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Regents Study Shows Teacher Certification Matters

BATON ROUGE, La. – Seven teacher training programs learned how well they prepare their graduates to teach students mathematics, science, social studies, language arts and reading today. The results of Louisiana's Value-Added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model were presented to the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education during a joint meeting of the members. Louisiana is the first state in the nation to use a performance model to examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs.

Programs evaluated in the 2007-08 study were Northwestern State University, Louisiana College, Louisiana Resource Center for Educators, Nicholls State University, The New Teacher Project, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the University of Louisiana at Monroe. The study revealed five significant findings indicating teacher preparation matters including:

- Some teacher preparation programs are preparing new teachers whose teaching effectiveness is equivalent to experienced certified teachers.
- Varying levels of effectiveness exist within teacher preparation programs and across teacher preparation programs.
- Certified teachers are more effective than teachers who are not certified to teach the content.
- The mean ACT scores of teacher graduates in this assessment are very similar and as a result do not explain differences in teacher preparation program effectiveness.
- However, ACT mathematics scores of individual teachers are modest predictors of teacher effectiveness in mathematics.

“This is yet another demonstration of higher education’s commitment to transparency, accountability and student learning,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen. “This study not only allows us to evaluate how well we prepare our teachers in this state, it will also allow us to isolate key elements of success that can be replicated which is powerful information that can be used to make meaningful improvements.”

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“We know that high quality teachers who are trained and knowledgeable in their respective subject matters achieve better outcomes with their students,” said State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek. “Evaluating the most effective practices for appropriately and adequately training teachers is crucial to our ability to improve teaching and learning in Louisiana as we work to prepare, recruit and place skilled and competent teachers in our classrooms.”

The Value-Added Teacher Preparation Model predicts student achievement in grades 4-9 based on prior achievement, demographics and attendance and then compares it to actual student performance using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the *i*-LEAP and LEAP-21 tests. The model then calculates how well students taught by new teachers did, compared to similar students taught by experienced certified teachers who had taught for two or more years. Programs are then placed in one of five performance levels:

- Level 1- More effective than experienced teachers
- Level 2- Comparable to experienced teachers
- Level 3- Comparable to new teachers
- Level 4- Less effective than new teachers
- Level 5- Significantly less effective.

“In looking at this year’s results it is striking to recall that several years ago it was not clear whether we could develop a technically sound assessment of teacher preparation,” said George Noell, professor of psychology at Louisiana State University and A&M College. “This year’s report is the result of careful developmental work that has been carried out over years by professionals and researchers in Louisiana and beyond. It would not have come to fruition without their hard work and the support of visionary educational leaders in Louisiana.”

The seven programs evaluated during 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 performed at the following levels:

- **Level 1 and Level 2:** Northwestern State University and the University of Louisiana at Monroe prepared new teachers whose students demonstrated achievement in four or more content areas that was comparable or above the growth of achievement demonstrated by children taught by experienced teachers.
- **Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3:** The New Teacher Project prepared new teachers whose students, demonstrated achievement in four content areas that was comparable or above the growth of achievement demonstrated by children taught by experienced teachers. Student achievement in one content area was comparable to the growth of learning of students taught by new teachers.

Louisiana College prepared new teachers whose students’ achievement in three content areas was comparable or above the growth of achievement demonstrated by children taught by experienced teachers. Achievement in the remaining two content

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areas was comparable to the growth of learning of students taught by new teachers.

- **Level 2:** Nicholls State University prepared new teachers whose students demonstrated achievement in one content area (language arts) that was comparable to the achievement demonstrated by children taught by experienced teachers.
- **Level 3:** The University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators prepared new teachers whose students demonstrated achievement in learning and was comparable to other new teachers in four of the five content areas.
- **Level 4 and 5:** The University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators each had one content area where student achievement was less than that of new teachers. In the content area of language arts, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette program performed at a level where new teachers were less effective than average new teachers, but the difference is not statistically significant. In the content area of reading the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators program performed at a level that was significantly less effective than new teachers. These two programs will be working with other programs in the state to identify ways to enhance the performance of their new teachers in the identified content areas.

"Most of Louisiana's teachers come from the University of Louisiana System campuses, and the quality of their preparation is paramount. That's why we are pleased to receive these results," UL System President Randy Moffett said. "Over the past few years we have increased our focus on teacher preparation. UL System universities have redesigned education courses for the demands of today's classrooms. They require that students pass the PRAXIS exam before they receive their diplomas and guarantee the performance of new teachers. Their hard work has made a difference, and I commend our university presidents, education deans, faculty and students. There is some room for improvement, but it's clear that the work we've done thus far is making a real difference in the lives of Louisiana students."

Louisiana's Value-Added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model has been a collaborative effort involving the Board of Regents, Office of the Governor, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana Department of Education. The Carnegie Corporation of New York has provided \$800,000 in funding over a two-year time period, matched by \$1 million from the Board of Regents to conduct this groundbreaking research which will next focus on determining why some programs do better than others in preparing teachers.

"What's most exciting about this research is that later this spring state research teams will be able to answer many of the 'why' questions and disseminate valuable information to improve not only Louisiana's programs, but programs across the country," said Clausen. "Louisiana is truly leading the way and our students will benefit greatly from this work."

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