



Protect and advance gains made in Pre-K through 12 public education

“ Let’s focus on the positive steps we can take together to help all children to reach their full potential as human beings. ”

— Margaret Trahan,
President & CEO of United Way of Acadiana

Opportunity

Louisiana has made significant gains in student achievement over the past decade. Student test scores are steadily increasing, while drop-out rates and failing scores are declining for students in K-12.

Gains in student achievement are supported by reforms that are raising standards, improving Pre-K options, providing parental choice, and empowering school and district leaders. Abandoning these reforms will be a major step backwards.

By advancing and sustaining the education policies and best practices that are supporting progress right now, Louisiana can increase the momentum of current student gains and better prepare our students for college and career opportunities.

Challenge

While Louisiana is making gains, student performance is still significantly lower than most other states, making the status quo unacceptable. Louisiana ranked 47th nationally for student proficiency in reading, math, science, and writing. No more than 26 percent of Louisiana 4th and 8th graders scored at or above proficient in math and/or reading.

Even though research confirms the life-long benefits of early childhood education programs, including a narrowing of the achievement gap, Louisiana’s programs continue to see cuts and limited funding.

Without a commitment to the education reforms that are working, Louisiana’s gains will become stagnant, or begin eroding, leaving students underprepared for college and careers.

Action

Achieving a sustainable, fast-growing economy will require a focused effort from Louisiana’s next Governor and State Legislature through the following actions:

- Maintain fair and robust academic standards and statewide accountability system.
- Prioritize early childhood care and education with funding for enhanced services, while accelerating the development of a unified high-quality Pre-K system
- Protect and improve school options for parents and families.
- Maintain policies that empower superintendents, principals, and school leaders with management discretion



For more than a decade, Louisiana has made significant gains in student achievement.

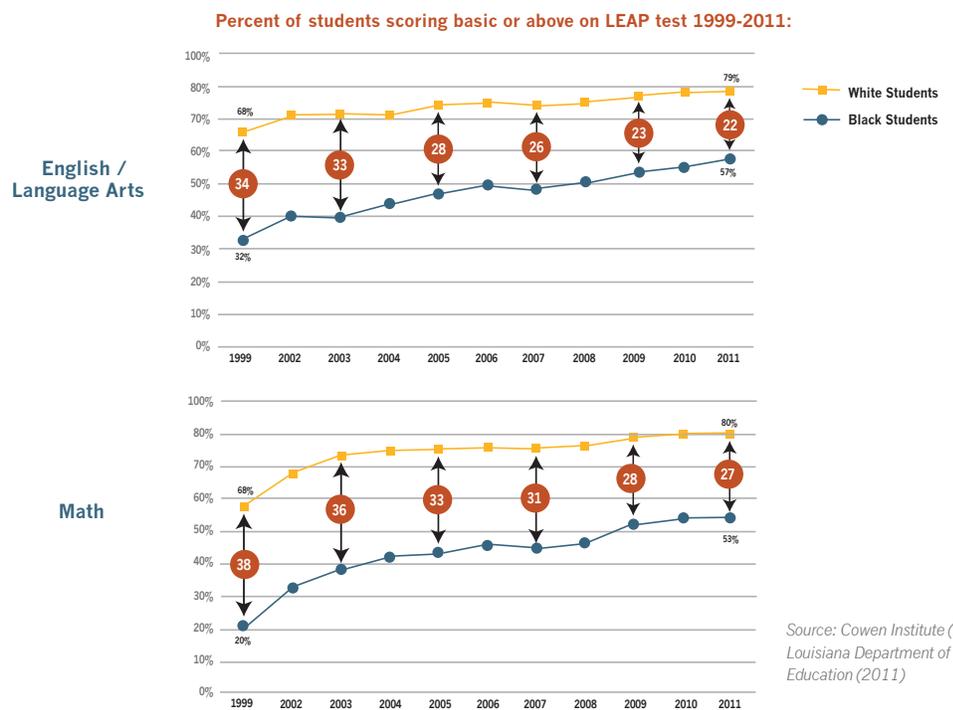
Since 2000, the percentage of students scoring “basic” and above on 4th and 8th grade standardized tests has risen more than 20 percent. Since 2006, the percentage of students scoring below “basic” on these tests has dropped 10 percent. Public school dropouts in grades 7-12 have been declining, and Louisiana’s high school graduation rate reached an all-time high of 73.5 percent in the 2012-2013 school year. Additionally, Louisiana’s LA4 pre-kindergarten program has served as a model of excellence by reducing special-education placements and increasing on-time arrival into the 4th grade.

This progress has been supported by Louisiana’s public education reforms that are promoting rigorous academic standards, improving pre-kindergarten, increasing parental choice, and empowering school and district leaders.

Abandoning these reforms will be a major step backwards.

While Louisiana has made major gains, our state's student performance is still significantly lower than most other states, making the status quo unacceptable. In the National Assessment of Education Progress, Louisiana was ranked 47th nationally in student proficiency in reading, math, science, and writing. Despite significant gains, a quarter of a million Louisiana students are still behind grade level and are leaving high school underprepared for college and careers. Only 15 percent of Louisiana students meet all four ACT benchmarks for college readiness, which is second lowest among 16 southern peers and far below the national rate of 26 percent.

Overall, Louisiana’s statewide test scores reveal significant gains in student achievement and a narrowing of the achievement gap



Louisiana’s low academic performance will impact career-readiness more significantly with time. **A majority of jobs projected for the next decade will require more than a high school diploma, yet Louisiana’s high school graduation rate ranks 45th nationally.** Without a constant focus on college and career readiness, including increased exposure to career opportunities, Louisiana will continue to miss the mark on providing the foundation for a skilled workforce.

One Acadiana is a better, bolder, and re-energized version of the former Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. We are a progressive regional economic development organization that represents Acadiana, a nine-parish area in South Louisiana. Our vision is to make Acadiana the most sought-after region in the South for business and talent. We call ourselves One Acadiana because we believe it takes a united region to create the best region.

We have created a collaborative and inclusive organization that welcomes all members, investors, and partners to work with us to make Acadiana a place that defies social and political fragmentation by forming alliances and creating solutions. We are a force for good in Acadiana, focused on improving the quality and long-term sustainability of our regional community.

To learn more, go to OneAcadiana.org.

