

Rural Louisiana

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In This Issue: Rural Education

According to research by the by the USDA Economic Research Service (www.ers.usda.gov), things are looking up for rural Louisiana schools. ERS found that the percent of adults completing high school in rural areas increased from below 50% in 1980 to over 67% in 2000. In this same time period, the percent of students from rural areas attending college almost doubled.

In this issue, we will investigate two programs in our state that are making a difference in rural education. The LA GEAR UP program directly helps at-risk students learn about post-secondary education opportunities. It also provides students an opportunity to earn money for college. The CATALyST program shows teachers effective methods for teaching science and math - and students are benefitting. While neither of these programs were specifically designed for rural schools, their results are clearly seen in rural areas.

We will look at challenges in offering after-school programs in rural schools, and report on the Department of Education's assessment of Louisiana's progress in this area.

In this issue we also feature Sicily Island High School, which received an honor as an exemplary rural school. They credit their success to their small, but actively engaged, rural environment.

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LA GEAR UP

(Louisiana - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs)

Malcolm Smoot, a junior at Bunkie High School, is preparing for his fourth summer with the LA GEAR UP summer camps. This year will be different, though, as he will not only attend LA GEAR UP camp as a student, but he will also return as a junior counselor. Malcolm started his journey with LA GEAR UP in the summer of 2003, the same year his school qualified for the program.

In order to qualify, these Title 1 eligible schools must perform below the state average in ACT scores (19.8 for 2005), and have poor college enrollment statistics.

All qualifying schools were invited to the LA GEAR UP program at the beginning of the grant cycle in 2002. Another grant cycle will begin in 2008, when all schools will be re-evaluated and a new invitation will be offered for the next grant cycle. For eligible schools that didn't respond to the initial invitation, Partnership Grants are offered annually and proposals are due March 1st of each year.

At this time, 38 schools are serviced through LA GEAR UP. All of the students enrolled in these schools are LA GEAR UP students.

The summer camps are just one component of LA GEAR UP, as the program also has an academic-year component in addition to the summer learning. The Explorer's Club is in place in the LA GEAR UP schools and it serves to reinforce concepts learned in the summer. These concepts are built around the "ABCs" - A is for academics, B is for behavior, and C is for college.

plan," says Glenn Beer, Director of the LA GEAR UP summer camps. "The students all seem to understand the importance of getting ready for post-secondary education and are eager to share their ideas on school, peer, and self improvement."

All LA GEAR UP students are encouraged to participate in The Explorer's Club in their school where they serve as role models and community leaders.

But it's not only the students who are getting "geared up", their guidance counselors also prepare in the summer time with professional development programs through LA GEAR UP in order to better serve their student populations as well as prepare themselves for their role as sponsors of The Explorer's Club.

Another exciting component of the LA GEAR UP program is the *Rewards for Success Scholarship*. This scholarship program deposits directly into the individual student's Student Tuition and Revenue Trust (START), Louisiana's 529 College Savings Program. Within START, all student accounts may earn from 2 - 14% in Earning Enhancements in addition to interest paid on their accounts. For more



Summer camp participants spend time daily on learning and exploring what the ABCs mean to them and their school. At the end of the week, each student must submit an action plan for the Explorer's Club for their individual school.

This action plan is the student's "bus ticket" to be able to attend a field trip to Grambling State University and Sci-Port Hands on Science Museum in Shreveport. "We have never had a student fail to complete an action

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LA GEAR UP - Continued

information on START, go to www.startsaving.la.gov.

According to Diane Pfeifer, of the Louisiana State Board of Regents, over \$1.5 million will have been distributed to LA GEAR UP students after this year's award cycle (2006).

Hundreds of students have earned scholarships based on the components stressed in the summer camp and The Explorer's Club: grade point average, standardized test scores, citizenship, school attendance, and school and community involvement.

Parental interest and support and eligibility for free/ reduced lunches are also components in the scoring guide for the scholarship.

