

AN EXAMINATION OF LOUISIANA EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
LEGISLATION, POLICY DECISIONS, INITIATIVES, AND FISCAL EXPENDITURES
FROM 1997 TO 2005

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy,
and Practice

by

Belinda Marie Cambre
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1993
M.P.P., University of Southern California, 1995
J.D./ B.C.L., Louisiana State University, 2006
May, 2009

To my mom and dad,
for the many sacrifices they made to ensure I had a college education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my professors and committee members for their support and encouragement throughout this long journey. I have been blessed to have received such a wonderful education. I also have to thank Professor Christine Corcos, one of my law professors who took the extra effort to foster my knowledge and passion for education law. I appreciate your confidence and advice.

I also owe special thanks to Dr. Dianne Taylor. I remember the day that you interviewed me to enter the program and finally I have arrived at the end. I could not have completed this journey without you and I cannot think of a better mentor. I have appreciated all of the extra time you have provided reading my drafts and helping me through the many mental blocks over the years. I am so grateful for your service and honored by your trust and faith in me.

Many thanks must go out to Henry Norman “Cap” Saurage, the founder of Community Coffee, whose brilliant work later evolved into CC’s Coffeehouses. Thanks are also due to the many employees of the CC’s on Burbank who got to know me well-enough to ask if I wanted my “usual,” a buttered croissant and a grande chocolate mochasippi (no whip). If only they chanted “Norm” when I walked through the door would I have felt more at home. Hopefully, they will dedicate my place at the computer tables in my honor.

Special thanks are due to my interview subjects. Not only did they provide their valuable time and knowledge, but they offered personal advice about furthering my work in education. For that, I am extremely grateful.

I'd also like to recognize several of my friends who have studied with me, complained with me, struggled with me, and celebrated with me. Thanks to Dave and Dana, and to Jonathon, for all of his time and expertise with content analysis. Thanks also to my "legal eagles" lunch buddies, Vallery and Jennifer, who cheered me to completion of this dissertation.

Finally, I have to thank the people who supported me the most through this long process. I could not have completed this degree without the unsung support of my husband, Jarrod, who cared for our girls at times when I couldn't. I know he didn't anticipate all of this when he married me. Thanks to my girls, Jenna and Bailey, for sharing me with this work. Maybe now we'll have some more weekend time together! I would also like to thank the rest of my family: my parents who have supported me endlessly, especially every time I said I was going back to school, and to my sister, brother-in-law, and brother, who probably had to hear about my accomplishments their entire lives. A special wish goes out to my sister Brandi, who, after many years finally realized what she wants to be...a teacher! I'm so proud of you!

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify major school improvement reform programs and initiatives in Louisiana during the period of 1997 to 2005. The criteria used to identify each program included: state funding that averaged at least \$2 million per year in state funds; programs that affected teachers and students for school improvement purposes; and, programs that remained in place for at least two school years. The study ultimately yielded nine programs that met each of the above listed criteria. Some, but not all, were the result of the School and District Accountability Commission, which was established by Act 478, the 1997 Louisiana School and District Accountability Act. These programs in alphabetical order are Community Based Tutorial Program; Distinguished Educators; K-3 Reading and Math Initiative; Louisiana Teacher Assessment & Assistance Program; Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success; Local Teacher Quality; Regional Education Service Centers; Remediation; and, State Testing/Accountability.

The present study was conducted in three phases. Phase One consisted of a document search and identification. Results of the document analysis provided a foundation for Phase Two. Using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), the text of laws passed by the state legislature, policies created by BESE, and documents published by the LDE were examined to determine the intent, goals, longevity, and sources and levels of funding of the various mandated school improvement initiatives. In Phase Three, semi-structured interviews were conducted with former personnel and officials of the LDE, which added depth to the findings from the document analysis and were used for triangulation purposes. As mentioned, the results of the content analysis conducted in Phase Two were used to frame the interview protocol used in Phase Three.

Data from the document analysis and the interviews revealed three issues relevant to the state's policymaking efforts in the school improvement arena: conflicts with stakeholders erupted over turf; program instability stymied effects; and, the lack of a shared mission also impacted effects. This study offers several recommendations to policy makers in Louisiana addressing these issues and concludes with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Consider the following statistics: for every 100 students in the 9th grade in Louisiana in 1992, only 13 graduated from college 10 years later (allowing 4 years for high school and 6 years for college). The largest loss in the state's education pipeline occurred between the 9th grade and high school graduation. Only 59 of 100 9th graders in 1992 received a high school diploma four years later in 1996—a drain of almost half of Louisiana's supply of human capital.

- Southern Education Foundation (2006, p. 6)

The State of Louisiana

The July 15, 2007 headline of Baton Rouge's newspaper, the *Advocate*, spoke volumes. "Closing the Gap," it read, with the smaller tagline reading, "Louisiana continues to lag behind the rest of the nation. Can a new governor and a new legislature change things?" (Brown, 2007, p. A1). To emphasize the point, statistics reported in the article revealed that Louisiana exceeded national averages in public high school dropout rates,¹ the miles of roadways that are in mediocre to poor condition² and a higher cancer death rate in 2007 than the rest of the nation.³ The state also had a much lower gross domestic product growth rate⁴ and spent less per capita on higher education.⁵

The article referenced above began with *Advocate* writer, Penny Brown, proclaiming, "It's the perpetual punch line to a very old joke: When state rankings come out on education or the economy or almost anything else that truly matters, Louisiana is first among the worst and last among the best" (p. 1A). The article warned that Louisiana had almost reached a point of no return. Widespread tolerance of corruption, mediocrity, and neglect at both the state and local

¹ Louisiana's rate is 7%, while the national rate is 3.9%

² Louisiana's percentage is 27%, while the national average is 19%

³ Louisiana's 2007 rate (per 100,000 people) is 223, while the national average is 187.

⁴ Louisiana's rate of growth from 2001 to 2005 is 4.8%, while the national average is 12.2%.

⁵ Louisiana's spending in 2004 was \$510, while the national average was \$589.

levels, and by people of means as well as the poor, had to end if the state were to survive, according to Brown (2007).

Louisiana has a long tradition of squandering its resources, leaving only minimal financial support for things that matter, including education. A state blessed with bountiful natural resources, the populace could once rely on an agricultural economy, oil and natural gas, and the port of New Orleans to enable most White families to make a reasonable living. These jobs required minimal skills, and adolescent boys in the southwestern part of the state would scoff to their teachers who urged them to complete high school, saying that they, the boys, would soon be making a higher annual income than the teachers, which was true.

Louisiana, like its western neighbor Texas, found itself with extremely valuable oil and gas resources. These resources made Louisiana one of the wealthiest states in the union in natural resources. Texas chose to use its oil wealth, in part, to improve its higher education system. As a result, the University of Texas system is one of the top university systems in the country while the Louisiana State University system, the state's flagship system, remains underfunded. An article in the *Houston Chronicle* (2006) quoted a former chancellor of Louisiana State University (LSU) as stating that the university is ten years behind other states' universities in terms of fundraising and academic efforts. The article referred to legendary governor, Huey Long, and his position that the state would provide a university education to anyone who wanted one.

Not only would universities be accessible, but they would be close geographically to state residents. Long made sure that colleges were no more than 60 miles from every citizen (Parent, 2004). The promise of a free education came at a price. Since oil and gas jobs required little formal education, higher education waned in importance as a funding priority. The state legislature became the entity the university depended on for money. Despite the underfunding of

higher education in general in Louisiana, the state legislature currently provides about 50% of the operating budget of LSU, one of the highest percentages in the country (Tresaugue, 2006). The current economic situation provides further illustration, as state-funded universities prepare to make substantial cuts to their annual budgets (Moller, 2008).

Louisiana, unlike Texas, failed to invest its resources to improve education. The state consumed its natural wealth with little regard to the future. The reliance on an oil and gas-based economy fueled corruption by Louisiana's political figures. Oil and gas revenues were plentiful, and politicians won approval by decreasing the taxation of Louisianians and by providing roads, bridges, and free textbooks to public school students. There was also a sense that this money was not the people's money, since it did not come from taxes, and therefore no accountability was necessary (Parent, 2004). In fact,

In this environment, if a brother-in-law or wealthy contributor made large sums of money when a bridge was built or a health service was provided because the state paid exorbitant prices, the average citizen could easily be lulled into just enjoying the benefits without worrying about the money wasted. After all, it was Texaco's money or Standard Oil's money that was being spent (Parent, 2004, p.26).

At the height of the oil boom, during the 1970s and early 1980s, oil and gas resources accounted for 30 to 41% of the state's revenues, approximately \$1.6 billion for the state (Finley, 1999). There was little incentive for the state to change its ways. Edwin Edwards served as governor during much of this time, winning elections in 1971, 1975, 1983, and 1991. Edwards continued in the tradition of earlier officials by providing basic needs for the state while engaging in illegal activity in office. He spent much of his later years fighting corruption and racketeering charges and is currently in prison.

The oil bust of the 1980s brought Louisiana's wealthy days to a rapid end and coincided with the rise of technologies that lessened dependence on unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

The state, however, did not respond with educational opportunities for these workers nor has it attracted clean, high-tech businesses. By 1997, oil and gas revenues accounted for only 12%, or \$723 million, in state revenues (Finley, 1999). As recently as the fall 2007, Louisiana competed with Alabama for a steel mill. The German company, ThyssenKrupp, noting concerns about the local workforce, opted to build the plant in Alabama despite the much larger tax concessions offered by the Louisiana governor (Blum, 2007; Scott, 2007).

Other oil producing states, such as Texas, recovered in the years following the oil bust, but to date in Louisiana, neither the populace as a whole nor the moneyed and power elite have come to grips with the implications of changing economic conditions and demands at the state, national, and global levels. For example, in 2003, just over 50% of Louisiana's exports were crops and another 27% came from petro-chemical industries (Council for a Better Louisiana [CABL], 2005). Combined, 77% of the state's exports in the new millennium are similar in kind to those of 30 years prior. Louisiana's failure to attract businesses that would diversify the economy is partially due to lax state enforcement of environmental laws which has led to serious air, water, and ground pollution. Lack of concern about the environmental impact has led to the stretch of land along both sides of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans being dubbed cancer alley (McQuaid, 2000). Clean industries have been unwilling to ask their workforce to live in these environmental conditions.

Another price the state has had to pay, in large part as a result of its poor educational system and inability to attract clean industry, is a brain-drain that began over 15 years ago and continues today. Between 1990 and 2003, the net out-migration from the state was 207,478 (CABL, 2005) costing the state a net loss of over 23,000 college-educated adults, including 10,000 with graduate and professional degrees. In-migration, on the other hand, included over

5,000 adults who had less than a high school education (Southern Education Foundation, 2006). Louisiana's Southern neighbors, Texas, Georgia, and Florida, have witnessed increased in-migrations of degreed adults and are among those states leading the nation in the brain-gain (Frey, 2004).

In 2005, before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit, almost 80% percent of the state's population was born in Louisiana, compared to Georgia and Arkansas where these percentages were 58% and 64%, respectively (US Census Bureau, 2005). The high out-migration of educated Louisiana citizens and low in-migration of similarly educated people is reflected in the state's continuous ranking near the bottom on national recommendations of "best" places to live (Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2006).

Louisiana has also earned the nickname of "the Inmate State" since the state has led the nation since 1998 in the number of inmates per capita. In 2005, Louisiana incarcerated 797 inmates per 100,000 residents, far exceeding the national average of 491 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Despite experiencing a 2.3% decrease in the prison population, Louisiana still leads the nation in incarceration rate. As discussed below, part of the incarceration rate can be connected to students who drop out without finishing high school, and thus with few skills that can be transferred into jobs that provide a living wage.

While no single solution will change the downward trajectory Louisiana was on before the hurricanes of 2005, the importance of a well-funded, politically-supported system of excellent public education in all of the state's school districts is certainly one of the essential elements necessary for any of the other steps to lift the state from the morass and to have a chance of success.

Purpose of This Study

A recent study (Southern Education Foundation, 2006) concluded that “63 percent – nearly two-thirds -- of the difference between Louisiana’s per capita income and the nation’s income can be explained solely by the state’s lower levels of education” (p. 5). Louisiana state compulsory education laws require schooling from the age of seven through eighteen (LA R.S. 17:221), yet almost 60% of the students who complete eighth grade in Louisiana do not finish high school on time (Louisiana Department of Education [LDE], 2007; LDE, 2002), compared to 74% nationally (Laird, DeBell & Chapman, 2006). Students who do not complete high school earn substantially less than students who earn a high school diploma (Schargel, 2004a; Brier, 2004). While every eighteen year old need not attend college, successfully pursuing some kind of post-secondary education is essential to becoming gainfully employed. The average high school graduate in 2003 will earn an average of \$23,657 annually, while the average college graduate will earn an average of \$47,100 annually, a 99% increase (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], September 2006). College graduates may enjoy a \$1 million difference in average lifetime salary earnings above high school graduates (Brier, 2004). The benefits of a college education are not constrained to a higher annual income. College graduates tend to have higher savings levels, a lower instance of unemployment, improved health and life expectancy, increased participation in leisure activities, and greater civic involvement (SREB, 2006).

The benefits of education accrue not just to individuals. According to a report by the SREB (2006), states receive tremendous advantages from college graduates through increased tax revenues and increased consumption, greater productivity, and less dependency on government provided health care⁶ and social security because they tend to have adequate health

⁶ In 2004, 93% of college graduates reported being in good, very good, or excellent health, as compared to 80% of high school graduates.

insurance and retirement plans. The citizenry as a whole benefits from an increased quality of civic life,⁷ through increased charitable giving, and through community involvement.⁸ While the benefits of a college degree are substantial, benefits of a community college education have also been documented. Even if not completed, additional education reaps financial benefits, especially for females (Marcotte, Bailey, Borkoski, & Kienzl, 2005).⁹ The economic and civic advantages of post-secondary education make investment in pre-kindergarten through high school (referred to henceforth as PK12) education obvious. The inadequacy of much of Louisiana's PK12 schooling results in colleges and universities expending monies for remedial courses in mathematics and English to help students acquire basic skills that should have been mastered prior to high school graduation (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002).¹⁰

The purpose of this study is to examine state legislation aimed at PK12 school reform and improvement, to document expenditures to the extent possible, and to suggest how monies could be better spent. To begin, I set the stage by giving a brief history of education in Louisiana. Next, I identify major reform legislation and programs enacted from 1997 through the end of the 2004-2005 academic year that were aimed at PK12 schooling. As these programs are identified below, content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) of the intent and goals of the initiatives is provided. In addition, the state dollars attached to each are given to the extent possible.¹¹ I conclude with

⁷ 77% of college graduates in the South reported voting in 2000, compared to 56% of high school graduates (SREB, 2006).

⁸ 30% of college graduates in the South reported volunteering at some level, as compared to only 18% of high school graduates (SREB, 2006).

⁹ The authors note their analysis reveals a 5% to 10% increase in earnings for each year of community college completed. This was true even for those who did not complete their education. Men, however, were not advantaged in hourly wage earning situations when they did not complete their degree.

¹⁰ In 2002, the state estimated that 66% of entering 2-year college and 35% of entering 4-year college freshman required remediation (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002).

¹¹ Education allocations are scattered throughout the state budget making precise accounting of all the funding designated for each particular reform law virtually impossible.

recommendations about what the state might do in the future to bring Louisiana to a par educationally and economically with successful southern states.

A Brief History of Education in Louisiana

Formal education was not a priority in Louisiana and the South during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Only children of the wealthy received a formal education from tutors, schools in Europe, or the few private institutions that existed. Parochial schools, especially Catholic schools, were predominant during this time. In 1728, several French nuns opened Ursuline Academy in New Orleans, the first formal school in the state and currently the oldest Catholic school in the country, to educate women of all colors (Ursuline Academy, 2008). Other denominations followed suit in establishing schools, though enrollment was restricted to White children, and over the years non-church related private schools were also established.

Louisiana's first public school system began in 1841 in New Orleans. Modeled after the system in Massachusetts, and led by reform ideas of Horace Mann, many of the city's school teachers hailed from the New England area (Hanger, 1996). Although the education provided was excellent (Hanger, 1996), wealthy parents continued to send their children to schools in Europe or the parochial schools within the state. A free education was viewed as appropriate for workers and immigrants, and wealthy parents often balked at the idea of paying taxes to support such a system (Hanger, 1996).

John McDonogh, a planter and merchant who relocated to New Orleans from New England, left half of his estate to provide for the free education of White and Black children (Hanger, 1996). In addition to McDonogh's philanthropy, another gift came from Marie Couvent, a former slave who bequeathed her wealth for the care and education of poor Black orphans. Despite these gifts, Black children were excluded from Louisiana's public schools

unless the free black community organized its own schools, as in New Orleans (Hanger, 1996). Free persons were also prohibited from teaching slaves to read and write (Hanger, 1996).

Reconstruction: Education for a Few

Following the Civil War, the South had a disproportionately large number of destitute and uneducated children, consisting of Black children of former slaves and White children of the plain folk (Southern Education Foundation, 2007). In the South, only 20% of Black children and 40% of White children attended formal schools. Those who did attend school did so for only a few months each year, as compared to students in the rest of the nation who attended school sessions that were twice as long (Southern Education Foundation, 2007).

The Louisiana Constitution of 1868 required that each parish provide at least one public school open to all students regardless of color. The number of public schools jumped from 100 in 1868 to over 1,100 in 1872 (Hanger, 1996). Few students of color enrolled in the new schools, and segregation returned at the end of Reconstruction (Hanger, 1996). During Reconstruction, public school enrollment for Blacks in Louisiana increased while attendance for Whites decreased (Hanger, 1996); however, private schools flourished for White students. The number of private schools in Louisiana increased from 140 in 1864 to 222 in 1877, with the number of students educated in private schools increasing from 5,000 to 19,401 (Hanger, 1996).

Huey P. Long: “Every Man a King”

Huey Long, perhaps Louisiana’s most famous governor, served from 1928 to 1932. He grew up poor and portrayed an image that he was one of the masses of poor in Louisiana. His “Share the Wealth” program built upon the notion that 65% to 70% of the nation’s wealth was owned by 2% of the people (Jeansonne, 1983). Long wanted the entire burden of taxation to fall upon millionaires, with middle and lower classes not paying taxes at all. Long sold this idea to

the people of Louisiana, but did little to make it a reality. The standard of living was and remains substantially below national averages, with illiteracy rates remaining among the highest.

A constitutionally mandated homestead exemption was first introduced in Louisiana around this time. Exempting a portion of personal property from taxation, the exemption was first worth about \$2,000 (\$5,000 for veterans) (Sindler, 1956) and has increased in value over time. Today, the first \$75,000 worth of appraised property is exempt from property taxes. In a state with elected assessors, nearly two-thirds of Louisiana's homes are fully exempt from taxation (Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, 2004).

Despite his popularity in Louisiana, Long's legacy in the area of education is a detrimental one. Notwithstanding his many claims to offer a "kingdom" to every Louisianian, his actual work was concerned more with publicity than substance (Jeansonne, 1983). His efforts to promote Louisiana State University, for example, were almost exclusively concerned with the football team and band. Long reasoned that jobs available in Louisiana, mainly those in the offshore oil drilling industry, did not require advanced education; thus, he did little to support the academic programs of the university.

The Late Twentieth Century: The Rise and Fall of the Oil Industry

In 1970, the Louisiana population was 3,644,637 (LDE, 1979). Ten years later, the population increased fifteen percent to 4,194,299. According to state officials, the areas along the eastern banks of the Mississippi River from Point Coupee Parish to Jefferson Parish experienced the largest population increases (LDE, 1979). Officials speculated that this may be due to increased industrialization and spillover from metropolitan areas into the more rural areas (LDE, 1979). Livingston Parish, for example, enjoyed a 59.1% increase in the population. Good

weather conditions, favorable labor supply for low-skilled jobs, and a traditionally higher birth rate have all been cited as factors to the decade's population boom (LDE, 1979).

Life was good by Louisiana standards as long as oil production was prosperous. By the mid-1980s, however, oil prices dropped from \$35 per barrel to \$10 per barrel (Garvey & Widmer, 2001). Unemployment rose to 11.9% statewide, and thousands of residents fled the state in search of jobs. The population loss was so great that, following the 1990 Census, Louisiana lost a Congressional seat in Washington, DC. As the twentieth century drew to a close, public education in Louisiana, much like its counterparts nationwide, was straddled by increasing regulations, decreased funding, and an explosion of impoverished students. Several districts in Louisiana remained under court-ordered desegregation plans.

A History of Inadequate Funding and the Litigation that Followed

This study undertakes an in-depth examination of Louisiana's funding and expenditures for its PK12 schools. As suggested above, Louisiana has a history of school underfunding and understaffing schools. Funding for schools in the South has historically lagged behind the rest of the nation. For example, in 1930, the average per-student expenditure in the South was \$37 while the national average was \$97 per student (Southern Education Foundation, 2007). Unequal expenditures by race were also prevalent. Southern states spent, on average, \$45 per White student but \$12 per Black student (Southern Education Foundation, 2007). Court challenges attempted to litigate equality but with little success.

The Louisiana Minimum Foundation Program

Nationwide, each state has a formula for determining the amount of money required to provide a minimum education to its citizens (Odden & Picus, 1992). State formulas often take into consideration issues such as the local district's ability to provide for its school age residents

through property taxes and the relative wealth of the local district. Therefore, the amount of money available for each local district varies. Because local districts are able to supplement the state allotment, wealthier districts which have higher valued taxable property are able to spend more on public schools. Such districts tend to provide higher salaries to teachers and offer a better funded education to their residents.

Louisiana is constitutionally mandated to create a funding formula known as the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is required to prepare a formula annually, but the legislature is vested with the authority to determine whether to appropriate funds requested by BESE. Louisiana's MFP calculates the amount of money necessary to provide a minimum education to the students in public schools. This calculation consists of three levels.

Level one includes several calculations. It determines the cost of an education in every district by multiplying a weighted student count by a weighted per pupil amount. Students classified as at-risk, special education, gifted and talented education, and vocational education receive increased weights in the formula. The local proportion of the funding is affected by a local wealth factor and a local equalization factor. These factors are determined by the parish's property and sales tax revenues to determine the fiscal capacity per pupil. Once the local support level is determined, it is subtracted from the total level one cost to yield the amount of state support. BESE, with approval from the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, adjusts and determines the per pupil amount. For the 2004-2005 school year, the Base Per Pupil amount was \$3,459 (LDE, 2004a). The amount established per school is based upon student membership on October 1st of each year. Should a student transfer to another school or parish after that date, the per pupil allotment does not transfer with the student.

The average state contribution is 65% per local district and ranges from a low of 17.84% in Plaquemines Parish to a high of 89.73% in Grant Parish (LDE, 2004a). Other funding sources are local taxes and federal monies. Table 1.1 displays the five parishes receiving the highest percentage of state allocations and the five parishes receiving the lowest percentage in 2004-2005.

Table 1.1
School Districts Receiving Highest and Lowest Percentage of State Revenue
Towards Education, 2004-2005.

Highest		Lowest	
Parish	Percentage of State Share	Parish	Percentage of State Share
Grant	89.73%	Plaquemines	17.84%
Washington	86.31%	West Feliciana	25.50%
Livingston	85.51%	Iberville	30.27%
East Carroll	85.25%	St. Charles	37.29%
Vernon	84.57%	East Baton Rouge	42.11%

Note: In Grant Parish, 89.73% of the total education budget is comprised of state dollars. The remaining 10.27% of funding in the district comes from taxes generated in the district and federal sources (LDE, 2004a).

Level two of the MFP rewards local school systems that contribute a greater portion toward the cost of education by raising local tax revenues. The formula offers approximately 40% of the amount of the local district's eligible revenue, as determined in level one. Level three provides for continuous funding for items such as across the board teacher pay raises, support worker raises, salaries for foreign language teachers, and a hold harmless provision established in the law. Hold harmless funding is an amount paid to districts that were deemed to be over-funded in the 1992-93 fiscal year. Table 1.2 shows those districts eligible to receive annual Level three hold harmless funding. This funding allows districts to continue to receive additional state funds regardless of the district's ability to collect revenues from its residents.

Table 1.2
 Districts Receiving Hold-Harmless Funding, 2004-2005.

District	Per Pupil Amount	Total Amount Not to Exceed
Concordia	\$61	\$224,419
East Baton Rouge	\$567	\$25,595,514
Evangeline	\$30	\$184,440
Iberville	\$586	\$2,512,768
Jefferson	\$523	\$26,013,497
Lafayette	\$69	\$1,996,377
Plaquemines	\$1,497	\$6,901,170
Pointe Coupee	\$112	\$354,256
St. Charles	\$1,010	\$9,520,260
St. James	\$498	\$1,872,978
West Feliciana	\$2,697	\$5,908,357

Note: Louisiana Department of Education (2004a, p.28).

Litigation Regarding Issues of Equity

The 1970s saw an increase in litigation regarding district funding formulas. In 1973, litigation in Texas challenged the state's system of allocation of state funds for education (Burrup, Brimley, & Garfield, 1996). The United States Supreme Court chose to review *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973), the first and only equal protection case concerning school finance decided by the high court. The Court ruled that education was not a fundamental right, thus not a constitutional federal interest, but rather a matter reserved for the legislative processes of the states (Burrup et al., 1996). The Court refused to hear later finance cases from Wyoming, Ohio, and California, on the grounds that school finance is a state matter.

The first challenge in Louisiana to the MFP formula occurred in the 1976 federal court case, *Scarnato v. Parker*. In this case, the plaintiffs, as taxpayers on behalf of their minor children, sued the state treasurer, claiming the variation in property tax assessments was unconstitutional and created a violation of equal protection. The United States District Court, Middle District of Louisiana, disagreed, citing *Rodriguez*, and noting

Even if all property were assessed on a uniform basis, the parishes with relatively less valuable immovable property would contribute less to the MFP than the parishes whose residents own more valuable

property. Local ability to support MFP diminishes the amount of the state contribution. (p. 275)

The court reiterated the stance of *Rodriguez* that matters of finance reform with respect to state taxation and education are best remedied by state legislatures.

Louisiana state courts ruled in a suit, *Louisiana Association of Educators v. Edwards* (1978). Here the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) claimed that state law violated the Louisiana constitution by not fully funding the MFP. The plaintiffs alleged that BESE submitted a request for education dollars and that the state legislature did not appropriate the requested amount. The Louisiana Supreme Court, however, determined that it is the legislature that appropriates the amount of money for education, and that “the function of the formula is to distribute equitably whatever funds the legislature had appropriated; the purpose of the formula is not to set the level of funding” (p. 394). This case further establishes state law that requires BESE, as an administrative body, to prepare the annual budget for education to be submitted and appropriated by the state legislature.

In another federal court case coming from Louisiana, *School Board of the Parish of Livingston v. LA BESE* (1987), the Livingston Parish School Board sued BESE proclaiming the disparity in the dollars expended violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The plaintiffs asserted that the MFP unfairly impacts parishes with a high proportion of homestead tax-exempt housing. The court responded that parishes which do not have the ability to contribute higher proportion of locally generated revenue receive higher state contributions. Thus, the court supported the constitutionality of the MFP system, noting that the MFP determines a dollar figure per student and that the formula determines what percentage each parish contributes to reaching that goal. The fact that a parish

contributes beyond the minimum dollar figure for its residents did not equate to a violation of equal protection in the court's view.

Finally, in 1992, parents of public school children sued state officials alleging that the State was not fulfilling its responsibility to provide a minimum foundation of education to all public school children of the state (*Charlet v. Legislature of the State of Louisiana*, 1998). The complaint pointed to deficiencies in textbooks, buildings, quality of teachers, and student achievement to demonstrate gross inequities between school districts. The Court discussed the fact that it is the legislators, elected from all corners of the state and assisted by extensive staffs and research committees, who are designated to make the inherently political decisions affirming the minimum amounts required to satisfy the MFP (p. 1204).

The plaintiffs appealed but the Louisiana Supreme Court remanded the case back to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. The Appellate Court, in 1998, held Louisiana's funding formula to be adequate and certified that it met state constitutional guidelines. According to testimony, the revised MFP formula, enacted into law in 1992, was specifically designed to eliminate some of the disparities which existed prior to revision. The Court held that the minimum foundation was being provided, thus satisfying the constitutional guarantees of equal protection.

In sum, the court system of Louisiana has not helped ameliorate funding inequities across the state's varied parishes. Louisiana courts have consistently held that the MFP represents the minimum investment in education. The courts have not indicated an interest in adhering to an equitable maximum rate of funding that would more nearly equalize spending among the parishes and districts.

Importance of This Study/ Research Questions

Louisiana is a state currently in flux. In addition to the current financial recession affecting the entire country, Louisiana is still trying to recover from two deadly hurricanes in 2005 that caused the relocation of thousands of the state's residents to other states. Many of those residents have yet to return. The impact from this population shift will be felt for years. These storms are still a painful reminder to most who live in the state. As devastating as the storms were to the state, the overall situation in Louisiana is not substantially different from what it was before the storms hit. Hurricane Katrina, for example, is the main reason the Orleans Parish School Board did not declare bankruptcy as a result of financial mismanagement (Thevenot, 2005). And, pre- and post-Katrina and Rita, Louisiana consistently ranked at or near the bottom in measures of student achievement and expenditures. Recovering from an already broken system will likely be a long-term, extremely difficult task. At the same time, Louisiana has spent years investing dollars in its educational system. One result of these investments, which will be discussed more fully, is that the state was recognized in 2002-2003 by Quality Counts (2003) as having a strong accountability system. This recognition came as a result of the state mandating numerous reform initiatives designed to increase student achievement.

A critical examination of the state's policy decisions is essential to identifying problems that keep the state at the bottom of national rankings of educational achievement. Examining the amount of money needed and allocated to educational improvement initiatives should provide insight into the state's ongoing difficulties in producing an educated citizenry capable of attracting high quality jobs. As part of this examination, it is important to investigate the longevity of the various improvement initiatives as a gauge of the amount of time and patience the state has allocated to achieve a desired result.

Louisiana had 1,535 schools in 2004-2005, employing 55,485 faculty members, and providing schooling for 724,002 students (LDE, 2006a). The student population showed slight decreases of approximately 3,000 students in each of the prior two school years. Despite the declining enrollment, expenses for education did not change. In fact, educational expenditures increased in each of those years. For example, during the 1979-80 school year, Louisiana invested a total of \$1,580,404,985 in education (LDE, 1979). By the 2004-05 school year, that investment had grown to \$5,957,739,210 (LDE, 2006a). These increases were based on the assumption that if funding for education increased, the quality of education in Louisiana would improve (Finley, 1999). Considering the above detailed litigation in the state, and given that Louisiana tripled its investment in education over the past twenty years, light sheds on the underfunding of public education historically. Figure 1.1 displays the investment in education made over the past 25 years, with dollars not adjusted for inflation.

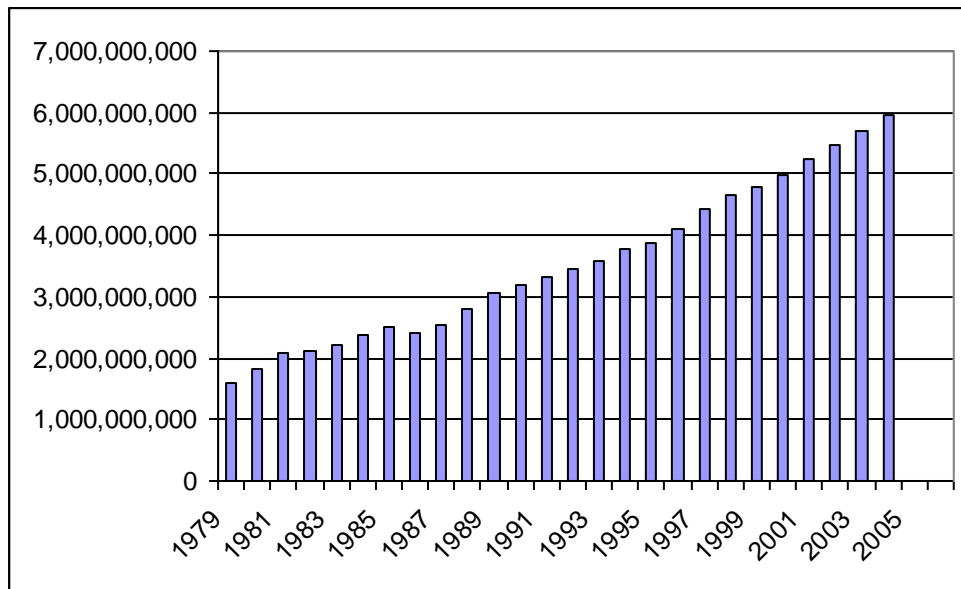


Figure 1.1 Total Revenue for Louisiana Schools (in Actual Dollars), 1979-2005
 Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *Annual Financial Reports*

This study examines Louisiana's school improvement initiatives and policies and the money expended for such programs from 1997 to 2005. To more fully understand the impact of the state school improvement initiatives implemented during the study period, three research questions are addressed:

(1) What major state education improvement initiatives were in place in Louisiana during the period of 1997- 2005?

(2) How do the identified school improvement initiatives compare in terms of intent, goals, longevity, and expenditures? and

(3) What are the perceptions of knowledgeable state personnel, both current and former, regarding the major state school improvement initiatives?

These questions will be further explored in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: ACCOUNTABILITY

Everything that can be counted does not
necessarily count; everything that counts
cannot necessarily be counted.
- Albert Einstein

Louisiana Situated in the National Context

This study examines Louisiana's school improvement policies and initiatives since the passage of the 1997 School and District Accountability Act. Central to the concept of accountability is measuring the effectiveness of the school dollar by testing student achievement.

This chapter describes the development of the Louisiana School and District Accountability Act (Act 478). It begins with a discussion of the evolving role of the federal government in the accountability movement during the past fifty years. We start fifty years ago because of the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ([ESEA] 1965) as part of the Great Society legislation passed under the Johnson administration. As will be detailed below, Title I of ESEA made millions of dollars available to local education agencies for the purpose of equalizing the education of poor and wealthier students. ESEA has been continuously reauthorized by Congress since 1965, though its name changed under different presidential administrations, discussed more fully below.

Louisiana enacted legislation mandating a statewide testing program in the 1980s, prior to NCLB. The requirement that students pass the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) was enacted in 1991 (LDE, 2008f). The 2002 implementation of NCLB imposed additional requirements on states and their respective accountability policies and school improvement initiatives. Louisiana, which had already begun adopting and implementing model initiatives from other states, was not required to make dramatic changes to comply with NCLB

requirements. Side by side comparisons of pre-NCLB and post-NCLB requirements in Louisiana are found in Appendix A.

The Role of the Federal Government in State and Local Education Policy

The Early Years

The federal role in education is limited by the Constitution which leaves to the states all powers not specifically given to the federal government (Berube, 1991). Education is not enumerated as a federal power in the Constitution. Therefore, for much of our history, education was a local function, deemed best coordinated by towns and states. The newly emerging federal government remained largely quiet with respect to education issues. Indeed, from 1777 to 1937, Congress enacted only 23 laws pertaining to education (Campbell, 1970). During the next 24 years, Congress enacted 33 laws, the majority of which provided money for construction of schools and compensated veterans for war service. However, the discussion below clearly demonstrates that various presidents, through their use of the bully pulpit, influenced public perception of the role of the federal government in public education. The power of the bully pulpit alone had substantial impact on education until the late 1950s, when federal monies began to be allocated to district and state level coffers, and the balance of power regarding education policy shifted. Nonetheless, prior to that time, presidents were quite influential in setting agendas, refining debates, and recasting specific policy goals (Shull, 1993).

Presidential interest in public education dates back to George Washington. Keppel (1990) describes four influential presidential messages regarding education. Washington, in his farewell speech to the army, offered the first such message, urging the promotion and diffusion of knowledge as the main vehicle for preserving the Constitution and democracy (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Washington's message provided an impetus for states to establish public schools,

an impetus that had substantial effect until the Civil War. The publicly funded, and now nostalgic, one-room school house is an artifact of Washington's influence.

The second presidential message came from Thomas Jefferson and changed the focus of public education from the preservation of the democracy to concern with absorbing the millions of immigrants flocking to the country and working their way into the workforce and later into citizenship. This message resonated in the public mind from the time of the Civil War through the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt in the early nineteenth hundreds. Because education had come to be understood as the primary vehicle for assimilating and Americanizing immigrants, public schools during this period began, for the first time, to be examined as social as well as educational institutions.

