Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS) program is helping schools across Louisiana set up learning communities to improve education and professional development. To learn more about collaborative learning, see “Professional Development in Your Own School” on page 23.
Make Professional Development Work for You: Six Must-Haves for You and Your Students

The Louisiana Components of Effective Professional Development give teachers and administrators the framework for creating programs that serve teachers’ professional needs and the needs of their students.

Picture yourself in your classroom. See yourself as a perfect success. Your students are happy and engaged in the subject at hand. You are the confident leader of the classroom, relaxed in the knowledge that you are teaching your students how to think, how to react, and how to enjoy learning.

Once you’ve visualized your ideal teaching experience, you have to take the steps to make it a reality. Louisiana has dozens of professional development options available to help you get the results you want in the classroom. Your challenge is to identify and select the opportunities that best reflect the Components of Effective Professional Development and make the most sense for you and your students.

The components listed at right describe the different attributes that must be present for professional development to be effective. Not every individual professional development experience will incorporate all of the components, but your total professional development plan—if it is to be effective—should speak to all of these elements. By making your professional development choices with the six components in mind, you can pick the strategies and tactics that best fit your professional goals.
Six Components of Effective Professional Development

Component 1: Needs-Driven

Produces ownership, not compliance; adapts to change, is not static. Needs-driven professional development addresses specific needs of the educators, the school, and the students. Professional development is shaped by analysis of student and teacher data, school-improvement plans, self-reflection, professional growth plans, and individual professional goals. Priorities are set based on current adult learning needs and gaps in student achievement.

Component 2: Curriculum

Generates deep understanding of content, not superficial knowledge; results in effective classroom practice, not perfunctory delivery. The content of the professional development is rooted in state curriculum standards, grade-level expectations, and comprehensive curriculum. Research-based instructional strategies and varied assessment practices inform instruction, align with state assessment, and promote academic growth and student achievement.

Component 3: Learning

Occurs regularly, not occasionally; supports team and individual learning. Professional development is part of the day-to-day school culture and provides site-based and extended learning opportunities for teachers, principals, and administrative teams. School leaders and teachers collaboratively identify individual and school-wide learning strategies that impact instruction and student achievement. The school as a learning community provides ongoing follow-up, support, and technical assistance.

Component 4: Active

Promotes active, not passive participation; stimulates critical thinking, not rote response or inattention; sparks investigation and innovative solutions. Professional development actively engages educators, addresses the needs of adult learners, models effective research-based instructional strategies, and makes use of a variety of teaching tools, both face-to-face and online.

Component 5: Relevance

Provides practical applications, not mere rhetoric; addresses the needs of students and educators for the 21st century; reflects current research, not passing trends. Relevant professional development is directly applicable to instructional practice; addresses real conditions in the classroom, school, district, and community; and makes appropriate use of information technology and resources.

Component 6: Evaluation

Focuses on effective implementation of professional development, not efficiency of delivery. Professional development is subject to diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation. The evaluation uses appropriate data to determine the effectiveness of the professional development in increasing knowledge of participants, improving instructional practices, increasing student achievement, and identifying additional needs.
Professional Development Requirements for Teachers in Louisiana

Professional development is a career-long enterprise. Many things can change as teachers pass through the different phases of their careers. That’s why the shape of professional development can vary so widely, from the structured assistance and assessment provided to teachers in their first two years, to the variety of workshops, conferences, seminars, and in-school learning groups that help veteran teachers take their craft to higher levels.

In 2002, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted a new licensure structure that ended lifetime certification of teachers. The new structure established three levels of professional licenses. Level 1 is an entry-level license, and Levels 2 and 3 are more advanced levels, requiring renewal every five years. Louisiana’s licensure structure reflects our state’s conviction that becoming a teacher is not a finite trip with a set destination, but a continuous process of renewal.

Certain basic requirements are in force for all teachers across the state. What they have in common is a dual concern for the good of Louisiana students and support for Louisiana teachers. The goal of all these requirements is to provide teachers with the tools they need for their ongoing journey toward excellence and to empower them to take their careers where they want them to go.

Support for New Teachers
Teachers entering the profession in Louisiana must graduate from a state-approved teacher preparation program, either the traditional route for students or the alternative path for people entering the profession from other occupations. Candidates must pass PRAXIS, a test of academic skills for new teachers, and be recommended by a university to receive a Level 1 teaching certificate.

Level 1 teachers must successfully complete the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP) and teach for three years to receive a Level 2 certificate. LaTAAP provides empowering teachers to succeed!

Highly Qualified Teachers
The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that teachers of all core content areas meet the requirements of the statute’s definition of a highly qualified teacher by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. To be deemed highly qualified in a core academic area, teachers must hold a standard state teaching certificate and demonstrate content mastery in the subject they teach.

Demonstration of content mastery can be done in a number of ways—passing the PRAXIS exam for that subject, college coursework equivalent to a major, National Board Certification in the content area (see “Continuing Professional Development,” page 22), or a master’s degree in the content area.*

*Another option is the Louisiana Housse (High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) option. Under Housse, teachers must earn a total of 90 CLUs in their academic area. The CLUs must be content-focused and aligned with the teacher’s individual professional growth plan (see “Plans and Portfolios,” page 9). Teaching experience in the content area may count for a maximum of 45 CLUs, with each year of successful experience counting for 3 CLUs. The Housse option expires in 2007.
One of the most important requirements of every Louisiana teacher is the professional growth plan, first drawn up by new teachers in the second semester of their first year of the LaTAAP program, and updated each year thereafter throughout their careers (see “What Is a Professional Growth Plan?” page 10).

Professional growth plans list professional objectives for the year, strategies and timelines for achieving the objectives, and the evidence, in terms of student performance, that will demonstrate success.

In LaTAAP, evidence that new teachers have achieved their growth objectives is collected in two ways—through the teachers’ portfolios and by observation of the teachers in their classrooms. The portfolio includes evidence from a particular unit of instruction, and may include instructional materials and samples of student work.