While other students may be "taking the summer off", Malcolm is getting ready to GEAR UP as a camper and a junior counselor. In order to be chosen as a junior counselor, he needed to submit a portfolio highlighting his ABCs; which included a

respectable 3.5 GPA, good ACT scores, awards and certificates from school activities such as State Vocal Rally, and letters of recommendation from admiring teachers and administrators.

His application is one of 16 students, each in their fourth year with the LA GEAR UP program. In the fifth year in the program, they're eligible to return as counselors, earning \$480 per week for their work of teaching others the ABCs of LA GEAR UP.

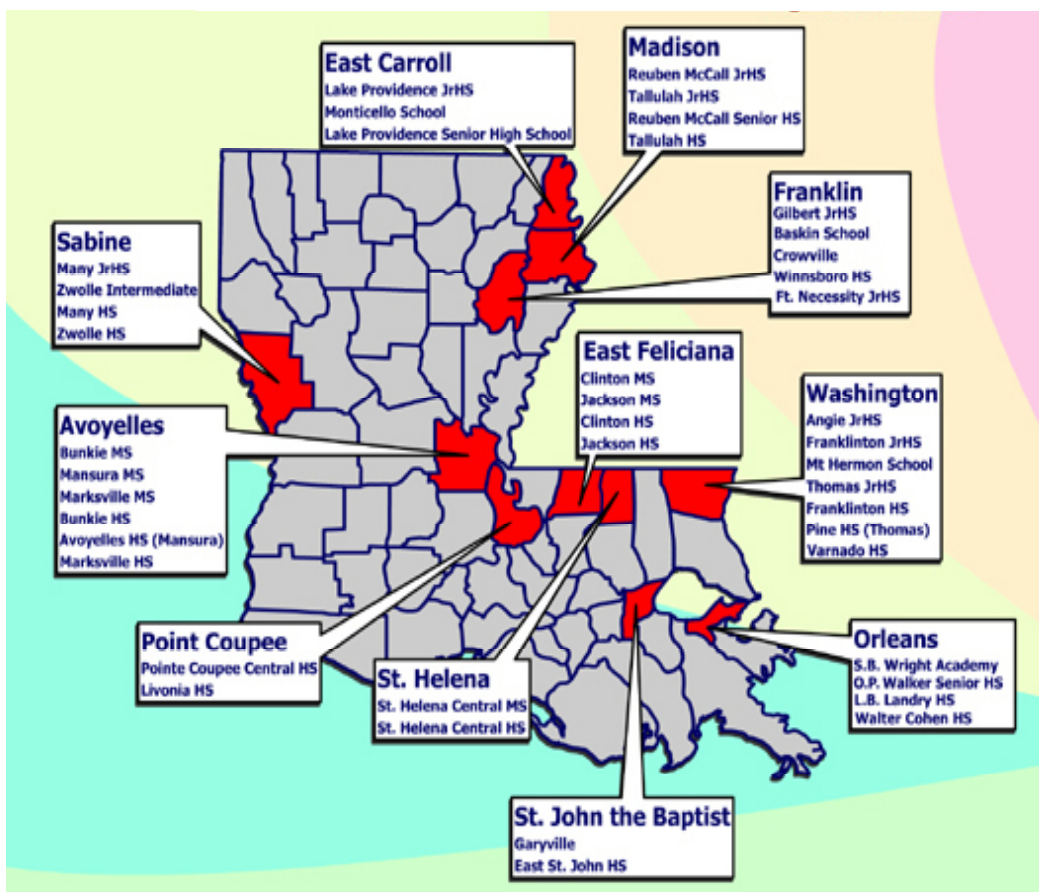
For more information about LA GEAR UP, contact:

Glenn Beer, Louisiana Tech University, College of Education
(318) 257-2866

or go to the following websites:

www.lagearup.org
www.latech.edu/lagearup.