The third presidential messages, given first by Theodore Roosevelt and then reiterated by Woodrow Wilson, again changed the public view about the purpose of schools. With the advance of the Industrial Age, schools were charged with promoting the economic and technological prowess of the country. The fourth message, advanced by Franklin D. Roosevelt, was that education was a right in and of itself, though as we learned in Chapter 1, the US Supreme Court has consistently refused to endorse this view. As a result of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Roosevelt's New Deal offered educational policies aimed at constructing schools, addressing teacher pay, and addressing the pressing needs of Black Americans (Fass, 1981). Roosevelt's plans uncovered deeply-rooted Black poverty and provided for literacy and skill-developing classes aimed at improving the ability of Blacks to compete in the workplace. Money was earmarked specifically for Black Americans, through job training programs and university funding, and forbade discrimination in the distribution of funds. Although New Deal programs attempted to address some of the widespread segregation in American schools, the failure to

institutionalize and make a statement of the legal rights of Black Americans ensured that New Deal aid was short-lived. Roosevelt's actions, however, set the stage for federal intervention in education policy issues in future years (Fass, 1981).

Keppel (1990) noted these presidential messages are often recycled. The first message, advocating education as maintenance of the nation, can also be seen in the presidencies of Nixon and Ford. Despite their rhetoric that education was necessary for the preservation of democracy, neither president did anything noteworthy to advance programs already in place. Nixon was quoted as having spent less than ten hours on education issues in his first two years as president (Berube, 1991). The second recycled message is evident in the immigration debates of the past thirty years. Texas tried to prevent illegal immigrant children from attending its schools citing heavy burdens placed on local economies. In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the Supreme Court ruled that such students have a right to an education and are indeed persons within the jurisdiction of the state. California's landslide passage of Proposition 227 (1998) resulted in the termination of bilingual education and the transition of students into English immersion programs. Recent issues with homeland security have also framed immigration debates in an effort to preserve democracy. Economic competitiveness messages of the early twentieth century are being repeated in the latest accountability movements. Beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (1983), stories of today's students academically falling behind those of other nations have fueled fears that the United States will lose its global position as a super power.

Expansion of the Federal Role in Education during the Last Half of the Twentieth Century

The end of World War II left the world with two new superpowers, the United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, commonly known as the USSR or Russia. Our nation's shock at the Russians' successful launch of the Sputnik satellite led to US

governmental concern that our schools were not educating students to be competitive in the Cold War context. US governmental officials worried that we would lose our military and technological advantage to the Russians, who were investing heavily in space and defense (Cross, 2004). Focus on education shifted to preserving and advancing America's superpower status through education of its citizenry. The Congressional response, with the support of President Dwight Eisenhower, was passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) and the Education Development Act of 1958, both aimed at strengthening mathematics, science, and foreign language education at the PK12 and university levels (Cross, 2004).

During the post-war years, advances in communications, transportation, and the continued growth of big cities were making our country smaller. At the same time, Black citizens, emancipated a century earlier, continued their struggle for civil rights, a movement that changed the social landscape of the country. The United States Supreme Court, in 1954, decided for the plaintiffs in a suit known as *Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka* (1954), technically according Black students the same educational opportunities as White students at the PK12 and university levels.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), 1965

Of the number of civil rights acts passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s, one mentioned above was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which dealt specifically with PK12 education. Initially, the passage of the ESEA was controversial. The notion that the federal government would reach into a domain largely restricted to local entities was unprecedented. Republicans voted en masse against the ESEA protesting the intrusion into local government, but the majority-Democratic Congress passed the controversial legislation (Davies, 2007). The federal government argued that federal

support of PK12 schooling was the most appropriate way to intervene in the educational crisis afflicting the nation's poor and minority children (McGuinn, 2006). Educational advancement would also positively impact the country economically.

The passage of ESEA touched almost every school district in the country, making money available for the improvement of the education for those who were then commonly referred to as disadvantaged children (Howe, 1990; Jeffrey, 1978). Among the most important elements of ESEA was Title I, which allocated millions of dollars to public schools to provide an education to Black students equal to that of White students (Pulliam & VanPatton, 2007). Unknown to many is that federally legislated education programs, such as ESEA and its successors, are voluntary; no state or district is forced to accept federal money. Indeed, federal allocations amount to about 8% of a typical state's education budget (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

Title I had three interrelated but distinct purposes: (a) to provide financial aid to schools with low-income students; (b) to fund special services for low-achieving students in the poorest schools; and (c) to contribute to the cognitive, social, and physical development of participating students (Wise, 1979). In addition to desegregation issues, other equal opportunity matters subsequently rose to prominence, particularly opportunities for females and people with disabilities. Subsequent amendments to the law required schools to provide student performance data to the respective state education agencies in an effort to systematically improve the effectiveness of educational systems.

The ESEA originally allowed local school district officials to control the expenditure of funds (Pulliam & VanPatton, 2007). However, from the beginning there were problems with the implementation of the program. Critics claimed the funding formula loopholes in the legislation allowed richer states to receive more funds than poorer states (Jeffrey, 1978). The formula was

also criticized for relying on 1960 census data to determine the number of poor children. By 1968, three years after the program was funded, many (Jeffrey, 1978) argued that the census data were out-dated, unfairly skewing the distribution of federal dollars.

In partial response to critics, the federal government funded one of the first massive studies of education in the country (Wise, 1979). The result was the *Equality of Educational Opportunity Report* (1966), commonly referred to as the Coleman Report. One part of the Coleman Report examined the determinants of variations in school outcomes. The report famously noted that schools “bring little influence to bear on a child’s achievement that is independent of his [sic] background and general social context” (Wise, 1979, p. 8). While the Coleman Report spawned many debates, it was an impetus for shifting the policy debate from examining inputs to focusing on the outputs of education (Wise, 1979). The results of the Coleman Report were disputed by some and gave rise to an important non-governmental reform initiative widely known as effective schools research (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1992). A federal response to Coleman’s report was to develop a measure of educational achievement among the states. In 1969, the federal government contracted with the Education Commission of the States to create the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Wise, 1979).

As Richard Nixon was set to enter the White House, the majority Democratic Congress moved to quickly reauthorize ESEA. Nixon, a Republican, attempted to slash approximately \$400 million from the education budget, but Congress overrode the cuts in large part because the widespread reach of the funding was politically popular (Davies, 2007). Nixon’s fall from power and his vice-president’s failure to win the 1976 election, brought another Democrat to the White House, Jimmy Carter. One of Carter’s goals was to create a United States Department of Education (USDOE), which slowly began to assume the task of monitoring compliance with

federal regulations, particularly ESEA. To this point, ESEA allowed large sums of money to be used at local discretion. Honoring local control of education, ESEA did not create a singular program, rather thousands of individual and different kinds of Title I programs existed (Graham, 1984).

As noted, over the years, ESEA was redesigned, funds reallocated and variously rededicated, and programs renamed. One of the most dramatic changes occurred in the 1980s during the administration of Ronald Reagan when ESEA was redesigned, renamed, and reallocated. The law was reauthorized under the name Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 (ECIA) and Title I was renamed as Chapter 1. The redesigned program, Chapter 1 provided block grants to the states (Anderson, 2007), allowing state decision makers to allocate funds to local districts and programs. Although ESEA has never been fully funded, under Reagan, the program was cut drastically and the states were mandated to make up the difference (Davies, 2007).

Policy making does not occur in a vacuum (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). ESEA was first passed in the 1960s during the height of the Civil Rights Movement which continued into the 1970s. By the 1980s, there was considerable concern over the quality of American educational system as international comparisons of student achievement indicated American students underscored their counterparts in other countries. In addition, Japan emerged as an economic powerhouse which caused many to believe that America's position as an economic world power depended upon the revitalization of our public schools (Berube, 1991; Boyer, 1990).

The release of the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983) allowed Reagan to proclaim a crisis in education and to use his position as a bully pulpit to call states and local governments to reform

their educational programs. The report claimed that US high school students were performing worse on standardized tests than in the prior years and that many adults were functionally illiterate. However, Berliner and Biddle (1995) demonstrated that test scores were, in fact, on the rise. These authors noted that commercial tests are typically recalibrated every seven years in order to ensure that the average student scores at the fiftieth percentile. This recalibration tends to lead to an initial drop in test scores, presumably fueling the fear that students are scoring lower than on prior exams. Notwithstanding the explanation for the decline in test scores offered by Berliner and Biddle, *A Nation at Risk* called for the creation of high standards to ensure that American school children were being educated to compete with internationally with countries such as Japan, South Korea, and West Germany. The report also blamed the decrease in student achievement scores to the poor quality of teachers, noting that many were often at the bottom of the graduating class at their respective colleges. Though *A Nation at Risk* was never codified through federal law, it spawned a plethora of state laws aimed at elementary and secondary schools.

Holton (2003), a member of the commission that wrote *A Nation at Risk*, reported there was no national interest in education in the 1980s. Reagan convened a commission of high level individuals who were not educators to write a report on the condition of education. Specifically, Reagan charged the commissioners with compiling a report that focused on five fundamental points: “Bring God back into the classroom. Encourage tuition tax credits for families using private schools. Support vouchers. Leave the primary responsibility for education to parents. And please abolish that abomination, the Department of Education” (Holton, 2003, ¶8). *A Nation at Risk* pressed a back-to-basics remedy for what was described as a debacle of public education. In contrast, some government officials wanted the report to point out and recognize

outstanding schools to serve as models for less successful schools. In response, states created task forces and increased school funding. The legacy of *A Nation at Risk* may be that the report facilitated the national conversation about educational excellence, revolutionizing the federal role in education, just as the 1957 launch of Sputnik had (Davies, 2007).

George H. W. Bush followed Reagan as president, self-proclaiming to be the “education president.” Bush convened an Education Summit with the 50 state governors in September, 1989. Then-Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, along with other southern governors, pushed for a set of national goals (Cross, 2004). The six national education goals, known as America 2000, were created as a result of the summit, and include:

- Goal 1 By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
- Goal 2 By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
- Goal 3 By the year 2000, American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
- Goal 4 By the year 2000, U.S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
- Goal 5 By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise

the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

- Goal 6 By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (National Education Goals Panel, 1992).

Although it seemed consensus about education was promising, Bush failed to have his *America 2000*, a goals-driven school reform package, passed based on opposition to the schools-choice provisions (Anderson, 2007). The package called for national standards, voluntary examinations, and school, district, and state report cards (Cross, 2004). The plan also called for merit pay proposals for teachers and principals, as well as model schools designated as “New American Schools.” Bush served one term as president and was followed by Bill Clinton in 1993. Under the Clinton administration ESEA was reauthorized, this time with federal funding tied to state actions. Clinton’s *Goals 2000* (1994) called for voluntary national standards and assessments based upon the goals outlined in the failed *America 2000* (McGuinn, 2006). States were free to create their own student standards, but were required to have them approved by the U.S. Department of Education in order to receive Title I funding (McGuinn, 2006). Like ESEA, *Goals 2000* was implemented under Democratic rule. Conservative Republicans agreed with the measures but had little support for the expansion of federal authority in schooling.

The standards movement and the release of *Goals 2000* appeared in the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA. The Clinton administration pushed for high standards for *all* students, requiring that schools receiving Title I money elevate the achievement of low-income students to higher standards applied for all students (Anderson, 2007). ESEA was renamed the *Improving America’s Schools Act* (1994) and was funded at \$12.7 billion, with \$7.4 billion going directly to

Title I/Chapter I programs. As a condition of accepting the federal funds, states were required to identify schools that were not making “adequate yearly progress.”

Following Clinton, George W. Bush made education a key issue of his domestic agenda during his presidential campaign (Baptiste, Orvosh-Kamenski, & Kamenski, 2005). Consistent with his proposed agenda, Bush sent major revisions of the ESEA to Congress, highlighted by a system of mandatory testing and accountability standards for schools, districts, and state departments of education. The Republican Party was in control of the Congress and under a Republican president, advocated an expanded federal role in education. The result was landmark bipartisan legislation known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), enacted in 2002, the first year of the Bush presidency. Based on high stakes test scores, schools deemed as failures were to face sanctions, such as loss of federal funding or closure. In addition, parents of students in failing schools were to be provided with tutoring at no cost or with the opportunity to choose a school deemed better for their child(ren) to attend. The legislation also forced schools in states accepting the federal dollars to be accountable for specific “subgroups” of students, such as students of color, English language learners, and students with special needs. Many states took issue with NCLB, but all accepted the money and the provisions that accompanied it. Still, Utah is one of the few states that passed legislation promoting their state accountability system above that required by NCLB, thus jeopardizing its federal funds (Archibald, 2005a; Archibald, 2005b).¹² In addition, Virginia, a state that receives approximately \$350 million in federal aid, may become the first state to pull out from NCLB by summer 2009 unless concessions are made allowing greater state flexibility (Quinn, 2008).

¹² Republican State Representative Margaret Dayton originally introduced legislation requiring Utah to opt out of NCLB, but revised the bill to require participation only in the areas with full funding. Utah officials report that they are not out of compliance with the law. Rather, they have given primacy to state measures they have adopted.

The NCLB legislation forced states accepting the federal funding to create an accountability plan. States accepting the funds and fail to comply with the provisions of the law and states that continue to show a lack of improvement face sanctions such as the withholding of federal funds. Thus, in many respects, NCLB requires that the federal investment in Title I funds be spent with greater accountability (LDE, 2005b).

The ESEA had far greater reach and longevity than initially intended when it was first passed. As noted, ESEA has been continuously reauthorized and serves as the vehicle for attaching education to presidential agendas, from Johnson’s initial plan in 1965 to George W. Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* in 2001. Table 2.1 reviews the transformation of the Democratic-sponsored bill to the current Republican-initiated legislation.

Table 2.1
Summary of Key Events in the Transformation of ESEA into NCLB

Year	Event
1965	Congress authorized ESEA to provide money to school districts with low-income students
1972	Congress passed the amendments to ESEA including Title IX which required equal access to academic and non-academic school programs.
1978	Congress reauthorized ESEA and added additional categories of eligible students; Title I money may be used schoolwide if 75% of the student body is low-income
1981	Congress reauthorized ESEA as the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 (ECIA); Money was sent to states as block grants
1988	Congress reauthorized ESEA and required districts to use standardized test scores to assess schools
1994	Congress reauthorized ESEA as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA); States must identify schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress
2001	Congress reauthorized ESEA as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under George W. Bush
2003	Congress amended NCLB to require failing schools to provide student transfer options ; teachers to meet certification qualifications; tests to be administered in reading and math; supplemental services to be offered in failing schools

(*Educational Leadership*, November 2006, pp. 10-11)

Accountability Legislation in Key States

With the federal government implementing policies to eradicate inequities in America's classrooms, states began implementing policies consistent with federal legislation. State policies often inspired federal regulations, as in the case when a former governor becomes president, and successful state policies often inspired legislation in other states. Louisiana's highly touted accountability system is actually a combination of the systems created in Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas (Thevenot, 2000). Louisiana state officials acknowledge observing the good and the bad in the accountability programs of other states and adapting legislation to fit Louisiana's needs.

Florida: Denying Diplomas

The 1971 Florida Legislature passed the Florida Statewide Assessment Program, which required the: 1) establishment of statewide learning objectives; 2) assessment of student achievement of these objectives; 3) public reporting of results for the State, each district, and each school; 4) testing basic skills in language arts and math; and 5) development of a cost-effectiveness plan (Florida Department of Education, 2008). Within the first four years following implementation of the assessment legislation, the Florida assessments were revised three times. The assessment program focused on testing a sample of students, rather than the entire student population. Florida became the first state in the nation to require students, beginning with the Class of 1979, to pass a functional literacy test in order to graduate (Florida Department of Education, 2008). Florida's current assessment system consists of high-stakes testing in two grades: 3 and 10 (Florida Department of Education, 2008). Promotion standards in the remaining grade levels are developed locally.

Since the passage of the Florida Statewide Assessment Program, the State has faced a number of legal obstacles and challenges to its program. The landmark federal case, *Debra P. v. Turlington* (1984), challenged Florida's high-stakes graduation exam. The federal court ruled in favor of the state, arguing that the state may, in fact, deny diplomas to students who have not passed the exit exam. Students not passing the exit exam are awarded a certificate of completion instead of a diploma, which may be exchanged if the student retakes and passes the appropriate exams. Students are provided remediation if they choose.

Science scores are now included in a school's report card in Florida based on the more recently developed Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Despite state rhetoric that teaching to the test does not exist, media reports illustrate the opposite. Green (2008) reported that Florida high schools where teachers are told to stop teaching the curriculum and to focus on review of FCAT skills. "The way I see it, they're still learning science," Principal Nathan Collins said. Students don't have much built in motivation for the test, he said" (§ 7).

In Florida, policymakers are having trouble with students circumventing the state's testing mandates by receiving online high school diplomas. As an alternative to dropping out, some students have found an online high school in Maine, the North Atlantic Regional High School (NARHS), that will issue a legitimate high school diploma (Goldberg, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Cavanaugh, 2004). In spite of failing Florida's graduation exit exam, parents can send their child's transcripts, and a small fee, to the NARHS and obtain a valid high school diploma. Graduates of the NARHS, which has an office in Florida, have gained admission to Florida State University, the University of Miami, and the University of Central Florida, among others (North Atlantic Regional Schools, 2003)

Kentucky: Litigated Reform

In response to the legal finding that the entire educational system was unconstitutional in Kentucky, the state legislature passed in the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) in 1990.¹³ This legislation provided for student performance standards, expanded preschool programs, and the reorganization of the department of education, among other programs (Cunningham, 2004). KERA also provided for the formation of family resource centers, extended school services for students who needed extra assistance in the primary grades, and a plan to have one computer for every five students (Steffy, 1993). KERA ended local control of education in the state, shifting accountability for education to the state government instead.

Following KERA, Kentucky introduced writing portfolios as a form of authentic assessment. The state also invested in Distinguished Educators, a cadre of certified educators who worked at specific school sites to assist struggling schools with the implementation of their respective school improvement plans. Distinguished Educators also assisted with local personnel decisions and helped increase the effectiveness of school, community, and governmental leaders with the implementation of schools' improvement plans (Steffy, 1993). If a school's scores declined, the Distinguished Educator had the power to recommend dismissal not only of teachers, but also the local superintendent.

North Carolina: The ABCs of Reform

The General Assembly of North Carolina approved the School Improvement and Accountability Act in 1989 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008). In response to a desire for increased local control in education reform, the Act allowed local districts to seek waivers from state policy if they could show that student achievement would be enhanced; teachers were awarded differentiated pay based on performance and service; and end-

of-grade test scores were utilized to create report cards for schools. The state's Department of Public Instruction was downsized to half its original size in an effort to make it more efficient. Regional Service Centers, originally created in the early 1970s as a way to bring state education officials closer to local school districts, were eliminated. The funds were given to the local districts to create their own regional alliances for staff development.

Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, Yarbrough, and Davis (1999) describe decreased morale and an increase in the amount of time preparing for state testing in North Carolina. The authors noted North Carolina's "ABCs" reform program, which is a back-to-basics skills approach, has had the effect of deskilling teachers who are told what to teach and precisely how. Teachers are allowed to use only what is prescribed by the state with an only one right answer curriculum. The authors noted the similarities of this one-size-fits-all approach to a factory model, where the teachers are the workers and the students are the raw materials. Critical thinking skills are sacrificed in an effort to ensure basic skills are mastered.

Texas: The Birthplace of Accountability

In 1979, the Texas State Legislature amended its education code to require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to implement a series of assessments designed to test basic skills competencies in grades 3, 5, and 9. The result was the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). Although diplomas were not withheld, students who failed the grade 9 TABS were required to retake it until they passed. Schools were pressured to provide remedial support for students falling below minimum expectations. The results of the exams were also released to the public.

In 1984, revisions increasing the rigor of the exams were put into place. The Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) replaced TABS and was administered to

¹³ *Rose v. The Council for Better Education, Inc.* (1989).

students in grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Beginning with the class of 1987, students were required to pass the 11th grade exit-level test to graduate.

In the late 1980s, further revisions resulted in the production of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The exam sought to ensure student proficiency in reading, mathematics, and writing, and other subject areas were later added. TAAS was administered to students in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11, with the grade 11 exam serving as an exit exam required to be passed in order to graduate. In 1999, the exam changed again to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Amid the many changes to the Texas statewide testing system, in 1994, the Texas exam became high-stakes for school principals as well as students. Tenure was replaced by annual performance contracts, with student test performance as the main measure of success (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Vasquez Heilig, 2008).

With all eyes on the accountability system in Texas, the system faced scrutiny in its practices. The TEA relied on schools and teachers to self-report cheating and test impropriety. When schools responded describing test security measures in place, the school was cleared of any wrongdoing, regardless of suspicious activity. Not surprisingly, accusations of cheating on Texas exams became a public interest. In 2004, the Dallas Morning News uncovered cheating in a local school district (“At TEA, years of inquiry, few concrete results,” 2007). The TEA initially declined to investigate reports of impropriety, but later discovered two-thirds of the district’s test proctors illegally helped students during the exams (“At TEA, years of inquiry, few concrete results,” 2007).

Since that time, outside experts have uncovered cheating in the state’s two largest school districts, Houston and Dallas, and found that the majority of cheating occurred on the state’s 11th grade exam which is required for graduation (Benton & Hacker, 2007a). Cheating was detected

primarily at underachieving schools, where the pressure to boost student scores was greatest; however, charter schools were also flagged for having large numbers of suspicious test score gains (Benton & Hacker, 2007b; Benton & Hacker, 2007d). More than 50,000 students statewide appeared to have suspicious test results (Benton & Hacker, 2007c).¹⁴ In response to public concerns of test security, the TEA announced plans for increased security measures beginning in 2008 (TEA, 2008).

Cheating was not the only problem attending the Texas testing program. McNeil et al. (2008) tracked a large cohort of students and found a strong association between Texas's high-stakes accountability system and large-scale dropping out. Not only were students actually encouraged to drop out of school, but they were retained in grade in non-testing years, especially the 9th grade and were refused course credit if they missed 10% of school days whether or not they had passing grades in the course.¹⁵ This study confirmed earlier research by Haney (2000) describing increased drop outs and retention as a result of the Texas system.

The state of Texas, once a forerunner state in student testing, has considered relaxing its standards for testing and testing only every third year (Mellon & Scharrer, 2008). State leaders in Texas point to an increased focus on the exam, a minimal-skills test, and issues with the curriculum narrowed to largely focus on knowledge level thinking skills as problems with the current accountability system and reasons to relax the current requirements (Mellon & Scharrer, 2008).

¹⁴ The authors note that this number may be underestimated due to an additional 20% of state tests that were not analyzed because of federal privacy laws.

Louisiana Legislation and Program Reform

The landmark federal education bill, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), requires states to create accountability programs in order to receive federal funds. Louisiana preceded NCLB with its own comprehensive accountability program. Prior to the establishment of this formal accountability system, Louisiana implemented a variety of inputs-based measures designed to ensure that schools met minimum standards related to school facilities and instruction, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s (Kochan-Teddlie, 1998). Minimum standards for teacher preparation, certification, and pay were implemented. Reforms also attempted to create standards for student learning, although these standards were criticized for being set too low.

The first major attempt at educational reform in Louisiana occurred in the Children First Act (1988). Following *A Nation at Risk* and the lead of other states, Governor Buddy Roemer heralded the act, which proclaimed

It is the purpose of this Chapter to provide a unified, farsighted, and intense program of school improvement designed to center resources and effort on continually improving the quality in the public school classrooms in this state. The legislature finds that it is in the classroom that teaching and learning occur and, therefore, this Chapter is designed, and it is the intention of the legislature, to put the children first (Act 659, 1988).

Components of the Children First Act codified activities thought directly critical to classroom success. The act, divided into professional employee quality development and school excellence, led to the creation of the Teacher Assessment Program, as well as a program for the evaluation of other school personnel. The act also required “Progress Profiles,” an annual report of data, for collection and dissemination to schools and districts for educational planning. The Children First Act also established a rewards program for schools and was intended to create

¹⁵ The authors described student interviews about the attendance policy. They described children who were emancipated, those who lived with grandparents, and those who have to take care of siblings as children who were

accountability by publicly identifying low performing schools. Despite the creation of these programs, the state legislature intervened further. As a response to the perceived public demand for an improved public school system, the 1997 Louisiana Legislature passed another major reform initiative, the Louisiana School and District Accountability Act, heralded by then-governor, Mike Foster.

Louisiana School and District Accountability Act, 1997

In 1997, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 478, the Louisiana School and District Accountability Act (La. R.S. 17:10.1 et seq). The legislation enumerated four aspects to its purpose: (1) to provide for the development and implementation of a school and district accountability system which requires and supports student achievement in each public school; (2) to provide assurance to the citizens that the quality of education in each public school is monitored and maintained at levels essential for each student to receive a minimum foundation of education; (3) to provide clear standards and expectations for schools and school systems so that assessment of their effectiveness will be understood; and (4) to provide information that will assist schools and school systems in order that energies and resources may be focused on student academic achievement. In addition, the legislation required BESE to create and regulate the state's accountability system. As part of the state executive branch, BESE serves as a quasi-legislative entity and is given the authority to promulgate its policies that have the force and effect of law.

Louisiana School and District Accountability Advisory Commission

To create the accountability model, Act 478 established the Louisiana School and District Accountability Commission. This state level Commission was comprised of 27 members, including 8 members appointed by the governor of whom 2 or more were to be parents or

often affected by these policies, despite receiving passing grades in these courses.

students; 11 members appointed by state superintendent of education, including representatives of the teachers' unions, school board associations, principal associations, and 3 principals with 1 from each school level, elementary, middle, and high, including 1 Blue Ribbon school; 2 state legislative representatives; and 3 BESE members. The Commission was charged to examine accountability models from other states and devise a model built on the experiences of these states while keeping the unique needs of Louisiana students in mind (Louisiana DOE website, 2008).

The Commission met 17 times between August, 1997 and March, 1998 (Louisiana District and Accountability Advisory Commission, 1998). Members met with consultants from the states of Kentucky, Texas, Florida, Maryland, and North Carolina, as well as consultants from three national research boards, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), WestEd, and the Education Commission of the States (ECS).

The accountability system operated in two-year cycles from 1998-2003. Schools were expected to achieve a School Performance Score (SPS) of 100¹⁶ by the end of the 2008-2009 school year. At the end of each two-year cycle, every public school was assigned a Growth Label reflecting the extent of increase in the SPS of the school. Any school failing to achieve a pre-assigned SPS could be placed in a program called Corrective Actions which was designed to help the school achieve an SPS of 100 by the designated school year. Schools that met or exceeded their calculated growth targets were eligible for financial rewards.

With the 2001 passage of NCLB, Louisiana's Accountability System needed only minor adjustments. Instead of two-year cycles, schools were assessed annually and the SPS goal was

¹⁶ The researcher was unable to determine the highest score a school could receive. Listed in the *State Education Progress Report*, schools considered Schools of Academic Excellence received scores ranging from "150 or above" (LDE, 2002, p. 3).

changed to 120¹⁷ to be achieved by each school by the year 2014 (LDE, 2004b, p. 3). Beliefs underlying the Louisiana Accountability System, as stated by BESE (2006), are summarized below:

- All students can and must learn at significantly higher levels.
- The need to improve student achievement is urgent.
- Continuous growth in student achievement must occur in all [public] schools.
- The focus must be on measurable student achievement results.
- Poverty impacts student learning; however, it does not prevent students from achieving.
- Low-performing schools must receive technical assistance and necessary resources to improve.
- Rewards and corrective actions can motivate educators, communities, and students to improve student learning.
- Parents, educators, and community members should be involved in the ongoing development and revision of school and district improvement plans.
- Districts and school sites must have the flexibility to improve learning in schools.
- The general public must be kept involved in and informed about the accountability process.
- It is essential that all stakeholders (e.g. students, parents, educators, and the community) work together to reach the state education goals.
- The accountability system must be kept simple.
- The State must provide adequate funding to support the accountability system and not back down on funding or standards once instituted (p.25).

¹⁷ The researcher was unable to determine the highest score a school could receive. Listed in the *State Education Progress Report*, schools considered Five Star Schools received scores ranging from “140 or above” (LDE, 2004b, p. 4).

The Louisiana accountability program, as required by Act 478 and promulgated by BESE as Bulletin 111 (2007b), is considered by many to be comprehensive. It consists of five components: (1) creation of challenging curriculum and content standards; (2) a comprehensive assessment program; (3) school performance monitoring and reporting; (4) corrective actions and assistance; and (5) recognition and rewards. These components of the Louisiana Accountability System are discussed below. Appendix A contains a chart summarizing the five components, pre- and post-NCLB, including the score requirements for performance and growth labels, as well as a description of each level of corrective actions/school improvement.

The Louisiana Accountability Program Components

Component 1: Establishing Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards

Louisiana revised its content standards in 1997. The standards then and now represent minimum competencies required for Louisiana graduates to be competitive in the marketplace. Foundational skills, such as communication, problem solving, resource access and utilization, linking and generating knowledge, and citizenship, formed the basis for the standards. The standards were organized by grade level groupings, K-4; 5-8; and 9-12 and were further delineated through benchmarks.

Under NCLB, the content standards and benchmarks remained. However, the state further defined content areas by releasing Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) for language arts, math, science, and social studies for grades Pre-K-12. The state defined a Grade-Level Expectation as a “statement that defines what all students should be able to do at the end of a grade level” (LDE, 2005b, p. 3).

Component 2: A Comprehensive Assessment Program

Louisiana students take annual tests in grades 3-11. Table 2.2 summarizes the exam progression for students since the implementation of the accountability program. Louisiana initiated its current assessment system in 1986 under the name Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP). The program first administered criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) to students in grades 3, 5, 7, 10, and 11, with norm-referenced tests (NRTs) administered in grades 4, 6, and 8 (LDE, 1999b). As can be seen in the table, the grades in which students took a CRT and an NRT changed beginning in the 1998-1999 school year. In subsequent years, the tests themselves were changed as well.

Table 2.2
Overview of the Testing Structure in Louisiana, Grades 3-11

Grade	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
3	LEAP (CRT ^a)		Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT ^b)						iLEAP ^c	
4	CAT ^d	ITBS ^e	LEAP 21 ^f							
5	LEAP (CRT)		Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT)						iLEAP	
6	CAT	Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT)						iLEAP		
7	LEAP (CRT)		Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT)						iLEAP	
8	CAT	ITBS	LEAP 21							
9	ITED ^g			Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT)						iLEAP
10	ITED; GEE ^h			GEE	GEE21 ⁱ					
11	ITED; GEE			GEE	GEE21 ^j					

Note: ^aIn the Spring of 1998, Louisiana administered a Criterion-Referenced Test (LEAP exam) to students in grades 3, 5, 7, 10, and 11. ^bNorm-Referenced Test ^cIntegrated LEAP ^dCalifornia Achievement Test ^eIowa Test of Basic Skills ^fLEAP for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) ^gIowa Tests of Educational Development ^hGraduate Exit Examination ⁱGraduation Exit Examination for the 21st Century ^jGEE21 retests (if necessary) From LDE; *Louisiana State Education Progress Reports*

Currently, Louisiana implements CRTs in grades 4 and 8. This test was first known as LEAP and later as LEAP 21 to reflect the new century. These CRTs were designed to measure students' mastery of state content standards in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. In 2000, the tests became high stakes, that is, promotion to the next grade was dependent on a student receiving a satisfactory score on the ELA and mathematics sections of LEAP. Thus, students in grade 4 could not be promoted to grade 5 unless they score

at a satisfactory level; and students in grade 8 could not be promoted to high school unless they score at a satisfactory level. Passing the CRT was the criterion for promotion in addition to having passing report card grades. This practice continues in the 2008-2009 school year. Score ranges on the LEAP closely track those for the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), referred to above. Thus, score ranges on LEAP span from Advanced, demonstrating high levels of mastery of the state content standards, to Unsatisfactory, representing a failing score. At the time the LEAP became a high-stakes test for students in grades 4 and 8, the minimum passing scores was Approaching Basic in ELA and mathematics. For high school students, passing the CRT, known as the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE), was implemented in 1991 as a requirement for public schools students to earn Louisiana State high school diploma.

In 2001, the GEE was renamed and called the Graduation Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21). The GEE 21 is a more rigorous exam than its predecessor and is administered to students in the 10th and 11th grades. Its purpose is to ensure that public high school graduates possess basic skills and knowledge in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies (LDE, 2004b). Starting with the Class of 2004 students had to score at least Approaching Basic on the ELA and mathematics sections and on either the science or social studies sections of the test in order to receive a passing score. We note here as an aside that students who attend non-public schools have not had to take these tests to be promoted to the next grade or to receive a Louisiana State high school diploma.

As Table 2.4 indicates, students in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 were required take a norm-referenced test (NRT). Originally these students took the California Achievement Test; the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) for students in grades below ninth grade and Iowa Test of Education Development (ITED) for high school students were adopted in 1998; and currently a state

created test called the *i*LEAP is administered in grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. These tests are designed to compare the performance of Louisiana's students to their counterparts in the rest of the nation.

Under NCLB, Louisiana's exams have remained intact. In 2005-2006, those students who were normally tested under the ITBS took the *i*LEAP, a CRT designed to emulate the LEAP 21 test. The LEAP 21 test remained. Starting with the spring 2004 LEAP 21 administration, fourth grade students must receive a score at Basic or above in either English Language Arts or mathematics and at least a score of Approaching Basic on one of the other sections in order to be promoted to the next grade. The same requirement began for eighth grade students with the spring 2006 LEAP 21 administration.

New to schools in 2001 was the LEAP Alternate Assessment (LAA), administered to students with extreme disabilities who normally did not participate in statewide assessments. Scores from the LAA were included in school accountability results beginning in 2002-2003. Since student LAA scores were included in school performance scores, schools could no longer ignore the needs of students with disabilities. Schools were forced to include all students in access to the curriculum in an effort to ensure their individualized needs were met.

Component 3: School Performance Monitoring and Reporting

Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, NCLB required that schools be evaluated in two areas to determine if they were achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The first area is the School Performance Score (SPS). Every year every public school in Louisiana is assigned as SPS based on a weighted combination of students test score performance on the CRT and NRT and a weighted combination of other factors, specifically student attendance for elementary and middle schools and students attendance plus student dropout status for high schools (LDE, 2002). These requirements of NCLB did not require much change in the Louisiana

accountability program because an SPS had been assigned to schools since the inception of its accountability system. Since the 1999 state launch of the accountability program, schools received a performance label, which coincided with a school's SPS, in addition to the growth label, mentioned above, which described a school's progress towards reaching the state SPS goal. Performance labels indicate the school's progress towards the goal of 120 points by 2014, while growth labels reflect the amount of growth or decline a school makes towards its annual goals.

As required by NCLB, the second area affecting a school's AYP is performance by subgroup members on academic assessments. The subgroups include: (1) students who are of low socio-economic status; (2) students from racial and ethnic minorities; (3) students who have disabilities; (4) students who have limited English proficiency (LEP); and (5) all students in the school. Academic performance and additional academic indicators, such as attendance and/or dropout rates, are examined to provide a subgroup score that is included in the calculation of the AYP of the school. The pre-NCLB ranges for the scores and labels have been adjusted to reflect the 2014 SPS goal of 120 points. The Performance Labels have also changed nomenclature as reflected in Appendix A.

Component 4: Corrective Actions and Assistance

Pre-NCLB, schools failing to meet their respective Growth Target entered a program called Corrective Actions, mentioned above. These schools received additional support and assistance with the expectation that "extensive efforts shall be made by students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and the school board to improve student achievement at the school" (LDE, 2002, p. 5).

Corrective Actions varied depending upon the school's SPS score and the number of years the school maintained a low SPS score. Louisiana schools could be required to work with a District Assistance Team to develop a School Improvement Plan; work with a Distinguished Educator assigned to a specific school site to improve classroom instruction; institute a Reconstitution Plan created by district officials to replace the school's teachers or administrators; or, offer parents the option of transfer their child(ren) to higher performing schools.

Post-NCLB, schools failing to meet their prescribed Growth Target entered a program called School Improvement, which replaced Corrective Actions. These schools received additional support and assistance with the expectation that "extensive efforts shall be made by students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and the school board to improve student achievement at the school" (LDE, 2005b, p. 6), the same expectation that accompanied placement in Corrective Actions.

Component 5: Recognition and Rewards

Pre-NCLB, schools that showed adequate progress towards Growth Targets were recognized with financial rewards. Schools, for example, that received the Exemplary Academic Growth label received \$28 per student (but never less than \$5,000) and schools that received the Recognized Academic Growth label received \$18 per student (but never less than \$2,500). These monies were spent at the discretion of the schools, with the exception that the funds could not be used to support salaries or provide stipends to school staff.

Post-NCLB, schools showing adequate progress towards Growth Targets continue to be recognized, but at a lower monetary rate. The Exemplary Academic Growth label now brings the school \$15.28 per student (but never less than \$4,000) and the Recognized Academic Growth label now brings the school \$10.19 per student (but never less than \$2,000). Although the stakes

have increased since the passage of NCLB, the financial reward to high-performing schools has decreased.