“Maintaining professional portfolios, together with updating of professional growth plans, continues throughout teachers’ careers. In later years, the focus shifts from establishing basic competence to documenting professional growth. Included in the portfolio could be the teacher’s updated resume, student work from particularly effective lesson plans, or documentation of committee work on professional issues such as curriculum development. “It’s really keeping a record of your professional accomplishments throughout your career,” says Kathy Mouton, Director of the Division of Professional Development in the Louisiana Office of Educator Support. While there is no state requirement that career teachers maintain a portfolio, portfolios are useful in documenting Continuing Learning Units (CLUs), earned for license renewal every five years, in maintaining professional artifacts, and in reflecting on career successes and learning experiences. Because professional portfolios are a collection of a teacher’s accomplishments, they are used in the selection process for teaching awards and recognitions.

Each new teacher with a mentor or mentor support team during the first two years of employment. During the third semester of employment, the new teacher is also assigned an assessment team that collects data (see “Plans and Portfolios” at right) that will be the basis for a recommendation to certify the teacher at Level 2. The assessment system also helps mentors develop profiles of new teachers’ strengths and needs. Those profiles are then used during the second year to guide professional development.

A teacher who completes LaTAAP, earns a master’s degree, and completes five years of teaching is eligible for a Level 3 certificate.

**Continuing Development**

Professional development continues throughout every Louisiana teacher’s career. Continuing Learning Units (CLU’s) are awarded for participation in different learning activities that improve teachers’ skills and students’ performance. Ongoing professional development based on earning CLU’s helps teachers stay sharp, keep abreast of new techniques, and advance their careers to higher levels of responsibility and leadership. State policy requires that all Level 2 and Level 3 educators complete 150 CLU’s every five years to renew their licenses.

Each school district decides which activities may be used to earn CLU’s. Teachers usually have a broad choice of options beyond the traditional workshops, seminars, and conferences. Depending on the requirements of teachers’ particular districts, those options can include:

- mentoring new teachers in the LaTAAP program;
- presenting workshops for other teachers in their schools;
- participating in faculty study groups; and
- other school improvement activities that increase their own professional skills.

In offering a wide variety of opportunities for earning CLU’s, Louisiana recognizes the fact that professional development addresses both the individual teachers’ career goals as well as the goals for school improvement in their district. Because teachers are central to the learning process, supporting their professional development also supports student achievement.
A professional growth plan (PGP) is a critical element of every teacher’s professional effectiveness and development. Planning for professional development is one of the major Components of Effective Teaching (see page 3) in Louisiana for both new and experienced teachers. New teachers set up PGPs as part of the LaTAAP program in the second semester of teaching, and experienced teachers update their plans every year. Louisiana takes professional development very seriously as a key element of ensuring that its teachers get what they need for classroom success. Professional development is not seen as an opportunity for teachers to pursue side interests randomly; it is meant to be pursued in response to teachers’ carefully identified needs in the classroom (see “Assessing Your Professional Needs,” page 11).

**Plans for Effective Teaching**

Objectives for professional growth are tied to specific components of effective teaching. Strategies for dealing with specific needs can be drawn from the more than 1,000 activities laid out in the Department of Education’s Strategies for Effective Teaching in the 21st Century.

The realization that professional development is central to effective education in general is affecting how PGPs work. More and more, professional development is taking place in teachers’ own schools in faculty study groups and professional learning communities that are, in effect, working both with professional development and overall school improvement.

Diane Marcantel, personnel director and director of school improvement in Allen Parish, finds that wearing both hats is a comfortable fit. “We’re a small school system with just 12 schools, so we can be very hands-on,” she says. “I work with school improvement teams in the schools, and because I do that, I am able to channel what I know about professional development through those teams.”

**Changing the Culture**

The goals for school improvement and professional development become one and the same—getting better results for students in the classroom. “I’m not knocking separate professional development programs,” Marcantel says, “but we’re moving from just having programs to changing the culture in the schools.”

Cheri Hebert is an English teacher in Destrehan at Destrehan High School, which also brings teachers together in what it calls faculty study groups that work on improving education in each classroom. She says the system simplifies planning in general; “We have professional growth plans, and where you get the goals for your professional growth plan is from the goals for your study group.”

“For instance,” she explains, “one goal for me this year was to increase the number of students scoring 5s on the AP scores of English language composition. That’s a great credit to the school as well as the teacher.”

More often than not, Hebert says, professional development becomes a tool that works for everyone—the school, the teacher, and the student.
Assessing Your Professional Needs as You Grow

To intelligently plan an effective program of professional development, you must first identify the areas where you need help most. You owe it to yourself to be totally honest in your self-assessment; you cannot fix problems without accurately describing what they are. As you progress professionally, it is important to assess your progress to date, reflect on what it takes to be an effective teacher, and evaluate how your classroom management style, instructional practices, involvement in school improvement, and other attributes come together to shape your overall performance. The questions to the right will help you in this reflection and evaluation process.

Please visit www.louisianaschools.net to view complete components and attributes.

A Survey of Your Professional Growth

**Planning**
- Do I plan effectively for instruction?
- Do I specify learner outcomes in clear, concise objectives?
- Do I design activities that develop my objectives?

**Classroom Management**
- Do I organize available space, materials, and equipment to facilitate learning?
- Do I maximize the amount of time available for instruction?
- Do I manage routines and transitions well?
- Do I adjust allotted time for activities as needed?
- Do I manage student behavior to provide productive learning opportunities?
- Do I establish clear expectations for student behavior?
- Do I use monitoring techniques effectively to facilitate learning?

