



Bobby Jindal
GOVERNOR



EDUCATION REFORM:

IMPROVING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES
FOR LOUISIANA'S CHILDREN

Fresh Start
FOR *Louisiana*

A MESSAGE FROM BOBBY JINDAL

Dear Fellow Louisianians,

For too long, Louisiana has tolerated sub-par performance in education, accepting it as good enough, despite years of painful evidence to the contrary.

We must improve our schools now if we want to prevent yet another generation of our students from leaving to find prosperity in other states. Families with children currently in failing schools cannot be told to simply wait while we tinker on the edges of reform.

I have seen firsthand how a good education can change lives in a single generation. My father was the first and only of nine children to even go to high school, much less complete college. Starting with nothing, my mother and father were able to create a wonderful family life for my brother and me right here in Louisiana.

My parents' story is a great example of one of our country's most powerful and inspiring ideas – that anyone can be successful here if they are willing to work hard enough.

Louisiana has taken some meaningful steps forward recently, including finally raising the pay for teachers to the southern average, expanding pre-K programs, putting in place strong accountability standards and fully funding the higher education formula for the first time in years. However, we must do more.

*To improve educational opportunities for Louisiana's children we must help schools meet **focused accountability standards**; partner with communities and families to **improve their education options**; inspire students to succeed within today's curriculum while **preparing for tomorrow's opportunities**; and, **attract and retain qualified educators**.*

Creating a better, more effective education system will create a chain reaction throughout our state.

Better schools mean more options for parents.

Improving education attainment rates is one of the best predictors of increasing income levels, improving health outcomes, decreasing crime rates, and otherwise improving quality of life where Louisiana so often lags behind the rest of the nation.

Graduating students will be better prepared to enter the workforce or further their education in universities, community colleges, or trade schools.

The image of our state will also be enhanced, and most importantly, Louisiana will be primed for rapid economic development: more jobs, higher paying jobs, and more business.



“Too many of our working families today feel like the local public school is not a realistic option for their children. My wife and I both attended and graduated from Louisiana public schools; there is no reason this should not be a desirable option for more families.”



Low graduation rates carry a high cost for our state.

More than 20 percent of people in Louisiana are without a high school diploma.

The 2005 census reveals that roughly 20 percent of our adult population never graduated high school and another 35 percent never went on to finish a post-secondary educational program.

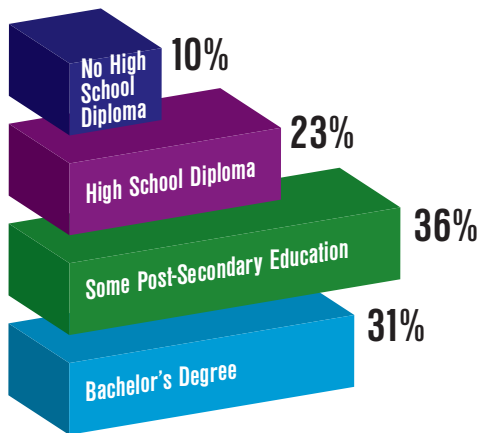
The number of graduates in Louisiana has dipped from 43,770 in 1995 to around 41,000. From the dropouts of the class of 2006 alone, Louisiana has lost an estimated \$6.5 billion dollars in lost wages and taxes over their lifetimes.

If we can increase high school graduation rates by just five percent, Louisiana could gain more than \$200 million each year, with each high school graduate earning on average \$9,200 in increased annual earnings over his or her lifetime.

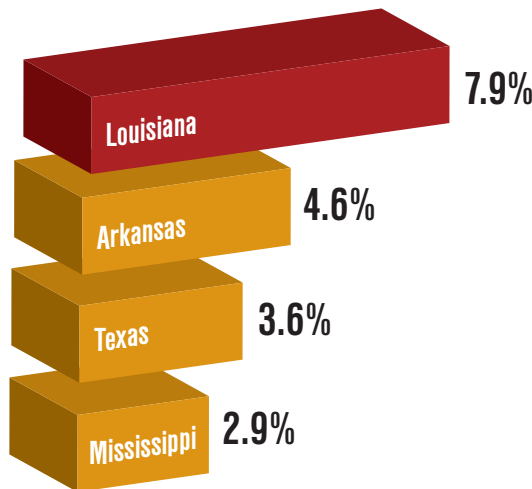


Two-Thirds of New Jobs Require Post-Secondary Education 2000-2010

SHARE OF NEW JOBS



Dropout Rates – 2004 NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS



Source: Carnevale and Desrochers, Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-12 Reform, Educational Testing Service, 2003

