Education

"Louisiana is making great strides in education. Our focus at the Louisiana Department of Education is on improving teaching and learning by aligning the department's five major responsibilities to students, teachers, principals, schools and school districts: setting standards, performing assessments, ensuring accountability, providing assistance and maximizing student achievement through efficient resource management."

Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard

Louisiana Department of Education, 2004

Education and Earnings

Experts from parents to grandparents stress how important it is to get a good education. It can improve your mind and increase the chances of having a job. An education can also increase the amount you earn each week. Trends do show that the higher a person's education level, salaries are higher and unemployment lower. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that persons with more education have higher salaries and are more likely to be employed.[1] On average, a person with a college degree earns 35 percent more per year than someone without a degree. Census numbers indicate that a full-time worker over 25 years old, without a college degree earns about $26,000 a year while a person with a degree makes about $40,000.[2]

Completing an education at any level is important. High school completion is a fundamental educational process that holds important implications both for individuals and for educational systems. For the student, obtaining a high school diploma offers an individual a variety of advantages, including the expectation of more stable employment prospects, higher lifetime earnings, and the

Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics	Men	Women
White	732	584
Black	569	505
Hispanic or Latino	480	419
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics, ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat37.txt		

opportunity to continue one's education at the postsecondary level.[3] Employers may view the ability to earn a degree as an indicator of assets—such as organizational skills and aptitude—that a worker will bring to the job.[4]

Education has been shown to be a strong indicator of health outcomes. Higher levels of education are linked to better health. Those more likely to lack health insurance continue to include people who have lower levels of education.[5] Youth who have a low commitment to school, or drop out, are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. This can lead to substance abuse, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and violence. Adults who have low educational attainment are less likely to have health insurance coverage or see a provider routinely.[6]

	Mid-point Weekly Earnings by Education Level/Unemployment Full-time workers, 25 years and older National Earnings Weekly: $662 and Unemployment Rate: 4.8%	
Earnings Weekly ($)	Education Level	Unemployment Rate (%)
396	Less than HS diploma	8.8
554	HS diploma including GED	5.5
622	Some college, no degree	5.2
672	Associate degree	4.0
900	Bachelor's degree	3.3
1,064	Master's degree	2.9
1,307	Professional degree	1.7
1,349	Doctorate	2.1
Source: Current Population Statistics, 2003; HS-high school		

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) collects information about the state's school system. This information includes budget and staffing, as well as the numbers on participation and abilities of students. By watching positive and negative changes in these numbers the LDOE, parish school boards and parents can make decisions about what the schools, staff and students need from year to year. Parents, school boards, and principals are

among those who use the department's information to make decisions about short and long term education needs. This chapter includes information about student participation, class size, cost per student, the graduation exit exam and local literacy programs. Student attendance and high school drop-out rates relate to the ability of students to receive their education. Class size and expense per student can be considered measures of investment in individual students. Test scores help people make parish-to-parish, state-level and national comparisons to assess the quality of education. Among the many tests given in school, the graduation exit exam has been selected for discussion, because it represents Louisiana's requirements for graduation.

This chapter discusses the following indicators.

- School attendance
- High school drop-outs
- Class sizes
- Expenditure per student
- Performance test results

DID YOU KNOW?
Currently, 90.79 percent of Louisiana teachers met state standards and were certified … up from a 10-year low of 84.39 percent two years ago during the 2001-02 school year.

Louisiana Department of Education, 2004

Basic Facts About City/Parish Public Elementary/Secondary Schools, 2002-03	Lafayette Parish[2]	Louisiana[1]
Number of City/Parish School Districts	--	66
Number of Public Schools	45	1,505
Number of Public School Principals	44	1,477
Number of Public School Graduates	1,518	37,213
Public Schools Average Daily Attendance	27,530	668,187
Number of Full-time Public School Teachers	2,025	49,371
Number of Students (End of Session Membership) in Public Schools*	28,852	702,004
Public Schools Average Daily Membership	29,235	714,774