**Instruction**
- Do I deliver instruction effectively?
- Do I develop clear lesson objectives?
- Do I effectively sequence lessons to promote learning?
- Do I present developmentally appropriate content?
- Do I provide ample opportunity for student involvement in the learning process?
- Do I accommodate students’ individual learning styles?
- Do I communicate effectively with students?
- Do I consistently monitor students’ ongoing academic performance?
- Do I use appropriate and effective assessment techniques?

**Professional Development**
- Do I identify areas of instruction that need strengthening?
- Do I develop clear plans for improvement and work to complete those plans?
- Do I effectively find ideas and strategies from resources (i.e., books, professional journals, websites) or colleagues that will improve my teaching and learning?

**School Improvement**
- Do I take an active role in decision-making in my school?
- Do I participate in grade-level and subject-area curriculum planning and evaluation?
- Do I serve on task forces and committees?
- Do I create active partnerships with parents/caregivers and colleagues?
Selecting Professional Development That Meets Your Needs

To put together an effective professional development package, you must first determine your individual needs (see “Assessing Your Professional Needs,” page 11) and decide which programs will meet them. You must also take into account a number of other considerations affecting your ability to do your job and advance your career. The following checklist will help you make sure you cover all the bases when you put together your plan for professional growth. Read each question, consider the possibilities listed carefully, and decide how each suggestion might be put into action in your own professional development plan.

Do you have the CLUs you need to renew your licence?

✓ Participate in teacher study groups in the content area.
✓ Provide tutoring or mentoring to a new teacher in the content area.
✓ Participate in online learning.

How do you get rigorous advanced training that examines your professional approach and teaching practices?

✓ Participate in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Have you developed lesson plans to implement Louisiana’s new Comprehensive Curriculum?

✓ Participate in ongoing training opportunities to further understand the new content requirements.
✓ Serve on school and district content committees.

Have you infused technology throughout your classroom instruction?

✓ Participate in professional learning activities at Louisiana’s Teaching, Learning, and Technology Centers.
✓ Participate in Effective Instructional Technology (EIT) trainings (see “Professional Development Online,” page 23).

Can you implement effective instructional practices that meet the needs of students with different learning styles?

✓ Participate in a book study on differing learning styles with other teachers.
✓ Participate in professional learning communities to develop new instructional practices and skills.

How do you introduce new content programs to address identified student learning needs?

✓ Participate in grade- and content-specific study groups to develop model lessons.
✓ Conduct action research in your classroom to compare student performances.
✓ Engage in tutoring, coaching, and mentoring with other teachers.

How do you expand knowledge and instructional practices to use hands-on strategies for teaching?

✓ Attend state or national conferences, institutes, seminars, and workshops.
✓ Participate in content-specific learning communities to develop and implement activities that address new hands-on strategies.
✓ Participate in Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS; see “Be a Teacher Leader,” page 24).

Making Time

How do you find time in a busy workday for professional development?

• Use common planning time with co-teachers to examine current instructional practices, develop lesson plans, model lessons, and other professional growth activities.
• Trade teaching responsibilities or elective periods with another teacher two times a month in order to have a common planning time.
• Participate in online learning opportunities.
• Set aside one lunch period every other week to work with other teachers.

Next Steps

What are your next steps in implementing your plan for career development?

• Identify your own learning goals based on your skills and needs.
• Identify school and student goals through Louisiana’s School Improvement Plan process.
• Develop your annual individual professional growth plan to meet your professional learning goals, and meet your school’s and district’s goals.
• Designate specific times throughout the school week to participate in high quality professional learning.
Does Your Plan Deliver the Components of Effective Professional Development?

You have the right as a professional educator to effective support and career development. The Louisiana Components of Effective Professional Development (see page 7) provide a handy yardstick for measuring whether a program you want to take will really help you, or whether a program you are currently involved in is actually making a difference.

The table below shows how to use the yardstick. Listed at left are the Components of Effective Professional Development, listed in the center are ways to recognize components of effectiveness in an existing program, and listed at right are the signs that the program in which you’re involved is on the right track.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the Components of Effective Professional Development?</th>
<th>How do I recognize effective development?</th>
<th>How will I know if it is working?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needs Driven Response</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program is based on:</td>
<td>Do I have ongoing assistance in interpreting data so that it can be of use?</td>
<td>I have been able to participate in the design of professional development at my school through grade- and content-specific meetings as we develop our School Improvement Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Student data</strong>— Performance on standardized and informal assessments.</td>
<td>Are various strategies presented for looking at and using the data?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>School data</strong>— How students perform compared to other students in the school and district.</td>
<td>After identifying needs, do I have an active role in planning the professional development program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Educator planning</strong>— Teacher involvement in devising responses to what is learned from the data.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Focus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development should be content rich. Educators must have a deep understanding and knowledge of the subject in order to meet the needs of the student. Content should address educators’ learning needs.</td>
<td>Does my participation in the professional development compel me to extend my content knowledge?</td>
<td>The professional development has strengthened my understanding of my content areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Communities</strong></td>
<td>Does the professional development content address my learning needs as an educator?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The professional development is sustained through the support of other teachers in learning communities. There are ongoing opportunities to work with peers to develop plans to implement professional development.</td>
<td>Do I have regular opportunities to meet with my peers so that we can successfully implement new strategies?</td>
<td>I received sufficient follow-up in my classroom so that my colleagues and I can refine the strategies we have developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Do our efforts to improve instruction have the backing of administrators?</td>
<td>I am engaged and stimulated by the activity. I am able to use the various strategies with different learners in my classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program actively engages educators, models behaviors that successful teachers use in the classroom, stimulates critical thinking, and includes strategies to engage the various learning styles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>Does the professional development activity include various strategies that work in the classroom?</td>
<td>I can put what I learn to use in the real world of my classroom. What I am learning is relevant to my teaching experience and my students’ lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program is focused on what really happens in the classroom. The new skills and information are usable in the real world. Practical strategies facilitate implementation of the new skills in the classroom the very next day.</td>
<td>Do I have opportunities to practice these new skills?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Does the program encourage me to think critically and independently?</td>
<td>My school evaluates the impact of professional development to document changes in educators’ practices and student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The professional development is designed in a way that allows for diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation. Appropriate data enable evaluation of teachers’ learning, student achievement, and additional classroom needs.</td>
<td></td>
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Creating Your Plan

Beginning in the second semester of their first year, Louisiana teachers must design annual professional growth plans (PGPs) to guide their professional development. While teachers face different challenges at different stages of their careers, the basic planning process is the same for teachers young and old.