Figure 1 - GEAR UP Sites in Louisiana



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After School Tutoring in Rural Regions

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates free tutoring programs for identified schools and students. From the 2005 article “Supplemental Help Can Be Hard to Find For Rural Students” in Education Week by Alan Richard, during the 2004-2005 school year, only 18% of eligible students received free tutoring. This number includes inner city and suburban areas as well as rural. It is believed that the percent of eligible rural students served by free tutoring programs is considerably less than the 18% due to problems in instituting and maintaining such programs.

Eligibility for the free tutoring programs is determined when a Title I school has failed to make “adequate progress” for three consecutive years. Most rural states such as West Virginia and Alaska have served only a small fraction of the eligible students. The entire state of Wyoming, states Richard, has not serviced one of the 200 eligible students.

Challenges Facing Rural Schools

These challenges include, but are not limited to transportation expenses and logistics, lack of internet access, a shortage of qualified teachers and tutors, and poor interest levels from for-profit compa-

nies providing tutoring services because of the limited populations to be served at one sight.

Digital Solutions

One solution to this problem might be through the Association of Educational Service Agencies. With \$1.1 million in funding from the Department of Education, this Virginia based agency has identified districts in Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania where an on-line tutoring service program is being piloted.

The on-line service links certified teachers with students in two-hour sessions. These sessions utilize headsets and microphones for communication between the teacher and the student in addition to interactive videos and quizzes.

Results from the pilot programs have been favorable. Skeptics, though, say that this service is not enough to meet the needs of many of the eligible students. The “digital divide” which affects rural communities is still a reality.

Louisiana's Response

According to the Department of Education, over 10,000 students are annually being served in after school and summer extended learning

programs in the state through a combination of state and federal funds.

For More Information:

There are over 300 sites in Louisiana that provide academic enrichment, tutoring, and recreational activities. A listing of community based sites, listed by parish, is available on the Louisiana Department of Education website under the heading of “After School for All in Louisiana.”

Go directly to the webpage: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/scs/1330.html

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CATALyST Produces a STAR

What does it take to be a STAR?

Lamar Cranston, a teacher at Pinecrest Elementary/ Middle School in Ouachita Parish, knows. He was one of only 50 teachers in the nation to be selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a STAR teacher of the year for 2005. Lamar credits his success to his students and to his association with CATALyST, a regional science and mathematics education center housed in the School of Biological Sciences at Louisiana Tech University.

CATALyST (Center for Applied Teaching and Learning to Yield Scientific Thinking) focuses on improving the scientific and mathematical understanding of K-12 teachers, students, and parents in the public school systems with which it partners.

CATALyST houses on-going nationally recognized professional development programs for K-12 teachers from throughout Louisiana and surrounding states. Project LIFE (Laboratory Investigations and Field Experiences), is in its 14th year of funding from LaSIP, the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. Chemical Concepts and

Connections for Teacher Leaders (C3), is in the fourth of four years of funding from the National Science Foundation.

Between 1992 and 2005,



more than \$12 million in external funding has supported professional development programs involving more than 2500 teachers who have impacted well over 2 million students attending over 900 schools in 5 states.

Lamar explains that the STAR award was based on the increasing performance of his seventh grade students in science for four consecutive years. But teaching science wasn't always something Cranston was excited about.

Cranston speaks with great enthusiasm as he explains how after teaching 18 years, he was ready to retire -- to try something new. Little did he realize that when he signed up for Project LIFE, he was going to try something new...he was going to impact his students by learning how to learn -- and then teaching his students to do the same.

As he recalls his class-time in Project LIFE, he uses terms like "I was hooked," and "I understood." This is quite an accomplishment for the man who admitted that he "thought his world came to an end" when he was assigned to teach science at his school. That has all changed now, as he contemplates

what extra-curriculum science activities he can offer his students.