[1]Source: District-reported data submitted to the Louisiana Department of Education via the Student Information System (SIS) end-of-year (EOY) report and Profile of Educational Personnel (PEP) System. Note: Data in this table are for the 66 City/Parish School Districts for grades pre-kindergarten (PK) through 12 and non-graded (NG) only. * Number of Students (End of Session Membership) in Public Schools is the total of pre-kindergarten (PK), K through 12 and non-graded (NG) students reported in membership on the last day of class by the 66 public school districts. [2]Louisiana Department of Education, 2002-2003 Annual Financial and Statistical Report, 145th edition, June 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data for 2002-2003 public school districts; Louisiana Department of Education, Summary of Reported Personnel, 2002-2003

In order to complete the picture of education in a parish, people may want to look at the education levels of their community, teacher certification, the number of places to get an education after high school, zoning for schools and youth satisfaction with their schooling. One or two pieces of information alone will not be enough for community planners and residents to prioritize what they want to do to improve education. Combining the information collected by agencies such as the Department of Education with information community members collect can lead to a more accurate picture of a community's education status. Taking action on these indicators is challenging. The needs of youth are well-studied. Community members often find that their decisions require much information. Changing one thing, such as high school attendance, may mean change on a variety of levels in the community. Throughout this section, and in the publications of the Department of Education, factors that contribute to these indicators are emphasized and discussed.

Keep Kids in School

In the United States people are getting more education. There are still differences, however in levels of achievement. Nationally, of all the

| Educational Attainment (2000)	Lafayette	Louisiana	U.S.
Population 25 years and over	116,183	2,775,468	182,211,639
Less than 9th grade	9,476	257,710	13,755,477
High school graduate or higher	33,699	899,354	52,168,981
Some college, no degree	25,143	561,486	38,351,595
Bachelor's degree or higher	20,592	339,711	28,317,792
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P18, P19, P21, P22, P24, P36, P37, P39, P42, PCT8, PCT16, PCT17, and PCT19			

racial groups, Hispanics have the lowest percentage with a bachelor's degree. African-Americans have the second lowest percentage of persons with a bachelor's degree or more. **In Lafayette parish, 79.8 percent of people had a bachelor's degree or higher. About 25.5 percent of people age 25 years had at least a high school diploma.**[7]

U. S. Educational Attainment of Population age 25 years and older	Caucasian	African-American	Total Population	Asian	Hispanic
High school graduate or more	89.6	80.3	87.5	91.8	73.5
Some college or more*	56.4	44.4	54.2	72.7	40.4
Bachelor's degree or more	29.7	16.3	27.2	48.3	13.5
*Some college includes those who have completed some college, but have no degree and those who have completed an associate's degree; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003					

Attendance of Students

Students need to be present in order to take advantage of what schools have to offer. Subjects such as math, science and history depend on progressive learning. Therefore, attendance throughout the school year is important. Attendance can be a measure of how well a school keeps students motivated. Attendance is also the best predictor of student performance available to the Department of Education. It is even better than standardized tests.[8] **During the 1999-00 school year, 94.0 percent of Lafayette parish students attended class. The average daily attendance in Lafayette parish in 2003-04 was 27,699 students for an average daily attendance rate of 94.0 percent.**[9]

Attendance of Students
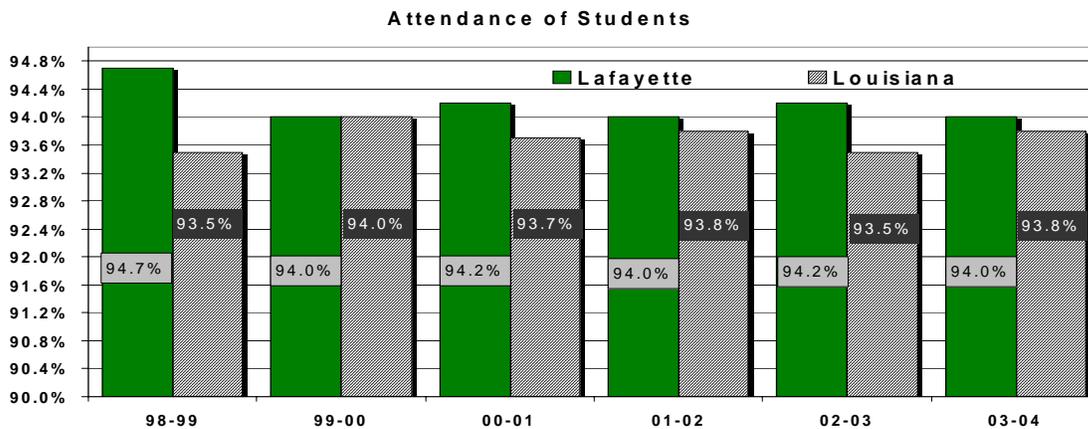
Dropping Out of High School