PGPs are important parts of teachers' portfolios. Portfolios are the collections of artifacts that document teachers' understanding of their jobs, ability to teach effectively, and capacity for professional growth as their careers progress (see "Building a Professional Portfolio" on page 16). PGPs provide a blueprint for the future, but also, as part of your portfolio, they become part of the record of your career achievements.

The following six steps for creating PGPs are taken from the Louisiana New Teacher Portfolio Handbook (see www.TeachLouisiana.net). As you follow the steps 1 to 6, make a point to reflect at each step on whether what you've outlined truly serves your needs. Once you have completed step 6, review and assess the entire plan and make changes as required. Only with this kind of careful self-reflection will you be able to create a plan that meets your needs.

To view a template for creating a strong PGP, visit www.TeachLouisiana.net.

1

Develop Growth Objectives

PGPs are comprised of plans for meeting specific growth objectives. Your first step in designing a PGP is to determine your personal growth objectives. Once you have thoroughly evaluated your particular needs (see "Assessing Your Professional Needs," page 11), formulating your growth objectives is a matter of deciding what you need to do to meet those needs.

As you set your objectives, take care to avoid some common pitfalls. Don't set objectives that are too broad, for example. While your general goal may be "to improve instruction," it will be hard to measure progress toward that objective. Avoid objectives that are too trivial or too ambitious. Achieving an easy goal won't really improve your skills, but shooting for something that is not doable will only end in frustration. Try to find the happy medium.

Here's an example of a reasonable growth objective:

Growth Objective:
The teacher will be able to identify, develop, and use questions that stimulate and encourage higher-order thinking skills among students.

2

Outline Expectations

The ultimate goal in all professional development is to improve student achievement. You must determine how achieving your objective will affect student performance. If only to establish a benchmark for measuring whether your professional development is working for students in the classroom. The results you expect should be the logical result of meeting your growth objective.

Expected Impact on Student Learning and Achievement:
Students will become better able to solve problems and conduct inquiry investigations. They will be able to critically analyze their work.
Devise Strategies

The next step is to devise a strategy for attaining your objective. It will help to consult with fellow teachers, your mentor if you are working with one, your school administrators, your district or school director of staff development—anyone who might provide valuable how-to guidance for achieving your goal. Types of activities may include structured staff development programs, readings, observations of other teachers, professional discussions with colleagues, and audio or video instruction aids.

Strategies and Activities:
- **Observation:** Tape record an effective teacher in your subject area who is explaining concepts, associations, principles, or rules to students similar to yours. Discuss the lesson with the teacher or a mentor, or both, and identify the kinds of questions the teacher asked to stimulate students' ability to analyze the information presented.
- **Teaching:** Plan and teach a lesson in which you will ask at least 10 higher-level questions that require students to understand, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate real-life situations.

List Resources

Make a list of the resources needed for the planned activities. Make sure the resources listed are actually available to you; if they are not, do not include them on the list and find a way to substitute resources that will allow you to execute your plan.

**Resources Needed:**
- **Observation:** Permission and schedule to observe and record the experienced teacher
- **Teaching:** Lesson plan template
- **Writing materials or computer
- **Schedule for meeting with mentor or other colleague to review the lesson plan
- **Arrange for mentor or other colleague to observe you teaching the lesson

Establish Timeline

Establish a feasible and realistic timeline for the accomplishment of each growth objective. Indicate beginning and ending dates for each activity listed.

**Timeline:**
- **Observation:** Scheduling, recording, and analyzing an experienced teacher’s lesson should take approximately five school days to complete.
- **Teaching:** Planning, teaching, and analysis should take four days to complete. Lesson planning should take two days. Discussion of the lesson with a colleague or mentor should take place the day after teaching of the lesson.

Plan Assessment

You must create a plan for documenting attainment of your growth objectives. You must describe how attainment of your objective will be assessed and the kinds of evidence that will be used to determine progress toward your goal.

**Expected Evidence of Attainment:**
The main evidence of attainment of the objective will be successful development and delivery of the specific lesson plan. The observations of a mentor or experienced colleague will be very helpful in determining whether the teacher was able to identify, develop, and use questions in that lesson to stimulate and encourage higher-order thinking skills among students.

Putting Your Plan in Action

Obviously, the ultimate test of the success of a professional growth plan is student achievement. What professional development is really about is a continuum of learning. If your PGP is effective, your teaching skills will improve. If your teaching skills improve, your students will learn more and achieve more.

The outcome of the one lesson plan obviously will not determine whether students become better learners, any more than one successful professional development exercise makes you a better all-around teacher. But in learning as in life, a journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step. It will be necessary to break down your professional development into different objectives to make real progress, but in the end professional development and teaching are about using all your talents together to help students achieve.
Building a Professional Portfolio

Under the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment (LaTAAP) Program, a two-year program that mentors, assesses, and certifies new teachers in the state, a key element of the assessment process is the New Teacher Portfolio.

The New Teacher Portfolio is a collection of artifacts related to a specific “Work Sample” — a one-to-six-week unit of instruction of a particular group of students focusing on one subject area. As part of the formal assessment of new teachers leading to Level 2 or 3 certification, the New Teacher Portfolio is subject to carefully spelled-out guidelines and procedures designed to help new teachers master their craft.