Cranston surely is a STAR teacher, and a humble one as well. He emphasized that the award is based on his students' performance -- that this is something THEY did, not him. He also went on to say that he "owes everything" to the CATALyST staff. But to be fair, we need to recognize that Cranston is a true catalyst -- a catalyst for change at his school.

For more information on CATALyST, call (318) 257 - 4772 or visit them on the web at <http://catalyst.latech.edu>.

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Website Review: Louisiana Department of Education and Other Resources

The Louisiana Department of Education's (DOE) website (www.doe.state.la.us) is a wealth of information for all types of stakeholders in education. Here are a few picks from this easy to navigate website.

How does my school rate?

Below are a few categories involving statistics on school districts:

ACT scores -- The state's average composite ACT score in 2005 was 19.8, while the national average was 20.9 for the same year. To see how your school performed on the ACT, click here: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/7829.pdf

Teacher Salaries Budgeted for 2005-2006 - this link has information on the number of teachers for each district and the average salaries. The average salary for teachers in the state is \$38,645; with Jackson Parish having the highest amount budgeted for teacher salaries with the amount of \$48,479, and Catahoula Parish having the lowest amount with \$27,827. To see where your district is in regard to teacher pay, click here: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/8976.xls

District Composite Record - the most comprehensive record of data collected in one report for any given

school district. The report includes a district summary, school characteristics, student participation, student achievement, and college readiness. These reports can be found from this webpage: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/pair/1613.aspx

Sub-group reports - this report gives the performance scores for each of the schools in a district based on ethnicity, English proficiency, poverty (indicated by free/ reduced lunch program participants), and education type (regular education or special education). This report can be found at: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/5799.pdf

In the Teacher's Lounge

Teacher resources are a great strength of the Louisiana DOE website. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students can find information on Grade Level Expectations, Curriculum, and Assessments - all of which are crucial components during this high-stakes testing era. Below are a few of the links to resources which can be used inside and outside of the classroom:

Curriculum, Professional Development, and Tests and Assessments sections of the Louisiana DOE website can be found at: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/doe_teachers.asp.

There are links to instructional resources, as well as Focused Learning Lessons, Model Lessons, and Teacher-to-Teacher Lessons which include content standards, teacher explanations, and printable hand-outs for ease-of-use.

PASS (Practice Assessment/ Strengthen Skills) - this is a practice test for the LEAP 21 and the GEE; great for computer lab time with a class, for individuals who get finished with work early when a classroom computer isn't in use, or to encourage parents and after-school caregivers to utilize. The website for PASS is: www.louisianapass.org.

For Grades 1 -5, Newton's Classroom is an interactive animated math lesson resource. Its home page is: www.louisianapass.org/NewtClassroom/NewtHomePage.php.

PASS on Paper - includes sample questions linked to content standards with explanations for the correct and incorrect responses and also includes student worksheets. This component can be found at: www.doe.state.la.us/lde/ssa/1981.html.

Moving Beyond the Classroom Walls

Learning doesn't stop when students leave their school's

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Website Review: Continued

campus. Here are a few links that address learning away from the classroom:

Distance Learning -- in its seventh year of existence, the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) experienced a dramatic rise in student use after the hurricane season of 2005. Content delivery is made through non-traditional classroom settings, such as on-line classrooms which utilize the internet and email. Classes include required core classes such as mathematics and English, Advanced Placement classes, and Dual Enrollment classes. For a listing of classes available, check: www.louisianavirtualschool.net/courses.php.

Help at home -- parents and students can utilize the "homework helper" link or get information on the Byrd Scholarship when the click on www.doe.state.la.us/lde/students.html. The link to the DiscoverySchool Homework Helper (school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck/) has over 700 links to sites available to help with everything from Kindergarten to Chemistry! Also, the link to QuizHub (quizhub.com/quiz/quizhub.cfm) is great to use to for any grade level in math, English language skills, foreign languages, history, science,

and more!