A high school diploma is a basic academic credential. Students with this degree can offer evidence of a certain level of educational attainment for admission to higher education or for employment. Dropping out of school signals a reluctance to persist and/or an inability to meet education requirements generally seen as necessary for entry into and success in

Percent Public High School Drop-outs[10]	Lafayette	State	U. S.*
1998-1999	9.4	6.6	--
1999-2000	9.8	7.8	11.2
2000-2001	7.8	8.6	10.9
2001-2002	7.2	9.4	10.7
2002-2003	7.1	7	
LA Department of Education, 2002-2003 District Composite Report, published April 2004 ; Source: *U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2002			

the workforce.[11] Completion of high school means that a person has achieved at least a minimum level of literacy. Typically, efforts are made to reduce the number of students who might leave school. They also work on changing behaviors which lead to expulsion.[12] Expulsions and suspensions are predictive of overall school performance. For example, students in schools with high rates of suspension, usually do worse on standardized tests than others.[13] However, suspension and expulsion rates cannot be compared among districts. The incomparability is because of the ways in which policies differ. Each school district has different reasons for expulsion or suspension. Accordingly, focusing on high school drop-outs is a better indicator since it can be compared across parishes.

Lafayette	Faculty	Louisiana
$39,268	Average salary of full-time teachers	$37,166
Louisiana Department of Education, 2002-03 Annual Financial and Statistical Report		

There are many ways to complete high school. These include special education and home-based schooling, as well as school-sponsored programs leading to a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), excluding adult GED programs.[14] Because a high school diploma is key to an individual's future, it is important to know what proportion of a class completes high school. Communities also need to know what is happening to the people who do not finish. Dropping out can result from pregnancy, disinterest in school, or going to jail. It can also result from an unstable home or a priority on full-time work. The drop-out rate cannot be reduced without attention to other local, root causes as well. Some of these include the physical state of the school, quality of teaching, poverty, and family unity.

Smaller Class Sizes

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has the constitutional and statutory authority to make policy decisions that govern the public education system of the state. BESE has recommended class sizes for each education level. Kindergarten through third grade should have no more than 26 students, and grades four through 12 should have no more than 33 students in a classroom.[16] Class size does not represent the student-to-teacher ratio. Resource teachers and others who lend support are included in the student-to-teacher ratio. But they are not

Class Size[15] (2003-04)		Percent
Lafayette	1 - 20	57.4
	21 - 26	33.9
	27 – 33	8.7
State	1 - 20	48.7
	21 - 26	34.3
	27 – 33	17.0

included in class size. Of course, the quality of teaching can not be forgotten. Some teachers may be able to challenge and inspire larger groups of students more than others. In areas where the chance of reducing class size is slim, it would pay to help teachers do their jobs better.[17]

Improve Student Expenditures

Educational quality really can not be quantified with one number. However, cost per student can indicate something about the quality of education. This is why access to an itemized budget is important. In this way, community members can understand what services this expense provides. **Lafayette parish spent $6,675 per student over the 2002-03 school year.** It is possible that even where the cost per student may be lower than the state average, students will still perform well. This may be because their classes are small or because their attendance is high. Nationally, schools are estimated to have spent an average of $7,875 per student in 2002-03.[18] Louisiana spent $6,906 per student within the public school system over the 2002-03 school year.[19]

Parents can help children develop confidence in their math abilities by helping them to understand the following concepts:

- **Problems can be solved in different ways.** Learning math is more than finding the correct answer; it's also a process of solving problems and applying what you've learned to new problems.
- **Wrong answers can sometimes be useful.** Ask your child to explain how she solved a math problem. Her explanation might help you to discover if she needs help with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, or with the concepts involved in solving the problem.
- **Don't be afraid to take risks.** Give your child time to explore different approaches to solving a difficult problem. As he works, encourage him to talk about what he is thinking. This will help him to strengthen math skills and to become an independent thinker and problem solver.