Career teachers maintaining their portfolios are not required to follow these guidelines, or even maintain a portfolio at all. Most educators who do so, though, agree that portfolios are a useful tool for career development and advancement (see “A Valuable Career Tool,” page 17), as well as a good way to help teachers reflect on the directions they are taking in the profession. By following the guidelines outlined on the next page, you can make sure your portfolio shows a complete and well-documented picture of your abilities and accomplishments.

Selecting Artifacts for Your Portfolio

To build the most impressive collection of artifacts for your professional portfolio, keep in mind that you need to include items that not only demonstrate your abilities but are also relevant to the craft of teaching. You should be able to tie each artifact directly to specific attributes of high-quality teaching laid out in the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching.

Listed at right are some possible artifacts for your portfolio. The list is by no means all-inclusive. One of the best things about building a portfolio is the opportunity it affords to show your talents as imaginatively and creatively as you can.

- Instructional materials
- Original student assessment materials
- Classroom management plan
- Parent communications log
- Samples of student work
- Teacher journal
- Class video or audio recordings
- Classroom photographs
- Student, parent, or colleague surveys
- Log of professional activities
- Awards, recognitions
- Certificates of participation in workshops or meetings
- Communications with colleagues and administrators
- Certificates of university coursework
- Teacher or class web page
- Reflections
A Valuable Career Tool

As teacher quality and accountability have become the watchwords of school improvement, teachers are finding it increasingly important to build a collection of career artifacts that document the quality of their work. A personal professional portfolio can help teachers document completion of professional growth plans (PGPs), Continuing Learning Units (CLUs) earned toward license renewal, and status as a Highly Qualified teacher under No Child Left Behind. Teachers are also finding portfolios very helpful in demonstrating qualifications for new jobs.

Roslyn Dempster, Title I/Title II coordinator and staff development coordinator for Terrebonne Parish Schools in Houma, says new professional realities are leading more teachers to maintain career portfolios. “Because of the requirements of NCLB for Highly Qualified status,” she says, “teachers have started keeping their portfolios. Most of them do keep their documentation for their PGPs in portfolios. When you go into job interviews, people have them. We interviewed a recent graduate for a new teaching position that we’re creating and her portfolio showed everything that she had done. The portfolios lay out all the training teachers have completed and examples of things they’ve done in the classroom, and every time teachers interview for jobs, they’re seeing that these are valuable tools.”

“In LaTAAP,” says Kathy Mouton, Director of the Division of Professional Development in the Louisiana Office of Educator Support, “new teachers are required to turn in a portfolio at the end of the program, but career teachers are not. There is no state requirement that teachers maintain a portfolio following completion of LaTAAP. We believe that it is a wise practice, however. A portfolio is an organizational tool for recording, documenting, and updating professional information needed for interviews, applications, and other career opportunities.”

Professional Portfolio Checklist

A portfolio gives teachers across the spectrum of the profession, from new teachers to career teachers to teacher leaders, a strong tool for recording their accomplishments and maintaining optimal skill levels. The following five categories—philosophy of education, background information, evidence of successful teaching, professional information, and involvement in school improvement—represent a sampling of information typically included in an established teacher’s portfolio.

Evidence of your professional skills and accomplishments may be included in your portfolio. These categories are not the only kinds of information that can be included, but they should give you a start in constructing your own record of accomplishment.

**Philosophy of education**

- Your vision of what education should be
- Your professional goals

**Background information**

- Your education
- Your degrees
- Your certifications
- Your work history
- Your résumé

**Evidence of successful teaching**

- Your best lesson plans
- Student work
- Student achievements
- Your areas of specialization
- Letters of recommendation

**Professional information**

- Your professional development experiences
- Your accomplishments
- Your publications
- Your awards
- Your memberships in professional organizations
- Your leadership roles in professional organizations

**Involvement in school improvement**

- Your committee memberships
- Your leadership roles
- Your classroom innovations

For more information on professional teaching portfolios and their contents,
In this guide, we have established what effective professional development is and why it matters to you and your students. We have discussed how to create plans for professional growth that meet your needs and leave you better equipped to deal with the needs of your students.

Now we are ready to consider the professional development resources that can help you put your plans into action. Because Louisiana has dedicated itself to improving education across the board, opportunities in this state for teacher career development and advancement are particularly rich. Much is asked of you as workers on the front lines of school improvement, but because the role you play is so important to our state’s success, you have an enviable choice of tools provided to help you succeed in your profession.

Below are the three broad categories of professional development opportunities available in Louisiana. On the next seven pages, we highlight some of the many opportunities available to Louisiana teachers in all three of these professional development options.

### Three Options for Teacher Success

#### Individual Professional Development

Individual Professional Development encompasses the traditional seminars, workshops, teacher in-service programs, university courses, and postgraduate study that supply a significant portion of professional development activities. The focus is on the individual skills and knowledge that you need to succeed.

If you have carefully assessed your strengths and weaknesses and designed a professional growth plan that clearly outlines your objectives, you should be well prepared to choose the options that fit your individual needs. If you haven’t completed your self-assessment, however, don’t sign up for a workshop for the sake of signing up. Without a well-defined plan in place, it is easy to waste time sitting through professional development that has nothing to do with your needs.

#### Cohort Team Professional Development

More and more school districts in Louisiana are bringing teachers together for regular meetings aimed at improving instruction as it happens. Sometimes these groups are organized by grade, sometimes they are organized by subject area, and sometimes teachers come together in different cohort teams at different times. Almost always, the focus is on finding ways to improve student performance and meet student needs.

How does a focus on the student help the individual teacher? Nothing defines teacher performance more accurately than the ability to get results in the classroom. By meeting with other teachers to discuss how to better reach students, by trying different approaches in the classroom, and then coming back to compare notes with the same group of concerned colleagues, teachers build a sense of professional identity and become better teachers.

#### Whole-School Professional Development

In Louisiana, professional development takes place in the larger context of school improvement. Each school draws up a plan that serves as a blueprint for the actions and policies needed to help that school better serve the needs of students. As part of the school improvement process, a professional development plan must be designed to ensure that school staff can implement the School Improvement Plan.