Other Internet Resources

The US Department of Education's website is a clearinghouse of information for everything education related for students, parents, administrators and community leaders, including free publications and materials. The website is located at www.ed.gov.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has information available on both private and public schools of all levels. School characteristics

and contact information are all available within their database at www.nces.ed.gov.

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) traces its roots back to 1907 when it was founded as the Department of Rural Education. From its website, one can access information on awards and scholarships for students, teachers, and school districts. Also available is the electronic version of the journal, Rural Educator as well as the newsletter, Rural Education News. The website can be found at www.nrea.net.

Continued on next page

LEAP & GEE TEST RESULTS

Louisiana VIRTUAL SCHOOL

$-1 = e^{i\pi}$

2006 Louisiana Leads Summer Conference
July 25 - 27 • New Orleans

Just a few of the resources found on the Louisiana Department of Education website

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Sicily Island High School

Accolades for Rural Louisiana School

Sicily Island High School in Sicily Island, Louisiana has been recognized in a report to the Southern Governor's Association as a Higher Performing High School in the South. Sicily Island High School was one of five southern high schools - of which all were small schools (compared to other schools in their state), have poverty rates higher than average, yet make adequate progress as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act.

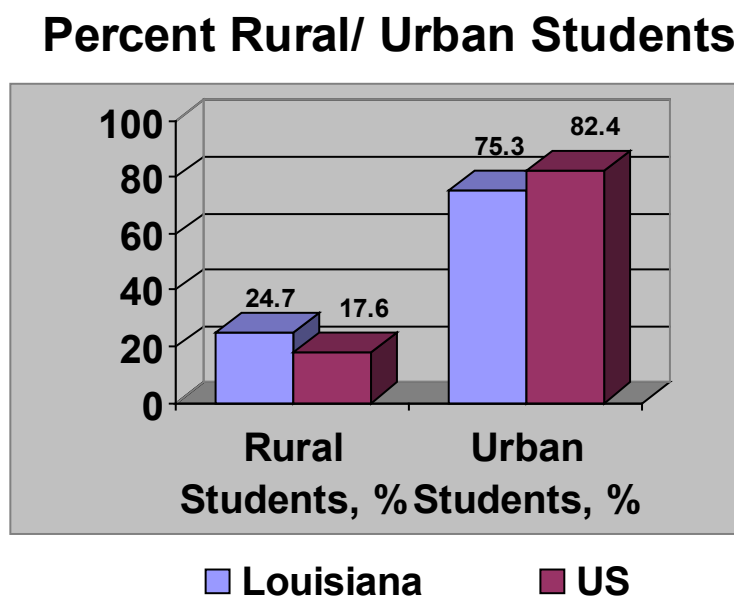
The report states the reason why Sicily Island High School and the other southern rural schools recognized are successful is due to the small school size and the closeness it creates. Positive relationships on all levels from school administrators, teachers, students and parents are fostered and valued as all work together to improve their school community. The entire report can be found at The Rural School and Community Trust website at www.ruraledu.org.

Website Review

(continued from page 7)

The Rural School and Community Trust is a national non-profit organization which seeks to improve the both schools and communities in rural regions. A national, state, and local agenda for increased awareness of rural schools and communities is the focus while supporting high-quality education practices. Rural Roots is a newsletter published six times a year by this organization. You can sign up for mailings or electronic versions of the newsletter by calling (202) 955-7177 or completing a form on their website at www.ruraledu.org.

Figure 2: Louisiana has a higher percentage of rural students than the US average



Source:

National Center for Educational Statistics; Fall, 2003

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Announcements:

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) is the Louisiana representative for the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning. Assistance and training is conducted through annual summer institutes and regional conferences. The Afterschool Training Roundup for the Midsouth Region will be October 23 - 25, 2006. More information and resources, such as ideas on parent involvement and lessons for content areas, can be accessed through the SEDL website at www.sedl.org.

The Center for Rural Development's office is moving!

As of July 1, 2006 you can reach us at:

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