- **Being able to do mental math is important.** Doing math "in your head" (mental math) is a valuable skill that comes in handy as we make quick calculations of costs in stores, restaurants or gas stations. Let your child know that by using mental math, her math skills will become stronger.
- **It's sometimes OK to use a calculator to solve mathematics problems.** Let your child know that to use calculators correctly and efficiently, she will need a strong grounding in math operations; otherwise, how will she know whether the answer she sees displayed is reasonable?

Source: U.S. Department of Education, The Achiever, *[December 15, 2004].*

Monitor the Quality of Education

The Louisiana Department of Education assigns performance labels to schools based on a yearly school performance score. This score takes into account the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century or LEAP 21, the graduate exit exam, the Iowa tests, attendance and dropout rates. Louisiana's standard is for schools to have at least four stars or an SPS of 120 or more.[20] The department also gives statewide assessment that parishes use within its school systems to determine student progress. The LEAP 21st Century is the state criterion-referenced test based on the new content standards. The test is given to all fourth and eighth graders to measure how well students have mastered English, mathematics, science and social studies ability.

For the norm-referenced testing program, Louisiana has adopted the Iowa Tests at grades three, five, six, seven and nine. Norm-referenced tests measure how well students perform against a national comparison group. The major subtests are reading, language and mathematics. High school students participate in the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE). Students must pass the GEE in order to receive a high school diploma.

Educate Adults

The link between health and educational attainment is clear in adults. People with lower educational levels are less likely to know about preventive health measures, such as screenings. When they are ill, poor reading skills may prevent clear understanding of their treatments.[21] Adults with low educational attainment are less likely to have regular health insurance coverage or see a provider routinely.[22] They are also less likely to report that their health is good.[23] In fact, there may be a link between low educational levels and poor lifetime health. Places with a greater proportion of residents with low educational levels also have high rates of premature death.[24] It is never too late for people to add to their educational status. There are plenty of reasons to invest in further education. The most

Did You Know?
More than 51 million adults or approximately 23 percent of the adult population of the United States, possess limited literacy capability—that is, they have not completed a high school diploma or equivalent. ***Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, April 2004***

Taking Care, Taking Control:
Knowledge is Powerful

After surviving three heart attacks and two strokes, Ronald Steele decided it was time to join the YMCA's Educational Services Literacy Program at St. Mark's Community Center. Throughout most of his life, Ronald has had to make use of what he calls "sneaky intelligence." In high school, Ronald would have one of his classmates read him their homework, and Ronald supplied the answer for both students. He fell behind but was pushed through the system because his teachers felt he was too much older than the rest of the students. Ronald finds these things easier to talk about since joining the program at St. Mark's. "Education is a way of communicating. Students may not be educated, but we are intelligent." At St. Mark's Ronald has found a family of learners who lean on one another. Ronald says, "I want to get just enough education to help others like myself." Not only is Ronald continuing at St. Mark's as a student, he is now a student-tutor. "The program made me realize I know so much more than I thought I knew."

- For further information: Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans 504-864-7077

important reason may be children. Just by watching parents go to classes and study, young people can become better students themselves. Ultimately, further education for adults can help the children.