In that sense, all professional development in Louisiana, from attendance at a workshop to meetings with a teacher study group, should be whole-school professional development. Done correctly, whole-school professional development is highly integrated in a larger plan of school improvement that, depending on a school’s needs, can include everything from an emphasis on instruction in core subjects to broad use of technology. The final result should be a school-wide package, including staff development, which produces better
Top Professional Development Opportunities

The following are six important professional development programs in the state of Louisiana.

**Grade-Level Expectations Education Model (GLEEM)**
A state educational model for providing educators with a deeper understanding of Grade-Level Expectations and the state’s Comprehensive Curriculum.

**Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS)**
An intensive school improvement program in Louisiana based on content-rich, technology-infused professional development organized around faculty study groups.

**Louisiana FIRST**
A special program to help Louisiana schools meet the needs of new teachers. The program, funded by system mini-grants to local school districts, provides summer induction before school begins, enhanced mentoring, and continuing professional development.

**Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP)**
The state induction program for new teachers. LaTAAP consists of two parts, a mentoring program and an assessment process to establish teachers’ qualifications to teach in Louisiana classrooms.

**National Board Certification**
The highest credential in the teaching profession, achieved through a rigorous, performance-based assessment that typically takes a year to complete, measures what accomplished teachers should know and do, and requires that candidates demonstrate how their activities improve student achievement.

**Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)**
A teacher support and development program sponsored in Louisiana by the Milken Family Foundation. TAP encourages multiple career paths for teachers, holds teachers accountable for the performance of their students, ties compensation to performance, and sponsors regular meetings of teachers for applied professional growth.
Getting Started: The New Teacher

In Louisiana, professional development begins when the new teacher takes his or her first job. LaTAAP, the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program, is a uniform statewide program of support for teachers entering service for the first time in the public school system.

Support for teachers is critical throughout their careers, but never so much as when they first enter the profession. Nationally, 22 percent of all new teachers leave service in the first three years. Teacher induction and mentoring programs in different states have significantly reduced attrition rates. California’s Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program, for example, has brought attrition rates among new teachers down to 6 percent at one year, 13 percent at three years, and 16 percent at five years.

LaTAAP is designed not merely to help new teachers become better at their craft, but—because shortages of teachers threaten the quality of education everywhere—to help keep new teachers in the classroom.

Each new teacher, during the first semester and throughout the first two years of employment, is provided with a mentor or mentor support team. During the third semester of employment, the new teacher also begins formal assessment. The teacher is observed in the classroom and submits a teaching portfolio. Assessment of the new teacher’s performance forms the basis for recommendations to the Louisiana Department of Education and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for career certification.

LaTAAP Assistance

New teachers are assigned mentors who serve three formal roles:

- **Coach** – The mentor coaches the new teacher by providing feedback on classroom instruction and development of the new teacher’s portfolio, and by assisting in analyzing instruction and refining instructional strategies.

- **Model** – The mentor serves as a model by demonstrating effective planning, instruction, and adjustment of instruction to meet students’ needs.

- **Professional Development Specialist**
  The mentor works with the new teacher and the school principal to formulate a formal Professional Growth Plan (PGP) and guides the teacher in exploring resources for building a personal portfolio.

Louisiana FIRST Online

Louisiana FIRST (Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers) Online is an innovative program for teacher induction. Funded through the Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund 8(g), the program supports the induction of new teachers through enhanced mentoring, modeling of classroom lessons, peer sharing, and continuing professional development in the context of an online supportive learning community.

Louisiana FIRST Online consists of three components: Louisiana FIRST Online Mentoring, Louisiana FIRST TIP Partnerships, and Louisiana FIRST Stop. (For more information about the program and its components, visit [www.TeachLouisiana.net](http://www.TeachLouisiana.net)).

Annette Breaux, former curriculum coordinator and teacher induction pioneer in Lafourche Parish, and now teacher induction coordinator at Nicholls State University, believes induction means more than simply providing mentors or orientation meetings for beginning teachers.

In an interview with Education World, Ms. Breaux stated, “Induction involves ongoing, systematic training and support for new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing throughout the first two or three years of teaching. The intent is not only to train new teachers throughout their first few years, but to instill in them the importance of becoming lifelong learners so they will continue to grow professionally throughout their careers.”
School principals assign mentors to their new teachers. Mentors are matched with new teachers by grade level and subject areas, if at all possible, and teach in the same building or have schedules flexible enough to be readily available. New teachers and their mentors meet weekly and observe each other’s classrooms at least eight times during the first year of the assistance program.

A mentor support team backs up the mentor and new teacher through the mentoring process, providing resources, advice, and expertise as needed. The team consists of a trained mentor, the school principal or other administrator, teachers who may or may not have gone through mentor training but who can provide special expertise (such as a subject area specialist), and a new teacher who has successfully completed LaTAAP.

**LaTAAP Assessment**

In the first semester of their second year, teachers begin formal assessment. The new teacher is observed in the classroom and his or her portfolio is evaluated. An informal conference, often the day before the classroom observation, sets the stage for the observation, and a post-observation conference follows within 48 hours of it. During each post-observation conference the assessor and new teacher will discuss the assessor’s feedback and construct an improvement plan to address the teacher’s needs.

Before the end of the semester, the new teacher submits a portfolio of his or her work (see “Building a Professional Portfolio” page 16). Ratings of classroom performance and portfolio are based on the components and attributes of the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET; see page 3). Teacher performance on each attribute and component is rated either “competent” (improvements can be made, but performance clearly does meet standards) or “needs improvement” (performance is sometimes inadequate or unacceptable and improvement is required).

In a final summary conference, the new teacher receives the assessment ratings and the resulting recommendations for certification. A comprehensive PGP based on the evaluation is prepared and signed by the participants.