Summary

From presidential messages offered in the late 1700s and early 1800s that advocated education as a way to preserve our newly developing country to later messages touting education as the way to assimilate newly arriving immigrants, education has been a topic often discussed by federal and state officials. Despite the limited authority granted by the United States Constitution, the role of the federal government in education has increased during the last fifty years. As states were unwilling or unable to help provide a proper education for minority citizens, the federal government promoted programs aimed at expending federal funds for such students. The most sweeping result was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which expanded from helping targeted populations to affecting nearly every student in nearly every public classroom in the country via the reauthorized No Child Left Behind.

Louisiana, although often years behind in education priorities and expenditures, has followed the trend of other states by legislating a strict accountability program. The 1997 Louisiana School and District Accountability Act authorized a 27-member commission to study and recommend a comprehensive school accountability system. The results were an annual testing program for students in grades 3 through 11 and multiple reform programs aimed at improving student learning. Subsequent chapters examine these programs in greater detail, explain how the analysis of these programs was conducted, and provide the accompanying allocations for each to the extent possible.

CHAPTER 3: THE PROBLEMS CONTINUE

When a third [of students] fail to pass, you have to ask yourself, did all of those kids miss school...or did the system fail to provide an adequate education?" said Lorrie A. Shepard, an education professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She added, "Every leading body has said you shouldn't make those decisions on the basis of a test alone," pointing to findings of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Educational Research Association, and others.

-Robelen (2000, p.24)

The Louisiana State Context

Because education is a state responsibility, educational laws and promotional requirements vary by state. It makes sense for a state to provide opportunities consistent with its needs. Issues that affect the students of Alaska may not be relevant to students in Florida. Developers of reform programs, however, tend to paint in broader strokes, making the respective programs appear applicable for adoption in many states, districts, and schools. A bandwagon approach takes hold as states and districts wish to appear current on the latest reform ideas¹⁸. Thus, reform programs that seem to work in one state are often replicated in others, despite variations in composition and the needs of the student population. Louisiana follows national trends, although the state deserves credit for often adapting reform programs used elsewhere to the state context.

The Louisiana accountability system was highly touted in Education Week (2003; 2004; 2005) and is a combination of aspects of accountability systems implemented in Kentucky, Texas, and North Carolina (Thevenot, 2000). As mentioned in Chapter 2, these state reform systems were not without controversy. Problems of increased dropout rates, cheating on tests,

¹⁸ See Holahan and Pohl (2002) who discuss some states as innovators of policy solutions and other states who replicate these results.

and narrowing the curriculum have plagued these once exemplary systems. Such problems have been replicated in Louisiana. High dropout rates and uncertified teachers which characterized Louisiana schools for decades have not been mitigated by the Louisiana accountability program (LDE, 2008g). The present study provides an in-depth examination of Louisiana policy choices and expenditures between 1997 and 2005, with the aim of offering recommendations about state level policies that might have a better chance of improving educational opportunities for all Louisiana public school students.

Louisiana has placed great emphasis on its accountability program, which took on a high stakes character in 2000 with the statewide implementation of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP). LEAP is used in the public schools to determine whether a student is promoted from fourth to fifth grade and from eighth to ninth grade. Similarly, the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) is used to determine whether a high school student is eligible to graduate. Unfortunately, the policies enacted and monies expended have not moved Louisiana out of the bottom levels of achievement in national comparisons (Education Week 2003; 2004; 2005).

Chapter 3 examines some of the problems Louisiana continued to face nearly one decade after the implementation of the 1997 accountability act. As noted, students still achieve poorly, dropout in large numbers, and are retained in grade level at increasing rates (LDE, 2008g). Uncertified and unprepared teachers are routinely placed in classrooms with the most academically needy students (Ingersoll, 1999; Peske & Haycock, 2006), and teacher salaries continue to fall below regional and national averages, especially for rural school districts (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). By relying on single, high stakes tests for promotion in gatekeeper

grades and for graduation, one could argue that the state penalizes public school students for state and district failures to adequately address the needs of Louisiana's educational system.

Persistent Problems

The Orleans Parish Public School System

The Orleans Parish School System had serious problems long before Hurricane Katrina forced its schools to close and sent thousands of students to other parishes and states. As the state's largest school system, Orleans faced persistent issues of overcrowding, inadequately trained teachers, and dilapidated buildings (Gray, 2000).

Notwithstanding multiple changes in superintendents and school board members, the school board often clashed with the superintendent. Routinely the district delayed payment to teachers due to insufficient funds or payroll glitches (Pope, 2005; Thevenot, 2001; Knabb, 2000) while district officials padded their pockets with extra cash (Filosa, 2005; Russell, 2005; Warner, 2005). Deceased and former employees remained on the payroll collecting monthly pay checks (Ritea, 2005). Bus drivers used district credit cards to buy and sell fuel to truck drivers not affiliated with the school system ("Bus Driver Booked," 2002). Contractors also profited from over-billed work (Thevenot, 2002) because the district often contracted with businesses based "more about who you know than what you can do" ("Beginning of a Turnaround," 2005, ¶ 15). The school board was strongly criticized for failing to submit the necessary paperwork for \$40 million of federal grants to improve technology in the schools (Gill, 2000). In addition, 53 individuals were considered "super users" of the computer system. These individuals had sensitive password access to computerized personnel information, affording them the power to change salaries and affect other financial information ("Beginning of a Turnaround," 2005).

By 2005, the school system found itself \$72 million in debt. That same year, over the opposition of the Orleans Parish School Board, the LDE authorized a \$16.8 million contract with the financial firm of Alvarez and Marsal to straighten out the district's financial records (Thevenot, 2005). Despite years of financial mismanagement, the state only intervened when the federal government threatened to withhold money from Orleans Parish (Anderson, 2005; Warner & Finch, 2005).

Lack of concern by some district administrators and some school board members, and the failure of the state to intervene, Orleans Parish students suffered, scoring among the lowest on the state's high stakes tests (LDE, 2004). Orleans had the highest number of failing schools as judged by the state accountability system. After Hurricane Katrina, the state took control of the schools, placing them in the state-run Recovery School District. However, the destruction of most school buildings, among myriad other problems, have stymied progress.

Once the largest of the state's then 66 school districts, eleven percent of the state's total PK-12 public school student population attended Orleans schools in 2001 (LDE, 2001). In addition, pre-Katrina Orleans schools had a large minority population. In 2000, 74,310 of the district's 80,531 (92.3%) students were Black (LDE, 2001). This figure translates to 21% of the state's total Black student population. In Louisiana, as is common elsewhere, wealth cuts along racial lines; thus, the large percentage of Black students in Orleans carried with it an obligation to provide the best teachers and other educational resources, not some of the worst.

As noted above, students in the Orleans Parish School System suffered the highest rates of failure on the state's LEAP exams. In 2000, 35% of fourth graders scored unsatisfactory on the ELA section of the LEAP, while 42% scored unsatisfactory on the mathematics section (LDE, 2004b). Eighth graders fared similarly. While 42% failed the ELA section, 57% received

unsatisfactory scores on the mathematics section. The consequence for these eighth graders was retention in eighth grade rather than promotion to high school. Such students are unlikely to continue in school, opting to drop out instead (Bowman, 2005; Kaufman, Alt & Chapman, 2004). The cascading effect for these students is limited opportunities for employment that brings a living wage. For the state, the consequences are a large number of unemployed or underemployed citizens and the attendant problems of increasing crime rate and health care issues (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Hauser, Simmons & Pager, 2004; Haveman & Wolfe, 1994).

Low Student Achievement Statewide

Despite having an accountability system that received national recognition, Louisiana students were not learning at rates that elevated the state to a position that attracts industry with high paying jobs and the associated improved standard of living. A recent publication of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (2006) assigned student achievement in Louisiana a grade of F based on the percentage of fourth and eighth graders testing at the proficiency level. The policy failure in Louisiana is brought into sharper focus when we consider that it was the first state in the union to initiate high-stakes testing in elementary and middle school grades (Thevenot, 2000).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires states to report student test data by subgroup to induce schools to pay attention to minority and low-income students. Louisiana has tracked subgroup scores on LEAP since 1999. Figure 3.1 summarizes the achievement levels of Black and White eighth grade students in Louisiana on the 1999 and 2005 LEAP administrations. Although scores for Black eighth graders were improving, a large number of students were still scoring below the required minimum for promotion. In 1999, 25% of eighth

graders scored at Basic level or above, compared to 59% of White students. By 2005, 33% of eighth graders were scoring at Basic levels or above, compared to 68% of White students.

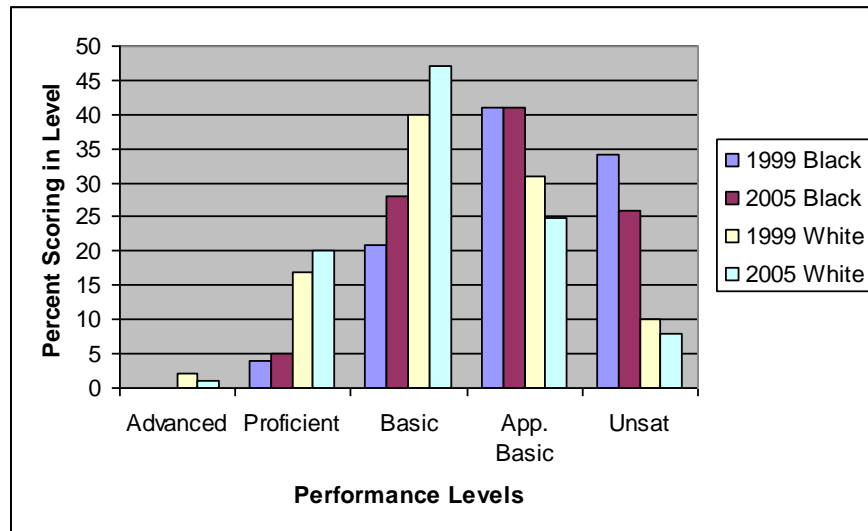


Figure 3.1 Trends in Subgroup Performance on the LEAP Exam, 1999 and 2005
 Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *State Education Progress Reports*

Mancuso, Taylor, and Dellinger (2005) compared the achievement rate of Black and White eighth graders statewide on LEAP. Their analysis found that White eighth graders had a statistically higher passage rate over their Black peers on the ELA assessment. White students also outscored their Black counterparts at the three highest levels of achievement, Advanced, Mastery¹⁹, and Basic.

Low Statewide Graduation Rates

As noted above, in Orleans Parish a large percentage of eighth students failed to achieve a passing score on LEAP and are at increased risk of dropping out of school. Louisiana historically has had a graduation rate below the national average (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2007). In 1990, the state was last in the country in this respect, posting only a 56.67% graduation rate, compared to the national average of 71.18% (National

¹⁹ Prior to 2003, students scoring at the Mastery level of student achievement were labeled Proficient.

Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2007). Figure 3.2 compares graduation rates in Louisiana with the national average from 1996, the year before accountability legislation was first enacted in the state, to 2005, when data were collected before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit. The overall trend line in Louisiana appears to be upwards even if only slightly.

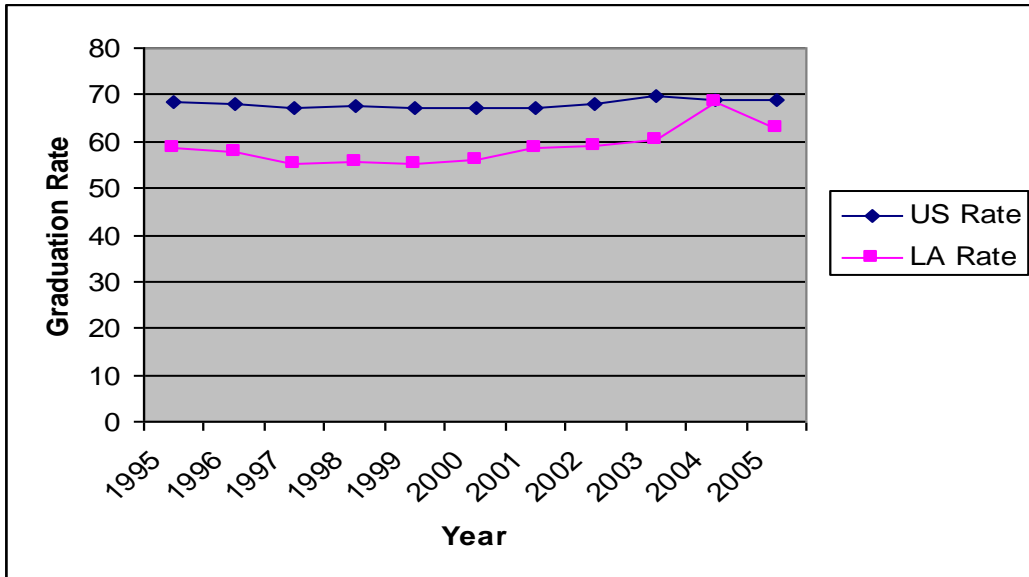


Figure 3.2 State and National Graduation Rates, 1995-2005
 Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems Information Center

Accountability legislation and policies notwithstanding, Louisiana has made little if any progress assisting eighth graders to graduate on time, as demonstrated in Table 3.1. Students counted as eighth graders in 1997²⁰ should have graduated in 2002. Of the 57,065 members of the 1997-1998 eighth grade class, 41,443, or 73%, were counted as twelfth graders as the 2001-2002 school year started. Of that number, 38,314 graduated by 2002, yielding a 67.14% on-time graduation rate. Although there may be many explanations for the data, students moving to private school or homeschooling situations, outmigration from the state, students being retained, there still exists the fact that, on average, approximately 67% of eighth graders will graduate on

time. This comparison is inconsistent with the state’s reported graduation rate of 92% for the class of 2002.

Table 3.1
Number of 8th Grade Students who Complete High School on Time

8 th grade year	Number of 8 th graders	12 th grade year	Number of 12 th graders	Difference	12 th grade Graduates	% who started in 8 th grade and graduated five years later	Reported Graduation Rate ²¹
1997	57,065	2001	41,443	15,622	38,314	67.14%	92%
1998	55,787	2002	41,611	14,176	37,905	67.95%	91.1%
1999	56,519	2003	42,385	14,134	37,608	66.54%	89%
2000	55,496	2004	41,270	14,226	37,017	66.70%	90%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *Annual Financial and Statistical Reports; State Education Report Cards*

Grade Level Retention

One of the consequences associated with high-stakes testing programs is the increase in grade retention. Proponents (Lindelow, 1982; Thevenot, 2000; see also Johnson, 1984; Shepard & Smith, 1990) argue that students should be retained if academic standards are not met to provide them extra time to learn core material. While this argument sounds beneficial to students, research points to the opposite result. That is, grade retention actually harms students and their future achievement levels. Students who are retained in grade run a greater risk of dropping out of middle school (Rumberger, 1995) or high school (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). Being retained also affects a student’s sense of self-efficacy, especially for Black students (Madaus & Clarke, 2001).

The problem occurs in the second year of instruction when there is usually little improvement in instruction designed to correct any learning deficiencies from the prior year

²⁰ The counts are taken as of October 1st of each year. Students counted as eighth graders in October 1997 should have completed eighth grade in the spring of 1998. They were counted as twelfth graders in October 2001 and should have graduated in the spring of 2002.

²¹ LDE calculates graduation rate by calculating the percentage of graduates among those enrolled as 12th graders on October 1 of the given year. The rate was reported in the state’s annual progress reports.

(Shepard & Smith, 1990). This lack of proper remediation wastes time for the student by relying on the supposition that retained students will learn the material by repeating it a second time.

Retention often occurs in the grades prior to high stakes testing grades (Goldberg, 2005). Yuan, Pernici, and Franklin (2001) studied retention rates in Louisiana during the period 1997-2001. They found that the retention rate in the fourth and eighth grades nearly tripled during the 2000-2001 school year when high stakes LEAP testing in Louisiana was enforced. In that year, 17.1% of fourth graders and 20.7% of eighth graders had to repeat a year of schooling, up from the 1999-2000 school year rates of 5.4% and 6.1%, respectively. The authors also noted that students who received free or reduced-price lunch were almost twice as likely to be retained as those students not receiving free or reduced-price lunch. Black students were also retained at the state's highest rate.²² During the study period, the K-12 retention rate averaged about 9.2% or approximately 63,158 students annually, as presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
K-12 Retention Rates in Louisiana, 1997-2005

	1997- 1998	1998- 1999	1999- 2000	2000- 2001	2001- 2002	2002- 2003	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	Overall Average
K-12 student retention rate	7.5%	8.0%	8.3%	10.7%	10.1%	9.7%	9.8%	10%	9.2%
Number of students retained	53,358	56,144	57,361	73,740	69,646	66,115	66,220	64,496	63,158

Source: Yuan, Pernici, and Franklin (2001) and Louisiana Department of Education, *State Education Progress Reports*.

Some Causes and Consequences of Dropping Out of High School

Until the technology boom, completion of high school was not a priority for many families in the United States (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Students could leave school early to help with farming, to help with the family business, or to earn a living at skilled work not

²² Black students receiving reduced-price lunch were retained at levels lower than those who received free lunch.

requiring a high school education. Schargel (2004a) reported an average of 2,805 students per school day drop out of school in the United States. Nationally, one-third of American high school students will not graduate from high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Burke Morison, 2006; Wallis, 2007). For minority or low income children, the rate increases to nearly 50% (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Wallis, 2007). Two background characteristics that are most strongly related to dropping out are socioeconomic status and race (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; Rumberger, 1995; Schargel, 2004b), characteristics also reported by Yuan et al. (2001) regarding Louisiana students.

Dropping out of school is not a sudden decision. Rather, it is a gradual process of disengagement (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Bridgeland and colleagues studied 16 to 24-year-olds who did not complete high school and identified the five main reasons for leaving as, (1) classes were not interesting; (2) too many days were missed to enable catching up; (3) time spent with people who were not interested in school; (4) too much freedom and not enough rules enforced; and (5) student was failing school (p. 3). Other causes of dropping out are pregnancy (Fine, 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Haveman & Wolfe, 1994; Rumberger, 1983); for males, entering the labor market as unskilled, low-paid workers (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger, 1983); and problem behavior, especially for older students (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger, 1995).

Twelve percent of American high schools are labeled as “dropout factories” (Zuckerbrod, 2007), graduating 60% or fewer of the students who started as freshmen at these schools. The highest concentration of these schools is in large cities and high-poverty rural areas. Nationally, Louisiana ranks eighteenth with 12.74% (27 of 212) of its high schools labeled as dropout

factories.²³ Louisiana's worst performing school, Wossman High School in Monroe City, graduated an average of 41% of its students between 2004 and 2006 (Zuckerbrod, 2007). The school had a minority population of 99.56% with 76.18% of its students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program.

One disturbing trend following the implementation of the high-stakes accountability systems is the increase in the number of high school dropouts, especially within the Black community (Clarke, Haney & Madaus, 2000). Researchers report a correlation between low standardized tests scores and dropping out (Ekstrom et al., 1986). Schools with higher proportions of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and that use graduation exit exams had higher dropout rates than schools not utilizing such exams with similar students (Clarke et al., 2000).

For several decades, schools were criticized for graduating students who had not demonstrated academic proficiency. NCLB was viewed as a way to prevent schools from graduating unprepared students. An unintended result, however, is that low performing students are often counseled to leave school or enter into GED programs after the ninth grade (Losen, 2005; McNeil, 2000) so that their scores are not included in the calculation of the school's average exit exam score. Current NCLB provisions require schools to raise test scores annually, a requirement may further incentivize schools to encourage struggling students to drop out (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

Students with passing report card grades but who fail a graduate exit exam²⁴ are more likely to dropout (Clarke et al., 2000; Griffin & Heidorn, 1996) than they are to return to school

²³ This analysis does not include any high schools from Orleans Parish. The study data were collected from 2004-2006 and many of the Orleans Parish schools were closed due to Hurricane Katrina. If these schools were included, the present researcher suspects that Louisiana's rankings would be very close to the bottom nationally.

²⁴ Reference is often made to graduate exit exams as Minimum Competency Tests (MCTs).

and retake the exam. Although exit exams in general do not increase the dropout rate (Bishop & Mane, 2001), states with high-stakes attached to graduation exams are often those states with the highest dropout rates (Madaus & Clarke, 2001).²⁵ Despite the existence of high stakes exit exams as a means of preventing failing students from graduating, evidence exists that such exams may have an unintended impact on students deemed successful on other measures, such as report cards and Carnegie units earned.

Reducing the dropout rate is important for several reasons. First, high school dropouts tend to earn less than their graduate counterparts (Murnane et al., 2000; Rumberger, 1987; Schargel, 2004a). Second, most high school dropouts are unable to compete for jobs that will keep them out of poverty (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Hauser, Simmons & Pager, 2004). Third, dropouts are much more likely than completers to become economically inactive as adults (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994). Finally, those who drop out of high school are also much more likely to eventually be imprisoned (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

Louisiana Dropouts

Legal Age to Withdraw from School

Compulsory education in Louisiana spans the ages of 7 to 17 (La. R.S. 17:221). A student may withdraw from school with written permission from his parent, guardian, or legal tutor once s/he reaches the age of 16. Students may also legally withdraw from school from school if they are emancipated by marriage or by their parents. Commonly, Louisiana students reach the legal dropout age of 17 before their senior year of high school, particularly if they are retained in grade more than once.

²⁵ The authors noted that research has not established a causal relationship between states with graduation exams and their high dropout rates. It does point out that these exams are not helping to reduce dropout rates.

In a study examining the impact of accountability on Louisiana dropouts, d'Hemecourt (2005) reported that high-stakes testing is not always the precipitating factor on a students' decisions to drop out. The 11 dropouts participating in the d'Hemecourt study passed the eighth grade LEAP exam. d'Hemecourt did not report whether these students also had passing report card grades. Five of these students took the Graduate Exit Exam, and three of the five passed. Although d'Hemecourt concluded that students did not dropout because of the high stakes tests, passing scores did not guarantee high school completion, perhaps for reasons discussed in the preceding section.

Determining the Dropout Rate

Although required by NCLB to account for the number of high school dropouts in school performance scores, states are allowed to determine how to define a dropout. Dropout statistics are difficult to determine definitively as there is no nationally standardized operational definition of a dropout (Schargel, 2004b). For purposes of accountability, Louisiana created formulas to calculate dropout rates in the middle grades (seven and eight) and high school grades (nine through twelve) (BESE, 2007). NCLB requires states to address their respective high school dropout rates, but does not recognize the number of students who drop out in the middle grades and, therefore, do not reach high school. Louisiana defines its dropouts in calculating the graduation index. Students who exit a school during the ninth through twelfth grades with a legitimate reason (death, transferring to another school, home schooling, taking part in a school choice or unsafe school transfer option, etc.) are not and should not be considered dropouts.

Louisiana reports its dropout rate using students in the high school grades but not the middle school grades. Missing from the reported rate are the additional 3,000 seventh and eighth grade students who choose to forego the remainder of their formal education. Table 3.3 displays

the numbers of dropouts from grades seven through twelve for the period 2001-2005. On average, approximately 16,950 students in these grades dropped out of school, and over the course of this four-year period, 67,793 students withdrew from public schools.

Table 3.3
Number of Louisiana Students in Grades Seven-Twelve not Returning to Public School During 2001-2005

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
7th grade	936	992	877	913
8th grade	2,100	2,302	2,139	2,069
9th grade	3,823	4,735	4,822	4,813
10th grade	3,535	3,420	3,381	3,173
11th grade	3,069	2,893	2,869	2,883
12th grade	3,151	3,459	4,098	3,341
Total	16,614	17,801	18,186	17,192

Sources: LDE (2003b; 2004c; 2006c; 2006d)

As the table indicates, across years there are two spikes in the number of students not returning to public school. The first spike is at the ninth grade when most students have not reached the age of 17 but have taken and passed the eighth grade LEAP. The second spike is at the twelfth grade when most students have reached age 17, and also have had opportunities to pass the GEE. The LDE (2003b; 2004c; 2006c; 2006d) does not speculate about a reason for these two spikes in students leaving the public schools, but given research cited above, high stakes testing is likely to have played a part for many students.

Alternative High School Graduation

In Louisiana, at least 19% of high school completers do so through the General Educational Development (GED) program (Schargel, 2004a). The GED is a nationally administered exam that consists of subtests in English/ Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The exam underwent a series change in 2002 to reflect national and

jurisdictional level content standards (American Council on Education, 2008b). Although the GED examination process has become more rigorous recently, GED students are likely to earn less than traditional high school graduates (Schargel, 2004a). Male dropouts with lower cognitive ability may improve their economic situation by earning a GED, signaling an improvement in their employability (Murnane, Willett, & Tyler, 2000). Males with higher cognitive ability who leave school do not necessarily improve their employability with a GED (Murnane, Willett, & Tyler, 2000).

Today, scores from the GED examination are accepted by 98% of U.S. colleges and universities, with 60% of the test-takers wanting to further their education (American Council on Education, 2008a). Amrein and Berliner (2003) reported that the number of teenagers participating in GED programs has increased since the implementation of high stakes high school exit exams. These authors also noted that the average age of students taking the GED is decreasing, a sign that high-stakes testing is taking its toll on younger students.

Louisiana Policy Regarding Multiple LEAP failures

Despite the policy that students must pass LEAP in order to be promoted from fourth to fifth grade and from eighth to ninth grade, state policy also allows a student to be promoted after repeated failing attempts at the test (BESE, 2007). A failing effort on the first try of these tests results in the student being recommended for summer remediation and retesting. Should the student fail the retest, the student repeats the grade. If, after repeating the grade, and the student fails LEAP again, attends summer remediation again and fails the fourth retake, the school can petition for the promotion of the student to the next grade despite not having attained a passing score. However, a student who has had several attempts to pass the exam and passes on the third or fourth try will likely be recommended to skip an entire grade of school (C. Jackson, personal

communication, March 3, 2008) and in two years, will face the eighth grade LEAP having missed the content taught in the fifth grade.

Narrowing of Curriculum

For tests to be true measures of student learning, the student must be taught a full curriculum (Neill, 2003). It would be impossible to design a test that would cover all material taught in schools. When the amount of material tested accounts for a portion of what's taught, it follows that the curriculum will slowly take shape around the content that is tested (McMurrer, 2008). The result is a narrowing of the curriculum (McNeill, 2000b).

Smith (1991b) reported that teachers feel test preparation is the only means that they have to positively influence test scores. Smith also noted that test preparation efforts range from teaching test-taking skills to teaching content known to be covered on the test to teaching to the test in format and content. Researchers have observed a narrowing of the curriculum as schools become more focused on high stakes test scores (McNeill, 2000b; Smith, 1991a), with assessment driving instruction in many schools (Jones et al., 1999).

When the curriculum is narrowed to focus on test preparation, teachers experience a reduction in their freedom to create, adapt, and use content they believe to be in the best interests of students' overall learning (Smith, 1991a). Teachers often report, "If it's not being tested, it's not being taught" (quoted in Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001, p.489). Studies document teachers shifting their time away from subjects not calculated for promotional purposes on high stakes tests and increasing their time on subjects on which promotion is based, usually ELA and mathematics (Jones et al., 1999; Tracey, 2005). Thus subjects such as geography and science get scant attention at best. Equally problematic, McNeill (2000b) reported that low scoring schools

tend to shift their resources in order to gain compliance with state standards. Further, she stated that principals may spend their entire instructional budgets to purchase test preparation materials.

Tolbert (2003) observed teachers in Louisiana fourth-grade classrooms who were encouraged by their principals to use most of their classroom time to teach test-taking techniques. The schools in the study with the highest LEAP scores made concentrated efforts to target skills found on the LEAP exam. Here, content on the LEAP dictated the curriculum of some of the state's fourth grade classrooms (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

What We Know Matters: Investing in Teachers

Teachers are the most expensive investments districts make. Once they reach tenure, teachers become near-permanent investments (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003). Goldhaber and Anthony (2003) estimate a single teacher's salary and benefits for 30 years of service to be \$1.7 million. Considering the long-term and expensive investment school districts make in the teaching force, it is critical to examine the impact that teachers have on student achievement. Despite Coleman Report that famously noted that schools had little bearing on a child's education, the report did note that teachers' educational levels, years of experience, and vocabulary test scores did effect student achievement (Ascher & Fruchter, 2001).

Investment in teacher quality is important to improving student learning outcomes (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997). Positive effects of employing certified teachers were found regarding elementary students' reading and mathematics achievement (Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002) and high school students' mathematics achievement (Cwikla, 2002; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2005) found greater effects on student achievement resulting from increasing teacher quality than from other reforms, such as decreasing class size.

Characteristics of teachers' educational achievement have also demonstrated positive effects on students' achievement. Studies of teachers' ACT scores (Bacolod, 2007), college grade point averages, and subject matter knowledge (Cwikla, 2002; Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997) recorded effects on increased student achievement.

Access to Qualified Teachers

Low income and minority students are twice as likely as their more affluent peers to be taught by novice teachers, uncertified teachers, teachers with low ACT or SAT scores, and teachers who are teaching out-of-field (Ingersoll, 1999; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Low-income students in the United States suffer the world's largest opportunity gap in access to qualified teachers (Akiba et al., 2007). In addition, higher motivation levels among teachers showed larger effects in schools with low-achieving students (Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997), a characteristic the less able teachers are unlikely to manifest (Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997).

In Louisiana in 2003, 25.5% of teachers in high-poverty districts received waivers for meeting state credential requirements (U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2003). In the remaining districts, 12.9% of teachers received such waivers. Statewide, 14.9% of teachers were not fully certified when they entered the classroom. Students in over 8,000 classrooms received instruction from teachers who received waivers that year (DOE, 2003). Nevertheless, all students were held accountable for passing the LEAP and GEE exams in order to advance in school.

The state boasts high passage rates on certification exams, with an 89% overall passage rate, and a 99% passage rate on basic skills sections, 94% passage rate on professional knowledge sections, and 92% passage rates of academic content sections (DOE, 2003). These figures are deceptive as Louisiana has set certification exam cutoff scores lower than the national

average (CABL, 2001; DOE, 2003). Lowering these standards puts into question teacher quality in Louisiana.

One measure of quality teaching is the attainment of National Board Certification. As of 2007, Louisiana had 1,216 board certified teachers (referred to as NBCTs) (LDE, 2007b). Thus, 2% of Louisiana's teachers are Board certified, higher than the national average of 1% and giving Louisiana a national ranking of fourteenth in the number of total Board certified teachers (LDE, 2007b). However, as described below, only 3.5% of these teachers work in the state's poorest performing schools.

In Louisiana, in 2007, 533 NBCTs worked in a school district that had no schools identified as academically unacceptable; 606 worked in school districts with at least one school labeled as academically unacceptable; and, the remaining 77 had no school district identified. Some NBCTs may be retired, working in district offices, or at a state college or university; 21 worked at the LSU University Laboratory School. Some were employed at private schools, such as Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge, which had 13 NBCTs. Of the 606 NBCTs working in districts with at least one academically unacceptable school, 43 were at schools identified as academically unacceptable.²⁶ Students at such schools clearly need these expert teachers but were not receiving their services.

Highly Qualified Teachers

No Child Left Behind requires that teachers be "highly qualified;" however, states determine their own definition of highly qualified. In 2003, Louisiana defined a highly qualified teacher according to the teacher's status as "new," "not new," or "out of state" (LDE, 2003a). New teachers, those entering the profession for the first time, must be highly qualified to begin

work in a Title I school and teach core academic subjects. To be highly qualified, a new teacher must qualify for a Level 1 certificate earned by completing a state approved teacher preparation program through a university or alternative means, pass the licensure exam called the PRAXIS, have the equivalent of an academic major in the content area teaching or pass the content related sections of the PRAXIS, or have a master's degree in the content area. In addition, a highly qualified teacher cannot have any certification requirements waived or have an emergency, temporary, or provisional certificate.

The same rules apply to teachers “not new” to the profession; however, these teachers can attain National Board Certification to become highly qualified. “Not new” teachers who have credentials but have neither passed the PRAXIS nor earned at least 12 semester hours of college credit in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies courses were required to complete 90 Continuing Learning Units (CLUs) by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Teachers credentialed in another state who have four years of successful teaching out of state and one year of successful teaching in state and who passed the appropriate sections of the PRAXIS are issued an Out of State Certificate.

Teacher Attrition and Mobility

Each year, the federal government conducts the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to track teacher attrition and mobility rates. During the 2004-2005 school year, 84% of teachers remained at the same school and are termed “stayers” by SASS, 8% moved to a different school and were termed “movers,” and 8% left the profession and were termed “leavers” (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006). The study indicated that the percentage of stayers has decreased over the past 15 years, with the percentage of leavers increasing over the same period.

²⁶ This figure includes 13 NBCTs in Jefferson Parish and 8 in Orleans Parish. These numbers were estimated based upon 2004-2005 school performance labels. In the two years following Hurricane Katrina, the schools in these two

Similarly, the percentage of movers increased over the past ten years. Each year, schools tend to lose 23% more teachers than they are able to gain through recruitment and hiring procedures (Schargel, 2004a). Some researchers note that the problem of a teacher shortage is not an actual shortage of teachers, but rather a problem of retention (Ingersoll, 2002; Schargel, 2004a).

Frantz (1994), in a study of new teachers in Louisiana, found that nearly half of new teachers remained in their districts two years after beginning their careers. Younger beginning teachers had a greater tendency to leave their schools than older beginning teachers, and male teachers left teaching in greater numbers than female teachers. Thirty percent of new teachers in Louisiana leave the profession within five years (CABL, 2001). In 2001, The East Baton Rouge Public School System reported its annual turnover rate to be 15%, with 400 new teachers hired each fall and an additional 200-300 hired during the year (CABL, 2001).

Researchers who study teacher attrition identify the following reasons for teachers leaving; poor salary (Bacolod, 2007; Ingersoll, 2002; Moulthrop, Clements Calegari, & Eggers, 2006); poor administrative support (Ingersoll, 2002); student discipline problems (Ingersoll, 2002); and, poor student motivation (Ingersoll, 2002).

Nationally, the teaching pool has remained white and female (Bacolod, 2007; Schargel, 2004a). A meager 10% of the teaching pool is minority, despite the fact that the minority student population is nearly 40%. Alt and Henke's (2007) research may shed light on this issue. Of those teachers actively teaching in 2003, 70% of white teachers were expected to teach until retirement, compared to 37% of black teachers. Seven percent of white teachers were expected to teach until a nonteaching job in education opened up, compared to 19% of black teachers. Similarly, 9% of white teachers reported they would teach until a better opportunity outside of education was found, compared to 20% of black teachers (Alt & Henke, 2007).

Schools in poor, urban areas have the most difficulty retaining teachers. Salaries are typically lower in these areas and the conditions are usually difficult. Kozol (1991) described the conditions in public schools in urban areas across the country. Teachers are expected to provide from their own personal resources the basic materials to teach lessons (Johnson & Johnson, 2002; Moulthrop et al., 2006). Teachers who are already the lowest paid professionals with collegiate and advanced degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997) often have to forgo teaching lessons that require purchased materials in order to provide food and housing for their own families (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Teachers also spend summers or evenings working second jobs in order to provide for their families (Moulthrop et al., 2006).

Teacher Salary

Louisiana ranks near the bottom nationally in terms of average teacher salary. (Corporation for Enterprise Development [CFED], 2006). According to CFED (2006), this measure is an important indicator of how competitive states want to be in their recruitment and retention of the most qualified teachers. Teacher salaries in Louisiana in 1983 ranked close to the national salary average (Augenblick, 1993). However, by 1992, teacher salaries fell to almost 15% below the national average (Augenblick, 1993). While several factors may explain this differential, it is clear that as the 1980s drew to a close, other states kept pace with rising teacher salaries nationally. Louisiana was one of 18 states that failed to keep pace with the rise in teacher salaries elsewhere. Since the early 1980s, Louisiana has consistently ranked near the bottom of the nation in terms of teacher salaries (Augenblick, 1993; CABL, 2001; Education Week, 1997).

Louisiana teacher salaries also vary considerably by district. The state mandates a minimum salary schedule and local school districts are enabled by law to supplement the state

minimum salaries. However, there is much variation among districts in their ability to raise local revenue to augment teacher salaries. Wealthier districts pay higher salaries, while poorer districts offer lower salaries. This disparity drags down the state's average salary figure and affects the quality of the teaching force in districts that offer lower salaries.

States often use a minimum teacher salary table to indirectly influence teacher salaries ("States Take More Active Role," 1985). The minimum Louisiana teacher salary table is legislated in Revised Statutes 17:421. The state also provides additional funds through statewide teacher pay raises funded through the Minimum Funding Program (MFP). Currently, the minimum salary for a beginning teacher with zero years of experience, and the requisite bachelor's degree, is \$14,631. At the opposite end of the salary spectrum, a twenty-five year veteran with a PhD degree is guaranteed a minimum salary of \$26,020 (LDE, 2007c).