Louisiana: Adult Education Target Population, by Years of Schooling and Age					
Level of Educational Attainment	Total	16 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 59	60 & Older
Total	967,573	265,736	253,672	165,541	282,624
0 to 4 Years Completed	73,044	4,407	12,927	12,882	42,828
5 to 8 Years Completed	213,999	22,520	37,626	40,337	113,516
9 to 12 Years Completed:	680,530	238,809	203,119	112,322	126,280
• 9 Years	138,443	48,921	35,304	21,934	32,284
• 10 Years	195,276	77,124	51,902	30,250	36,000
• 11 Years	192,629	76,229	56,489	28,246	31,665
• 12 Years, No Diploma	154,182	36,535	59,424	31,892	26,331

U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

The Community Can …

Get Children Ready for School. Communities can contribute to home-school partnerships by:[25]

- Promoting awareness of parent involvement in school and supporting school efforts to reach families, and

- Strengthening linkages between community resources and schools to create continuity across the informal and formal learning environments of children through extracurricular activities.[26]

Toolkits & Guides:

Strengthening Connections Between Schools and After-School Programs
www.ncrel.org/21stcclc/connect/

Louisiana Department of Education www.ldoe.state.la.us.

National Education Association provides many resources for parents and communities
www.nea.org/parents/research-parents.html

Parents can keep kids in school[27,28]

- Actively organize and monitor a child's time.

- Monitor and help with homework.

- Discuss school matters.

- Get involved early in a child's educational process.

Toolkits & Guides:

Resources for Early Learning www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/ed.early.html

Tool Kit for Parents: Tips for Understanding What You Read - Web site on learning disabilities for parents, teachers, and other professionals
www.ldonline.org/article.php?max=20&special_grouping=&id=1111&loc=89

Communities can help parents keep kids in school[29]

- For parent involvement to have an impact on achievement, schools must link parent activities to student learning goals and be respectful of the differences among families.

- For schools to succeed in engaging families from very diverse backgrounds they can:

  - ➢Focus on building trusting, collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members.

  - ➢Recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as their differences.

  - ➢Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

- "When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."

Toolkits & Guides:

The What Works Clearinghouse established by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide educators, policymakers, and the public with a central, independent, and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education www.w-w-c.org

Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide; U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, December 2003.
www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousevid/rigorousevid.pdf

The Promising Practices Network web site highlights programs and practices that credible research indicates are effective in improving outcomes for children, youth, and families.
www.promisingpractices.net

Communities in Schools champions the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life www.cisnet.org/about/

Develop Families' Social Capital[30]

- Promote families' connections with each other, with teachers and other school staff, and with community groups.

- Translate communications with families into their home languages and provide an interpreter at meetings.

- Offer childcare, meals, and transportation for major activities at school.

- Ask families about the best times for them to attend events at school. Ask what kind of events they would like to attend. Ask what they think would make the school better.

Toolkits & Guides:

Connection Collection: School-Family-Community Publications Database
www.sedl.org/connections/resources, 192.231.207.100/planetarium/familyastro/evidence.pdf

Develop Families' Political Knowledge and Skills

- Support families' involvement in decision making by offering training for parent and community members.

- Ask the superintendent, board members, and district staff to meet with families at the school and explain what they do.

- Work with families to develop an agenda for the meetings so they can voice their concerns.

- Give families information about how the education system (and local government) works.

- Make visits to district offices and attend school board meetings.

Toolkits & Guides:

Connection Collection: School-Family-Community Publications Database, www.sedl.org/connections/resources, 192.231.207.100/planetarium/familyastro/evidence.pdf

Educate Adults - **Adult Education and Literacy Programs Can Increase Effectiveness at Work, at Home, and in the Community**

- Research has emerged on adult education and literacy development programs in workplaces that teach English, reading and mathematics skills integrated with job knowledge. Research further suggests that similar programs may contribute not only to improving an adult's job-related literacy and mathematics skills, but may also improve productivity on the job, increase reading to children at home, increase use of language and literacy skills in the community, and in making the decision to pursue further education.

Toolkits & Guides:

Louisiana Department of Education www.doe.state.la.us

TANF Adult Literacy (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) - A collaborative effort established between the Department of Education, the Division of Administration and the Department of Social Services. The program provides literacy training to adults 16 years of age and older in need of adult basic education. A total of five LEA agencies and three private providers have collaborated with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System campuses in this collaborative partnership. www.doe.state.la.us/lde/family/524.html -

A Roadmap to Implementing Adult Basic Education Program. State of Florida Adult Basic Education Committee of the Practitioners' Task Force, through an Adult Education State Leadership Grant from the Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development. www.floridatechnet.org/inservice/abe/comp1a.html

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