The new teacher must be rated as competent in each of the 11 components of the LCET to meet the assessment standard. A teacher who does not meet these standards during the third semester of employment must repeat the assessment process in the fourth semester. A new teacher who does not demonstrate competence by the end of that semester will be denied regular certification and must leave teaching in Louisiana public schools for at least two years.

In the end, LaTAAP operates as a coordinated program of teacher support, training, and accountability. Annette Breaux, the former curriculum coordinator in Lafourche Parish who developed the model for the Louisiana FIRST Online teacher induction program (see “Louisiana FIRST Online,” page 20), believes teacher support and training is critical for successful schools. Breaux, who now serves as teacher induction coordinator at Nicholls State University, told Education World, “If you train and support new teachers, your chances of retaining them increase a hundredfold. At worst, it’s much better to train new teachers and risk losing them than not to train them and risk keeping them.”

Financing Professional Development

Finding for professional development activities in Louisiana schools comes from state and federal sources directly or indirectly connected with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

NCLB is primarily concerned with school improvement and accountability, with funds specifically earmarked for educator staff development under Title II of the act. Titles I, II, III, IV, V, and X all allocate funds for purposes ranging from addressing the needs of students with limited English language skills to encouraging the use of technology in the classroom.

Each year school districts submit a consolidated application for federal funds under NCLB. The federal government allocates money to the states under the various titles of NCLB in the form of a block grant and the state Department of Education distributes funds from that grant to local districts.

A consolidated application, or “e-grant” (because it is submitted electronically), is submitted each year to the state. “When you write your e-grant,” says Roslyn Dempster, Title I and Title II staff development coordinator for Terrebonne Parish schools, “you’re telling the state what you’re planning to do with these funds to make sure you’re following federal guidelines. The money is there, but if you don’t adhere to the guidelines, you won’t get to spend the funds.”

Dempster says that in Terrebonne Parish, some funds for professional development are allocated to the schools and some are administered at the district level. “My teachers need to talk to their principal to find out who’s in charge of what funds,” she says.

Jan Murphy, Title I and Title II coordinator in Lincoln Parish, says professional development funding is closely tied to school improvement in her district. “We review school improvement objectives and activities in faculty meetings—what each activity will cost, where funding for the activity comes from. Teachers know exactly where the funding is, because it’s in the School Improvement Plan.”
Continuing Professional Development

Louisiana has an abundance of professional development programs aimed at developing individual skills and knowledge that can help you take your career to a higher level. More of the 20 Louisiana colleges and universities have state-approved teacher preparation programs, and most offer professional development course hours to career teachers.

Many teachers improve their professional credentials by adding endorsements in different subjects and grade levels to their teaching certificates. For information on specific course requirements for different add-on endorsements, visit the Teach Louisiana site and click on the Teachers tab at the top navigation bar for links to the site’s Teacher Certification Center. A drop-down list on the center’s home page allows you to review certification requirements for more than 60 add-on endorsements.

National Board Certification

Louisiana also offers opportunities to teachers who aspire to the highest levels of career excellence. The state has made a clear commitment to encourage and support teachers who choose to pursue National Board Certification (NBC). More than 800 teachers in Louisiana hold this certification, a rigorous professional credential administered by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The NBC is the highest credential in the teaching profession and takes a year to complete. The process requires teachers to demonstrate how their activities, both inside and outside the classroom, improve student achievement.

Nearly every year, Louisiana ranks in the top 10 states nationwide for number of teachers earning National Board Certification. The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Quality Education Support Fund, commonly known simply as 8(g), provides teachers with money for certification fees for qualified NBC candidates. Originating in a 1986 federal law providing Louisiana with offshore oil money, 8(g) funds pay roughly $850 of the $2,500 cost of participating in the NBPTS program (Approximately $1,150 of the cost is paid through federal funds allocated through NBPTS). Louisiana law also requires that districts pay a minimum $5,000 pay supplement per year for the life of the certificate to National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs).

Districts with limited budgets can help teachers take part in the NBPTS program by enrolling them in Take One! Take One! is a cost-effective NBPTS initiative that allows educators to complete one teacher portfolio entry for National Board Certification by itself and apply scores to later completion (within three years) of the certification process.

The portfolio is based on classroom activity and includes video recordings of teacher-student interactions. In addition to this direct evidence of teaching performance, candidates submit written commentaries analyzing their experiences. Because the program is job-imbedded and completed within the schools walls, it is more likely to fit the limited budgets of high-needs schools.

Louisiana provides year-long regional support and mentoring to NBC candidates. Present NBCTs serve as mentors for prospective NBCTs. Support meetings are held monthly across the state with NBCT mentors assigned to each training site.

Louisiana believes the NBCTs play a central role in the state’s school improvement efforts. “These educators have gone above and beyond to master their craft,” says state Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard, “and the children of Louisiana will benefit tremendously from their effort.”
The growth of school-based professional development programs is one of the most successful and encouraging aspects of school improvement in Louisiana. Teachers across the state are coming together within their schools to create “professional learning communities” and “faculty study groups.” These school-based, job-imbedded programs bring entire faculties together in small working groups to assemble data and compare notes on the way their classrooms work.

A number of school improvement initiatives in Louisiana (see “Be a Teacher Leader,” page 24) use small working groups to help boost teachers’ skills and professionalism. Meeting regularly, the groups focus on real-life instructional problems, generate possible solutions, and test them in their own classrooms. This approach often leads to better results in the classroom, and it does that by helping educators be better teachers.

Jan Murphy is coordinator of the LINCS (Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success) program in Lincoln Parish schools. Since 2000, LINCS grants have enabled schools across the state to set up faculty study groups to focus on improving student performance in math, science, and English language arts. Three elementary schools in Lincoln Parish participate in the program.