Teacher Salary Schedules

As noted, teacher salaries in Louisiana have and continue to vary greatly by parish. Table 3.4 displays teaching salaries for the state's five lowest paying districts. The data include salaries based solely on experience and do not include salary increases earned for attaining advanced degrees. The table provides the difference in salary between a beginning teacher and a veteran teacher with 20 years of experience. If a teacher starting a career in Jackson Parish in 2005 were to stay there for 20 years, and the salary figures were to remain at present levels, the teacher could expect a maximum salary increase of \$6,603.

Exacerbating the small increase awarded over a 20 year career, the rate of teacher salaries increases is shrinking. Although beginning salaries are higher in dollar amount in 2005 when compared to 1995, the 20 year change in salary has actually decreased. For example, a teacher in Jackson Parish would expect a 34.2% increase in salary over 20 years if the 1995 salary schedule

remained the same. The same teacher would expect a 29.7% salary increase over 20 years if 2005 salary figures remained in place. Therefore, despite the appearance of increases in teacher salaries, teachers in 2005 received proportionally smaller increases than did teachers in 1995.

Table 3.4
Teacher Salary Differences at the Bachelor’s Level for the Lowest Paying Louisiana Districts

District	Years	Beginning Salary	20 years experience	20 year Change	20 year Percent Increase
Jackson	2005	22,208	28,811	6,603	29.7
	1995	19,331	25,934	6,603	34.2
Madison	2005	22,358	29,261	6,903	30.9
	1995	17,471	24,174	6,703	38.4
Catahoula	2005	22,454	29,357	6,903	30.7
	1995	15,895	22,798	6,903	43.4
Tensas	2005	23,186	30,089	6,903	29.8
	1995	15,631	22,534	6,903	44.2
Union	2005	23,207	30,380	7,173	30.9
	1995	14,631	21,534	6,903	47.2

Source: Louisiana Department of Education website

The same is true for teachers in the state’s five highest paying districts. Table 3.5 displays the salaries teachers in those parishes can expect based on the beginning salary and the salary after 20 years of teaching experience. Consistent with the table above, the attainment of advanced degrees are not considered in the comparisons represented below. As demonstrated in Table 3.5, in the state’s highest paying districts, teachers in 2005 received proportionally smaller salary increases.

Table 3.5
Teacher Salary Differences at the Bachelor’s Level for the Highest Paying Louisiana Districts

District	Years	Beginning Salary	20 years experience	20 year Change	20 year Percent Increase
St. James	2005	37,174	45,562	8,388	22.6
	1995	21,985	30,373	8,388	38.2
West Feliciana	2005	36,325	44,872	8,547	23.5
	1995	20,196	28,368	8,172	40.5
St. Tammany	2005	34,690	44,933	10,243	29.5
	1995	20,760	30,509	9,749	47.0
DeSoto	2005	34,480	44,480	10,000	29.0
	1995	19,431	26,334	6,903	35.5
Jefferson	2005	33,255	45,255	12,000	36.1
	1995	19,711	31,303	11,592	58.8

Source: Louisiana Department of Education website

Advanced Education

Teachers do have the option to obtain advanced education and receive a higher salary. Graduate education often comes with a substantial price tag. Although the state once established a tuition exemption program for any teacher advancing her or his education, the program has since been changed to give school districts the discretion to determine eligibility for tuition exemption. East Baton Rouge Public Schools, for example, allows tuition exemption for those seeking coursework in critical needs or shortage areas. Thus, teachers not teaching in these areas often have to assume the full costs of earning a graduate degree. Table 3.6 displays the current graduate school costs at the following state universities; Louisiana State University (LSU), Louisiana Tech University (LTU), the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL), the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM), and the University of New Orleans (UNO). These universities were chosen because their locations represent the various areas of the state and/or the proximity to the largest population centers. For many teachers, it may not be possible to pursue full-time studies, which could require leaving the security of a job with income and benefits. The state offers a one year partially paid sabbatical for teachers who have taught for six consecutive years, and some universities offer graduate assistantships to teachers who are

enrolled full-time. However, a graduate degree can seldom be earned in one year and assistantships are seldom sufficient to support a family.

Table 3.6
Approximate 2008 Tuition Costs for Graduate Education at Five Louisiana Universities

University	1 course	2 courses	3 courses	Full-time degree ^a	Part-time degree ^b
LSU	\$544.25	\$996.50	\$2,276.45	\$9,105.80	\$6,531.00
LTU	\$374.00	\$912.00	\$1,316.00	\$5,264.00	\$4,488.00
ULL	\$452.60	\$993.60	\$1,633.10	\$6,532.40	\$5,431.20
ULM	\$675.75	\$1,271.95	\$1,732.70	\$6,930.80	\$8,109.00
UNO	\$545.00	\$804.00	\$1,646.00	\$6,584.00	\$6,540.00

Notes for Table 3.6: ^a This estimate is calculated as the current (based on fall 2008 tuition and fees) full-time cost times four semesters. This assumes no tuition increases. These figures do not include fees, costs for books, parking on campus, and other costs associated with earning a graduate degree.

^b This estimate is calculated as twelve (the estimated number of courses required for a master's degree, usually 36 hours) times the fall, 2008 one course tuition and required fees. This figure represents the total cost of the degree should the teacher study on a part-time basis and take one course per semester for a total of twelve semesters. This figure assumes no increases in tuition. These figures do not include costs for books, parking on campus, and other costs associated with earning a graduate degree.

Sources: University websites

Given the investment a teacher makes in a graduate education, a return on that investment in the form of additional salary associated with a master's degree would be expected. Table 3.7 displays salary information for ten Louisiana districts, each in the vicinity of the above universities. Using the part-time cost estimate from Table 3.6, and given the local parish's beginning salary and the five-year salaries as reference, the return on investment year is determined to give an estimate as to how many years it would take to earn back the amount spent on tuition and begin seeing a profit. For some school districts, the return would take ten or more years before teachers would begin to profit monetarily from their investment in a master's degree.

Table 3.7
 Estimated Return on Investment for a Master’s Degree in Education

Nearby University	Cost of the master’s degree	Nearby School District	Years of Service	Salary with Bachelor’s Degree	Salary with Master’s Degree	Difference	Return on Investment ^a
LSU	\$6,531	East Baton Rouge	0	\$38,800	\$39,653	\$853	7.7
		Rouge	5	\$40,481	\$41,927	\$1,446	4.5
		West Baton Rouge	0	\$40,884	\$41,290	\$406	16.1
		Rouge	5	\$42,905	\$43,517	\$612	10.7
LTU	\$4,488	Bossier	0	\$38,449	\$39,199	\$750	6.0
			5	\$41,671	\$42,491	\$820	5.5
		Lincoln	0	\$39,660	\$40,013	\$353	12.7
			5	\$41,427	\$41,959	\$532	8.4
ULL	\$5,431	Acadia	0	\$37,454	\$37,819	\$365	14.9
			5	\$39,240	\$39,786	\$546	9.9
		Lafayette	0	\$38,408	\$40,094	\$1,686	3.2
			5	\$40,730	\$42,416	\$1,686	3.2
ULM	\$8,109	City of Monroe	0	\$39,772	\$40,402	\$630	12.9
			5	\$41,716	\$42,610	\$894	9.1
		Ouachita	0	\$33,640	\$35,135	\$1,495	5.4
			5	\$36,220	\$37,896	\$1,676	4.8
UNO	\$6,540	Jefferson	0	\$39,130	\$39,730	\$600	10.9
			5	\$42,130	\$42,730	\$600	10.9
		St. Tammany	0	\$40,265	\$42,137	\$1,872	3.5
			5	\$42,844	\$44,974	\$2,130	3.1

^a Return on Investment is an estimate of the number of years a teacher would spend paying for a graduate degree, given the salary increase a master’s degree provides, before the teacher begins to profit monetarily from the investment. The figure was calculated by dividing the cost of the master’s degree by the salary difference. Sources: Louisiana Department of Education salary schedules, 2007-2008.

The Teaching Pool

Given the minimal salary increase teachers are paid for earning a master’s degree, there is little incentive for teachers to pursue a master’s degree. The low pay and small differential over the course of a career support the findings reported by Bacolod (2007) and Ingersoll (2002) that poor pay is a frequently mentioned reason for teacher attrition. The size of the teaching pool is also affected by mandates that give teachers little opportunity to exercise the craft aspect of the profession. Teachers feel a loss of power and professionalism with current accountability systems (Winkler, 2002). Smith (1991a) stated, “A teacher who is able to teach only that which is determined from above and can teach only by worksheets is an unskilled worker” (p. 11).

Winkler (2002) found differences in attitudes toward mandated testing between veteran and novice teachers. Veteran teachers viewed mandated testing as an intrusion and a loss of power, while novice teachers welcomed the collaboration that mandated testing sometimes provides.

The previous discussion focused on some issues that influence the quality and retention of teachers as well as some of the reasons teachers choose to leave their current positions or leave the profession entirely. Several studies point to a large pool of degreed or licensed teachers who decide not to teach at all (Alt & Henke, 2007; Bradshaw & Hawk, 1996). Alt and Henke (2007) report nearly 30% of education majors never teach. A total of 57% of education majors receiving degrees in 1993 were not teaching ten years later, according to the Alt and Henke study. These researchers also noted that approximately 54% of the college graduates in their study considered teaching and/or took steps to become teachers. Of that group, approximately 36% decided that they were not interested in teaching. At some point in their collegiate careers, approximately one-third of students consider becoming teachers but change their minds before graduation.

Private Schools and Accountability

An additional factor impacting the state's school improvement policy decisions are the influence of the state's private schools. Private schools are exempt from state and federal accountability systems (Title I, 2002). In the 2003-2004 school year, 9,151 high school seniors graduated from private schools in Louisiana (Broughman & Swaim, 2006). The same school year, 37,017 students graduated from public schools in Louisiana (LDE, 2006b). Thus, private school graduates make up 19.8% of the total high school graduates in Louisiana. In other words, 20% of the state's high school graduates earned official state diplomas without having to pass the

high stakes tests required of public school students or have their curriculum narrowed to the content included on the state's high stakes test.

Summary

The Louisiana accountability system has garnered much national attention. Recently rated as one of the top accountability programs in the country (Education Week, 2003; 2004; 2005), state education officials appeared to have cause to be proud of the positive press, the state accountability program, its goals, its ambitions, and its design. However, though the development of the accountability program was carefully thought out and was implemented with good intentions, by 2005, Louisiana students continued to achieve at among the lowest rates in the country. Some likely reasons for Louisiana students to make meager progress are discussed above, including a press to teach to the test, the lack of fully certified teachers in all classrooms, and non-competitive teacher salaries. Other potential reasons for Louisiana students to score poorly compared to their counterparts in other states must be examined if the state is to reap the rewards that seemed to be forthcoming from the accountability effort. The following chapter sets forth the methodology for such an examination.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

It may not be perfect, but before we were running a system where we had no idea what was happening in it, who was doing good and bad...Now we know what's broke, and we can fix it." [Former Governor] Foster said, adding, "if we can get the money to do it."

- Thevenot (2000)

Louisiana policymakers mandated numerous school improvement initiatives and expended millions of dollars aimed at improving student achievement during the period 1997 - 2005. The Children First Act, although passed in 1988 and thus before the time period on which this study focuses, heralded a plethora of legislation in the years that followed. Since then, governors and law makers alike exhibited increasing interest in student test scores and in raising public awareness about the state of education in Louisiana. This interest was manifest in numerous legislative and policy initiatives.

One such law was implemented in 1998, when the LDE began to publish annual progress reports of student achievement. Since that time, statewide student test score gains have varied from a low of approximately 38% passing the eighth grade mathematics in the 1998-1999 school year to a high of approximately 59% passing the fourth grade English Language Arts (ELA) in the 2004-2005 school year. Figure 4.1 details statewide trends in these two subject areas for Louisiana students on the LEAP from 1998 to 2005.

Overall, the percentage of students statewide passing LEAP in these two subject areas has risen, although the trend line shows rises and falls, as might be expected. Notwithstanding the overall achievement gains during the 1998-2005 period, Louisiana unfortunately still ranks at or near the bottom on national achievement surveys (Education Week 2003; 2004; 2005).

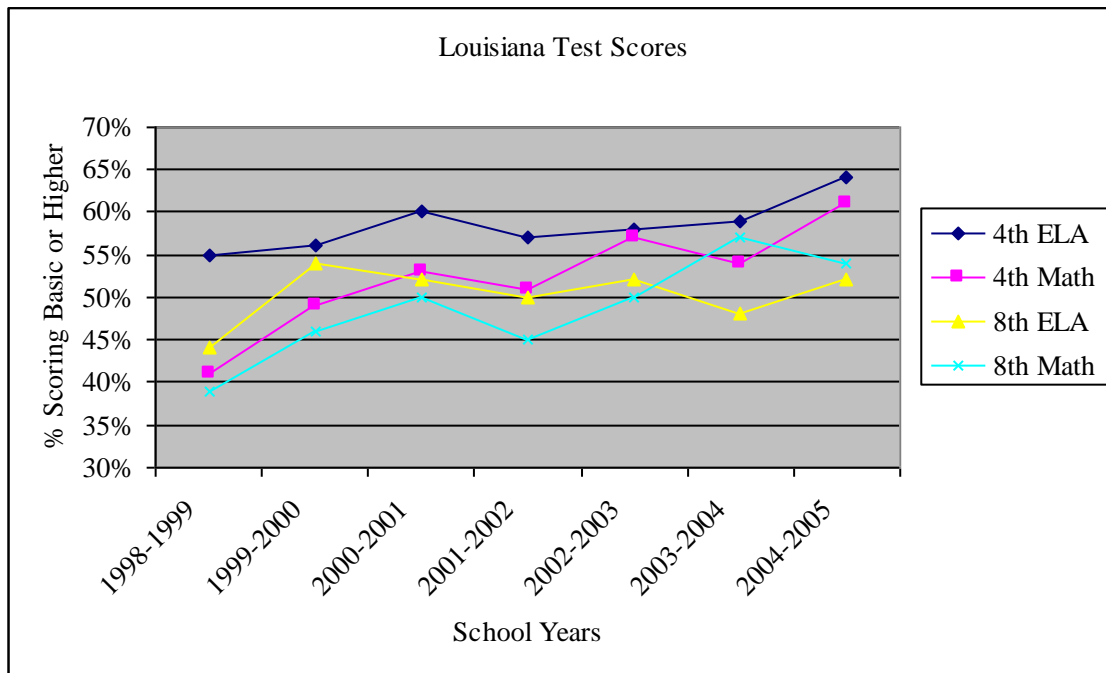


Figure 4.1 Trends in Louisiana Test Scores, 1998-2005
 Source: Louisiana Department of Education, *State Education Reports*

To date, there has been no systematic analysis of the programs mandated by the state during this time period. State progress reports, mentioned above, provide an overview of the state of Louisiana’s educational system, but not the effects of specific state improvement initiatives. The types of programs mandated by the state vary, from hiring personnel to provide assistance to struggling districts and schools, to initiatives designed to enhance the reading and mathematics proficiency of students in the primary grades, to the accountability program with high stakes tests in grades four and eight, and for high school graduation. Analyzing the impact of these state programs will enable Louisiana policymakers to make better choices in their decisions regarding education and thus the future of Louisiana.

The timing of the present study is opportune. Louisiana is still struggling to recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2005. Concurrent with the recent economic downturn and national recession, Louisiana expects a budget deficit in 2009. Among the pressing needs of the state are PK-20 education, physical and mental health care especially for the indigent and elderly, the legal and prison systems, and infrastructure. Given the competition for state dollars, a systematic in-depth analysis of education reform initiatives is needed.

Overview of the Study

The present study was conducted in three phases. Phase One consisted of a document search and selection. Using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), the text of laws passed by the state legislature, policies created by BESE, and documents published by the LDE were examined to determine the intent, goals, sources and levels of funding, and longevity of the various state school improvement initiatives and comprised Phase Two of the study. This analysis provided the foundation for Phase Three. In Phase Three, semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and former state education agency personnel of the LDE. These interviews added depth to the findings from the document analysis and were used for triangulation purposes.

The study period, 1997-2005, was chosen for specific reasons. During Governor Mike Foster's administration (1996-2004), high-stakes accountability testing became a focus of the state's school improvement efforts. The passage of the 1997 Louisiana School and District Accountability Act (hereafter referred to as Act 478) signaled a major shift in accountability in the state. The study period was terminated after state testing in 2005 because Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused substantial population shifts at the start of the 2005-2006 school year. Thousands of students fled their home parishes or left the state altogether, and many schools remained closed for six months or longer. At this writing, many schools in Orleans Parish,

formerly one of the largest school districts in the state, have yet to reopen. Table 4.1 displays the 2005 PK-12 student population of the six parishes most impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The total number of students affected (180,199) represents 24% of Louisiana’s entire student population of 724,002 (LDE, 2006a). The corresponding student population for these parishes two years later reveals a net loss of 56,123 students, with Orleans Parish taking the largest loss of 40,062 students.

Table 4.1
The 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 PK-12 Student Population in the Eight School Districts Most Affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Parish	Student Population in 2004-2005	Student Population in 2006-2007	Net Loss (or Gain) of Student Population
City of Bogalusa	1,797	2,439	642
Cameron	2,914	1,630	-1,284
Jefferson	51,403	43,528	-7,875
Orleans ^a (RSD)	64,920	9,039	-40,062
Plaquemines	5,024	3,573	-1,451
St. Bernard	8,802	3,513	-5,289
St. Charles	9,719	9,678	-41
St. Tammany	35,620	34,857	-763
TOTAL	180,199	124,076	-56,123

Note: ^aThe state takeover of the Orleans Parish School System was completed as schools were reopening from the storm. The Orleans Parish School System maintained control over 9,039 students (approximately 14% of its pre-Katrina student count) while the majority of returning students entered schools in the state-run Recovery School District (RSD).

Sources: Louisiana Department of Education. *Annual Financial and Statistical Report 2004-2005* and *Annual Financial and Statistical Report 2006-2007*.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall in late August, 2005, and Hurricane Rita hit in late September that same year. Both storms struck before the state’s official student count date of October 1, 2005. The state allowed all school districts to forego administration of the LEAP in 2006 because of the frequent moves displaced families were required to make, thereby affecting the validity of the test scores. Although many parishes opted to administer the test anyway, data from LEAP compiled from that school year would not give an accurate measure of the

effectiveness of the state's policies. For these reasons, the period of the study does not extend past the 2004-2005 school year.

The next section provides the research questions and a full discussion of each, including sample selection, reliability and validity procedures, and data analysis strategies. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations for this study.

Research Questions and Methodology

Discussion of the Research Questions

The present study consisted of three phases, with one research question guiding each phase. Phase One involved the identification of documents related to major state school improvement initiatives. Phase Two involved conducting a content analysis of these initiatives. Phase Three used the data from Phase Two as the basis on which to construct an interview protocol used to conduct interviews with knowledgeable individuals currently or formerly associated with the LDE. Each research question is presented separately below and accompanied by a brief discussion. A discussion of other elements of the methodology follows.

The first research question asks, What were the major state funded school improvement laws, policies, and programs in place in Louisiana during the period of 1997 to 2005? To conduct an in-depth analysis of these laws, policies, and programs, relevant documents had to first be identified. For brevity these laws, policies, and programs will also be referred to as state school improvement initiatives through the study. Major state school improvement initiatives are operationally defined to include; (1) state programs that averaged at least \$2 million per year in state expenditures, (2) programs that affected teachers and students for school improvement purposes, and, (3) programs that remained in place for at least two school years. State expenditure is defined as sources derived from State General Funds (SGF) or the Louisiana

Quality Education Support Fund, known as 8(g) funds. Documents created by the state legislature, the LDE, and BESE were examined to identify programs that met these criteria.

To identify these state initiatives, the census sampling technique was used. A census consists of a body of texts matching all of its kind (Krippendorff, 2004). All publications from the LDE, BESE, and the state legislature regarding state school improvement initiatives were accessed and examined for congruence with the above described criteria to determine suitability for inclusion in the study. A complete list of documents is found in Appendix B as part of the content analysis code book.

Phase Two was guided by a research question which asks, How do the identified state school improvement initiatives compare in terms of intent, goals, total expenditures, and longevity? After the major state school improvement initiatives were selected, they were examined to identify the above characteristics.

To address this second research question, a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) was conducted. As data were gathered and analyzed, the information was compiled as displayed in Table 6.11 on page 168. This method of analysis allowed the researcher to compare the goals of each school improvement initiative with those of agencies of the executive branch of government (e.g., LDE, BESE) (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996).

The Phase Three research question is, What are the perceptions of knowledgeable state education agency personnel, both current and former, regarding the major state school improvement initiatives? A snowball or chain sampling technique was used (Creswell, 2008). This technique involved identifying an individual knowledgeable about a program or programs, conducting an interview with her or him and asking for recommendations of other individuals who might also be knowledgeable about the program or programs.

Thus far, we have identified and discussed the research questions that guided this study. Next we discuss in greater detail each of the three phases of the study and the data analysis procedures used for each. Following the format used above, each phase is discussed separately, though after the initial document analysis, the phases overlap to some extent.

Phase One: Identification of State Funded School Improvement Initiatives

Johnson and Joslyn (1995) defined episodic and running records as the two main types of documents. Episodic records are those not part of an ongoing, systematic record-keeping program, but are preserved and produced in a more casual or personal manner. Examples of episodic records include personal diaries, memoirs, correspondence, and autobiographical and biographical materials. Running records are preserved in a more formal manner, and include election returns or voting decisions, judicial decisions, speeches, and governmental policies.

Running records are the documents most useful for this study. Johnson and Joslyn (1995) explained the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing running records. One advantage is that the cost to search running records is inexpensive for researchers. Collecting, tabulating, storing, and reporting of these materials requires the most money, although digital storage capability has potentially eased this burden. A second advantage is that running record data is easily accessible. Most government agencies have offices where they maintain these records and provide easy access to the public. With the proliferation of internet database searching, these materials are typically readily available. The Louisiana Legislature maintains an informative website which allows one to search for legislative bills submitted and passed from 1997 to the current session. Financial information for state appropriations can also be found on this website. Likewise, the LDE website contains a great deal of archived data covering the study period.

Finally, an advantage of running records is that they cover a more extensive time period than episodic records.

Notwithstanding these advantages, Johnson and Joslyn (1995) describe several of the disadvantages of using running records. One substantial disadvantage is that running records may be incomplete (Johnson & Joslyn, 1995). Likewise, documents may be missing, negatively affecting the researcher's ability to make an accurate analysis. Another disadvantage, selective survival, occurs when the record keeper keeps only select materials, such as those most favorable to the agency's position. Selective survival is mitigated in this study because the state is required to maintain most of the information sought as part of the public record. In addition, because we anticipated encountering some the disadvantages that Johnson and Joslyn describe, Phase Three of the study was designed to collect interview data from knowledgeable individuals associated with state government and its policy making agencies that affected state school improvement initiatives in Louisiana. These interviews helped to fill gaps that resulted from missing documentary data.

Sources of Documentary Information and Sampling

In order to identify the major state school improvement initiatives, an extensive search of several sources was conducted. Education policy in Louisiana is created primarily by two bodies, the Louisiana Legislature, which enacts laws, and BESE, which mandates policies. However, state law and policy can also be affected by other governmental entities. Figure 4.2 summarizes the sources of law affecting Louisiana. For purposes of this study, federal documents were not examined but the legislative structure from federal to state is displayed because federal laws, such as NCLB, and federal court decisions, such as *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, discussed in Chapter 1, impact state laws and policies.

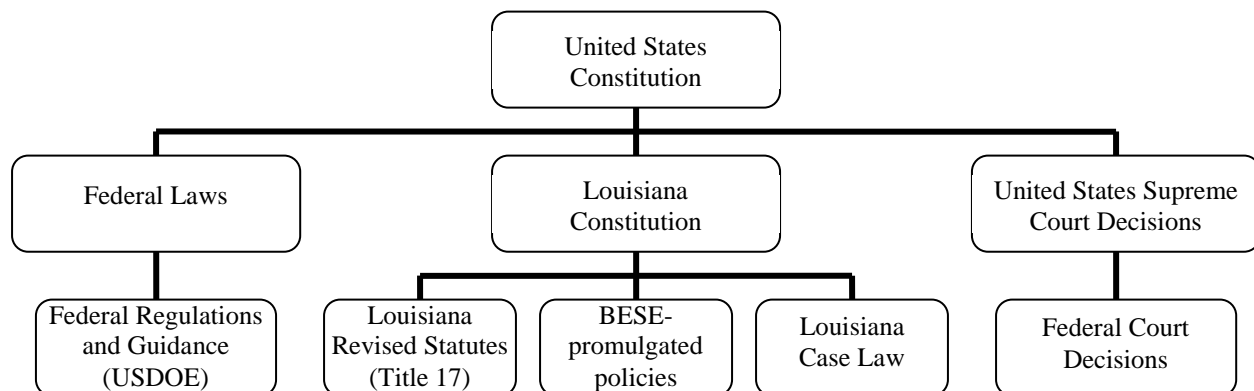


Figure 4.2: Sources of Law and Policy affecting Louisiana School Improvement Initiatives

The federal, state, and local levels of government influence our nation’s classrooms. The precise hierarchy, however, depends upon the issue. In education, the State Constitution holds precedence, provided federal law is not contravened. Federal laws, such as NCLB, are binding in states that choose to accept federal funds, and thus override all state laws to the contrary. Federal regulations are the more precise policy measures the government adopts to provide specific details related to the implementation of the law (akin to Louisiana’s Revised Statutes). Federal guidance documents provide suggestions that can be useful in interpreting federal laws and regulations. Decisions from federal districts, in Louisiana the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court are binding against state officials and thus affect state mandated school improvement initiatives.

The Louisiana Legislature is charged with creating policies and appropriating funds. Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes is the codified education law in Louisiana. Title 17 includes current legislation and details those programs that have been legislatively enacted, repealed, or changed as a result of subsequent legislative activity. Thus, Title 17 of the Revised Statutes provides documentation regarding legislatively mandated programs that existed during

the study period and affected state school improvement initiatives at various points in time, including the repeal of laws relevant to the current study.

Louisiana legislative materials, archived at the state capitol, the State Archives building, the Internet, and the Louisiana State University Law Library were examined to determine laws relevant to the current study and fiscal allocations associated with those laws. The Louisiana Legislature maintains an information-rich website. Among its contents are Louisiana House of Representatives' *Fast Fact* publications. These annual fiscal reports detail appropriations made by the state House of Representatives and enacted into law that cover state expenses.

BESE, through its administrative powers, can create policy. If promulgated, these policies have the force of law unless overturned by a state court, or subsequent legislation. BESE also has the authority to create and repeal its policies. BESE's current policies are archived on the LDE's website and within the LDE office building. These policies were examined to provide further evidence of the intent and goals of state school improvement initiatives. Other entities that have an effect on statewide education policy include the state superintendent of education and the governor. Documents produced by these sources and personal communications where possible, were gathered, coded, and analyzed to identify information relevant to this study. The LDE maintains a website with archived financial and accountability data. These data were searched thoroughly to identify programs that met the above stated criteria for inclusion in the present study. The state provides an annual financial report discussing the status of the state's public schools and school districts. These reports are archived and available online.

Collectively, this information details not only the governmental agencies that affect laws and policies related to state school improvement initiatives, but also this information shows the universe in which documents necessary to this study exist. We remind the reader that because of

the disadvantages of running records, a number of individuals associated with the government and governmental agencies were interviewed in Phase Three of the study as sources of information for locating publicly available documents that assisted in the analysis of the programs included in this study as well as for additional relevant information.

Phase Two: Document Analysis

Documents are particularly useful sources of data because the researcher is enabled to access the exact language and words used (Creswell, 2008). Creswell (2008) described the generic steps involved in the document analysis. After the researcher organizes and prepares the documents for study, each document is read to get a general sense of the information and to ascertain the overall meaning. Next, the researcher develops a coding procedure to use in the data analysis. This coding procedure is used to generate a description of categories or themes that emerge from the data. The researcher then determines how each category and theme will be represented in the qualitative narrative. Finally, the researcher interprets the data.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a “systematic research method for analyzing textual information in a standardized way that allows evaluators to make inferences about that information” (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996, p. 1). Patton (2002) defined content analysis as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). In content analysis, the unit of measure are messages. In the current study, the messages include texts of laws, public records documents, budget information, and publications of the LDE.

To determine the goals and intent of each of the chosen programs, an a priori design was used. An a priori design requires decisions be made in advance of data collection regarding

variables and their measurement (Neuendorf, 2002). A priori designs meet the requirement for objectivity-intersubjectivity (Neuendorf, 2002).

Content analysis offers a researcher several advantages. For instance, the researcher is unobtrusive. Content analysis involves the examination of text, so interaction with humans is limited and the privacy of any non-public individual is not threatened. If the examination contains documents deemed part of the public record, then access to such documents is usually easy. Computer programs allow for easier, more consistent coding of data (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996). The widespread use of the internet as a repository of digitized documents eases data collection.

Content analysis also has disadvantages. This analytic procedure requires the researcher to make judgments about coding and assigning codes to the materials being analyzed (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996). The researcher is responsible for developing the codes, labels, and definitions for each of the items to be coded. Another disadvantage of content analysis is that it may be subjective. Although the researcher may examine manifest content which is seemingly objective with respect to the research being conducted, the researcher may unwittingly couple this examination with latent content. Latent content requires the researcher to undertake an interpretive reading, making the analysis more subjective (Taylor, 2003).

Coding Procedures

The first step in conducting the content analysis for the present study was to determine which programs qualified for inclusion in the document sample. Examining documents prepared by the Louisiana Legislature, the LDE, BESE, and several nonprofit watch groups, such as the Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) and Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL), resulted in the inclusion of all programs that met the three-pronged operational definition provided above.

All documents that mentioned these programs were included to complete the census sampling (Krippendorff, 2004). To conduct the content analysis, the researcher created a code book and code sheet found in Appendixes B and C, respectively. The code book contained specific instructions for coding as well as a listing of 86 state created documents that contained program descriptions and financial information.

The content analysis coding process was both deductive and inductive in nature. First, the researcher examined several key documents to determine a priori codes that were used to frame the analysis procedure. These documents included the text of Act 478 and the resulting proposal submitted to BESE, the Louisiana District and School Accountability Advisory Commission's 1998 report, "Recommendations for Louisiana's Public Education Accountability System." Because the purpose of the present study is to identify laws and policies that resulted from the passage of Act 478, it was necessary to read Act 478 and the legislated report. Reading these materials resulted in the identification of initiatives and key phrases that pointed to the intent and goals of laws and policies found in subsequent documents. These two documents, which helped frame Louisiana's current accountability program, were examined along with a third document, the *2001-2002 Louisiana State Education Progress Report* (LDE, 2002), which provides the LDE's descriptions of the five components of the Louisiana accountability system. The researcher used these three documents to extract language used to describe the accountability system components. A total of 34 a priori codes were created from these documents.

The codes were organized using the five core components of Louisiana's accountability system and labeled as follows: (1) Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards; (2) Assessment Program; (3) School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting; (4)

Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts; and (5) Recognition and Rewards. While these components were more fully discussed in Chapter 2, it is necessary to provide an operational definition here for each component heading. Because three researchers independently coded all documents for reliability purposes, these definitions were included in the Code Sheet, described below, to ensure that each coder had the same understanding of the components. Coders included the author of this study, a professor of educational leadership who had experience with the law and supervised this dissertation, and a doctoral student whose dissertation is a companion to the current study. Common understandings among the coders were crucial since part of the analysis was emergent and required an understanding of the components to identify accurately appropriate categories and themes as they emerged.

Operational Definitions

The components are operationalized below:

- Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards (6 a priori codes) comprises all aspects that affect classroom instruction.
- Assessment Program (5 a priori codes) consists of all aspects of accountability that refer to testing or evaluation. This component may refer to the assessment and evaluation of students, teachers, schools, school districts, school boards, or a state level entity. Assessments may be formal or informal.
- School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting (10 a priori codes) consists of programs that support the evaluation of a school and reports the findings to another educational agency and/or to the public in general.
- Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts (12 a priori codes) refers to programs that provide additional resources for or support to schools based on

accountability scores. Assistance includes any measure taken to make corrective improvements at the school or district levels.

- Recognition and Rewards (1 a priori code) refers to programs designed to promote and reward successful schools based on accountability standards.

This deductive approach helped fill in the manifest portions of the research questions. Manifest content of a document consists of the elements that are physically present and that can be counted accurately (Taylor, 2003). All documents were read to get a general sense of the information in the materials gathered during the census sampling identified the names of the programs in place during the research period (Cresswell, 2008). These data answer Research Question 1 and can be found in Table 5.1 of chapter 5. These data also formed the basis of Table 6.11, found at the conclusion of chapter 6.

A second type of content analysis involves indentifying latent content. Identifying latent content requires researcher interpretation to determine the underlying meaning (Taylor, 2003). This information is not obvious. Allowing latent content to emerge provides a richer interpretation of the text and the ability of the researcher to determine the actual goals and intent of each the program meeting the inclusion criteria. Blank spaces were provided on the Coding Sheet for the coders to include latent content that emerged relative to the goals and intent of the programs. As noted, Appendix B contains the Code Book for the study and Appendix C contains the Coding Form used in this study.

Reliability

Reliability measures the extent to which a procedure will yield the same results given repeated trials (Neuendorf, 2002). Although reliability does not ensure validity, it is necessary for a method to be considered valid. Krippendorff (1980) describes three types of reliability

pertinent to content analysis: stability, reproducibility, and accuracy. Stability refers to the extent to which results of content classification remain similar over time. Stability, also referred to “intra-observer reliability,” may be attained with the use of the same coder. When only one person is coding, stability is the weakest form of reliability (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). Although a weak measure on its own, stability is tested by having the observer code study data at two points in time.

Reproducibility refers to the extent to which content classifications are reproduced when using more than one coder. Reproducibility, also referred to as inter-coder reliability, is the aspect of most concern to researchers. Accuracy, the strongest measure of reliability, tests the degree to which an analysis yields what it is designed to yield (Krippendorff, 1980). Data are collected under test conditions. These conditions are met by having the coder’s performance measured against what is known to be the correct performance.

To address issues of reliability, three coders were used in this study as described above. Krippendorff (1980) cautions that communication between coders is likely to make data appear more reliable than it really is. To address this issue, the only communication that took place among coders was contained in the written instructions provided prior to coding. To ensure reproducibility, written instructions for coding data were created by the researcher. The percent of agreement among the among coders was calculated, adjusting for the percentage of agreement reached simply by chance. Krippendorff’s alpha (α) was used to measure reliability. The statistic takes into account chance agreement and the magnitude of the misses, and adjusts for the type of variable (Neuendorf, 2002).

The formula for α is as follows:

$$\alpha = 1 - \frac{D_o}{D_E}$$

where, D_o = observed disagreement and D_E = expected disagreement (Neuendorf, 2002). Perfect agreement is calculated to be 1.000 (100%) while the total absence of agreement is 0.000 (0%) (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Hayes and Krippendorff (2007) posited that this calculation enables this index to be interpreted as “the degree to which the data can be relied on in subsequent analyses” (p. 79). The statistic was calculated using an SPSS macro provided by Hayes and Krippendorff (2007) and available at <http://www.comm.ohio-state.edu/ahayes/macros.htm>.

Reliability should be tested at two points in the study, pilot and final (Neuendorf, 2002). In this study, two of the coders met prior to the collection of data to pilot test their coding agreement on a small sample of data. The final reliability data were measured with Krippendorff’s alpha and reported with the study’s results.

Multiple coders were utilized to establish validity and reliability (Patton, 2002). Further, using one of the identified programs, the three coders worked together to test and refine the instrument. Upon agreement of code wording and meaning, several documents were coded separately. The coders met again to cross-check coding results and to enhance inter-rater reliability. Krippendorff’s alpha (Krippendorff, 2004) was used to calculate inter-rater reliability. The resulting alpha= .72 is an acceptable reliability coefficient for this exploratory study (Krippendorff, 2004). The inter-rater reliability was calculated again at the conclusion of the study. The resulting alpha= .86 is a strong reliability coefficient for this study (Krippendorff, 2004).

Validity

A measuring instrument is valid if it measures what it is designed to measure (Krippendorff, 1980). Krippendorff (1980) notes that content analysis is valid if its inferences are upheld in the face of independently obtained evidence. Validation is important to assure policymakers that the findings of the present study are to be taken seriously when considering decisions on issues related to school improvement. There are two types of validity, internal and external. For content analyses, internal validity is consonant with reliability (Krippendorff, 1980). External validity assesses the degree to which “variations inside the process of analysis correspond to variations outside that process and whether findings represent the real phenomena in the context of data as claimed” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 156). To address concerns of validity, triangulation of sources was used. To increase the validity and trustworthiness of the document analysis, peer debriefing was utilized to enhance the accuracy of the account.