Disruptive classrooms are a disservice to our children AND our teachers

Roughly 50 percent of new teachers leave teaching in Louisiana's public schools within five years, with a majority citing classroom behavior as the top reason. This trend cannot continue.

Louisiana ranks 39th in the nation out of 40 states reviewed in discipline.

Our students are lacking in the basic skills of reading and writing

About half of Louisiana's fourth graders are lacking basic reading skills, and too many have not improved by the time they reach the eighth grade.



Percent of Students Above Basic Grade 4 Reading (Latest Available) by state
National Center for Educational Statistics

Percent of Students Above Proficient Grade 4 Writing (Latest available) by state
Out of 44 states ranked
National Center for Educational Statistics

Scale Score, Grade 8 Math by state
National Center for Educational Statistics

State	Percent of Students Above Basic Grade 4 Reading (Latest Available) by state	Percent of Students Above Proficient Grade 4 Writing (Latest available) by state	Scale Score, Grade 8 Math by state
LOUISIANA	53% (rank: 43rd)	14% (rank: 42nd)	rank: 46th
Arkansas	63% (rank: 31st)	19% (rank: 35th)	rank: 38th
Mississippi	48% (rank: 50th)	13% (rank: 43rd)	rank: 49th
Texas	64% (rank: 30th)	29% (rank: 13th)	rank: 24th

www.statemaster.com/graph/edu_ass_of_stu_abo_bas_gra_4_rea-above-basic-grade-4-reading

www.statemaster.com/graphB/edu_ass_of_stu_abo_pro_gra_4_wri-above-proficient-grade-4-writing

www.statemaster.com/graph/edu_ass_sca_sco_gra_8_mat-scale-score-grade-8-math

Bobby Jindal's Action Plan

Improving Louisiana's Schools and Meeting the Needs of Our Children

ATTRACT AND RETAIN QUALIFIED EDUCATORS BY GIVING THEM THE RESOURCES THEY NEED

■ Competitively compensate Louisiana's teachers

The vast majority of our teachers are dedicated, hard working people who spend their days educating our children to the best of their ability. For too long, these educators have been underpaid for this effort. It was critical that the Legislature recently increased teacher compensation to meet the SREB average. This is a good first step, but more work needs to be done to ensure our educators are fairly compensated. We should also pursue student loan payment assistance programs for new teachers who teach in targeted areas or identified subjects of need.

■ Keep our teachers and classrooms safe by improving classroom discipline

Louisiana ranks 39th in the nation out of 40 states reviewed in discipline. Roughly 50 percent of new teachers leave teaching in Louisiana's public schools within five years, with a majority citing classroom behavior as the top reason. This trend cannot continue. Each school should have a "Teachers' Bill of Rights" that details the disciplinary procedures understood by all teachers, students and parents that will be enforced without exception. Teachers must know that they will be supported by their principal, superintendent, school board, and ultimately parents when they discipline disruptive children. We should increase in-school suspensions that carry with it closer supervision, strict schoolwork assignments, and school facility work requirements. Students that ignore teachers in the classroom but listen to their coaches and instructors should not be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities. We must increase verbal, written and on-line communication between parents and educators so that parents can play the critical role of giving their children the appropriate behavior instruction at home. For those students who simply refuse to behave in our classrooms, we must make sure alternative schools for children with discipline problems are accessible, accountable, and providing an environment that results in improved behavior and academic achievement.