“It gives teachers time,” Murphy says, “to share ideas, to learn new ideas and techniques, to grow professionally. Maybe something has worked in one classroom that they can try in other classrooms, maybe what works for one teacher doesn’t work for another. From student work you can consider what you’ve done as a teacher, how you presented the lesson. You can learn so much by evaluating student work.”

Schools find the opportunity for immediate follow-up provided by study groups particularly valuable. “That’s the way teachers learn,” says Steve Keyes, staff development coordinator for Destrehan High School. Keyes says traditional professional development, in which teachers “sit and get” information in workshops and trainings, need hands-on follow-up to really be useful. “Sit and get” just won’t do much for you, he says, “if you don’t have a lot of follow-up.”

Roslyn Dempster, staff development coordinator for Terrebonne Parish Schools, says effective follow-up requires careful collection of data on student performance. “It has to be based on data. If you’re just doing professional development to spend money, it’s not going to be valuable to anyone. It has to be based on data that reflects the needs of the school. If it’s not doing that, it’s just a waste of time and you won’t see teachers using it because it’s not important.

“Once you can see that professional development is targeting the needs of your school, then your student scores are going to improve. Then it’s not just what somebody thinks you need, it’s what your school data shows you need to help your students, and it will definitely make a difference.”

Professional Development Online

A variety of online professional development initiatives make it possible for teachers in all corners of the state to develop their careers. Here are some online opportunities.

**Bridging the Gap—Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**
Bridging the GAP—UDL addresses the challenge of making curricula accessible to all learners. The institute, delivered online or face-to-face, highlights Universal Design for Learning, an approach to teaching diverse learners through flexible applications of technology tools, networks, and digital content. Learn more at [www.TeachLouisiana.net](http://www.TeachLouisiana.net).

**Effective Instructional Technology (EIT) Online Course Series**
EIT helps Louisiana teachers understand and use instructional technology in their classrooms while meeting national and state technology mandates. The EIT series consists of two courses, Effective Instructional Technology: An Introduction and Building a Portfolio of Exemplars. For more information, see [www.TeachLouisiana.net](http://www.TeachLouisiana.net).

**Grade-Level Expectations Education Model (GLEEM)**
The five learning modules of GLEEM provide educators with a deeper understanding of Grade-Level Expectations and the state’s comprehensive curriculum. The modules are delivered online or in face-to-face trainings. Modules can be taken as a series or as stand-alone trainings, but Module 1 is a prerequisite for the other five. Visit [www.TeachLouisiana.net](http://www.TeachLouisiana.net) to learn more.

**Proficiency Express**
This interactive online course provides basic technology proficiency as participants apply software applications and technology to develop instructional resources. The course takes 12 weeks to complete. See [www.TeachLouisiana.net](http://www.TeachLouisiana.net) for more information.
Developing Leadership Potential

Career development almost inevitably involves building teachers' leadership abilities. Pylla Turner, for example, is a literacy coach for kindergarten through grade 3 classrooms at Fairview High School, a pre-K-12 consolidated school in rural Allen Parish. She was a first grade teacher at the school and began facilitating meetings of teacher teams working on reading and math skills in the early elementary grades.

“Where the district created the position of literacy coach, her experience leading teacher teams made her a natural for the job,” Turner says. “I was blessed; I didn’t even have to ask for the position.” Turner says the team meetings help bring out teachers’ leadership potential “because each team has to have a leader. It almost forces that. Somebody has to step up and lead. And then they take turns, too, you know, so it’s building leadership among all the faculty.”

T his guide has already discussed several of these opportunities. The Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP, page 20) gives veteran teachers the chance to serve as mentors for young teachers in their first two years of teaching. Teachers with special expertise in technology can help other educators introduce technical instructional tools in their own classrooms in a variety of state technology initiatives (see “Professional Development Online,” page 23).

LINCS (Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success) is a state initiative that tackles educational improvement on a school-by-school basis, setting up faculty study groups, focusing on content in math, science, and English language arts, infusing teaching with technology, and developing lessons and assessments that are standards-based and sensitive to students’ needs. The program also gives teachers the opportunity to step into positions as LINCS Content Coaches, who work with full-time classroom teachers, model lessons, and provide feedback to support standards-based teaching in the target content areas.

The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), a school improvement initiative of the Milken Family Foundation in Santa Monica, California, that operates in a number of schools in Louisiana, focuses specifically on developing first-rate teaching, and provides a number of opportunities for teacher leadership.

TAP encourages professional growth by setting up teacher teams to improve instruction. TAP establishes multiple career paths for teachers, and in doing so fosters professionalism by giving teachers a number of different opportunities for enriching their work lives.

Career teachers focus their professional talents and skills on teaching in the classroom. Other teachers may choose to become mentor teachers, modeling lessons, working with mentees, and facilitating teacher team meetings. Mentor teachers, who continue to teach some classes, are trained and compensated for their advanced service.

Finally, other teachers in TAP are named master teachers. These teachers do not teach in the classroom. Instead, they serve as members of the leadership teams overseeing implementation of TAP in their schools. They teach with colleagues, provide demonstration lessons, evaluate teacher performance, and share instructional leadership roles with their principals.

Louisiana is mobilizing to help teachers and others advance to leadership roles in school and district administration. The state has created the Louisiana Educational Leadership Network (LELN) to ensure that effective administrators are in place at every school in the state. LELN is designed to recruit, induct, and support educational leaders.

The program’s Louisiana Leadership Through Administrator Development (LaLEAD) initiative helps local educational agencies recruit and prepare teacher leaders for success in administrative roles. Teachers completing the pilot development program earn Teacher Leader Endorsements to their teaching certificates. LELN also operates the Louisiana Educational Leaders Induction Program to support principals in their first years on the job.

Taken together, Louisiana has created a full spectrum of programs to encourage and nurture school leadership. To learn more about these programs and all of Louisiana’s professional development efforts, visit the Office of Educator Support Web site at www.louisianaschools.net.
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Teaching – The Profession That Creates All Others