To summarize, Phases One and Two included the identification and analysis of documents that mandated major state school improvement initiatives. The data from these two phases helped to inform Phase Three, which is described in the next section.

Phase Three: Interviews with Former and Current State Education Agency Personnel

Phase Three of this study involved individual interviews with state LDE personnel, both former and current. The interviews not only helped to clarify issues that arose during the examination of state laws and policies, but also added institutional memory that supplemented published information from the state and its agencies. Critical sampling (Creswell, 2008) was combined with snowball sampling so that the researcher could learn about each specific state school improvement initiative from individuals with deep knowledge about the initiative. Thus, these interviews provided richer description than was available from the document analysis alone

and allowed for data triangulation. Patton (2002) describes three types of open-ended interviews: (1) the informal conversational interview; (2) the general interview guide approach; and, (3) the standardized open-ended interview. These approaches differ in the extent to which interview questions are standardized prior to conducting the interviews.

An informal, conversational interview requires no predetermined questions. The interviewer determines questions from the flow of the conversation. Questions can then build upon the information provided in order to delve deeper into a particular subject matter. In contrast, the general interview guide approach requires that questions or topics for discussion be determined in advance of the interview. This approach enables the researcher to make the most of the time allotted for the interview, and it ensures that critical topics are discussed. If the interviewer conducts multiple interviews, the general interview guide approach ensures that all subjects are asked the same questions. However, this approach does not preclude the interviewer from asking additional, non-predetermined questions when appropriate. In the standardized, open-ended interview, the researcher predetermines all questions. This ensures that all subjects will be asked the same information, allowing for greater comparative precision during data analysis because all participants responded to the same questions with no probes that produce information not included in the original set of questions.

Researchers are able to combine approaches. For this study, the researcher chose to combine the standardized, open-ended interview with the interview guide approach. Prior to each interview, a set of predetermined, open-ended questions were created to ensure that each interviewee was asked the same core questions. A list of additional questions was created to address specific areas relevant to specific interviewees and probes, discussed in the next section, were used to garner information related to issues not anticipated in advance of the interview.

Probes

The researcher utilized probing questions to elicit further responses to increase the depth and richness of the responses (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) discussed four types of probes: detail-oriented questions (e.g., When did that happen? Who else was involved? p. 372); elaboration probes (e.g., Would you elaborate on that? Nonverbal cues such as head nods, p. 373); clarification probes (e.g., I'm not sure about... Could you elaborate on that? p. 374); and contrast probes (e.g., How does *x* compare to *y*? p. 374). Each interview ended with a final question as suggested by Patton (2002). For the present study the ending question was either, 'Is there anything that should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?' or 'That covers the things I wanted to ask. Is there anything you care to add?' (Patton, 2002, p. 379).

Sampling for Phase Three

To determine the individuals to be interviewed, purposive sampling strategies were utilized, including theoretical, critical, and snowball or chain sampling (Corbin & Strauss (2008; Creswell, 2008). The researcher began by interviewing several former LDE personnel who were nominated by a former LDE employee as key informants to the study. These individuals were chosen specifically because of the positions they held within the state or the LDE during the specific time period being studied and because of their intimate knowledge of the specific policies and programs analyzed in Phase Two. During the interviews, individuals were asked to nominate additional personnel with knowledge about the programs of interest as part of the chain sampling technique (Creswell, 2008). By asking numerous individuals with information about the same initiative, the accumulation of information-rich cases grew. This strategy resulted in four additional interviewees. Initial contact was made via email. Appendix F contains the text of the message sent to potential interviewees. Email messages to which there was no response

were followed up by a second email request and/or a phone call. Programs for which no contact names emerged from the interviews, contact was attempted with the LDE personnel listed on the respective website as contacts for the programs. Again, email messages were sent with follow-up emails and phone calls to non-responders. Some of the LDE personnel responded that they had no knowledge of the program, or they declined to participate.

During the interviews, data were continuously collected, referred to as theoretical sampling by Corbin and Strauss (2008), allowing the researcher to develop concepts in terms of the properties and dimensions, variations, and relationships. This process of continuous data collection and coding was done until saturation occurred, that is, until no new data emerged.

The Interviews

The primary researcher asked the questions and operated the recorder. The researcher also maintained an electronic journal, recording thoughts and impressions after each interview. The electronic journal entries were transcribed and analyzed as part of the Phase Three data collection strategies. Throughout the document, the terms personnel, participants, interviewees, and employees are used interchangeably in the text and refer to the interview participants regardless of departmental rank. The terms officials and administrators, also used interchangeably, refer to individuals at high ranks in the LDE hierarchy.

As mentioned, all interviews were recorded using the Olympus DS-30 digital voice recorder. Digital equipment offers ease in transcription and storage, allowing for greater protection to the data (Neuendorf, 2002). The interviews were transcribed and compared to the field notes and electronic journal entries produced by the researchers.

Prior to each interview, LSU Institutional Review Board procedures were used including informed consent and securing participants' permission to have their interview audiotaped. The

data were kept in digital files and stored on the researcher's computer and an external hard drive away from the research sites. Participants were given an identification code to further ensure confidentiality.

Member Checks

Member checks, also referred to as respondent validation, serve as a way to increase the validity of a qualitative study (Scott & Morrison, 2006). As such, a separate chart with all of the codes listed was created and indicates the codes pertain to a particular program. During the participant interviews, or during a follow-up contact, interviewees were asked to review the content analysis results for the various initiatives pertinent to that interview to indicate whether or not the interviewee agreed with the results and whether the results depicted an accurate portrayal of the program. In general, interviewees agreed with the results making only minor adjustments for inclusion of the codes concerning diverse learners and high stakes testing.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined constant comparison analysis as “the analytic process of comparing different pieces of data for similarities and differences” (p. 65). As units of data are found to be similar, they are grouped together and given a descriptive code. For the present study, coding the interview data was done immediately following the each interview. Subsequent interviews were structured to build upon prior interviews and to provide additional data to delineate and explain the chosen codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). To assure trustworthiness of the interview data, member checks (Patton, 2002) were conducted in which each participant was asked to review the transcriptions for accuracy and to make changes where accuracy was in doubt.

Once confirmed, interview data were unitized (Krippendorff, 2004) by text segment (Creswell, 2008) and given a preliminary code. The coded bits were written on color-coded index cards to organized emerging themes (Dick, 2005). The coded bits on index cards enabled the researchers to physically move data bits to more appropriate categories. Data segments that did not fit an existing category were placed in groups and marked miscellaneous.

Once the data from the first interview were coded into common categories, the data from the second interview were analyzed and either included in the initial categories or new relevant categories were created. As necessary, categories were re-coded and shuffled to include all raw data into common themes (Dick, 2005). The process was repeated until data from all interviews had been unitized and categorized by emerging theme. After all interview data were categorized in an emerging theme of right fit, the researcher returned to the group marked miscellaneous to check for any additional data bits, or segments, that might fit with the existing codes and themes.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the study's researcher is that of the instrument of data collection (Patton, 2002). This role requires that I reflect on and report any potential sources of bias and error. I offer the following information to alert the reader of any potential biases I may possess.

I was born and raised on the West Bank in the Greater New Orleans, Louisiana area. I attended public schools in Jefferson Parish from Kindergarten until my high school graduation in 1989 and was the first person in my family to go to college. I graduated from Louisiana State University in 1993, and have since furthered my education with graduate study in public policy and law. I feel that my schooling prepared me well for these pursuits. I also spent seven years as an elementary school teacher, four in the State of California and three in the State of Louisiana.

I was hired for my first teaching position as a result of California's class-size reduction policy. Although the policy aims were noble, the state and especially the nation's second-largest school system, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), was not able to fill the required teaching vacancies with credentialed teachers. The LAUSD ultimately hired over 3,000 uncertified teachers in 1996, and I was one of them. I was fortunate to be placed in a team-taught, multi-age classroom that contained students in Kindergarten through second grade. Since my arrival did not impact the system this team had in place, I was able to spend most of my first year observing the veteran teachers in the team, and beginning my intensive alternative certification program through California State University in Dominguez Hills. My cohort of fellow new teachers, including two at my school, would teach all day and attend methods courses on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00 pm until 10:00 pm. We did this for one and a half school years, with the last semester consisting of observations of our teaching. My school was a year-round school that offered four tracks, or four different schedules, to accommodate the 1,200+ students in our Pre-K to fifth grade school.

As a new, single teacher, it was not a large burden to attend after school meetings. I was often the only one of my fellow 12 red-trackers who would volunteer to participate in afterschool activities or as a member of our school's site-based management team which was given the authority to make budget and personnel decisions. It was not uncommon for me to spend upwards of \$1,000 annually of my own salary (which, in California, was not enough to ever dream of home ownership or renting without a roommate) to purchase books for my third grade classroom library or supplies to conduct basic science lessons.

After four years of teaching in Los Angeles, I was married and returned to my home state of Louisiana. I took a job in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBR) at a school that

was beginning a partnership with LSU. We had field experience students observing and conducting lessons, and we also had one or two student teachers in our classrooms for extended periods of time. As teachers, we had the opportunity to take advantage of teacher tuition money from the state, so I took additional courses to improve my teaching methods.

I came back to Louisiana in 2000, the same year the state implemented high-stakes testing in the fourth grade. As a third grade teacher, I often felt the pressure to ensure those students passing at the end of the year were ready to face the LEAP exam. Over the course of my three years, it was easy to sense when testing was near because everyone, teachers and students, would begin to appear more worried. You could also hear the word LEAP used in first- and second-grade classrooms more often as well. I was employed by EBR during the years 2000-2003, the years included in this study. My school in Baton Rouge participated in several of the initiatives studied in this dissertation.

After I left teaching and went back to graduate school, I remained in touch with the teachers at my former school. I also spent four years volunteering as a Reading Friend to a student there. I began working with her during her third grade year, when she could barely read. My time with her was brief, so I know my impact wasn't as great as that of the wonderful teacher she had that year. She spent two years in fourth grade, having failed the math section of LEAP. Subsequent attempts were not successful and she was eventually promoted to the fifth grade. During her fifth grade year, we worked exclusively on math in an effort to prepare her for success in middle school and mitigate her chances of dropping out. I've lost touch with her, so I hope she still has her family supporting her through the next years.

I also spent time working as a law clerk for the Louisiana Department of Education. My work focused on legal issues in employment and discipline, mostly conducted as research and

done in response to complaint letters written to the Superintendent of Education. I was also asked to research legal and policy issues related to accountability and school takeovers in advance of the creation of the Recovery School District. I was employed at LDE from 2004-2005, years included in this study.

As a teacher, I have been impacted by laws and policies that are mandated from above and often without regard to the most impacted levels of the classroom. Some of these decisions led to my leaving my classroom position to pursue a different career path. Contacts made during the course of my employment at the LDE and in EBRPSS aided in securing several of the interviews conducted which may have caused potential bias in the study. By the summer of 2008, the time of the data collection, I had been out of the classroom for five years.

Summary

This study explored major state school improvement initiatives in an effort to compare these initiatives in terms of intent, goals, total expenditures, and longevity. To accomplish this task, state archival records were examined to determine the years of implementation and/or repeal, and state budget data and appropriations legislation were examined to determine expenditure amounts.

The result of the information gathered in this phase of the study is displayed in Table 6.11 on page 160 of this study. The importance of this information is displayed in a twofold manner. First, the charts and tables allow readers to quickly visualize state program data. Second, the charts and tables reveal the state improvement initiatives that are mandated for implementation by educators across the state. These formats reveal the longevity of the various state improvement initiatives and the overlap among them. The charts and tables also reveal the multiple reform initiatives that were in effect at a given time.

Limitations of the Study

Terminology in education changes quite often, thus some of the data are difficult to compare one year to the next. For instance, minor changes were made to the existing accountability structure in Louisiana after No Child Left Behind was enacted. Appendix A illustrates some of the changes in nomenclature made after the passage of NCLB affecting the accountability program in Louisiana. This limitation occurred mainly in the differing names of programs. To compensate, program descriptions will be compared in the next chapter.

Study results are also limited by the fact that the study consisted of one state. Results were also limited by the parameters established by the researcher. Only ten interviews were conducted during this study and included only those officials who were nominated for an interview and agreed to participate.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY RESULTS

Basically the data showed that after all these years and over \$100 million of state funding, 25% of Louisiana's 3rd graders could not read on grade level at the end of 3rd grade. So here I am with this lovely graph and a Power Point show and it shows that 25% of our kids, after we've invested all of this, cannot read on grade level.

-Participant interviewee

Accountability initiatives in Louisiana have existed for the past 30 years. The current study focuses on the most recent accountability legislation in Louisiana. The study seeks to identify major school improvement initiatives implemented to support the accountability of schools. The study further seeks to identify an exact dollar figure expended on such initiatives and programs.

This chapter examines the sources of state funding in Louisiana and reveals the amount of money allocated toward the programs included in the study. The chapter then details the results of the content analysis examination of state documents concerning these programs. Finally, the chapter discusses the results of the interviews conducted with current and former LDE officials regarding the nine identified programs.

Document Collection

The researcher began the study by identifying all necessary documents. The search began with a search for documents created by the LDE, since this state agency is responsible for implementing educational policies and programs (La. R.S. 17:21 et seq, 2005). The majority of the documents were available online through the LDE's website, <http://www.louisianaschools.net>. Those documents that were not available electronically were also accessed in the state archives, the Special Collections of Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge or the Louisiana State Library in Baton Rouge. Publications

produced by the BESE were accessed. These publications included annual reports and the promulgated regulations for various state programs released to the public as Bulletins. Documents published by the Louisiana Legislature, mostly legislation, were also accessed. When possible, the original legislation was obtained in the event the program was amended through subsequent legislation. Appropriations bills, the state's method of authorizing expenditures, were also accessed and analyzed to help determine financial allocations.

Preliminary Identification of School Improvement Programs and Initiatives²⁷

While gathering the documents, the researcher located *A Guide to the Louisiana Department of Education* (hereafter referred to as the *Guide*) (LDE, 2003a). The *Guide* was designed to be a resource tool for educators and non-educators by providing “brief, concise, easy-to-read descriptions of each of state programs and initiatives” (p. 1). The book contains a separate page for each program, identifying the purpose/description; accomplishments/results; funding source; and, LDE contact person for further information. The programs were tagged as eligible for the current study if the funding source section identified only state funding sources (e.g., “state” or “8(g)”). This search yielded 26 state-funded programs. These programs were then scrutinized to determine whether they met the three-prong criteria for inclusion in the study, as described in Chapter 4. Fourteen of the programs were eliminated for failing to meet the requirement of averaging two million dollars annually. None of the programs were eliminated for the duration requirement, as all were determined to be in place for at least two school years. Two of the programs were eliminated for not affecting the teaching and learning environment. Two of the programs, identified in the *Guide* as Louisiana Teacher Assistance Program and Louisiana Teacher Assessment Program, were later combined by legislation to be called the

Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP). LaTAAP is included in the study. The 26 programs are listed in Appendix E, along with the decision and reason for inclusion or exclusion in the study.

The researcher read the annual reports of the BESE and the State Education Progress Reports of the LDE to identify any additional programs for inclusion. An additional initiative emerged, Regional Education Service Centers, and was included in the study program. The researcher used publications from the BESE, along with appropriations bills of the Louisiana Legislature, to determine annual allocations.

Additional Document Search

Once the major programs were established, the researcher conducted a final search for documents relating to each specific study. First, a general search was conducted using an internet search engine. The results yielded links to the LDE website, along with links to specific Louisiana university websites. The information linked consisted of the same data provided by the LDE.

Second, the researcher searched several scholarly databases for any evaluations or studies of the particular programs chosen for inclusion. These databases, available through LSU, included Academic Search Complete, Dissertation Abstracts, EBSCO Electronic Journals Service, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) Abstracts, and JSTOR. The results yielded reports for two of the programs. Finally, the researcher searched the LDE's website search engine for specific program information. Program blurbs and documents were downloaded and included in the content analysis. A database of dissertation abstracts was also searched to locate additional studies of the selected programs. Dissertations examining change

²⁷ Although distinct, the terms programs and initiatives are used interchangeably throughout the study and during the interviews. The Regional Education Service Center (RESC) was identified for inclusion in the study. Although the

agents, teacher retention, and state agency employment were used to examine the development of selected programs.

Excluded Programs

Programs were excluded from this study if they did not meet the established study criteria. Several programs were identified as funded by state and/or 8(g) funds but no dollar amounts were discernible from the financial documents. These programs were also searched on LDE's website to no avail and were excluded from the study. As noted, Appendix E includes a list of state-funded programs that failed to yield specific financial data.

Exceptions to the Criteria

Several programs were included in the study despite the fact that they failed to meet all three stated criteria for inclusion. For example, the LINCS program operated with a combination of state and federal funding. The program was included because LINCS received an average of \$2 million in state funds²⁸ in addition to some federal funding from Title II and IDEA sources. During the subsequent interviews, it was clarified that the federal funding received helped cover the salaries of the Regional Coordinators. Further information about LINCS is found in Chapter 6. Interviews also revealed that many of the state employee positions are funded using federal money.

The program called "Accountability" was classified as an umbrella term that consists of many different improvement initiatives. One such initiative was the District Assistance Team (DAT) which was required for schools entering corrective actions. Although no specific dollar amount could be determined for DAT, it was still included in the content analysis since the program received attention in several LDE and BESE publications examined during this study.

RESC is a legislated arm of the LDE and is not a program or initiative per se, it will be referenced as a program.

Included Initiatives

Specific state-funded initiatives that were chosen for inclusion in the study satisfied the three established criteria. These school improvement initiatives included in the study are:

- Community Based Tutorial Program (in charts called CBTP)
- Distinguished Educators (in charts called DE)
- K-3 Reading and Math Initiative(in charts called K-3)
- Louisiana Teacher Assessment & Assistance Program (in charts called LaTAAP)
- Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success (in charts called LINCS)
- Local Teacher Quality (in charts called LTQ)
- Regional Education Service Centers (in charts called RESC)
- Remediation (in charts called REM)
- State Testing/ Accountability (in charts called TEST)

The documentary data gathered are displayed in Table 5.1. Displaying the identified state initiatives in this form provides an overview of state school improvement initiatives, including the year of their implementation and overlap among the programs.

Table 5.1
Table of School Improvement Initiatives and Years of Implementation

		Academic Year								
		1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Program	State Testing									
	LaTAAP									
	Remediation									
	Distinguished Educators									
	K-3 Reading and Math Initiative									
	Local Teacher Quality									
	LINCS									
	Community Based Tutorial Program									
	Regional Education Service Centers									

Funding Louisiana Schools

Louisiana schools receive funding from local, state, and federal sources. On average, the budgets for schools include 12.5% federal resources, 36.4% local resources, and 51.1% state

²⁸ LINCS received allocations from the State General Fund and 8(g) Fund. See Tables 5.2 and 5.3 for specific

resources. In 2004-2005, these percentages translated roughly to \$840 million from the federal government, \$2.8 billion from state government resources, and \$2.3 billion from local sources (LDE, 2006a). As described below, Louisiana schools are operated by allocations from the state general fund and 8(g) funds. Other sources of state program funding, the Tobacco Fund and the Education Excellence Fund, were not included in this study because documents were inconsistent with the treatment of these funds.

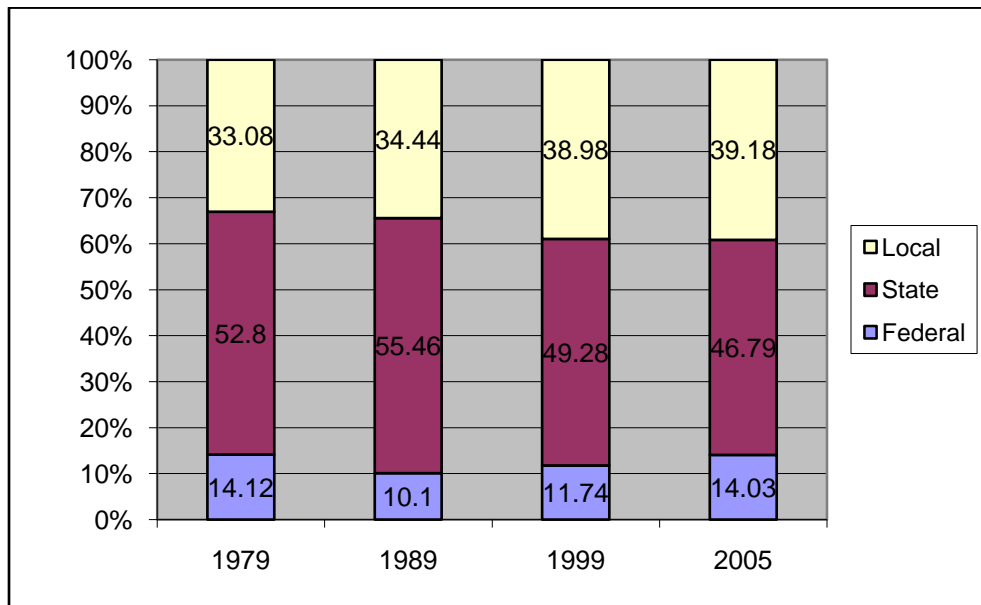


Figure 5.1. Distribution (in Percentages) of Federal, State, and Local Resources to Fund Louisiana Schools

State General Fund

State funds are kept in the General Fund. Funds enter the General Fund through statutory dedications, fees, and self-generated revenue. By law, the LDE and BESE create the budget for education. The state legislature has constitutional authority to appropriate funds for education (La. Const. Art. VIII, §11), although the governor may make changes to the budget once it is

allocations.

established. PK-20 education consumes 55% of the State General Fund expenditures (LANO, 2008), far greater than the 22% spent on human resources and 10% on public safety.

The budget speaks to the priorities of the state (Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations [LANO], 2007). For education to receive such fiscal attention implies that it is a priority for the state’s leaders. On average, allocations for K-12 and higher education consist of 56% of all proposed State General Fund spending for each fiscal year (LANO, 2007)²⁹, again implying it a priority of the state’s leaders. Since 1975, the State of Louisiana has spent nearly \$50 billion on education: \$29.8 billion in the first 22 years (1975-1997) and approximately \$20.1 billion spent during the next 8 years, corresponding to the study period of 1997-2005.³⁰

For the study period, eight of the identified nine programs received funding from the State General Fund. Their allocations for each year of the study period are identified in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Allocations for School Improvement Initiatives from the State General Fund (in Millions)

Program	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	TOTAL	AVE
LINCS ^a	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.0
LaTAAP	2.9	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.3	4.7	4.1	4.1	29.1	3.6
Rem	0	2.0	7.4	11.6	20.3	20.0	21.0	21.0	103.3	14.8
Test	2.4	5.7	8.0	14.8	29.2	19.6	21.0	23.9	124.6	15.6
DE	0	0.2	1.2	1.7	4.4	4.1	4.5	4.4	20.5	2.9
K-3	30.0	20.0	20.0	14.6	14.6	14.6	13.0	12.8	139.6	17.5
CBTP	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	19.0	2.4
RESC	0	4.4	4.4	5.9	5.3	5.3	5.7	6.1	37.1	5.3
TOTAL	38.0	38.4	47.0	54.1	79.4	68.3	72.4	75.4	475.2	63.1

Note for Table 5.2: ^aLINCS received a total of \$4.9 million in 8(g) funds (see Table 5.3) and therefore met the established study criterion of averaging at least \$2 million in state and 8(g) allocations annually.

²⁹ For Fiscal Year 2007 (FY 07), the percentage of funds for general areas of state government breaks down to the following: 56% education; 22% human resources; 11% general government; 9% public safety; 1% environment and natural resources; and, 1% business and infrastructure.

³⁰ This information was extracted from the Annual and Financial Statistical Reports published by the LDE for the years 1975-2005.

8(g) Funds

Another source of state funding is known as the 8(g) Fund. Louisiana began offshore drilling in 1947. After a lengthy controversy with several states over ownership of and royalties from offshore drilling, the United States Congress passed the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act in 1953. In an effort to give states more control over offshore activities, amendments made in 1978 provided coastal states a “fair and equitable” (LDE, 2007c) share of money made from offshore activities. This amendment, numbered 8(g), provided Louisiana 27% of the money generated by contested offshore areas. The citizens of Louisiana voted to amend the state constitution and establish the Louisiana Educational Quality Trust Fund with the interest from this fund, known as the Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund, dedicated to educational programs. Fifty percent of the monies allocated by the legislature are to be dedicated to higher education causes, such as to promote research efforts of Louisiana universities and to endow chairs for eminent scholars. The remaining fifty percent of the monies are to be allocated to support K-12 education such as funding school remediation programs and insuring an adequate supply of textbooks, library books, and equipment (La. Const. Art. 7, §10.1(D)). Since 1986, over \$1.22 billion was dispersed to the Board of Regents and BESE for use in universities, schools and districts within Louisiana (Louisiana Department of the Treasury, 2008).

BESE has authority to allocate 8(g) funds to local schools and school districts. Allocations are made through three types of programs: 1) Elementary/Secondary Competitive Grant Program; 2) Elementary/Secondary Student Enhancement Block Grant program; and 3) Statewide Grant Program. Individual schools and districts apply for funds through the Competitive Grant and Enhancement Block Grant Programs. Statewide Grant Program funds are allocated to the LDE for use across the state. For purposes of this study, only allocations made

through the Statewide Grant Program were examined. For fiscal year 2002-2003, 12.5% of 8(g) allocations, or \$4.2 million, were dispersed through competitive grant allocations. Forty-five percent, or \$15.1 million, were dispersed through block grants, and 40.2%, or approximately \$13.5 million, were dispersed through the Statewide Grant Program (BESE, 2002b). Table 5.3 displays the amount of 8(g) funds allocated for programs included in the present study. Only two of the identified programs are funded with 8(g) funds, LINCS and Local Teacher Quality. Both of these programs began in the 2002-2003 school year, thus no funds were allocated during the first five years of the study period.

Table 5.3
Allocations for School Improvement Initiatives from the 8(g) Fund (in millions)

Program	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	TOTAL	AVE
LINCS	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	1.8	1.8	4.9	1.6
LTQ	0	0	0	0	0	3.5	3.2	3.2	9.9	3.3
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	4.8	5.0	5.0	14.8	4.9

Funding Summary

During the study period, Louisiana invested \$490 million in the nine identified programs. This amount represents state general fund and 8(g) dollars only and does not include any additional federal, local, or private resources that may also assist with funding these initiatives. Given this investment, further analysis of the identified school improvement programs is pertinent.

Results of the Content Analysis

After the included programs were identified, a content analysis was conducted using all documents found that contained descriptions of the programs. The three coders worked separately to code the program documents, and met to compare results and refine the instrument. The researcher coded all materials and reported six emergent codes. Table 5.4 lists the program codes that emerged from the document study. The numbers represent the a priori code and the letters represent each emergent code from the document analysis that was related to the five components of the Louisiana accountability system promulgated by BESE. Each of the emergent codes concerns teachers by either increasing their knowledge and/or holding them accountable for performance. All documents were reanalyzed for emergent codes.

Table 5.4
Emergent Codes

Code Number	Code Description
6A	Provides teachers with professional development opportunities
6B	Increases teachers' content knowledge
6C	Increases the number of certified/ Highly Qualified teachers
6D	Teacher demonstrates competency
12A	Assesses teacher performance
34 A	Holds teachers accountable for failing performance

Once all initiatives and the RESC were analyzed and coded, several observations were noted. Table 5.5 contains a list of each initiative and the RESC, the documents used to analyze the program, and the code numbers that appeared in at least one of the identified documents. Two programs matched the fewest number of codes. The Community Based Tutorial Program matched two codes, representing a significant shift in role and/or responsibility of BESE, LDE, school board, district, school, community (code 3), and supportive rather than punitive model of improvement (code 24). This program funds community members to tutor students in after-

school and summer programs. The tutoring program can be described as supportive, since there are no punitive measures taken as a result of participation in the program.

Table 5.5
Content Analysis Results Synopsis

Program	Documents Used ^a	Codes Found ^b
CBTP	41, 44	3, 24
DE	41, 42, 64, 100	1, 3, 5, 6A, 8, 10, 12A, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31
K3	12, 16, 41, 47, 51, 52, 54, 55, 72, 104	3, 5, 6A, 6B, 6C, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31
LINCS	41, 43, 54, 68, 69	1, 3, 4, 5, 6A, 6B, 8, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31
LTQ	68, 69, 69B	3, 6A, 6C, 24, 29, 31
LaTAAP	11, 41-1, 41-2, 49, 49B, 71, 103	1, 3, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D, 9, 10, 12, 12A, 13, 23, 24, 31, 34A
RESC	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 102	3, 5, 6A, 8, 16, 20, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31
Rem	41, 45, 46, 51, 52, 54, 101	3, 10, 13, 15, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 34
Test	41, 48B, 48C, 48D, 51, 52-1, 52-2, 64, 65, 72	1, 3, 5, 6C, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35

^a Document numbers correspond to those found in the code book (see Appendix B).

^b Code numbers correspond to those found in the coding sheet (see Appendix C).

The Local Teacher Quality Program matched six of the codes, including one which emerged as providing professional development for teachers (code 6A) and a second which emerged as increasing the number of certified teachers (code 6C). The other codes included the supportive nature of the program and the shift in the responsibility of the LDE. Under this program, LDE officials became responsible for reading through teachers' transcripts and advising them on potential avenues for licensure. The program was also found to provide technical assistance to schools and school districts (code 31).

The program that contained the most codes was the accountability and testing program. This outcome came as no surprise since the documents used to create the codes were the

documents used to establish the current accountability system in Louisiana. Thirty-two, or 80%, of the 40 codes applied to the accountability and testing system. Those not applying to the accountability and testing system include five of the six emergent codes (increasing the number of certified/Highly Qualified teachers was the one exception) and the ability of school districts to have greater flexibility in the delivery of education (code 4). The remaining two codes were not found to apply to any of the programs: content standards for students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and linguistically and culturally diverse students (code 2) and demonstrate competency in foundational skills (code 6). These skills were defined in documents to include communication, problem solving, resource access and utilization, linking and generating knowledge, and citizenship (LDE, 2006b).

The program garnering the most emergent codes was the LaTAAP program, Louisiana's teacher assessment program. To a great extent the LaTAAP program is supportive to new teachers consistent with the assertion of the School and District Accountability Commission that the accountability system would be a supportive program. Teachers who fail to perform successfully after multiple attempts at the assessments are dismissed before attaining tenure. Thus, successful performance in the LaTAAP program should ensure competent teachers (LDE, 2008d). Further information about LaTAAP is found in Chapter 6.

The Most Common Codes

Two codes applied to each of the ten programs. Overall, these programs were found to represent a significant shift in the role and/or responsibility of BESE, the LDE, the school board, district, school, or school community (code 3), and the programs were found to be supportive rather than punitive models of improvement (code 24). Eight of the nine provided technical assistance to schools or districts (code 31). The one program that did not provide technical

assistance was the Community Based Tutorial Program, which was found to have very little connection to the schools. Eight of the programs focus resources to schools, districts, and/or students in an effort to improve student achievement (code 23) and eight redirect existing state resources to help schools implement improvement programs (code 29). Six of the programs utilize trained officials in an advisory capacity to improve student achievement (code 26), while six programs provide teachers with professional development opportunities (code 6A). Twelve of the 40 codes applied to only one program, the majority belonging to the accountability and testing program. Two codes, content standards for diverse students (code 2) and demonstrates competency in certain foundational skills (code 6) were not found through the document analysis, to apply to any of the programs.

During the subsequent interviews with LDE personnel, the results of the content analysis were shared. These personnel were asked to comment on the results and to offer additional evidence that provide support for the excluded codes. Interviewees pointed out that the LINCS program did provided standards for diverse learners and that a main focus of the program was teaching teachers to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. The same occurred with high stakes testing. Interviewees noted that demonstrating competency in certain foundational skills (code 6) was indeed a goal of the high stakes testing program.

Specific codes as they relate to the individual programs are further discussed within the program profiles in chapter 6. As presented in the next chapter, each of the identified programs is diverse in scope and purpose. However, when analyzing the documents produced by the LDE and BESE, many of the codes emerged from the descriptions of the programs. From the program that had the most connection to schools and to accountability (the accountability/ testing

program) to the program that had the least formal connection to the schools (Community Based Tutorial Program), at least two of the codes applied each of the nine programs.

Table 5.6
Summary of Codes by Key Facets of the Accountability System

	N = ^a	CBTP	DE	K3	LINCS	LTQ	LaTAAP	RESC	REM	TEST	TOTAL
		Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards ^b									
Codes 1-6D	10	1	4	5	6	3	6	3	1	4	35
		Assessment Program									
Codes 8-12A	6	0	3	0	1	0	4	1	1	5	16
		School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting									
Codes 13-22	10	0	5	1	3	0	1	2	2	10	24
		Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts									
Codes 23-34A	13	1	6	7	6	3	4	7	6	12	58
		Recognition and Rewards									
Code 35	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	40	2	18	13	16	6	15	13	10	32	136

Notes: ^aN represents the number of codes in the code book that correspond to each of the five components of the accountability and testing program.

^bThese components correspond to the key facets of the Louisiana accountability system as stated in the State Education Progress Reports (LDE, 2006b).

Program Support

The current accountability system is comprised of five key components promulgated by the BESE: challenging curriculum and content standards; assessment program; school and district performance monitoring and reporting; assistance to low performing schools and districts; and recognition and rewards (LDE, 2006b). The results of the content analysis were organized around the five components, which formed the a priori themes in this study, to determine whether one component was represented by more of the identified initiatives over the others. Table 5.6 summarizes the results of the codes by a priori and emergent theme. The components that received the most programmatic support are assistance to low performing schools and districts and challenging curriculum and content standards, while the components that received the least programmatic support is recognition and rewards.

Table 5.7 provides the five components of the accountability and testing system and matches the study programs that support each component. Support may be programmatic or may include funding opportunities.

Table 5.7
Five Components of Louisiana Accountability and Testing System and the School Improvement Initiatives that Provide the Most Support

Accountability Component	Supporting Initiatives
Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards Assessment Program	LINCS, LaTAAP
School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting	Accountability and Testing, LaTAAP
Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts	Accountability and Testing, Distinguished Educators
Recognition and Rewards	Accountability and Testing, Regional Education Service Centers, K-3
	Accountability and Testing

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with those LDE officials, past and present, who were knowledgeable about the identified school improvement initiatives. The purpose of the interviews was threefold: to supplement the information obtained from the documents studied in Phase One of this study; to determine additional sources of information, including other persons to interview; and, to determine perceptions of LDE regarding major state school improvement initiatives. The third purpose satisfies the final research question from this study.

Interview Subjects

A total of ten interviews were conducted between the period of August 13, 2008 and October 28, 2008. As explained above, interviews were conducted with current LDE personnel and former personnel either face-to-face or by telephone. Each former LDE employee continues to work in the education field at some level, K-12 school administration, district office,

university, or non-profit educational group. Table 5.8 provides overview information about the interviewees without breaching the researcher’s commitment to preserve their confidentiality.

Table 5.8
Summary of Interviewees and Their Experiences

Interviewee	Experience at LDE	Prior School Experiences	Number of Programs discussed ^a
1	1978-present	ES ^b teacher	1
2	2000-2003	ES teacher	2
3	2001-2005	HS Counselor, HS teacher	3
4	1990-present	School psychologist	4
5	1988-2002	ES teacher; district office	3
6	1997-2003	ES teacher	3
7	1980- 2002	MS teacher	5
8	1978-present	None	5
9	1999-2007	None	3
10	1999-2007	ES principal, teacher	6

Notes: ^aNo participant who had responsibility for the Remediation initiative agreed to an interview; however, 5 of the 10 provided information about the initiative.

^bThe abbreviations ES refers to elementary schools, MS refers to middle schools, and HS refers to high schools.

Informed consent forms were obtained from each interviewee, as well as their permission to audio tape and transcribe the interview. Audio recordings were not made of the phone interviews. Also, one face-to-face interview with two interviewees was conducted in a restaurant over lunch. This interview was also not recorded but extensive notes were taken and member checks conducted. Notes from the phone and face-to-face interviews were transcribed the same day to ensure maximum memory of the interviewer. After each transcription was completed for all interviews, the text was sent to the interviewee for verification. This provided the opportunity to clarify any mistakes and complete any inaudible sections of the interview (Scott & Morrison, 2006). When necessary, a follow-up contact was made with the interviewee. Overall, interviewees were very receptive to participation and open with their responses. Each person was proud of the accomplishments of the programs that were discussed, but also spoke of changes s/he would like to see. Interviews were conducted until saturation occurred. The

interviewer noted saturation when the same concepts were repeated. Interviewees were assured of their confidentiality during the study. To protect confidentiality, job titles, departments within the LDE, and specific background information are not included in this dissertation. Specific notes about individual programs are contained in Chapter 6.