■ Improve programs to help teachers succeed and stay in the classroom

During my tenure at the University of Louisiana System, we launched teacher warranty programs designed to help new teachers succeed and stay in the profession. These programs provide additional free courses to new teachers who fail their first-year teacher assessment. Our higher education institutions must be able to guarantee that education graduates will have the classroom management skills, curriculum knowledge, and understanding of

how best to incorporate technology into their classrooms and lesson plans. Effective mentoring programs should be put in place so that effective teachers can work with their colleagues to improve performance and appreciation of successful techniques. We must also improve alternative certification programs for talented mid-career professionals to join the teaching ranks and make a difference.

■ Reduce paperwork requirements that keep our teachers and guidance counselors from working with students

We should eliminate unnecessary paperwork requirements and other demands unrelated to classroom instruction. This burden affects not only our teachers, but also the guidance counselors and administrators in our schools. The effectiveness of programs such as the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LaTAAP), which is intended to help new teachers develop needed skills for the classroom, is greatly diminished if it requires countless hours of paperwork. Too often, forms for tardiness, discipline problems and accident reports require teachers to repeatedly fill out student information that is easily found in the central office. Any system put in place is only as effective as its ability to help teachers spend more time and focus on the critical mission of preparing our children for the opportunities that lay ahead.

■ Reward effective teachers with a merit bonus program

In addition to raising the pay for all educators, we should also promote excellence in teaching. If we want to inspire teachers to excel in the classroom, then we must provide more incentives and more upward mobility. Merit bonus programs are used in many other professions to promote excellence and should be utilized in teaching as well. The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), developed by the Milken Family Foundation and being used in several Louisiana schools, is a promising approach that judges teacher performance by peer evaluation and monitors student progress as they move through the school system. This is fairer than judging teachers based on the performance of a new set of students each year. Innovative bonus programs could target teachers who achieve certain performance measures, who teach in priority subject areas, who serve as mentors to other teachers, or who serve in rural or other under-served areas.

HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED IN TODAY'S CURRICULUM AND PREPARE THEM FOR TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES

■ Expand promotion and access to pre-K programs so our children enter school prepared for success

Unfortunately, too many children from low-income and working families are unprepared to succeed when they enter the first grade. We must better promote top quality pre-Kindergarten programs to help these children develop critical reading readiness and social skills that will pave the way for academic success. We should work with communities and local school systems so that every parish can offer a top quality program that meets the community's needs. A strong quality rating system must be maintained to ensure these programs put an emphasis on literacy and core academic skills.

"Repairing Louisiana's education system is not simply a question of money; we also need students, teachers, principals, parents, and school districts to do their part."

— BOBBY JINDAL



■ Improve the utilization of technology in our schools

The Kauffman Foundation ranks Louisiana 48th in online population and 41st in school technology. We must make the consistent commitment to help districts improve the quality and usage of technology in classrooms. Sporadic investment in technology without training educators on how best to use these resources will lead to wasted investments and disappointing outcomes. Placing a computer in a classroom is only the first step of the process. Virtual classrooms, Internet-connected chalkboards, and on-line courses can help districts lacking teachers qualified to teach certain subjects. Electronic tutoring programs can help students falling behind in an effective and budget-friendly way. Technology improvements can also improve the availability of advanced courses, foreign language training, and improved early access to college credits. School districts should be encouraged to court and partner with private entities to pursue investments in technology and donated technical maintenance.

■ Implement remediation and alternative credit recovery programs for children falling behind

Too many students fall behind each year and never catch up. With roughly 7 percent of our high school students dropping out each year, it is our responsibility to do more to give these children better odds of success. We must change the notion that summer school is a punishment and expand remediation and accelerated learning summer programs to help struggling students. An effective early warning system that utilizes teacher and parental input, along with test results, will help focus extra attention on struggling students. Participation in “catch-up” programs on core subjects and alternative credit recovery programs can keep our students on track, rather than forcing a student to take an entire course over again. The solution to poor test scores is not lowering our standards, but rather, improving our performance.