During the period of interview data collection, Louisiana was again hit by several hurricanes. Hurricane Gustav made landfall on Labor Day, September 1, 2008 and hit the Baton Rouge area especially hard. Widespread power outages forced area schools to close for several days or weeks and the LDE operated in storm mode. Less than two weeks later, another powerful storm, Hurricane Ike, made landfall just west of Louisiana in the Houston/Galveston areas of Texas. Since Louisiana was east of the eye of the storm, the most powerful area of a hurricane, it felt the wrath of Ike as well. Parishes and school districts in the southwestern part of Louisiana were affected. As a result of these two hurricanes, many potential employees were unable to meet scheduled interview times. Several interviews had to be rescheduled, which proved difficult for some and led to phone interviews instead of the face-to-face meetings originally planned.

Emergent Concepts

Interviewees were guided through the interview using a semi-structured protocol. Some interviewees answered the questions without having them specifically asked, and in many instances, the interview became a conversation. Following the transcription and member checks, the data were coded to identify words, phrases, and concepts germane to the study. This yielded 287 bits of data that were coded (referred to as codes). The data were grouped into 24 common concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and then were organized around 3 similar themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Concept data that revealed program-specific information are included within the

program profiles featured in chapter 6. The remaining broad-based information revealed the general functioning of the LDE, information that is discussed below. Appendix H contains the data organized by themes, concepts, and codes.

Three overarching themes emerged from the interviews: conflicts over turf, program instability, and lack of a shared mission. Each theme is discussed below; however, only those concepts that give the most meaning to the theme will be discussed in detail.

Table 5.9
Emergent Themes from the Interview Analysis

Themes	Concepts	Codes
Conflicts over Turf	9	111
Program Instability	4	46
Lack of Shared Mission	11	130
TOTAL	24	287

Theme #1: Conflicts over Turf

One theme that emerged from this study was a turf mentality, or instances where the entity in charge, either the LDE, school district, or sometimes the teachers' union, exhibited control over another entity. Several concepts that emerged within this theme included issues of trust, different perceptions of the role of the legislature or of BESE, and state-level problems at the LDE level. In addition, some interviewees reported that schools perceived that they had little role in the decisions made on their behalf.

Schools Told What to Do

In several interviews, participants reported that schools were often told what they had to do, contradicting the local authority that schools were once given. The LDE created contracts for schools in Corrective Actions detailing what they were required to do and the requisite expectations. Schools often exhibited resistance to these mandates, leading one interviewee to speculate that resistance was caused by the lack of trust.

Lack of trust was also noted at the district level. In some cases, districts were singled out by the LDE and required to address concerns about individual schools or the entire school district. One interviewee described District Dialogues as an opportunity for school districts to appear before LDE officials and other interested stakeholders (further described in chapter 6) to discuss the progress of particular schools. This interviewee reported that the state would conduct its own analysis of the school, present it to the district superintendent during the District Dialogues, and the superintendent would take it back to the individual schools, complete with the state's recommendations for action. This top-down activity led not only to schools feeling as though they were often told what to do, but it also exacerbated problems of trust between the local schools and the LDE. This top-down activity was not limited to failing schools. One interviewee described the process of determining which schools would participate as:

We kind of called it “the smorgasbord approach.” We picked some [districts] that were in dire need. We picked some who maybe had some strengths in some areas and some weaknesses in others. It wasn't the really higher performing districts. There was more to accountability than just a score rolled up like SPS. District accountability had stuff about having high percentages of teachers teaching the courses that were certified... I think they [rural parishes] have some Highly Qualified issues at the high school level, but almost all of their teachers are certified. Maybe some things about summer school. That's why it was called the smorgasbord approach. We picked people for a variety of reasons.

Despite the fact that school districts were succeeding on the state's accountability system, some districts were still required to report to the state and defend themselves. Schools were given the opportunity to respond to specific issues of concern by BESE. According to one interviewee,

[An LDE official] would give a ten year history of where the district had been on assessment data, on percent of certified teachers, on the condition of their buildings, how old [the district's] buildings were, and then the district would respond. “Well, we can't repair the buildings because we can't get a tax passed and we've tried this many times. We can't get certified

teachers because our salaries are lower and we don't have the tax base." The stories were frequently the same when you're dealing with the rural districts.

Several interviewees reported problems in those programs that were mandated upon schools and fewer problems associated with programs that were not mandated.

In instances where schools were not told what to do, where they had choice about participation, programs were more successful. LINCS, according to one interviewee, was not mandated by state officials, yet some districts forced schools into participation. According to this LDE official,

[LINCS] was not mandated, which I think was good. We've just -- I've seen, even in LINCS, as districts mandated certain schools to be in-- they [the schools] just if they didn't want it from the beginning and weren't committed to it, they never achieved the same degree of implementation. And so I think it was good that it wasn't mandated.

Trust

A concept related to turf conflicts that emerged from interviews was the issue of trust. In some instances, trust was present, leading to more favorable perceptions of the particular initiatives. In other instances, interviewees reported that trust was lacking from both the LDE and from the schools. Participants reported events where the state conducted activities when a perceived lack of trust of schools was present. Interviewees repeated a similar phrase often sung by the schools, "They [the LDE] don't trust us." Multiple interviewees described a lack of trust on the part of the state as a reason for the accountability initiatives. Schools have appeared to fail in the education of students and so the state must take measures to ensure some level of accountability.

According to interviewees, there must be a shared sense of responsibility towards creating goals for school improvement. One interviewee in particular described the necessity of trust by all levels by declaring

There must be a climate of trust between the state department, schools and the public. I mean it to be circular, NOT unidirectional. There is this climate of suspicion and mistrust out there. The public doesn't trust the schools. The schools do not trust that the public supports them. Often, the state department does not trust that the schools are capable of correctly implementing their policy or trusting that the public really understands what the state department is doing. This climate of mistrust does damage to school improvement. There must be shared trust and shared goals.

The Regional Education Service Centers appeared to garner the greatest amount of trust from the schools, often leading an interviewee to speculate that this phenomenon resulted because Regional Service Center personnel were not in the school to conduct assessments, but rather to provide assistance. Specific comments describing the RESC included, "We were always in the schools and NOT in our offices. The schools knew they could depend on us for assistance. Trust was [not] the real issue for us. The schools trusted us." Other participants credited the non-evaluative role of the RESC as an important trust building component.

Role of the Legislature and BESE

Seven of the ten interviewees mentioned issues surrounding the role of the legislature and/or BESE as a factor influencing school improvement implementation. Power issues were mentioned often, referring, for example, to instances where BESE did not want to empower Distinguished Educators with certain authority over personnel. Expectations about the role of the DEs differed from the state to the schools, as explained by one participant,

I think what the schools perceived and what the legislature intended may not have been the same. I think the legislature

assumed that they [DEs] would be support and resources. But that the schools would be change agents for themselves. I think the schools thought that this is a person who's going to change us.

Other issues concerning the DE initiative consisted of expectations for results. Participants noted the unrealistic goals for results with the DE initiative. Specifically, one participant reported, "The DEs were to go in to the schools and make the changes quickly. The state, well it was BESE, may not have had realistic goals for the program. They wanted greater results in a short time. In most cases, we did see quick results, but then they flattened out."

Several of the interviewees noted the difficulty in establishing policy when dealing with the state legislature. Full funding of programs was often difficult to achieve if the legislature did not believe in the program, as was the case of the LINCS program. This was provided as one of the reasons that LINCS received funding from both the legislature and from BESE, as BESE was more convinced about the potential for success with LINCS.

Several interviewees noted the frustration with having to work through several levels of committees before approaching BESE. The accountability testing program, for example, went first through a Technical Advisory Committee, and then to the Accountability Commission, with final approval still to be granted by BESE.

Utilized Experts

A concept that emerged from the interviews was the fact that the LDE utilized experts for many of its programs. Interviewees were quick to report the importance that the best people were hired for programs such as the Distinguished Educators and LINCS. DEs often utilized each other as experts if that was needed to address a particular school need. RESC staff were also certified to be "trainer of trainers" in order to facilitate stability and capacity at schools sites whenever possible. In addition, select grade level and content area expert teachers from around

the state were chosen to participate in the creation and revision of state curriculum content standards. These standards represent the content Louisiana students are expected to demonstrate on state examinations.

For programs such as the accountability system, experts from around the country were utilized as consultants to provide support and expertise to the state. The Accountability Commission was designed such that experts in the field of testing, *No Child Left Behind*, and education law were present to help structure changes to the testing structure once NCLB took effect.

Glad to Be Working Away from the School Site

Although the interviewees are experts in their field and displayed a truly genuine desire to improve education in the state, several comments were interesting. One interviewee declared, “I’m not in the classroom; therefore I like it [the particular program].” Another participant stated that it was nice being on the other side and not having programs pushed down your throat. These comments highlight the concept that the LDE employees were removed from the school site and triangulate with the perception that turf issues impacted the implementation of the school improvement initiatives.

LDE Problems

Interviewees described state-level LDE problems that impacted implementation of school improvement initiatives. As an example, one participant described internal opinions impacting the state testing program. LDE personnel were hired for their expertise in a particular area, especially in measurement, but the decisions made did not match the professional opinions of the employees. As a particular example, this participant noted

And I even think a lot of people in testing really felt like, you know, a lot of people in the measurement field don’t agree with

high stakes testing and even passing a test to be able to graduate, that one shot kind of thing ... But I think the overall thing with BESE and the department was that we have to be doing something to hold everybody's feet to the fire and seeing what these kids know.

Another example was provided regarding the Distinguished Educator program.

So I think, you know, in hindsight, it might not... it might have been a better plan. Whereas, we were looking to be a statewide support and maybe we didn't need [statewide support]. And looking right now, we didn't need that during those years. We needed southern support.

The School Districts Forced a Change

Although many instances of powerlessness on the part of the school districts were reported, one LDE employee noted an occasion when one school district superintendent formed a coalition with other district superintendents and together were able to force the state to make a change regarding accountability. In this instance, although interviewees later said the change was made for the better, it was not well-received by the LDE. State personnel were not happy that this event occurred, but one LDE employee noted that the change was really needed. She explained,

It was one district that got some of the other districts involved and they really called down the state on a variety of things. They put together, I think maybe even a presentation, maybe even a little bit of a report about things in accountability that they just didn't think were working right. And there was actually a whole accountability commission meeting or at least part of one that was devoted to that and there were some things changed. It was a really good thing that they did. Of course a lot of people felt aggravated at first, but it really was a good thing.

Theme #2: Instability

The theme of instability encompasses interviewee comments associated with a reorganization of the LDE, with changes made to initiatives being implemented, and with the concept of sustainability.

Reorganization of the LDE

Eight of the ten interviewees discussed changes within the LDE itself. Just prior to the start of this study period, a new state superintendent of education, Cecil Picard, was appointed by BESE. Interviewees noted that the LDE was reorganized shortly after the arrival of Mr. Picard. Divisions once in charge of some programs were reorganized to oversee others. Several interviewees saw the reorganization or realignment of the LDE as inhibiting program implementation.

Participants also pointed to the change in physical location of the LDE offices as an issue. Prior to the 2002 move to the current location in the Claiborne Building, LDE offices were located in several buildings in the downtown Baton Rouge area. This geographic inhibitor impeded communication within the LDE. The physical move to the current location also involved problems. Not only did documents get lost in the move, but space in the new building was limited, so many of the old documents were thrown away.

Other interviewees named the reorganization of the LDE as an obstacle to successful implementation to programs. One participant listed various divisions within the LDE working on assessments, with assessment development, assessment administration, and assessment research. Despite all having to do with accountability, this separation was described as follows:

They have the assessment development, which is making all these tests. And they have assessment administration, which is administering [the test], all the test manuals, the tests themselves, production of tests and then the scoring all that. There is also an

assessment-like research group that kind of checks the scoring and is involved in selecting items and other research products for assessment... Some of the more joining together was because accountability didn't just go away and that NCLB and that there was more with the two needing to work together.

The organizational separation of these departments prevented conversation between the various personnel. According to one LDE official, the assessment department that focused specifically on developing and piloting the tests rarely communicated with the accountability department which focused on state testing policy and preparing reports to go to the Accountability Commission and BESE. Following the implementation of NCLB, however, there was increased communication between the departments. When it was realized that accountability was not going away, and given the parameters expressed by NCLB with test scores, the departments understood the need to share information. However, as one former LDE official spoke, "Even [in 2007] it was still a little bit of the separation of the two even though [they were] in the same division."

Interviewees also described the lack of stability within the LDE, especially the constant change of leadership at the department, likening this turnover to a "revolving door." Madison-Harris (2008) conducted a study of retention and attrition among employees of the LDE. In that study, former employees noted the organizational culture of LDE did not offer a caring environment or support to employees. Only half of the former employees surveyed by Madison-Harris believed supervisors had confidence in their ability and commented that supervisors did not support collaboration. Many former employees believed that supervisors did not provide sufficient professional growth opportunities and many believed they did not have job security while at the LDE. Madison-Harris's study provides insight about program instability that was also described in the current study.

Changes in Initiatives

Interviewees described the evolution of some of the programs they implemented, an issue more thoroughly discussed within the initiative profiles in chapter 6. One LDE employee noted that “we never give programs time” and that, especially with the Distinguished Educators (DE) program, those in the upper hierarchy of the LDE and BESE wanted greater results more quickly than they were coming. In other instances, changes came to the initiatives to satisfy funding requirements. One participant noted that despite the changes in purpose to the LINCS program, the core focus of the program remained the same: “As [LINCS] grew, as [LINCS] evolved, [the] purpose was restated. It was always, always to improve teaching practices and student achievement.”

In many instances, the changes in initiatives resulted in positive steps toward improving student achievement. In several cases, safeguards were put into place to ensure money allocated was being used for the proper purposes (e.g., Community based Tutorial Program) or ensuring credentialed teachers (e.g., Local Teacher Quality).

Sustainability

Sustainability is an important aspect of any school improvement initiative. Half of the interviewees specifically stressed the need for sustainability. Successful programs, such as LINCS, were credited in part for their sustainability. Interviewees detailed their purpose was to build capacity of the school or district. One interviewee detailed the capacity building purpose of initiatives such as the DEs and LINCS. Specifically,

If we [DEs] walk out, what did we leave behind that will still be working, the way it needs to be working? And so [capacity building] was very, very important at the state department when I was there... We did not want to be the experts that went in and did something and when we left, there was nothing there left. So, it was all about building capacity. I'll just tell you that I think if you

were to look for bright spots in all of these programs, that would be which schools built capacity to maintain first implementation, and then who built capacity to maintain that initiative would be how you're going to know [who built capacity]. And I think it's going to be, again, a [sic] normal curve, because I saw some of [the schools] pick it up and go well and I saw some say they were going to pick it up and go well, but didn't build the capacity. So when [sic] LINCS pulled out or that Distinguished Educator pulled out, it was like [LINCS or DEs] were never there.

According to several LDE personnel who were interviewed, the program that provided the most value to schools was the Regional Education Service Centers. This program brought the LDE directly to the schools. Having the eight locations spread throughout the state allows policy initiatives created in Baton Rouge to reach classrooms in Shreveport, Lake Charles, or New Orleans with relative ease. Multiple interviewees pointed to successful interactions between the Regional Education Service Centers and schools and district-level personnel.

Another initiative that supported capacity building was the District Assistance Team (DAT). Districts were able to craft the composition and mission of the DAT to match its individual needs.

I can tell you that, I think, overall in all the districts I've been in, and I've been in a lot of districts, that I would say [the DAT] probably sustained and is still sustained among in the state. I think that each district found value in District Assistance Teams. For instance, if you no longer needed a District Assistance Team, that district maintained one because they found it of value. It didn't look exactly like the one that the state required, but [the district] knew that they had to have some cadre of people go in and monitor schools that needed monitoring. So that tells you right there that it was valued. [The DAT] may not be exactly the same thing. It may not be called exactly the same thing, but it's there. In almost every district I've been in, the districts valued that kind of monitoring.

Theme #3: Lack of a Shared Mission

The majority of the interview codes and concepts fell under the third theme, Lack of a Shared Mission. This theme included interviewees' comments regarding the views of the major

stakeholders (parents, educators, administrators) in education and was highlighted by substantial discrepancies in the process and implementation of programs. Some comments were in conflict with others in this theme, suggesting that the ultimate mission of the initiatives may not have been clearly understood by all parties. Issues regarding the success of programs and funding highlight such discrepancies.

Views from Stakeholders

One of the most common issues to emerge from the interviews was that schools and principals viewed the state programs differently than the LDE viewed the programs. One participant expressed a sentiment perceived to be common at the school level, noting “They’re from the state department, and they’re here to change us.” Another participant offered the following:

I think what the schools perceived and what the legislature intended may not have been the same. I think the legislature assumed that [Distinguished Educators] would be support and resources and that the schools would be change agents for themselves. I think the schools thought that this is a person who’s going to change us.

LDE personnel described the additional time and energy that was required to convince school faculties that the LDE personnel were, in fact, there to help make the school better to improve student achievement.

Despite the fact that the accountability system was supposed to “create an easy way to communicate to schools and the public how well a school is performing” (Louisiana School and District Accountability Commission, 1998, p. 1), one interviewee noted that there was a joke around the LDE that the MFP was hard to understand and that accountability was beginning to surpass it given the technical language and complicated details that were included with the

parental report cards and information released to the public. This concern highlights that the positive aspects of the accountability system have not fully been realized, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Another issue has been the voice of parents and teachers with regard to the state's high stakes testing program. One interviewee reported:

To parents, accountability to them, they think is, that you're telling me if my kid's school is good or bad and I want to know that. But what I don't like is high stakes testing because my kid is not going to pass. So there was a lot of venting. When you met with teachers and principals, there was a lot of venting about accountability. It was never like we don't like the idea of accountability. Because everybody realized that the main intent was-- if you take out the little nuances and complexities, the big picture of it was-- to get schools to say what are we doing, are we doing a good job or a bad job?

Funding Disagreements

This study examined programs that were funded exclusively through state and 8(g) funds. Using state-created documents, 26 programs were identified as receiving state funding as their sole source of funding. During the interviews, several administrators confirmed that some personnel positions were paid for with federal funds. For example, the Local Teacher Quality Program used federal IDEA funds since a large majority of uncertified teachers teach in special education classrooms. The Regional Education Service Centers also used federal funds to pay for positions, often based on the description of work that the affected employees did. For example, the School Effectiveness Person, the person in charge of assisting schools with school effectiveness initiatives, was funded by Title IV money as well as state dollars.

When pressed about the adequacy of funds for the respective programs, interviewees had mixed responses. Some interview participants, such as those involved with the DE program,

thought the program was well-funded since the purpose was to place one DE at each failing school. Given that this purpose was accomplished, the funding appeared adequate.

Others noted, however, that there was not enough money to fund every eligible classroom. The K-3 Reading & Math Initiative and LINCS fall into this category. Although these programs' goals were to improve student achievement statewide, LDE personnel noted that there was not enough money to accomplish the goals statewide. The Regional Education Service Centers were also described as underfunded and undervalued. An illustration of this deficiency occurred when a director was forced to split time commuting between two regions when there was no money to replace the director who left the LDE. The LINCS program also had difficulty funding the number of trained coaches necessary for successful implementation, according some interviewees.

One possible reason for the differing views about funding may have been elucidated by one of the interviewees. This person noted the difficulty in asking the state legislature for additional school improvement dollars. LDE officials go to the legislature in March to submit budgets for the following fiscal year. The interviewee noted the difficulty encountered in explaining the need for additional dollars when a vast majority of money allocated for that current school year had gone unspent. The official noted that, often for convenience reasons, schools and districts typically wait until the end of the fiscal year (June 30) to expend the majority of their monies, not realizing that this practice has an impact on future monies allocated. The LDE has attempted to resolve this problem by requiring quarterly reporting of expenditures in some initiatives.

Although expenditure data were difficult to locate for this study and could not be provided by interview participants, those interviewees that were in charge of budgets for the

included initiatives reported that approximately 90%-95% of money allocated was actually expended. This information may contradict the need to request additional resources if the unexpended portions could have made a programmatic difference.

Substandard Schools and Dysfunctional Attitudes

Student achievement was the focus established by the accountability commission. Interview participants noted that sentiment when they described some of the conditions of schools visited. Some schools were in especially bad shape, as noted by one interviewee:

I go to the door [and] it has a built-in metal detector, and when I get inside the door, I tell them I have an appointment with the principal. [sic] They say, “Oh, he’s on the 2nd floor. We don’t let him stay on the 1st floor.” ... there were not enough desks, there were no teachers in classrooms, kids were sitting in the windows looking down. It was something I did not know existed in the state of Louisiana.

Other schools were described as “looking good,” meaning that they had newer facilities and equipment, but the test scores were still weak. In other schools, the leadership was described as poor. Some principals were excited to bring about change to their schools by buying new garbage cans for classrooms. As one participant remarked, “But for every one clueless principal, there were 10 who were good and really wanted their students to achieve.”

In some schools, students were encouraged to drop out rather than participate in state testing. An example was explained by one interviewee, “[We] started noticing that some students would be encouraged to drop out or not [be] tested and this was before NCLB when you had to test 95% [of the students], so if you don’t test the lower students and you are not in any way penalized, then your scores are going to go up.” Participants noted that the LDE responded by including a dropout measure that would account for students not including in testing.

Goal is to Increase Student Achievement

Seven of the ten interview participants emphasized that the state initiatives focused attention to increasing student achievement. The testing program in Louisiana consisted of higher order thinking skills while preparing kids with Advanced Placement (AP) type questions. Accommodations for students with disabilities were included, while still holding such students to the same standards as their regular education peers.

Despite national rankings to the contrary, interviewees noted that student achievement has improved. Multiple interviewees pointed out that Louisiana raised standards for student learning over time. Standards were increased for fourth graders and were slowly increased for the eighth graders years later. For example, one interviewee explained

I think you have to remember that the targets have been increased; I mean the bars have been raised. The first cut score for schools was 30 and then it was raised to 45 and then to 60. So the schools... If we had left the score at 30 we wouldn't have any unsatisfactory schools. If we had left the expectation at below basic, we wouldn't have the results that we've raised the bars [to attain].... For example last year when it [no growth] appeared and it was quite often referred to as our data being flat because there wasn't [enough growth], it was like maintaining but not growing. Well that was the year in which the high schools had the new GEE [Graduation Exit Exam] and the 8th graders were asked to have what 4th grade had to do 2 or 3 years prior-- the 8th graders had to all be at basic in both of their primary content areas. I think Louisiana has grown tremendously since 1997.

Another interviewee concurred and compared progress in Louisiana to that of the state where she now works. She noted that her current state, despite student achievement ranking near the national average, set expectations too low and that Louisiana was far superior in its preparation of students.

In some cases, improving student achievement was a matter of changing poor habits of students. Despite the emphasis on quickly improving test scores, one interviewee reported that

working with some teachers, especially those of the upper grades, took longer as the teachers were often resistant to change. Specifically,

It's taken quite a lot to get higher grade teachers to get their attention to help them see that they really do need to improve their teaching practices. We have the toughest time in LINC schools with some of the high school teachers that just want to continue their lecturing and [we're] trying to get them to use cooperative learning and hands-on and meaningful, worthwhile, real-world kinds of things. [This has] come a lot slower for them than for the others...

The interviewees spoke of the increased achievement. This contradicts the overall tone of the media and the national rankings further emphasizing a lack of shared mission on the part of all interested shareholders.

Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation were frequent concepts mentioned by interviewees. For initiatives that contained professional development components, evaluations revealed the overwhelming majority of teachers believed the sessions to be beneficial. Although several of the initiatives attempted to increase student achievement by focusing on the improvement of teachers, several participants reported the difficulty in measuring a direct impact on student achievement.

In many instances, interview participants reported few to no evaluations took place assessing the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives. One interviewee further offered that, although research projects on program effectiveness were planned, implementing components of the accountability system came to be the priority. As such, the LDE proposed and implemented school improvement initiatives without the proper monitoring to measure effectiveness and suggest improvements.

Recommendations Offered by Interviewees

Interview participants were asked to provide suggestions for improving Louisiana schools. Suggestions concerned the Regional Education Service Centers, building school district capacity, professional development and evaluation opportunities for school and district level personnel, and program implementation.

Greater Utilization of the Regional Education Service Centers

Multiple interviewees pointed to the value of the Regional Education Service Centers. These participants emphasized the importance of being able to work directly with schools and school districts. Not only are the RESC staff members able to cultivate trusting relationships with local school personnel, but they provide a local face to the LDE.

One interviewee suggested that the regional nature of the RESC was important in having policy messages from the state implemented successfully at the local level. To further these aims, she offered:

The Regional Education Service Centers are underfunded. They are overutilized in schools and undervalued by the higher-ups. The higher-ups, the Pastoreks and the Nortons, don't recognize the value of these centers. Some view [an LDE official] as "abrasive," but some of that comes from her frustration that the centers are not valued. I wish there was a way to better promote the Regional Service Centers to those who are making the budgetary decisions. The Service Centers are the face of the LDE at the level of the school. Teachers often don't understand policies and the way policies are presented, and the way the demands are articulated. If they are successful in understanding this, it's because of the Service Centers.

Another interviewee continued this description by adding the difficulty in retaining RESC staff. The LDE competes with local school districts for RESC staff. While RESC positions are similar to school site positions, RESC staff work 12-month positions as opposed to

many school site positions which are 9- or 10-month positions. RESC staff members are paid roughly the same salary as school site positions despite the extended contract period.

Build Capacity at the District Level

According to one interviewee, the trend nationally is to provide more assistance at the district level in order to build the capacity for working with schools. As noted, it is impossible for the LDE to improve each and every school on an individual basis, so assistance should be provided to build capacity at the district-level which can in turn then provide assistance at the school level. In this regard, one participant offered the following:

You can do all you want to “fix” a school, but once you fixed the school, the school ultimately still belongs to the district. And so if you then walk away from that school and they are left in a dysfunctional or semi-dysfunctional district, you really haven’t done anything to help. To me, the work of a state really needs to focus more at that district-level and building capacity at the district level when a school gets in trouble.

Professional Development and Evaluation for School and District Personnel

Participant interviewees suggested that professional development needs attention. Specifically, the professional development plans of the school staff should be driven by the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process that each school prepares. An interviewee described the need for a better mechanism for teacher evaluation. Specifically,

I think that our teachers need to have high opportunities for professional growth through personnel evaluation. And what other states are doing, and it has not been discussed in Louisiana, is a 360° evaluation of personnel ... In Louisiana, one principal evaluates all his teachers or her teachers and all of them are wonderfully successful. Yet we know when we go into the school that the school scores don’t show us that. But seriously if you look at personnel evaluation in Louisiana, we’re just doing a great job. But it’s not so. So how do you help teachers to grow? Through personnel evaluation.

Limitations of the Interview Data

Although the interviewees added richness and depth to the current study which was not available through the document analysis alone, there are several limitations to the study that became apparent through the interviews. One limitation concerns the availability of documents not available from the official sources that were searched as part of the study. As noted above, there were several instances during the study period when the LDE was reorganized, which involved the reassignment of some school improvement initiatives from one division to another. Each time the LDE was reorganized, problems maintaining communication, documentation, and commitment to the school improvement initiatives arose. More problematic was the 2002 move of the LDE to its present location. The burden of the move itself, the lack of storage space in the new building, and another reassignment of programs from one division to another led many LDE employees to discard documents potentially relevant to the initiatives included in this study. Discarded documents included various kinds of paperwork and other materials related to the initiatives that had been developed over the years.

Another limitation to this study concerns the funding for the initiatives. The initial aim of the study was to include only those school improvement initiatives that were funded solely from Louisiana's coffers and to report expenditures rather than revenue allocations for each initiative. As became clear from the interviews, several of the included initiatives were not funded by state sources alone. Several programs received funding from federal as well as state sources. To maximize use of the available dollars, personnel and equipment were sometimes shared by two unrelated programs. For example, a projector may be paid with 60% federal money for use in a federal program, and the remaining 40% was paid with state funding sources for use by the

initiatives included in this study and other state programs. The same projector could then be used 60% of the time for the federal program and 40% of the time for the state initiatives and programs.

Finally, the study is limited by the number of interviewees and the focus of the interviews. The interview protocol was designed to obtain richer data than were available through the document analysis alone. Individuals interviewed were identified using a chain sampling strategy, as described in chapter 4. In the context of the interview protocol, saturation was reached through the interviews and the ten individuals interviewed provided much rich description regarding the school improvement initiatives. However, as is generally true with policy making, political machinations take place outside of public access. The interviewees in this study were policy implementers, not policymakers. Had the study been more broadly conceptualized, interviews with policymakers might have shed additional light on behind-the-scenes political deal making that that was ultimately captured in legislation and related policy formulation that guided the nine initiatives studied.

Summary

This chapter outlined the results of this study. During Phase I, an extensive search publicly available state documents relative to Louisiana's school improvement initiatives was conducted. In Phase II, a content analysis these documents was conducted to determine a description of each of the identified programs in the study. In Phase III, interviews were conducted with personnel associated with or knowledgeable about the identified programs. Interviewees were asked specific questions about the development and purpose of various initiatives. They were also asked to discuss the state's expectations for the programs and to assess whether or not those expectation were met. In Chapter 6, each of the nine identified

initiatives is profiled. The profiles contain specific information about the amount of money allocated for each program during the study period, as well as specific information from the interviews that adds rich description.

Overall, each interviewee agreed that Louisiana was moving in the right direction with its school improvement initiatives. Although each offered ways for the state to improve, each believed that the state was showing improvement. Interviewees noted the relatively high standards Louisiana has set for student achievement. One interviewee compared Louisiana's standards to those of another southern state, noting vast differences between the two states regarding expectations for student learning.

Chapter 6 provides a profile about each of the school improvement initiatives identified in this study. The profiles include appropriations data and specific information gathered from the content analysis and participant interviews.

CHAPTER 6: PROFILES OF INITIATIVES AND RESC

It is absolutely imperative for state leaders to maintain commitment to programs in which schools and individuals throughout the state have made major investments of time, money, and energy. It is difficult for regional coordinators to ask schools for a commitment if the state is not going to maintain a high level of commitment to local schools.

-Roberts (2007, p. 228-29)

This study sought to identify major state school improvement initiatives in existence in Louisiana during the period of 1997-2005. Based on information gathered through content analysis of documents and interviews with Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) personnel, nine initiatives were identified and can be grouped by the education entity they are designed to impact most directly: schools, teachers, and students. Table 6.1 displays the initiatives organized by the entity they impact.

Table 6.1
Program Initiatives and School Entity Most Impacted

Target Audience	Initiatives	Main Purpose
School Level	Regional Education Service Centers	Assist in implementation of state policy
Teacher Level	Distinguished Educators	Assist failing schools
	K-3 Reading and Math	Improve reading and math instruction
	LaTAAP	Assess the quality of teachers
	LINCS	Improve professional development
	Local Teacher Quality	Increase number of certified teachers
Student Level	CBTP	Provide afterschool tutoring
	Remediation	Provide assistance with LEAP exam
	Testing	Assess student mastery of standards

Once the programs were identified, a content analysis was conducted of state documents that were made publicly available through the LDE website and at state libraries identified as repositories of state documents. From this search, nine programs were identified and analyzed to

determine the intent, goals, expenditures, and longevity of each. Although the search appeared thorough, there were a few documents missing and information that could not be determined through a document search alone. To further identify state school improvement initiatives that met the three criteria for this study (see Chapter 1), interviews with the individuals who had intimate knowledge of the initiatives were conducted. Together these data collection techniques permitted in-depth profiles to be constructed of these nine initiatives. Each initiative is profiled below.

School Level Initiatives

Regional Education Service Centers: “Overutilized and undervalued”

Eight Regional Education Service Centers (hereafter referred to as “Centers”) were established by legislation in 1988 (La R.S. 17:3781 et. seq.). Language included in the legislation suggests that these Centers actually existed prior to 1988 as “professional development centers.” In §3781, the legislation mandates BESE to establish Centers at the site of each professional development center in existence prior to July 21, 1988; and, in §3782(B)(4)(b), the legislation mandates the retention of employment of any teacher or teaching assistant employed to work in the mandated Special Program to Upgrade Reading, consistent with Civil Service requirements. These two notations suggest that there was a precursor program in place prior to 1988, and the current Centers may have evolved from that program.

According to an interview participant, the Centers served to translate policies and mandates from the LDE to school districts and school sites. Center personnel worked often in the schools conducting professional development. Not only did Center personnel keep districts apprised of programs available through the Centers, but also districts often requested special training opportunities. Another interviewee reported that the Centers are an “absolute necessity

in any state.” This participant noted that LDE officials perform many functions responding to the legislature and the federal government, but that Center staff are the ones who have the expertise to help individual schools and are the most effective entity to work intensely with schools on specific needs.

Allocations for the Centers are provided in Table 6.2. Although the table represents state funding allocation, one interviewee noted that some federal monies were used for salaries depending on the position description. The Reading First person, for example, was paid by federal funds, and the school effectiveness person was paid by both Title IV funds and state funds. The source of funding often led to an underutilization of the staff’s expertise. If a person was funded entirely by Reading First funds to work with K-3 Reading and Math initiative and also had expertise in adolescent literacy, the person was restricted to working within the boundaries of the K-3 Reading and Math initiative and could not legally provide services to adolescents. One interviewee noted that, in an effort to address this problem, some positions were paid with state funds. Using federal and state funding sources provided greater flexibility in the assignments personnel were able to take on, thereby maximizing the use of the person’s area of expertise.

Table 6.2
Annual Allocations for the Regional Education Service Centers

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	\$2.1 m
1998-1999	\$4.4 m
1999-2000	\$4.4 m
2000-2001	\$5.9 m
2001-2002	\$5.3 m
2002-2003	\$5.3 m
2003-2004	\$5.7 m
2004-2005	\$6.1 m
TOTAL	\$37.1m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

Distinguished Educators: “It’s amazing what a name can do.”

The Distinguished Educator (DE) Program was established in 1999 with the primary goal to “creatively and assertively assist struggling schools in reaching and surpassing their Growth Targets under the Louisiana School and District Accountability System” (LDE, 2008c, ¶ 1). The DE program was established to assist schools failing to show improved student achievement over two consecutive years. DEs were exemplary teachers and principals assigned by the state to one school outside of the DE’s home district. DEs provided daily on-site assistance to strengthen the school’s “curricula, instruction, and assessment practices” (LDE, 2003a, p. 85). A two year pilot, lasting from 1999-2001, resulted in test score improvement in 85% of schools receiving DE assistance (BESE, 2001). The program went into full effect in 2002.

Several interviewees mentioned that the DE initiative was modeled after a Kentucky program of the same name. There was some discrepancy among interviewees about the level to which the DE program was adapted for implementation in Louisiana. Several interviewees noted that the program was adapted to better fit the needs of Louisiana schools. However, one interviewee, a former high-ranking official, recalled that the program was taken from Kentucky and implemented in Louisiana without modification. This discrepancy highlights a disconnect within the LDE regarding the perception of this program.

One notable difference between Kentucky’s model and that of Louisiana concerns the geographic location from which the DEs were recruited. According to interviewees, Kentucky’s DEs were recruited from and placed in the same school district. In Louisiana, BESE officials wanted the DEs to be representative of the entire state. Educators from northern Louisiana parishes were thus recruited and placed in schools in the New Orleans area. According to

Stevens (2001), several DEs reported that they did not come from the district in which they were working and therefore they did not understand the problems in district to which they were assigned.

Four documents related to the DE program were coded in the content analysis: the legislation authorizing the program (La. R.S. 17:10.4), the program description from the *Guide* (described in Chapter 5), the program description from the LDE website, and the 8(g) Annual Report and Program Results, 2000-2001. Across these four documents, the DE program pertained to 15 of the 34 a priori codes. Not surprisingly, the codes with which the DE program was most often associated were those under the component Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts. Of the 12 codes comprising this component, the DE program pertained to 8. Among these codes are the following: focus resources to schools to improve student achievement, increase the intensity of assistance to a school that fails to show adequate growth, and provide technical assistance to schools or districts.

Between 1998 and 2005, the state spent \$20.5 million on the DE program. Table 6.3 displays the amount allocated annually to the DE program.

Table 6.3
Annual Allocations for the Distinguished Educator Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	***
1998-1999	\$0.2 m
1999-2000	\$1.2 m
2000-2001	\$1.7 m
2001-2002	\$4.4 m
2002-2003	\$4.1 m
2003-2004	\$4.5 m
2004-2005	\$4.4 m
TOTAL	\$20.5 m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

Due to the newness of the program, the LDE had trouble attracting potential DEs. According to interviewees, the LDE and BESE decided to offer a higher salary to DEs to attract qualified individuals. These high salaries, however, raised concerns among legislators and brought scrutiny to the program. Although the salary seemed high, DEs were required to relocate temporarily for a two-year stint at the school to which they were assigned. In the early years, all of the schools to which DEs were assigned were in Orleans Parish. According to one interview participant, since the legislation required DEs to serve a maximum of two years, many of the DEs did not permanently relocate to the area they were assigned. The program did not offer additional compensation for housing, and with nearly all of the DEs placed in the areas with higher rents such as New Orleans, the larger salary became less of an issue.

It was difficult for the LDE to know the exact number of schools that would need a DE, thus several extra DEs were hired. All DEs were placed in schools; some with another DE at a school site while others were offered to districts with the next greatest need. Schools in Corrective Actions were not able to refuse the placement of the DE (participant interview). According to interviewees, the program was well thought-out. DEs spent months preparing for the school to which they were assigned. One participant commented that DEs walked into the school with an improvement plan in hand. This same interviewee recalled that DEs spent time conducting trainings to garner buy-in for the improvement plan, which was needed because of the lack of administrator and teacher input in creating the improvement plan for their school.

Stevens (2001) interviewed DEs and examined low-performing middle schools during the LDE pilot study of the program. DEs were perceived to impact the quality of instruction at the schools to which they were assigned (Stevens, 2001). These sentiments were echoed during the interviews for the current study. School administrators were perceived to be the largest barriers

to success both in the Stevens study and in the current study. One interviewee noted the program was successful to the extent that the school administrator took ownership of problems and issues at the school. Principals that were in place for longer periods of time had difficulty separating themselves from their past practices to take an action that would lead to improvement.

The DEs were placed in schools to serve as external change agents. According to one interviewee for the present study, if a DE was in a particular school too long, or became too embedded in one particular school, the decision was made to change the DE. This transfer was made to maintain the DE as an external agent. Later, the legislation was changed to allow DEs to continue in their post for a longer period of time if necessary.

One perception that was threaded throughout the interviews in this study concerned the name “Distinguished” Educators. Several interview participants noted that the word distinguished often offended some teachers at the receiving schools. In this vein, one interviewee commented, “Distinguished Educators. Why are they called Distinguished Educators? It’s just a teacher from Monroe.” Another participant shared, “We really should have called it something else. The name alienated some people. Imagine introducing yourself as a ‘Distinguished Educator.’” Other interviewees echoed these sentiments, noting that the title seemed to give the appearance that DEs were set above the others and that the DE demanded respect from the title alone. One interviewee recalled, “You look back and think if we had called them a coach, or something a little less ‘pedestal-ish,’ it probably would have been a good idea.”

Although there were discussions about changing the name, a former LDE official noted a political ramification of doing so. The name was codified into the legislation, thus to make a change required opening up the legislation for amendment. Once a piece of legislation becomes opened for an amendment, all legislators are free to make any changes they want. Since there

had been some opposition in the legislature to the program, the LDE personnel made the decision to leave the name as it was.

According to interviewees, the same obstacle faced the program in Kentucky. Kentucky responded by changing the name to “Highly Skilled Educators,” although this did not make much change in the way teachers and school administrators viewed these educators. One interviewee noted that the salaries drawn by the DEs had already received scrutiny from the legislature; therefore, opening up the legislation was not a priority of the LDE.

Teacher Level Initiatives

K-3 Reading and Math Initiative: Not Enough Money for Every Classroom

The K-3 Reading and Math Initiative was originally legislated as the Quality Early Reading Initiative, championed by then state Superintendent Cecil Picard. The legislation states, “it is therefore the purpose of this initiative to provide for and enhance quality reading programs for the young students in our state” (La. R.S. 17:24.9(A)).

During the study period, Louisiana allocated \$139.6 million to improve the reading and math instruction of K-3 students. Although legislated as the Quality Early Reading Initiative, BESE added math instruction to the purpose of the program. Despite the laudable goal of improving the math instruction of young students, the addition of this math to the program strained the resources available for the full implementation of the initiative. Interviewees noted that although a large amount of money was allocated for the initiative, it was never enough to impact every eligible K-3 classroom. If the intent of the legislation were to improve reading, it was hampered by the inclusion of math requirements, although interviewees noted that little service was made available in the area of mathematics.

Changes in the organization of LDE departments and divisions, discussed in Chapter 5, was often followed by changes in the stated purpose of various programs. The K-3 Reading and Math Initiative serves as an example. In addition to the purpose stated in the legislation, BESE stated that the purpose of the initiative was to “improve the reading and mathematics skills of Louisiana public school students in grades K-3 through excellent instruction for all students and appropriate intervention for all low performing children” (BESE, 2000). Subsequently, the program goal was to “reduce the percentage of K-3 students not performing on grade level in reading and mathematics” (BESE, 2003). Within that same document, BESE asserted that “the purpose of this initiative is to improve reading and mathematics instruction in K-3 classrooms and provide intervention for low performing students or those at risk of failure” (BESE, 2003). Another version of the goal of this program is found on the LDE website and in a BESE publication. According to the website version, “the goal of the program is to improve the reading and mathematics achievement of Louisiana public school students in kindergarten through third grade through improvements in instruction” (LDE, 2007a; LDE, 1999a). As promulgated in BESE regulations, “one goal of this initiative is to identify children in grades K-3 experiencing difficulty and to intervene with strategies that will address their particular needs and learning styles so that retention will be used only as a last resort” (LDE, 1999a, p. 5).

The program was described as a major initiative in the documents; however, according to interviewees, though the initiative received a large allocation, there was not enough money for every K-3 classroom in the state. Districts were required to apply for funding and disperse the funds to the schools to employ research-based strategies for effective teaching.

The total allocation for the K-3 Reading and Math initiative during the eight years of the study period was \$139.6 million; however, the amount allocated decreased annually. Table 6.4 displays the annual allocations for the K-3 Reading and Math Initiative.

Table 6.4
Annual Allocations for the K-3 Reading and Math Initiative

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	\$30.0 m
1998-1999	\$20.0 m
1999-2000	\$20.0 m
2000-2001	\$14.6 m
2001-2002	\$14.6 m
2002-2003	\$14.6 m
2003-2004	\$13.0 m
2004-2005	\$12.8 m
TOTAL	\$139.6 m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP): Ensuring Quality Teachers

The Louisiana Teacher Assessment Program began in 1994 as a support and assessment program for first-time teachers in Louisiana. It began as one semester of support and a second semester of assessment by a three-person committee: the principal, an experienced teacher, and an external assessor. The program changed to the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP) in the spring of 1997. The revised version offered the new teacher a one-year mentor with a two-person committee evaluating the new teacher during the second semester of the teacher's first year of teaching. Early studies of the program have reported negative feelings regarding the assessment process. Angelle (2001) reported the program to be ineffective as a certification process and viewed negatively by schools.

The program was further revised in 2001 following recommendations from the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality. The program is currently a two-year program, with mentoring during the first year and assessment during the second year of teaching.

According to state policy, the program has two basic purposes:

- 1) To provide new teachers with a planned program of leadership and support from experienced educators.
- 2) To provide assurance to the state that the new teacher demonstrates competency in the understanding and use of the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching, the teaching standards that form the assessment criteria (Bulletin 1943), prior to the issuance of a permanent Louisiana teacher certificate.

The primary goals of LaTAAP are the improvement of teaching and learning and ensuring that teachers certified in Louisiana are able to effectively provide instruction (LDE, 2008d). These goals are further strengthened in state policy by providing new teachers with a system of support and assistance that will result in strengthened instructional knowledge and skills (BESE, 2008).

Table 6.5 provides the annual allocations for the LaTAAP program.

Table 6.5
Annual Allocations for the LaTAAP Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	\$2.9 m
1998-1999	\$3.4 m
1999-2000	\$3.4 m
2000-2001	\$3.2 m
2001-2002	\$3.3 m
2002-2003	\$4.7 m
2003-2004	\$4.1 m
2004-2005	\$4.1 m
TOTAL	\$29.1m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS): A Model of Professional Development for the LDE

The Learning-Intensive Networking Communities for Success (LINCS) program is designed to enhance the professional development of teachers. According to the *Guide*, the purpose of LINCS is “to build and strengthen the ability of classroom teachers to design and

implement standards-based, technology-rich lessons into their daily instructional programs” (LDE, 2003a, p. 26). The goal of the program was to improve teachers’ content knowledge (participant interview). LINCS began in 2000-01 as part of the INCLASS program, designed to enhance teaching strategies used in the classroom. The INCLASS program gained wider teacher participation when it became LINCS.

Leaders in the Whole-Faculty Study Groups (WFSGs) movement conducted workshops for state leaders and for the Regional Coordinators who were hired to facilitate the implementation of LINCS in schools (Lick & Murphy, 2007). Use of national research strategies as a major part of its job-embedded professional development component for teachers enabled LINCS to become a model of professional development for the LDE.

LINCS program personnel worked directly with teachers and concentrated their efforts on providing in-class assistance. According to interviewees, teachers were taught how to analyze student test score data and formed study groups targeted to their school’s needs. Classroom practice was assessed through observations; however, early efforts to assess teachers’ content knowledge proved difficult to determine fairly. Several interviewees reported that LINCS programs in high schools were often less successful because high school teachers were not able to change their teaching practices as easily as teachers in the younger grades. To compensate, reform strategies specific for middle grades and high schools were used to better engage schools.

An extensive profile of the LINCS program’s success can be found in the school reform textbook, *The Whole-Faculty Study Groups Fieldbook: Lessons Learned and Best Practices from Classrooms, Districts, and Schools* (Lick & Murphy, 2007), published by Corwin Press. Despite this national attention given to the program, and the fact that multiple interviewees pointed to the

LINCS program as a successful initiative, the program was dismantled in 2008 in favor of a performance pay program, the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP).

Five documents were identified that contained information about the LINCS program. Across these five documents, 14 of the 40 codes pertained to the LINCS program. After consulting with one interviewee about these results, this participant added one additional code concerning content standards for diverse learners, emphasizing that the LINCS program taught teachers how to work with diverse learners.

The LINCS program was funded largely with state funds. However, interviewees pointed out that funding came through was a mix of federal and state monies.

Table 6.6
Annual Allocations for the LINCS Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	*
1998-1999	*
1999-2000	*
2000-2001	*
2001-2002	*
2002-2003	\$1.3 m
2003-2004	\$2.8 m
2004-2005	\$2.8 m
TOTAL	\$6.9 m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

Given that the focus of the LINCS program lies largely with the promotion of professional learning communities in schools, teacher retention issues loom large. When asked about the program’s impact on teacher retention, one interviewee revealed that the department began to collect data on retention but Hurricane Katrina defeated those efforts. According to informal data from LINCS coordinators, successful LINCS schools retained many of their

teachers. Nonetheless, higher salaries paid in neighboring school districts did cause teachers to leave LINCS schools, despite the efforts of LINCS and the LDE personnel.

Local Teacher Quality Program: “We were giving out money and hoping for the best.”

The Local Teacher Quality Program (LTQ) provides funds for teachers in public and non-public schools to earn their teaching credentials or to work toward meeting the state’s requirements for being designated as a Highly Qualified Teacher, consistent with requirements of NCLB. The program was formally started in May, 2002 but actually evolved from combining three prior programs: Teacher Tuition Exemption, Scholarship Stipend, and Innovative, a program that focused on district-level professional development. The original programs did not focus on teacher certification or the high number of uncertified teachers in Louisiana classrooms. The original programs were also operated on a first-come, first-served basis, and teachers were disqualified for funds if they did not register with the LDE on time.

One problem noted about the Tuition Exemption Program was that teachers made individual applications to the state for reimbursement for college courses. One interviewee offered the following: “We had no clue if people were actually finishing up programs, actually completing certification, anything really. We were giving out money and hoping for the best.”

When the original three programs were merged in 2002, a new focus on use of the funds for certification in areas of need was established. Funds for the program supplement the salaries of Regional Certification Counselors who were housed at the Regional Education Service Centers around the state. These Counselors work directly with schools and districts to identify and counsel uncertified teachers on pathways to certification. The remaining monies flowed to districts and non-public schools to fund tuition and some fees for teachers taking coursework to earn a credential. The Regional Certification Counselors’ salaries were paid 50% from Local

Teacher Quality funds and 50% from IDEA funds. Since the majority of uncertified Louisiana teachers were teaching in special education classes, federal IDEA funds were used to support the search for these teachers.

Non-Public schools are also eligible for the funds. Those schools willing to participate must receive Brumfield-Dodd approval³¹ and, if the school were sectarian, to have their sectarian status filed with the LDE.

The program focus for public school teachers was to partially fund university or college courses and to pay for any fees for examinations required for full certification, thereby removing the teacher’s status as temporary certified. The LTQ program helps identify the fastest way to certification or alternative certification for teachers. Certification needs of school districts were most critical (participant interview). Beginning in 2003-2004, funds were also used to help teachers reach highly qualified status, by covering examination fees or continuing learning credit fees. Funds are not used to assist teachers with advanced degrees. However, secondary teachers in shortage areas are able to use funds to earn an advanced degree in a content area.

Allocations for the Local Teacher Quality program are displayed in Table 6.7. During the study period, \$9.9 million in 8(g) funds were expended to help certify teachers.

Table 6.7
Annual Allocations for the Local Teacher Quality Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	*
1998-1999	*
1999-2000	*
2000-2001	*
2001-2002	*
2002-2003	\$3.5 m
2003-2004	\$3.2 m
2004-2005	\$3.2 m
TOTAL	\$9.9 m

Sources: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

³¹ Brumfield-Dodd approval refers to the Louisiana court case that prohibits private schools from discriminating practices in order to receive state textbook funds.

According to one interviewee, the number of certified teachers in Louisiana has increased over the years. The number of highly qualified teachers has also increased to some extent. This participant noted the difficulty in determining the number of highly qualified teachers because, according to law, a teacher can be highly qualified in one subject area and not in another, although the teacher may be assigned to teach subjects in which s/he is not highly qualified. Although the focus of the LTQ program is to increase the number of certified and highly qualified teachers, LDE personnel feel that student test scores will rise as the number of certified teachers increase.

In analyzing the Local Teacher Quality Program, six codes applied. These codes came from the three documents that discussed the program. Not surprisingly, LTQ was found to address the need for quality professional development (code 6A) and to increase the number of certified or Highly Qualified teachers (code 6C). The program was also found to be supportive rather than punitive (code 24), a program characteristic that was also mentioned in the interviews. While some state programs met with resistance at the school level, the Local Teacher Quality Program was warmly welcomed. This program did not have an assessment aspect to it, thus teachers and schools did not feel threatened by its presence. In addition, the program goal was to benefit teachers and funds used were to focus on the teacher certification and professional development but not on student performance. The Regional Counselors would provide teachers with a variety of credentialing options to fit their current situation, and in many cases, the program paid for the courses.

The program represented a significant shift in the responsibility of the LDE (code 3), as the state employees were now analyzing transcripts, suggesting credentialing options for teachers, and/or providing technical assistance to schools (code 31).

As noted above, non-public schools are eligible to participate in the LTQ program, allowing these teachers to receive funds for certification. While non-public private schools are not required to follow the highly qualified certification provisions, these schools are allowed to utilize LTQ funds for teacher professional development and credentialing.

Student Level Initiatives

Community Based Tutorial Program: Money Went to Vacant Lots

The Community Based Tutorial Program (CBTP) was created in 1985 as the Church-Based Tutorial Program. The program provides funds for teachers and supplies to offer after-school and summer tutoring programs. As the original name states, these tutoring programs were primarily located at faith-based facilities throughout Louisiana. The original allocation was \$100,000 that included funding five positions. Over the years, the program has grown to average of over \$2 million per year, servicing 115 sites and 3,000 students. CBTP has been funded for the past 23 years (LDE, 2008h).

According to interviewees, the program was pushed through by local legislators as a line-item program. Although CBTP was always available to non-church affiliated organizations, the majority of programs were offered in churches. In the beginning, there was little oversight of the program and many payments were sent to vacant lots, according to two interview participants. When Cecil Picard became superintendent, guidelines and oversight procedures were put into place. There was also an attempt to attract certified teachers to the programs, although that effort was not always successful.

Two documents were located which discussed the CSTP. Two codes were relevant to the program, but they appeared in both documents. The CBTP was found to be a significant shift in the role and/or responsibility of the school community (code 3), as volunteers working in faith-

based or community-based programs were authorized to provide tutoring for students. The program was also found to be a supportive rather than a punitive model of improvement (code 24). The program was allocated at least \$18.6 million dollars during the study period, although the allocation amount for 2002-2003 could not be determined.

Table 6.8
Annual Allocations for the Community Based Tutorial Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	\$2.7 m
1998-1999	\$2.7 m
1999-2000	\$2.6 m
2000-2001	\$2.3 m
2001-2002	\$2.3 m
2002-2003	\$2.2 m ^a
2003-2004	\$2.1 m
2004-2005	\$2.1 m
TOTAL	\$19.0 m

NOTE: ^aAllocations for the 2002-2003 could not be determined from the same sources that provided allocation information in the other years. Email correspondence from the LDE staff member currently in charge of this program included, “Those files have been archived. If you look at the year before and the year after maybe there was no change in the funding amount for 2002/2003 fiscal year” (P. Fisher, personal communication). For purposes of this chart, the allocations for 2002-2003 have been averaged.

Source: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

The Community Based Tutorial Program exists aside from NCLB mandates. Although the language of the program tracks that of NCLB, the CBTP program is funded separately.

Remediation: Supplemental Instruction to Achieve Proficiency

According to the LDE website, the purpose of supplemental remedial instruction is to assist students, including identified students with disabilities, to overcome their educational deficits so that they may be successful in achieving required proficiency levels on the spring or summer administrations of the LEAP tests, or to increase their scores above the Unsatisfactory achievement level on the Graduation Exit Exam (GEE). (LDE, 2008e) Additionally, beyond the goal of achievement in grade appropriate skills, additional goals of this initiative are to give

students a sense of success, prevent their alienation from school, and prevent their early departure from school (La. R.S. 17: 395(B), 2008).

The purpose of all of the programs included in this study was to decrease the number of students scoring at the “Unsatisfactory” achievement level on LEAP 21 by providing intense and focused instruction in English/language arts and/or mathematics (BESE, 2001).

The purpose of the High Stakes Remediation Program is to provide summer instruction for students who have failed the LEAP 21 English or Math test. The purpose of the LEAP 21 Tutoring Program is to provide intervention for students who are at risk of failing the tests; instruction is provided in a small-group setting. (BESE, 2001)

Table 6.9
Annual Allocations for the Remediation Program

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	n/a
1998-1999	\$2.0 m
1999-2000	\$7.4 m
2000-2001	\$11.6 m
2001-2002	\$20.3 m
2002-2003	\$20.0 m
2003-2004	\$21.0 m
2004-2005	\$21.0 m
TOTAL	\$103.3 m

Source: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

State Testing and Accountability: Holding Everybody’s Feet to the Fire

One program that underwent the most change during this study period is Louisiana’s accountability system. Statements produced by the LDE and BESE are at odds with what occurs in many classrooms. Prior to the institution of high-stakes testing, BESE materials state that the purpose of the testing system is “to provide reliable and valid student assessment data as a measure of student accountability” (BESE, 2000, p.16). The purpose then changed “to measure

school performance over four indicators and to provide incentives for change at the local level” (BESE, 2001, p.14). One interviewee stated the purpose of the testing system was that “We have to be doing something to hold everybody’s feet to the fire and seeing what these kids know.”

Table 6.10
Annual Allocations for the School and District Accountability System

Year	Amount Allocated
1997-1998	\$2.4 m
1998-1999	\$5.7 m
1999-2000	\$8.0 m
2000-2001	\$14.8 m
2001-2002	\$29.2 m
2002-2003	\$19.6 m
2003-2004	\$21.0 m
2004-2005	\$23.9 m
TOTAL	\$124.6 m

Source: Appropriations Bills; BESE Annual & Financial Reports

According to an interviewee, the amount spent annually for the assessment component of the Louisiana’s accountability system ranges from \$5-\$7 million per year. This figure includes costs associated with the implementation of the exams, the ongoing development of new items and forms of the assessments, and the scoring of the assessments. The CRT component of the assessment, the LEAP and iLEAP, are scored in Maple Grove, Minnesota (Participant Interview). Several interviewees revealed that, in addition to scoring procedures, the LDE established data verification procedures and erasure analysis processes conducted to ensure the validity of the test scores. One participant noted that these verification and analysis procedures were implemented when the tests became high-stakes for students and schools. During the exam week, the LDE selects random schools to monitor and sends members of the Regional Education Service Centers and the Department of Assessment and Accountability staff to oversee test administration at the selected schools. In addition to the costs noted above, costs associated with

travel to school sites for monitoring, as well as work time redirected from other issues due to monitoring, are additional costs that were not able to be quantified in this study.

Several initiatives fall under the heading of accountability. Although the most well known initiative is the testing program, several other initiatives were funded through accountability dollars and are discussed next.

Accountability Commission

Although Act 478 required the creation of the School and District Accountability Commission with the sole charge of researching and creating a state accountability system to be adopted by BESE, the Commission remained in place for many years following adoption of the system in 1997. In fact, the Commission met monthly to discuss program happenings and make any necessary revisions to the accountability system. According to interviewees, Commission members remained as authorized in the law, but after the accountability system was in place, attendance at meetings was often low. The researcher was not able to determine the exact costs of the accountability commission, but the state incurred great cost in having the 27 members meeting once per month for several years following the initial establishment of the accountability system. Travel costs and lost work time for Commission members to continuously meet must be great. One interviewee reported that the Accountability Commission still meets, ten years after their initial legislated charge. The section of the accountability law has since been changed to repeal §D, the part of the law that established the Commission. Although this does not make the Commission illegal, it signals that the Commission will likely remain an important feature in the accountability movement.

The Accountability Commission was initially charged with researching accountability and offering recommendations to BESE. Beyond that duty, recommendations from the LDE on

policies and issues associated with accountability and testing first went to the Accountability Commission for input. According to interviewees, changes relating to the Distinguished Educators, for instance, were first brought to the Accountability Commission before being forwarded to BESE. When No Child Left Behind was passed in 2001, the changes necessary to make Louisiana's system compliant went to the Accountability Commission for approval. The Commission then made recommendations to BESE for adoption. Interviewees held different views about the roles and actions of the Commission and BESE. One interviewee stated that decisions were made by the Commission instead of BESE, the state's formal policymaking body, while another interviewee declared that the Commission made no decisions, but rather made recommendations that were presented to BESE for enactment. As another interviewee described it, many of the decisions were technical in nature, such as confidence interval sizes. In such instances, the LDE staff developed various examples and presented them to the Commission. The Commission, in turn, would ask questions of the LDE staff and the staff would devise new analyses and models and present them at the next Commission meeting.

District Dialogues

District Dialogues were meetings between a particular school district, staff of the LDE, and a committee in place to dialogue with the district. According to interviewees, districts would prepare a presentation describing activities that they were conducting, and the LDE would present its version of district happenings. One interview participant noted that the District Dialogues were the pet project of then-BESE member and current State Superintendent, Paul Pastorek.

Districts that were in jeopardy of having some or all of its schools enter into corrective actions were called to a meeting with an additional commission, composed of legislators, not

necessarily from the school district's area, BESE members, and business members to discuss school progress. LDE staff and BESE members would recommend that the districts utilize existing programs, such as LINCS, as a means to address some of the schools' deficiencies.

District Assistance Teams/ Accountability System

District Assistance Teams (DAT) are an external team of trained personnel which assists schools in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of school improvement programs (LDE, 2008b). Interviewees reported that the DAT process maintained its sustainability in the school districts as districts seemed to value the monitoring and feedback. According to the LDE employees interviewed, most school districts felt the process provided valuable feedback and information for school improvement. The DAT process varied from district to district, often with a different name for the process in different districts. The program was flexible enough that the process adopted in Ascension Parish, a suburban district near Baton Rouge, did not have to match the process adopted by Jefferson parish, a suburban district near New Orleans. School districts were able to structure the DAT process to meet their specific needs.

Summary

This chapter served to provide an in-depth look at the nine major school improvement programs that existed during the study period of 1997-2005. Based on information examined in state documents and obtained through interviews with current and former LDE employees, profiles of each program were developed. Content analysis techniques were employed to provide descriptors that match the components of the Louisiana accountability system. Each of the nine programs was examined to determine the extent of congruence with the accountability components and expressed in various state department documents. State allocation information was also provided in this chapter and included by program and year.

Table 6.11
Comparison of School Improvement Initiatives

State Initiative	Intent	Goals	Year Implemented	Year Ended	Allocations ^a
CBTP	Supplement remedial instruction	achievement in grade appropriate skills	1985	n/a	\$19.0 m
DE	Act as a change agent to assist failing schools	creatively and assertively assist struggling schools in reaching and surpassing their Growth Targets under the Accountability System	1999	n/a	\$20.5 m
K3	Enhance quality reading instruction in the state	Improve the reading and mathematics achievement of K-3 students through improvements in instruction	1997	n/a	\$139.6 m
LaTAAP	Formally assess new teachers in the first two years before issuing a permanent license	improvement of teaching and learning and ensuring that teachers certified in Louisiana are able to effectively provide instruction	1994	n/a	\$29.1 m
LINCS	Provide job-embedded professional development for teachers	improve teachers' content knowledge	2000	2008	\$6.9 m
LTQ	Increase the number of certified/ Highly Qualified teachers	Ensure credentialed teachers	2002	n/a	\$9.9 m
RESC	Provide technical support and professional development to schools and districts	Increase efficiency and coordination in a regional center	1988	n/a	\$37.1 m
Rem	Deliver supplemental remedial instruction based on pupil progression plans	achievement in grade appropriate skills based on state test data, improve students' sense of success, prevent alienation from school, and prevent early departure from school	1980	n/a	\$103.3 m
Test	Establish the state's goals for schools and students, communicate to the public regarding performance, recognize schools for good performance, and focus attention, energy, and resources to improve student achievement	Schools demonstrate continuous growth, improvement in student learning	1977	n/a	\$124.6 m

Note: ^aAllocations provided cover the study period only, 1997-2005.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the efforts of many conscientious educators, Louisiana's students rank near the bottom when compared to students in other states on nearly every measure of test scores, dropout rates, college remediation rates, and employability...Clearly, the public demands that student learning improve.

-Louisiana District and School Accountability Advisory Commission (1998, p.1)

Summary of the Study

This study sought to identify major school improvement initiatives in Louisiana during the period of 1997 to 2005. Specifically, the initiatives studied were analyzed to determine the intent, goals, longevity, and expenditures per selected initiative. The criteria used to identify each initiative included: state funding that averaged at least \$2 million per year; programs that affected teachers and students for school improvement purposes; and, programs that remained in place for at least two school years. The study ultimately yielded nine programs that met all of the above listed criteria. These initiatives in alphabetical order are Community Based Tutorial Program; Distinguished Educators; K-3 Reading and Math Initiative; Louisiana Teacher Assessment & Assistance Program; Learning Intensive Networking Communities for Success; Local Teacher Quality; Regional Education Service Centers; Remediation; and, State Testing/Accountability (i.e., LEAP, *i*LEAP, and GEE).

To construct a history of the initiatives profiled in chapter 6, a content analysis was conducted on state documents containing information about the programs. Data were also obtained through interviews with current and former Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) employees who had knowledge of the initiatives. In this way source triangulation was provided. Data from the document analysis and the interviews revealed four issues relevant to the state's policymaking efforts in the school improvement arena: a positive orientation to school

improvement was not realized in implementation; conflicts with the LDE erupted over turf; program instability stymied effects; and, the lack of a shared mission also stymied effects. This chapter offers several recommendations addressing these issues to policy makers in Louisiana and concludes with recommendations for future research.

Of the nine initiatives studied, seven were initiated prior to 1997. Several were renamed (e.g., the Teacher Assessment Program became the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program, LaTAAP) while others morphed into the version examined during this study (e.g., Teacher Tuition Exemption morphed into the Local Teacher Quality program, LTQ). Three of the initiatives remained largely the same from their original implementation: the Community Based Tutorial Program, Regional Education Service Centers, and Remediation. Two of the initiatives began at approximately the same time as the implementation of Act 478: Distinguished Educators, created as part of the accountability program, and the K-3 Reading and Math Initiative, enacted during the same legislative session that Act 478 was enacted.

Initially, the researcher assumed that the passage of Act 478 in 1997 was the impetus for the various state school improvement initiatives implemented in Louisiana during this study period. Through the content analysis and interviews, this assumption proved unfounded. The development and implementation of several initiatives included in the study actually began several years prior and may be linked to the leadership of former state Superintendent Cecil Picard. According to several interviewees, prior to Superintendent Picard's tenure, the LDE suffered from lax administrative oversight and direction. The state allocated money with little accountability for how the monies were spent. Further, many of the programs when initially implemented did not specifically target improving student outcomes. For example, the Teacher Assessment Program was a state developed and implemented evaluation of teachers that replaced

district developed evaluation procedures. The implicit intent of the program was to improve student learning by identifying and dismissing incompetent teachers.

Patton (2002) notes that interpretation of data involves attaching significance and making sense of findings. Schlecty and Noblit (in Patton, 2002) further state that “an interpretation may take one of three forms: making the obvious obvious; making the obvious dubious; and, making the hidden obvious” (p. 480). Responses from the interviews conducted in this study make the “obvious obvious.” LDE officials expressed common sentiments that formed the basis of the following recommendations.

Recommendations to State Policymakers

Provide Improvement Initiatives That Are Responsive to Local Needs

In various instances, schools and districts were mandated to participate in improvement initiatives that were inconsistent with local needs and/or the local culture, according to some participants. Several participants also stated during interviews that not every school could benefit from the mandated initiatives. When mismatches occurred, much effort was expended to garner teacher buy-in for the initiative before professional development could be devoted to improving teaching and learning.

One way to overcome the obstacle of local buy-in is to offer a package of improvement initiatives from which schools and districts could choose. Although low-performing schools could be required to select an initiative for implementation, having the option to select from among several initiatives could eliminate resistance from the professional staff and enable the school to move more quickly in the direction of school improvement. While no formal evaluations have been conducted of the initiatives Louisiana provided, several initiatives were perceived as more successful than others by interviewees. Initiatives perceived as least effective

by the interviewees were those that were forced on schools. For example, schools were not given a choice about receiving a Distinguished Educator and were often highly resistant to their presence on campus. Conversely, initiatives perceived by the interviewees as more successful, such as LINCS, were not mandatory. Because schools and districts elected to implement these programs, there was greater likelihood of buy-in by school administrators and faculty. Allowing choice among initiatives could also ameliorate some of the conflict over turf, as local schools and districts would have more ownership over their decisions.

Another recommendation stemming from this study is to use existing state resources to build capacity at the school and district levels. According to several LDE personnel who were interviewed, the state initiative that provided the most value to schools was the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs). This program brought an arm of the LDE directly to the schools. Multiple interviewees pointed to successful interactions between the RESCs and both school and district level personnel. With eight locations spread throughout the state, policy initiatives created in Baton Rouge reached classrooms in cities and in rural areas with relative ease. LDE participants emphasized the importance of being able to work directly with schools and districts as influential in the success of some initiatives. Not only are the RESC staff able to cultivate trusting relationships with local school personnel, but they also provide a local face for the LDE.

As mentioned, there was a perceived disconnect between the LDE and the individual schools and districts which often caused ill feelings toward the LDE. Some participants suggested that these feelings accrued from the decrease in autonomy formerly enjoyed by school districts. This autonomy was lost a result of state mandated improvement initiatives. Here again the RESC can serve a useful purpose by blunting the sense of lost autonomy among districts.

Expanding the role of the RESC as a communication conduit could provide a solution to several of the issues that surfaced in this study, including increasing the sense of a shared mission and keeping state level decision makers in touch with school and district level implementers.

A third recommendation is to combine the Distinguished Educators and District Assistance Teams initiatives to provide bottom-up/ top-down assistance to schools and districts. The LDE thoughtfully created mechanisms to build capacity among school and district personnel. In addition to RESC staff discussed above, DEs provide support to individual schools, while District Assistance Teams (DATs) are a vehicle to assist troubled school districts. Like the DEs, DATs are external change agents who come from local universities and central office staff members or retired educators to assist schools in Corrective Actions. The work of DATs can be redefined as collaborative with the DEs so that assistance provided at a district level is congruent with that which the DEs provide at the school level. By establishing this collaborative relationship, district personnel can build the necessary capacity to work effectively in assisting struggling schools, as was suggested by one interviewee. The DAT can foster ownership of the schools by the school districts and increase buy-in among school and district personnel. The DATs and DEs within a district should share a vision about how to improve capacity at the district and school levels, enabling district administrators to assist improvement initiatives at the school level. If DATs and DEs work collaboratively to discuss obstacles to school and district improvement and develop a coherent plan to facilitate improvement at both levels.

By establishing collaborative working relationships between the DEs and the DATs, a coherent plan for school and district improvement becomes possible. DEs who work intensely with low performing schools were effective in some schools, according to several participants.

Several interviewees noted that the most successful schools were those that accepted the recommendations of the DEs and worked to implement the changes.

Improve Professional Development Opportunities

Improved professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff was mentioned by several interview participants as a suggestion for improving Louisiana schools. Specifically, professional learning communities were mentioned in several interviews, ironically the cornerstone of the discontinued LINC program.

As suggested above, providing schools with options to choose improvement programs may support buy-in at the local levels. The same holds for professional development learning opportunities. Schools should have the ability to structure their needs based upon local student needs. Several interviewees specifically pointed to the use of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for this recommendation. As currently used, the SIP contains student achievement data and a plan for improving student test scores. Structuring the activities around the teachers' needs and allowing them to take ownership of their school's SIP increases the level of professionalism teachers are owed.

As explained by one interviewee, the SIP is often viewed as a cumbersome process. An additional recommendation to the state would be to invest in technology to assist with the SIP process. Technology could be provided to complete the more tedious tasks of filling in student achievement data and growth targets. Since the state already has access to this information, it could easily provide this data in the SIP form to schools to facilitate writing the plan. Cutting down on this time will increase the amount of time allotted to crafting school improvement strategies designed to increase student achievement. Assisting schools in this process will allow additional time to focus time and energy implementing the plan's strategies.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations for Future Research

This study served as an exploratory examination of school improvement initiatives in Louisiana. During the course of the study, several questions emerged that were unable to be answered given the parameters of the study. The most troubling and persistent question is “why?” Why did the LDE so often encourage changes in initiatives without first offering the requisite support to foster successful implementation and then giving the initiatives time to have an effect? The school change literature is replete with reminders that substantial school change takes a number of years to become institutionalized (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1990; Louis, 2006). When an improvement initiative is changed midstream, teachers become skeptical and revert to traditional ways of teaching behind the closed door of the classroom (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1990). Future research might examine what political pressures, internal and external to the LDE, led to changes in initiatives before an effect could be empirically determined.

Another ‘why’ issue is, Why were there such pervasive issues over turf? Why did these issues fester unresolved? Conflict resolution is among skills teachers and administrators are taught through a number of school improvement models. Why did the LDE fail to employ these skills to resolve turf tensions so that state initiatives could be implemented more effectively at the school and district levels? This issue also warrants study in future research.

Finally, a ‘why’ question not answered by this study is, Why is there such a perceived disconnect between the LDE and the schools receiving assistance through LDE improvement initiatives? In 1990, Senge published his groundbreaking book on learning organizations in which he describes “systems thinking [as] the fifth discipline” (p. 12). The teachings of this book were available during the study period, but were not put into practice to heal the rift between schools and districts and the LDE, a rift that was described by several of the LDE personnel

interviewed for this study. Although it cannot be stated with assurance, it is likely that the disconnect between the LDE and the schools and districts is related to the turf issues mentioned above. An attitudinal study of perceptions held by personnel in schools, districts, and the LDE may uncover the source of disconnect and suggest strategies for healing the rift.

The study identified major school improvement initiatives and the amount of state funds allocated toward each during the eight-year study period, but did not explore the effects of these initiatives on student achievement. As stated above, approximately 35% of the total state appropriations in Fiscal Year 2004-2005 went toward education (Louisiana House of Representatives, 2004). To craft useful recommendations for state policymakers, further study into the effectiveness of the nine identified programs is needed. An additional study interviewing state policymakers in the legislature and/or BESE would further explore these initiatives and the political machinations that may have had an impact on the eight included initiatives and the Regional Education Service Centers.

This study was designed to examine documents related to major state school improvement initiatives in Louisiana. Interviews conducted with LDE personnel yielded a richer description of the initiatives than was available through document analysis alone. Serendipitously, the interviews uncovered perceptions about machinations within the LDE that likely had an impact on the effectiveness of the initiatives. Not included in this study by design are the voices of school and district personnel. A qualitative study that gives voice to these individuals, that is, to those greatly affected by state improvement initiatives, might reveal additional issues associated with implementation of not only the nine initiatives analyzed in the present study but also other initiatives that were not selected for analysis. Such a study could provide an increased understanding of reasons that Louisiana remains at or near the bottom in

educational achievement despite the many initiatives and state allocations directed toward school improvement.