■ Improve the caliber of math and science education in our high schools

A strong proficiency in math and science has been shown to be a needed skill for many of the current and projected high-wage jobs in Louisiana, as well as a key indicator in college achievement and higher ACT scores. For those districts having trouble attracting and retaining teachers qualified to teach these subjects, we need better training programs and on-line courses to help those teachers succeed. We should also better pursue talented graduates of multiple fields (e.g., physics, math, or biology) to make up for teacher shortages and expand alternative certification programs so that working professionals with expertise in these subjects can be taught the skills needed to relay that knowledge in the classroom. School partnership programs with local employers are critical to educate students on the usefulness and value of strong math and science skills. Louisiana has a large manufacturing base that uses technology daily and we should leverage that presence to improve math and science instruction in the classroom.

10 Principles for Improving Student Achievement in Louisiana

Accountability – Resist efforts to weaken current accountability measures and pursue reforms to make standards more effective for schools, teachers and students.

Help Teachers Succeed – Ensure we have an effective teacher in every classroom by helping them to be qualified in the subjects they teach and the methods they use.

Reward Our Teachers – Retain and attract quality teachers by paying them competitively and also offering merit bonus programs for those that mentor other teachers and improve student achievement.

Recruit Quality Administrators – Pursue quality principals and administrators and give them the tools to be successful.

Safety in Our Schools – Protect our teachers and our children by removing from classrooms disruptive students with chronic discipline problems.

A Back-to-Basics Curriculum – Promote math, science and literacy in our classrooms in a way that prepares students for tomorrow’s challenges.

Target Dollars to the Classrooms – Every dollar wasted on excessive bureaucracy rather than our classrooms cheats our children.

Choice for Communities and Parents – Families with children stuck in chronically failing schools deserve reasonable alternatives.

Prepare Students for Next Steps – Beginning with expanded Pre-K programs, we must prepare our students for the upcoming challenges at each stage of their development. Children must enter school ready to succeed and be introduced to educational and career choices through effective high school counseling and academic programs.

Excellent Education for All – Every Louisiana child deserves access to a great education.

Bobby Jindal's Action Plan *continued...*

■ Better prepare students as they begin high school for career and higher education options

While not every student plans to go to college, we owe it to our high school students that they graduate able to meet either college or technical school requirements. Our students should understand that nearly 65 percent of today's jobs require training beyond high school, but not always a college degree. We must prepare students for the many career options available by beginning career-oriented counseling after 8th grade and expanding programs like those we initiated at the University of Louisiana System to inform students of college admission requirements and encourage them to get a head start by taking advanced placement (AP) courses. Improved teacher/student ratios in schools, with a particular focus on smaller "learning communities" for certain grades (such as 9th and 12th), are critical to social and academic development.

■ Increase the focus in our schools on dual-enrollment, dual-track, and skill training programs.

Too often today, our schools do not effectively prepare students for the many educational and career options available to them after high school. While expanding access to college courses and an improved skill training focus is critical to maximize the value of the senior year of high school, we must begin these and other programs much earlier than that to give our children every opportunity possible to succeed. Programs such as automotive tech and health care can give students the ability to gain course credit and career training by learning from local businesses and industry. Dual-track programs can give students a better understanding of the many options available to them post-graduation. Initiatives like the TOPS Tech Early Start program, and the "Early College" program put together by East Baton Rouge Parish and the Baton Rouge Community College should be used as models. Successful program models that allow students to take post-secondary courses should be incorporated into an effective statewide plan so that all schools can take this step.

■ Maintain and strengthen the promise of TOPS

The Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) has provided affordable access to higher education for many deserving students. TOPS has directly led to many students taking a more rigorous high school curriculum, resulting in more high school graduates being better prepared for success in higher education or the workforce. Recent investments in needs-based programs to help make higher education more affordable for those with lower incomes are productive investments in the future of our state and its citizens. These grants should also help older students pursuing vocational training or a particular degree to meet the demands of a changing workforce.

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– BOBBY JINDAL

"Providing access to quality public education is one of the most important things we can do to move our state forward, create better paying jobs, and improve our quality of life."

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HELP SCHOOLS MEET EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

■ Promote "value added" accountability to better monitor a student's progress

Setting standards without actually helping schools meet them defeats the purpose of a strong accountability system. State evaluations should include "value added" comparisons of student performance at the beginning of a year with that same student's performance at the end of that academic year to get the most accurate measure of that student's school.

■ Protect the ability for the state and other groups to temporarily step in when schools continuously fail to educate our kids

Any state-led effort to temporarily take over failing schools should serve simply as the bridge to local communities and school boards taking the lead in operating quality schools. While helpful, this is not a permanent solution. Ideally, our schools are best served by having responsible, dedicated leaders at the local level that make management decisions that best meet the needs of the communities.

■ Maintain the reform effort underway in New Orleans

Before Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Public School District was clearly troubled, with 75 percent of schools listed as failing or on academic warning, millions of dollars unaccounted for, and questionable administrative efforts. Today there are 43 charter schools, 20 Recovery School District-operated schools, and five New Orleans Parish-operated schools. This reform effort in New Orleans will provide valuable insight on how best to use the resources of the state, while allowing parents and educators to develop a community model that benefits all families.

■ Recruit top quality principals and give them the tools to succeed

Principals are critical in any school's ability to be run effectively, attract and develop effective teachers, and meet the needs of the community. We must use the best principals in our state as mentors for other principals to develop strong leaders in every school. By partnering with universities, nonprofit organizations, leadership academies and local parishes, we can implement effective leadership curriculum programs, seminar-workshops, and in-school training exercises to help principals meet school-wide achievement and student performance goals. We must learn from successful private sector management practices and incorporate similar techniques, where possible, to improve the effectiveness of school leadership.

■ **Make school spending efficient, accountable, and focused on classroom instruction**

Each school faces unique budgetary challenges, depending on the location and needs of the area it serves. We must remember that the answer is not for government to micro-manage school districts with arbitrary mandates. Instead, we must help districts use their resources effectively by giving them comparative information to control costs, implementing proven management approaches to lower administrative costs, and exploring available options to partner with the private sector, colleges and universities for services. We should also pursue incentive funds for districts that show improved management practices.

■ **Hold our institutions of higher education accountable**

In addition to our K-12 institutions, we must also enforce accountability in higher education by holding our colleges and universities accountable for retention and graduation rates, as well as providing quality courses and enhanced student support services to encourage students to complete their degree and training programs. Such services have proven to substantially increase retention and graduation rates. Rather than being tied to enrollment, the funding formula should be one based on outcomes. We must reward excellence and discourage mission creep and duplication. As head of the University of Louisiana System, I urged colleges and universities to identify areas of excellence, discourage duplicative academic programs, maximize financial resources, and promote specialized, high-quality instruction and research to students statewide.



PARTNER WITH COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION OPTIONS

■ **Empower communities and give families alternatives to failing schools**

Providing access to quality public education is one of the most important things we can do to move our state forward, create better paying jobs, and improve our quality of life. While our top priority must be to improve all of our schools, we cannot sentence any child to a poor education if they just happen to live within a certain geographical boundary. These children, like all others, deserve a good education and a promising future. In New Orleans, given its unique and enormous needs and history of challenges, we should consider all options to help parents whose children are trapped in failing schools. This includes improving public schools, partnering public schools with universities and businesses, charter schools, and even private schools.

■ **Cultivate innovative partnerships to increase the performance of our schools**

We should actively pursue grants from educational foundations and promote partnerships with other entities in the private and public sector to help Louisiana build a reputation for creative thinking in education reform. Collaborating on research projects with higher educational institutions, non-profits, and the private sector can help examine ways to reduce overhead in our school systems, improve accounting, lower high dropout rates, recruit quality educators and get better outcomes in our schools.

■ **Promote expansion of successful charter schools and the adoption of applications based on proven models**

Charter schools, by state law, are required to meet student achievement and accountability standards. These schools are typically operated with less bureaucracy and offer opportunities to test innovative teaching methods and alternative management approaches. Recognizing that not all charter schools are created equal, we should welcome expansion of successful charter schools, creation of promising charter schools, and the closing of poorly operated charter schools that fail to improve. Applications based on proven charter school models should not be held up by bureaucratic roadblocks and federal funding allocated for charters should be distributed to the schools as soon as possible. Any proposal for a new charter school should be specific to ensure the programs meet the state and local community's vision for excellence.

Paid for by Friends of Bobby Jindal.



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