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APPENDIX A. COMPONENTS OF THE LOUISIANA ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM, PRE- AND POST- *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND*

Component		Pre-NCLB	Post-NCLB		
Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards		Created standards and benchmarks for grade level groupings: K-4; 5-8; 9-12	Promulgated Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) for grades PreK-12 in language arts, math, science, and social studies		
Comprehensive Assessment Program		Administered the ITBS, a NRT, to grades 3,5,7, and 9	Administered the ITBS, a NRT, to grades 3,5,7, and 9; in 2006, the exam switched to the iLEAP, a criterion-referenced test (CRT)		
		Administered the LEAP, a high-stakes, CRT to grades 4 and 8	Administered the LEAP, a high-stakes CRT, to grades 4 and 8		
		Administered the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE), a high-stakes CRT to 11th graders	Administered the Graduate Exit Exam (GEE), a high-stakes CRT, to 11th graders		
School Performance Monitoring and Reporting	Factors	Assigned a School Performance Score (SPS) to public schools, based upon a weighted formula that included student test scores, attendance, and dropout rate	Assigned a School Performance Score (SPS) to public schools, based upon a weighted formula that included student test scores, attendance, and dropout rate. Also required disaggregation of score by subgroup to include performance by the school's low income, minority, or disabled students to calculate whether Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was attained		
	Performance Labels	School of Academic Excellence	150.0 or Above	Five Stars	140.0 or Above
		School of Academic Distinction	125.0 – 149.9	Four Stars	120.0 – 139.9
		School of Academic Achievement	100.0 – 124.9	Three Stars	100.0 – 119.9
		Academically Above the State Average	State Average – 99.9	Two Stars	80.0 – 99.9
		Academically Below the State Average	30.1 – just below the state average	One Star	60.0 – 79.9
		Academically Unacceptable School	30.0 or below	Academic Warning	45.0 – 59.9
				Academically Unacceptable	Below 45.0
Growth Labels	Exemplary Academic Growth	School exceeded its Growth Target by 5.0 points or more	Exemplary Academic Growth	School attained its Growth Target; all subgroups gained at least 2.0 points; and the school was not in School Improvement (SI)	

		Recognized Academic Growth	School met or exceeded its Growth Target by fewer than 5.0 points	Recognized Academic Growth	School attained its Growth Target; at least one subgroup did not gain at least 2.0 points; and/or the school is in SI
		Minimal Academic Growth	School improved, but did not meet its Growth Target	Minimal Academic Growth	School improved, but did not meet its Growth Target
		No Growth	Change in SPS was 0 to minus 5.0 points	No Growth	Change in SPS was 0 to minus 2.5 points
		School in Decline	School declined in SPS of more than minus 5.0 points	School in Decline	School declined in SPS of more than minus 2.5 points
Corrective Actions	Level I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School worked with a District Assistance Team utilizing the School Analysis Model (SAM) to identify needs, redevelop School Improvement Plan, and examine use of school resources Reported quarterly to LDE to describe implementation of the School Improvement Plan Annual evaluation of the level of implementation of the School Improvement Plan is required 	SI 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Assistance Team revised School Improvement Plan 	
			SI 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Choice- Parents had the right to transfer their children to a higher performing schools <u>not</u> under a judicial mandate to desegregate Scholastic Audit required in Year One 	
	Level II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDE assigned a Distinguished Educator (DE) to the school as an advisor to help the school improve student achievement DE reported school improvement recommendations to the school district which was required to respond to the recommendations School choice- Parents had the right to transfer their children to a higher performing schools <u>not</u> under a judicial mandate to desegregate 	SI 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplemental Education Services (SES) required Schools assigned a Distinguished Educator (DE) Scholastic Audit required in Year Two 	
			SI 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add from Corrective Action List Developed a Reconstitution Plan (Eligible for DE Partnership) 	
	Level III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DE continued as an advisor; parents may continue to transfer students School choice- School district had to submit a Reconstitution Plan to BESE by spring of first year at this level If Reconstitution Plan was approved and achievement did not improve by end of first year, school had to follow a Reconstitution Plan 	SI 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented a Reconstitution Plan or lost School Approval Developed Alternate Governance Plan Developed Reconstitution “Light” Plan- substantial school reform aimed at increasing the academic performance of low achieving subgroups 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Reconstitution Plan was not approved and school did not meet its required minimum growth, the school lost State funding and State-approved status. 	SI 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate Governance Implemented Reconstitution "Light"
Recognition and Rewards		School received "Exemplary Academic Growth" and was awarded \$28 per student (min \$5,000); school received "Recognized Academic Growth" and was awarded \$18 per student (min \$2,500)		School received "Exemplary Academic Growth" and was awarded \$15.25 per student (min \$4,000); school received "Recognized Academic Growth" and was awarded \$10.19 per student (min \$2,000)

APPENDIX B
CODE BOOK

Program Title: _____
Analyst: _____
Date: _____

Purpose: To determine how specific school improvement initiatives and programs, enacted by the Louisiana Legislature and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, during the period following the enactment of the 1997 School and District Accountability Act, compare in terms of the stated purpose, expenditures, and longevity.

Manifest Question: What major education school improvement initiatives and programs were in place in Louisiana during the period of 1997-2005?

Latent Question: How do these school improvement initiatives and programs compare in terms of stated purpose, expenditures, and longevity?

Operational Definitions: Major state school improvement initiatives and programs are operationally defined to include: (1) Programs that averaged at least \$2 million per year in state expenditure; (2) Programs that affected teachers, students, and the teaching and learning environment; and, (3) Programs that remained in place for at least two school years.

State expenditure is defined as sources derived from State General Funds (SGF) or the Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund, known as 8(g) funds.

Several a priori codes were developed based upon language from Act 478, the Louisiana School and District Accountability Act, the Louisiana School and District Accountability Commission's report to BESE, and the five components of the accountability program articulated by the Louisiana Department of Education in the *State Education Progress Report*. The codes are organized around the five components of the Louisiana accountability system promulgated by BESE. Each is operationally defined as follows. The component "**Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards**" comprises any aspect that affects classroom

instruction. The component “**Assessment Program**” consists of all aspects of accountability that refer to testing. This component may refer to the assessment of students, teachers, schools, school districts, school boards, and/or a state level entity. The “**School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting**” component consists of programs that support the evaluation of a school and report the findings to another educational agency or to the public in general. “**Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts**” refers to programs that provide additional resources or support for schools based on accountability scores. It consists of any measure taken to make corrective improvements at the school or district level. The component “**Recognition and Rewards**” consists of programs designed to promote and reward successful schools based on accountability standards.

To be completed for each program.

PART ONE: To be completed by the primary researcher

Step 1: Read the document to identify school improvement policies or programs.

Step 2: Determine if the state program meets the criteria outlined in the operational definition. To do so, read the document for specific information about the proposed program. If the three criteria are identified, place the documentation information in the appropriately marked boxes under the given criterion. Multiple documents may be used to determine if the program meets the study’s criteria.

Step 3: Satisfaction of the three components of the operational definition deems the program eligible for further study. If any component of the definition cannot be verified, stop. This program will not be included in the study.

Step 4: Each program will be profiled on a separate coding sheet. To begin coding information for a new program, use a new coding sheet.

PART TWO: To be completed by all researchers

Step 1: Provide the program name and name of the analyst at the top of the coding sheet. Only include information for one program on an individual coding sheet. In the top row of boxes, complete the information for each document used. In the first column, provide the document's number. The document's number will be found beginning on page 4 of this code book. Each column represents the information included about the particular program from that document. Use only one column per document. If you find a second document that discusses the program, use the second column and remember to include the document's number.

Step 2: As a particular code is met, write the page number or numbers where it is discussed in the document in the box on the appropriate row.

Step 3: If information is given about the purpose of a program, the analyst will discuss and support with document page numbers his or her interpretation of the purpose. This information is to be recorded in the appropriate spaces in the chart provided on page 5 of the Code Sheet.

Step4: Any code that emerges from a document not already included on the coding sheet should be added as a code in the appropriate category with full documentation (appropriate page numbers).

Refer to the operational definitions listed above for a description of each component.

Document Numbers to be used for PART TWO of the Coding Sheet

Document Number	Title
	Author: Louisiana Department of Education
1	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 1996-1997
2	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 1997-1998
3	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 1998-1999
4	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 1999-2000
5	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 2000-2001
6	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 2001-2002
7	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 2002-2003
8	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 2003-2004
9	Annual Financial and Statistical Reports, 2004-2005
10	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 1997-1998
11	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 1998-1999
12	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 1999-2000
13	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 2000-2001
14	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 2001-2002
15	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 2002-2003
16	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 2003-2004
17	Louisiana Progress Profiles State Report, 2004-2005
20	MFP Handbook 2002-2003
21	MFP Handbook 2003-2004
22	MFP Handbook 2004-2005
23	MFP Accountability Report
31	Budget Letter 1999-2000
32	Budget Letter 2000-2001
33	Budget Letter 2001-2002
34	Budget Letter 2002-2003
35	Budget Letter 2003-2004
36	Budget Letter 2004-2005
40	Louisiana Plan for Highly Qualified Teachers
41	A Guide to the Louisiana Department of Education
42	Louisiana Department of Education website-Distinguished Educators
42B	Louisiana Department of Education website- District Assistance Team
43	Louisiana Department of Education website- LINCS
44	Louisiana Department of Education website- Community Based Tutorial Program
45	Louisiana Department of Education website- LEAP Remediation
46	Louisiana Department of Education website- GEE Remediation
47	Louisiana Department of Education website- K-3 Reading & Math

- 48 Louisiana Department of Education website- School & District Accountability Commission
- 48B Louisiana Department of Education website-Standards, Assessment & Accountability
- 48C Louisiana Department of Education website- Division of Standards, Assessment & Accountability
- 48D Questions & Answers about the “Old” GEE
- 49 Louisiana Department of Education website- LaTAAP
- 49B LaTAAP Background Information

Author: Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

- 50 Annual Report, 1998-1999
- 51 Annual Report, 1999-2000
- 52 Annual Report, 2000-2001
- 53 Annual Report, 2001-2002
- 54 Annual Report, 2002-2003
- 55 Annual Report, 2003-2004
- 56 Annual Report, 2004-2005

- 60 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 1996-97
- 61 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 1997-98
- 62 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 1998-99
- 63 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 1999-2000
- 64 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 2000-01
- 65 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 2001-02
- 66 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 2002-03
- 67 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 2003-04
- 68 8(g) Annual Report & Program Results, 2004-05
- 69 2003-04 Report to the Committee on Education
- 69B 2002-03 Report to the Committee on Education

- 70 Bulletin 111: Louisiana School, District, and State Accountability
- 71 Bulletin 1943: Policies and Procedures: Louisiana Teacher Assistance & Assessment Program
- 72 Bulletin 1967: K-3 Reading & Math Initiative
- 73 Bulletin 1872: Extended School Year Program

Author: Louisiana Legislature

- 80 Appropriations Bills, 1996-1997
- 81 Appropriations Bills, 1997-1998
- 82 Appropriations Bills, 1998-1999
- 83 Appropriations Bills, 1999-2000
- 84 Appropriations Bills, 2000-2001
- 85 Appropriations Bills, 2001-2002
- 86 Appropriations Bills, 2002-2003

87	Appropriations Bills, 2003-2004
88	Appropriations Bills, 2004-2005
90	House Budget Fast Facts, 1998
91	House Budget Fast Facts, 1999
92	House Budget Fast Facts, 2000
93	House Budget Fast Facts, 2001
94	House Budget Fast Facts, 2002
95	House Budget Fast Facts, 2003
96	House Budget Fast Facts, 2004
97	House Budget Fast Facts, 2005
100	R.S. 17: 10.4 Distinguished Educators
101	R.S. 17: 394 Remedial Education
102	R.S. 17: 3781 Regional Education Service Centers
103	R.S. 17: 3891 LaTAAP
104	R.S. 17 :24.9 K-3 Reading & Math Initiative (Act 1441)
110	Major Fiscal Issues, revised February 1, 1999

APPENDIX C
CODE SHEET

Program Name: _____

Analyst: _____

PART ONE:

	State program averaged at least \$2 million per year in state expenditure	Affected teachers, students, and the teaching and learning environment	Those that remained in place for at least two school years	Total Years Funded
Document Name, Author, and Date of Publication:				
Page Number or Numbers:				

Program	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001
Dollars Allocated					
Dollars Expended					
Funding Source					

Program	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	TOTAL
Dollars Allocated					
Dollars Expended					
Funding Source					

Funding Source Key: SGF = State General Fund 8(g) = 8(g) Fund FED = Federal dollars

Notes:

Coding Sheet

Program Name: _____

Analyst: _____

Date: _____

PART TWO:

		Sources:	Document 1	Document 2	Document 3
		Act 478 , Commission Report, <i>State Education Progress Report</i>	Number _____	Number _____	Number _____
	Challenging Curriculum and Content Standards				
1	Provide clear standards for student learning (e.g., content standards/ benchmarks/ GLEs)	§10.1(A)(3) p. 2 p. A			
2	Content standards for students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and linguistically and culturally diverse students	p. A			
3	Significant shift in role and/or responsibility of BESE, LDE, school board, district, school, community	p. 2			
4	Greater flexibility for school districts to deliver education	p. 2			
5	Drive fundamental changes in classroom teaching and assessment	p. 1			
6	Demonstrate competency in certain foundational skills (e.g., communication, problem solving, resource access and utilization, linking and generating knowledge, and citizenship)	p. A			
6A	Provides teachers with professional development opportunities				
6B	Increases teachers' content knowledge				
6C	Increases the number of certified/ Highly Qualified teachers				

6D	Teacher demonstrates competency				
	Assessment Program				
8	Provide information to assist schools to focus on student achievement (e.g., school report cards)	§10.1(A)(4)			
9	Develops school accountability system which requires student achievement (e.g., CRTs, NRTs, LAA)	§10.1(A)(1)			
10	Provides an accountability component which supports student achievement (e.g., LEAP remediation, Options)	§10.1(A)(1)			
11	Accountability for each child (e.g., high-stakes testing)	p. 1			
12	Strengthens state testing system	p. 2 p. 7 p. A			
12 A	Assesses teacher performance				
	School and District Performance Monitoring and Reporting				
13	Provides assurance to citizens (e.g., Progress Reports)	§10.1(A)(2); p. 1			
14	Provides school report cards to principals, schools, parents	p. 1 §10.1(A)(2)			
15	Gathers feedback from all constituents to refine and improve aspects of accountability program	§10.1(D)(9)			
16	Provide information to assist school districts to focus on student achievement	§10.1(A)(4)			
17	Develops school district accountability system which requires student achievement	§10.1(A)(1)			
18	Develops school district accountability system which supports student achievement	§10.1(A)(1)			
19	Every school expected to show growth (e.g., AYP, Growth Labels)	p. 1 p. C			
20	Reviews progress for evaluating student achievement (e.g., GPS)	§10.1(B) p. B			

21	Assesses school effectiveness (e.g., Performance and Growth Labels)	§10.1(A)(3) p. C			
22	Assessment of school district effectiveness (e.g., District Accountability Reports, District Report Cards, DRI, DPS)	§10.1(B) §10.1(C) p. B, D			
	Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Districts				
23	Focuses resources to schools, districts, and students designed to improve student achievement	pp. 1, 3 p. E			
24	Supportive rather than punitive model of improvement	p. 2			
25	Intensity of assistance increases if schools fail to show adequate growth (e.g., levels of Corrective Actions)	p. 3 p. E			
26	Trained officials work in an advisory capacity to improve student achievement (e.g., Distinguished Educators)	p. 3 p. E			
27	Parents have right to transfer students to higher performing public school	p. 4			
28	Provide training for school improvement teams (e.g., DAT)	p. 12			
29	Redirect existing state resources to help schools implement improvement plans	p. 12			
30	Provide additional state improvement funds (e.g., School and District Accountability Fund)	p. 12 §10.3(A); (C)			
31	Provides technical assistance to schools or districts	§10.1(B) §10.3(C)			
32	Each student receives a minimum foundation of education	§10.1 (A)(2)			
33	Holds schools accountable for results (e.g., Corrective Actions; Reconstitution Plan, loss of state funding, Parental right to transfer child; Performance and Growth Labels)	pp. 2, 3, 12 p. C, E §10.1(A)(2)			

34	Holds school districts accountable for results (e.g., DRI labels, operational audit, BESE action)	p. 2 p. E			
34 A	Holds teachers accountable for failing performance				
	Recognition and Rewards				
35	Recognize schools for their effectiveness in demonstrating growth in student achievement	p. 1 p. F			

Sources: Louisiana School and District Accountability Act (1997)
Louisiana District and School Accountability Advisory Commission.
(1998, March 18). *Recommendations for Louisiana's Public Education Accountability System.*

PART TWO, STEP THREE:

Program Name	Stated Purpose	Goals/ Objectives
Document Number(s)		
Document Page Number(s)		

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Preliminary Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

Belinda M. Cambre & Jonathon A. Szymanski

Summer 2008

Interviewee: _____

Interview Date: _____

1. What years were you employed by the LDE/served as a BESE member/official?
2. What state funded school improvement initiatives were implemented while you were with the LDE/BESE?
3. (If you were at the LDE/BESE prior to 1997) How did your assigned position change after implementation of the 1997 School and District Accountability Act, if at all?
4. What specific LDE/BESE school improvement programs did you help establish, help implement, and/or help oversee?
5. We're interested in your perceptions about these programs. Let's talk about (name a specific program) first. What were the state's expectations about how that program would improve student achievement?
 - a. PROBE: Were those expectations achieved?
 - b. PROBE: Why do you say that?
 - c. PROBE for all programs the interviewee mentions
6. (For each program) What were the funding sources for that program?
 - a. PROBE for all programs
7. One of the things we're interested in is the funding sources for these programs. Can you tell us where could we find all of the state's allocations for (name a program) program?
 - a. PROBE for all programs

8. (If needed) Where would we find other funding information, other than the sources you've named? In particular, can you help use locate money spent on public relations used to promote the accountability program?
9. We've looked at the actual legislation, LDE/BESE reports, and (whatever other resources we have examined). What other publicly available documents do you suggest that we examine?
10. In your opinion, how was student achievement impacted by the (name specific programs until you have probed all programs the interviewee mentioned)?
11. Overall, what are your thoughts about Louisiana's initiatives to improve student achievement since the implementation of the 1997 School and District Accountability Act?
 - a. PROBE for specific program if needed
12. If you were given the responsibility of revamping Louisiana's school improvement initiatives right now, what would you do?
 - a. What benefits do you anticipate would result from those changes?
 - b. What funding sources would support those changes?
13. What else should we know about the state's school improvement initiatives since 1997 that we haven't asked?

APPENDIX E
INITIAL INITIATIVE DISCOVERY

Source: LDE (2003). *A Guide to the Louisiana Department of Education*. Baton Rouge: Author.

Program Name	Decision
LINCS	Included in the study
Teacher Leader Institutes	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Local Teacher Quality Program	Included in the study
LA Principal Induction Program	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Alternate Certification Program	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Nat'l Board Certification	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
LA FIRST	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
LA Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program ^a	Included in the study
Local Personnel Evaluation	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
LA Virtual School	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Algebra One Online	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
K-12 Online Database Research	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Remedial Education	Included in the study
LA School & Dist. Acct. System	Included in the study
Distinguished Educators	Included in the study
K-3 Reading & Math Initiative	Included in the study
Multisensory Structured Language	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
8(g) Superior Textbook Program	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Education Excellence Fund ^b	
Home School Program	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Nonpublic Annual School R.	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Extended School Year program	Excluded: Did not meet funding requirement
Community Based Tutorial	Included in the study
Motorcycle Safety	Excluded: Did not affect the teaching and learning environment
Pupil Transportation	Excluded: Did not affect the teaching and learning environment

Notes: ^aThe *Guide* includes this program separately, as the Teacher Assistance Program and the Teacher Assessment Program ^bThis program was excluded for inconsistent treatment in documents

APPENDIX F
INITIAL REQUEST FOR INTERVIEWS

Dear

My name is Belinda Cambre and I am working on my dissertation (under the direction of Dr. Dianne Taylor) in Educational Leadership at LSU.

The purpose of my dissertation is to identify major state school improvement reform programs that were in place between 1997, following implementation of the School and District Accountability Act, through 2005. I am defining major state programs as those that cost an average of \$2 million per year in state dollars, were in place at least two calendar years, and affected the teaching and learning environment.

The programs that I have identified are:

- Community Based Tutorial Program
- Distinguished Educators
- K-3 Reading and Math Initiative
- LaTAAP
- LINC
- Local Teacher Quality
- Regional Education Service Centers
- Remediation
- State Testing/ Accountability

I have completed a content analysis of state documents on these programs to determine the goals, purpose, and longevity of each. The second phase of my dissertation is to conduct interviews with former and current LDE and BESE officials to gain additional information and complete my analysis.

Because of your experiences with the LDE, you have been suggested as a person with tremendous institutional knowledge about at least one of the above mentioned programs.

I am writing to request your participation in a short interview. I will be asking for your assistance in identifying any information about the program's goals, objectives, intent, and purposes. I am also trying to determine an exact dollar amount expended for each program. I have been able to track allocations, but have had difficulty finding actual expenditures. Any help in that area (including names of personnel I may try to ask) would be greatly appreciated.

I would appreciate any information you could provide for any of the programs listed above, as well as any other programs you think I may have excluded.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in an interview. You can reach me through email, or at home (225)647-8049. I appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you for your help.

APPENDIX G
CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

Study Title: When Money Doesn't Matter: An Examination of Louisiana Educational School Improvement Policy Decisions and Fiscal Expenditures Following the Implementation of the 1997 Louisiana School and District Accountability Act

Performance Site: Documents will be retrieved from the publicly-accessible electronic websites of the Louisiana Department of Education (<http://www.louisianaschools.org>) and the Louisiana legislature (<http://www.legis.state.la.us>). Documents not retrieved from the websites will be accessed from state libraries, including the Louisiana State Library and the Louisiana State University libraries, including the law school's library.

Interviews will be held at sites convenient for the subjects and include, but are not limited to, meeting rooms at Louisiana State University Peabody Hall, participants' homes, and participants' office at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE).

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8:00 – 4:30p.m.
Belinda M. Cambre (225)
Dr. Dianne L. Taylor (225) 578-2192

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine state legislation and policy aimed at PK12 school improvement, to document expenditures to the extent possible, and to suggest how monies might be better spent. To begin, the researcher will identify major school improvement legislation, programs, and policies enacted from 1997 through the end of the 2004-2005 academic year that were aimed at PK12 schooling. As these programs are identified, content analysis of the intent and goals of the reforms will be conducted, and the dollars attached to each program will be located to the extent possible and reported. Interviews with current and former LDE officials will be conducted to complement and augment the above data by tapping the institutional knowledge that participants feel comfortable providing. The study will conclude with recommendations about what the state might do in the future to improve the academic achievement of Louisiana PK12 students. The study will fulfill the final dissertation requirements for the researcher, Belinda M. Cambre.

Subject Inclusion: Individuals who currently and formerly work(ed) at the LDE or were members of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) at the time of specific program implementation.

Subject Exclusion: Individuals who were not employed at the LDE nor were members of BESE during the time of specific program implementation.

Number of Subjects: Six former officials of the LDE, who have been nominated by a former LDE employee, will be interviewed as key informants to the study. During the interviews, individuals will be asked to nominate additional officials with knowledge about the programs identified. Sampling will cease when saturation is reached and no new data are forthcoming.

Study Procedures: The present study will be conducted in two phases. Phase One consists of a document analysis. Using content analysis, the text of laws passed by the state legislature, policies created by BESE, and documents published by the LDE will be examined to determine the intent, goals, sources and levels of funding, and longevity of the various mandated school improvement initiatives. Results of this analysis will provide a foundation for Phase Two.

In Phase Two, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with current and former state policymakers and officials of the LDE, to provide additional data through the institutional knowledge possessed by the participants and for triangulation purposes. As mentioned, the results of the content analysis conducted in Phase One will be used to frame items for the interview protocol used in Phase Two.

Benefits: There are no known benefits to the participants.

Risks: There are no known risks to participants.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate and/or to decline further participation at any point during the study.

Privacy: Results of the study will be published as part of the primary researcher's dissertation. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the privacy of the interview subjects. Pseudonyms attached to the actual participants will be kept in a locked location in the researcher's home for a minimum of three years following the conclusion of the study. Thus, complete confidentiality is assured. In addition, specific information regarding the subjects' job titles and dates of employment will not be used in the dissertation or any publications that result from the dissertation.

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H INTERVIEW THEMES, CONCEPTS, AND CODES

Themes, Concepts, and Codes Emerging from Analysis of the Interview Data- identified by Theme, concepts (●), and codes (○).

Theme 1: Conflicts over Turf

- **Schools told what to do**
 - Got to want help in order to receive help
 - Contracts said you're in school improvement and this is what you'll have to do
 - Created contracts to detail expectations
 - DEs worked same function whether placed in or requested
 - Program not mandated- problems when it is
 - Districts placed them- no choice for some
 - State does an analysis; gives to Superintendent & Sup takes to district
 - Department would make presentation about what district is doing
 - District Dialogues
 - There was a committee to dialogue with the district
- **Trust**
 - Took lots to get over resistance
 - Trust missing
 - "Test police"
 - Ensuring test security- ensuring standardization
 - Not there to snitch
 - Trust- schools trusted us
 - Climate of trust necessary- suspicion & mistrust
 - Must be shared trust and shared goals
- **Role of legislature and BESE**
 - What schools perceived and legislature perceived are separate
 - Need longer than 2 years for change- legislation changed
 - Did legislature think DEs would be change agents or support and resources
 - Legislation changed to address problems
 - BESE changes program
 - BESE's role
 - BESE didn't want to give DEs power
 - BESE did not have realistic goals for the program
 - Expectations of BESE- wanted representation from all over the state
 - NO just put stuff on paper- "special case"
 - Slow going to fund wholesale if legislature doesn't believe in it
 - Those powerful made the decisions- BESE (Pastorek)
 - Legislature saw we needed to help schools
 - Levels to get approval (TAC → AC → BESE)- decided in AC with BESE reps
 - Provided data for decision-makers

- Let LDE know what was going on in districts
- Good intentions with accountability
- Good motives, but unintended consequences
- People were aggravated at first, but was good thing
- **Utilized Experts**
 - DEs brought in each other if necessary, as experts
 - LDE sought expertise to run program
 - LDE sought out experts w/ specialties
 - University partnerships
 - Tough to implement—difficult to make good matches between universities and LINCS schools
 - Utilized outside resources to improve
 - Were carefully screened
 - Well-qualified
 - Interview process thorough, intensive—sought out the best
 - Hired best people
 - Brought in experts RESC was “trainer of trainer”
 - Brought in experts/ teachers to write standards
 - Paid consultant from NH through the years
 - Need district and university support
 - Had experts in testing, NCLB, law
 - “Work day” with consultant
- **Glad to be working away from the school site**
 - “I’m not in the classroom therefore I like it.”
 - Nice being on this other side- not having it pushed down your throat
 - Difficult to go from the state to schools/districts by yourself
 - RESC workers were level removed from the money
- **In the schools**
 - “Technical assistants” coaches
 - INCLASS wanted sustained reform where teachers were
 - Regional Certification counselors
 - Always in schools NOT in office
 - Personal relationships
 - RESCs were face of LDE
 - Content leaders in the schools/ classes
 - Could put more at RESCs – to help schools, you have to get into the schools
 - Enjoyed talking to people – hearing questions
 - Tried to respect principals’ time
 - More “in depth” attention – “adopt-a-school”
 - Not just classroom work – guidance, counseling
 - Need to work with schools – how to make improvements
 - Data used locally
- **SIP**
 - Made plan for the schools (no buy in)
 - Schools given things to work on
 - Training in SIPs

- SIPs written with goal of improvement
- Professional development aligned with SIP or DIP
- Had to be content-specific professional development
- Professional development tied to current teaching assignment
- Trying to have data electronically to make SIPs easier – fell through
- **LDE Problems**
 - Workerbees do not agree with powers that be
 - Same makeup as original commission
 - Does not match the makeup of the law
 - Attendance at meetings not great
 - Meetings not enjoyable but productive
 - Long meetings – Lunch provided- “work days” with consultant
 - Not right people at the meeting
 - Work group got too big – not effective
 - Accountability Technical Work Group
 - Daily meetings with core (**twice the meetings required)
 - People nervous about working together when put together
 - Too much stuff required to be put in report card
 - Early years bad communication and errors
 - More cost effective to have a state department for some things
 - Wanted/ hired to do research but reporting became important
 - Road blocks
 - Teacher unions tried to stop
 - Problems with employees working for LINCS then returning to districts
 - Programs do not try to do everything
 - Not everyone will benefit – wholesale funding tough
 - Name alienated some
 - Implementation of DEs failed because of reception by district
 - Difficult to implement fully
 - Still had some folks (bad DEs) slip through
 - Like change agents but w/o titles
 - LA was going to be statewide support, but maybe needed southern LA support
 - Programs from same shop – use similar language
 - Technical Advisor Commission – assisted with assessment questions
- **The School Districts Force a Change**
 - One district got others together and forced state into changes
 - Some rural v. city district differences
 - DAT had different implementation by each parish
 - Different names for programs in different parishes

Theme 2: Instability

- **Reorganization of the LDE**
 - Data missing because of disruption from hurricanes
 - Changes with Picard
 - Reorganization

- Moved to new building—lost documents
- Reorganization – no stability
- Got rid of old documents
- Reorganization
- Realignment
- Disorganization in LDE – aligned by '06, then had better communication and reduced error
- Had dual system of accountability
- Still a division even though now in same division – combined because accountability stayed
- Divisions doing Assessment Development, Assessment Administration, Assessment Research
- Various groups within LDE separated (in different buildings—no talking)
- No stability with groups and meetings at LDE
- DEs now leaders
- LDE had different leadership- revolving door
- **Changes in Initiatives**
 - Program turnover
 - Name changes—changed with funding
 - Program extinguished (not in study period)
 - Started as INCLASS
 - Raised the bar with program
 - Changed in '02
 - Program evolved
 - More safeguards included
 - Propose changes, although overall goal remains the same
 - Program started as something else
 - Wanted greater results in a shorter time
 - Never give programs time
 - Testing changed
 - Recognized long time ago needed follow-up
 - Continued with “Accountability Commission” once/ month for additional 6 years
 - Changes in assessment
 - Difficult to make current system fit w/ NCLB
 - Pre-NCLB, districts could remediate any way they want
 - Have to be true to implementation
- **Program Flexibility**
 - Programs do not try to do everything
 - Should have some flexibility
 - Can be subtle change agent
- **Sustainability**
 - Something over time
 - Sustainability
 - Sustained
 - Some problems get fixed temporarily, then regress
 - Some schools did not build capacity and regressed to old ways

- Trained to build capacity
- DATs had best capacity, sustainability
- DAT valued and remains

Theme 3: Lack of Shared Mission

- **Parental views (community)**
 - Community members bought in- even if school didn't
 - Lack of parental involvement & support
 - Parents like accountability but not high-stakes
 - Some parents wanted to know everything
 - Make parents feel included- important for you to know this
- **Views from principals**
 - Schools thought "they're here to change us"
 - Perception: they're taking over school
 - Some DEs had no personal skills- kicked out of school; state superintendent had to go in
 - Mission difficult to understand for schools
 - Schools understood infrastructure- so changed purpose
 - Some schools may have needed even more than just a change agent
 - Teachers understood/ like whole faculty study group
 - RESC translated policy into practice
 - Some schools not getting it (the concept)
 - School officials took suggestions seriously
 - Some principals refused to meet with DEs
 - Principals are not secretaries- too much paperwork
 - Principal important but need school team – professional learning community
 - Teachers and principals vent
 - Teachers do not like assessment
 - K-12 folks very helpful and made some impacts
- **From the state department**
 - Convince them we're not state department
 - From "state department"
 - Name alienated some schools
 - Didn't see us as "from the government"
 - Say "I'm from state department"
 - Coming in to your house saying you're not doing it right
 - State believed this was support
 - We (state) could've done more
 - State didn't do enough to prepare schools
 - Did not prepare them enough
 - Some personalities did not match
 - Sending in person can't change these problems (this program not the right solution)
 - Was face of LDE so people vented
 - Joke that accountability became tougher than MFP to understand

- Lots of people do not like high stakes testing
- Parents can appeal scores, but no mistakes with testing
- Assessment is a necessary evil
- Picked certain districts- some dire needs, others particular thing
- Districts valued the monitoring
- Program may not be right for every school

- **Views from stakeholders**
 - Unsure about their role in relation to administration
 - Districts did not want to give up too many folks
 - District folks “abrasive” if sticking up for program
 - Helps to have district office person with knowledge of program- availability
 - District support varied
 - District level involvement crucial
 - Report cards gave perceptions re: neighborhoods
 - Had focus groups with all stakeholders
 - High performing districts did not like because penalized for not growing much
 - Support from district personnel
 - High performing district uses process
 - People moving- want to know good school districts

- **Successful programs**
 - Louisiana headed in right direction
 - RESCs successful
 - Program worked- direct impact on those impacting school improvement
 - Can tell LINCS-trained people
 - LINCS very successful
 - LINCS successful
 - Higher performing schools wanted to participate
 - Some schools more successful than others
 - Everyone likes accountability
 - DEs worked hard
 - Schools getting stronger

- **Working directly with kids**
 - Didn’t impact most needy kids
 - No real direct work with students
 - Not working directly with students
 - High poverty

- **Focus on school-level**
 - Schools assessed- not individual teachers
 - Purpose of acct: big picture to get schools to say what we are doing – good job?
Bad job?
 - Saw testing as way for schools to see how kids doing
 - Trying to put focus on the schools doing their job
 - Examine schools that are working

- **Funding disagreements**
 - Schools/ districts wait until end to spend money

- To make money changes, tough to do when schools do not expend funds timely
- More restrictions = less likely to spend money
- Not enough money for every class
- Not everyone will benefit
- Lack of resources- time, materials, quality of coaches
- Underfunded- needed several coaches in some schools
- Some coaches shared over schools
- Districts had to pay for their travel to BR
- Expenditures tough to ask for
- “Pulling down” money
- DEs well-funded
- Funding available one year not next
- Expend 90-95% of funds
- Expend 90-95% of allocations
- Thought well-funded because had enough people- didn’t think needed 2 people/school
- RESCs underfunded/ overutilized/ undervalued
- Money goes back to BESE – no double-dipping with funds
- Money for a position at LDE
- Meetings lasted a long time
- **Substandard schools and dysfunctional attitudes**
 - Some schools “looked good” but test scores sucked
 - Some schools WAY BAD
 - Some principals clueless
 - Some teaching is awful
 - Came down to kids- schools shouldn’t look like this
 - Some students were encouraged to drop out or not test
 - Tried to correct bad deeds of districts
 - Some/ lots of schools not doing their job
- **Goal is to increase student achievement**
 - Accommodations for students w/ disabilities
 - Special education kids held to same standards
 - Could focus on special education training
 - Louisiana set high standards
 - LEAP tests higher order thinking
 - Preparing kids for AP exam-type questions
 - Schools needed to increase scores
 - Focus on student achievement
 - Have to change students’ ways
 - NAEP increases- lower grades increase
 - Student achievement has improved
 - Goal was with student- increases student achievement
 - Purpose to provide academic tutoring and remediation during after-school hours
 - Measure success with student achievement
 - Goal: Increase student achievement
- **Evaluation**

- Did see greater goals initially
- No evaluations done
- Legislature mandated evaluation/ testing
- Not really evaluated early
- Do not like focus on test scores but like seeing performance
- Evaluated by teachers at workshops – data should be available
- Test scores also used
- Evaluations = 90% teachers thought professional development sessions helpful
- Tough to show direct impact
- Not assessing you as a teacher
- Tried to make sure testing air tight
- Reports required
- Accountability results were biggest “to-do” for department
- Focus on accountability left evaluations undone

VITA

Belinda Marie Cambre is a native of the New Orleans area and graduate of the Jefferson Parish Public School System. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Louisiana State University and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Southern California. After graduating from USC, she began teaching at Norwood Street Elementary School in Los Angeles, California, while working towards her teacher certification. She returned home to Louisiana four years later to teach 3rd Grade at Highland Elementary School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After a seven-year classroom career, Belinda decided to go to law school. After her first month, she realized that she didn't want to be a lawyer, but she loved learning about the law. Her remaining semesters of study were focused on courses that are germane to education.

Belinda recently joined the faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations at the University of New Orleans. She teaches courses in education law and policy.

Belinda is married to Jarrod Van Hoogstraten and they have two girls, Jenna, 7, and Bailey, 19 months, and a nephew, Dustin, 8.