

**Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force**

**June 21, 2022**

**1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

*Iowa Room, 1-153*

*1201 N. Third St. Baton Rouge, LA 70802*

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Dr. Kim Hunter Reed called the meeting of the Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force to order at 1:11 p.m.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Cara Landry called the roll, and a quorum was established.

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Esrom Pitre	Senate Committee on Education
Ethan Melancon (designee)	LDOE
Kim Hunter Reed	Commissioner of Higher Education
Janet Pope	LA School Boards Association
Karen Peace	LA Association of School Executives
Nathan Roberts (designee)	LA Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Gladys Mouton	LA Association of Educators
Barry Erwin	Council for a Better Louisiana
Rep. Buddy Mincey	LA House of Representatives
Ronnie Morris (designee)	BESE
Sen. J. Rogers Pope	LA Senate
<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Rep. Mark Wright	House Committee on Education
Mike Faulk	LA Association of School Superintendents
Edward Parks	LA Federation of Teachers
Bruce Chaffin	LA State Association of School Personnel Administrators
Joy Rimmer	Association of Professional Educators of LA
Alex Jerrell	LA Association of Public Charter Schools

APPROVAL OF APRIL 11, 2022 MINUTES

**Commissioner Reed asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2022 meeting. On motion of Dr. Janet Pope, seconded by Dr. Esrom Pitre, the Task Force approved the minutes.**

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATES AND IMPACT

Mr. Ethan Melancon, Director of Government Affairs at LDOE, presented the updates from the 2022 Legislative Session Bills of Interest, noting that LDOE tracked more than 200 bills relevant to education during the 2022 Legislative Session. He highlighted four specific bills related to teacher preparation/certification, teacher preparation scholarships and salary increases, as well as highlighting six bills regarding retirement. Commissioner Reed asked whether SB 377/Act 244 had the reciprocity portion for other states as well as having the master's degree element for those in-state. Mr. Melancon elaborated on this bill by stating that it was a way to enable teachers coming from out of state to immediately begin teaching. Mr. Melancon spoke regarding the process moving forward on the certification and Praxis bills, indicating that once the Governor signs the bills, policies will be brought forth to BESE for approval and, following approval, LDOE will provide guidance for all the prep providers in the state. He noted the challenge that these laws are not codified in policy yet and individuals are reaching out to ask whether changes apply to their personal situations. Dr. Craig acknowledged that these policies will not be approved by BESE until August and most institutions start their semesters in August as well, which poses an additional challenge. Mr. Melancon added that the law trumps BESE policy and that other issues may lie in alternative certification programs, which were created by BESE. Rep. Mincey asked whether the reciprocity component had been satisfied and received an affirmative answer. Rep. Mincey noted that he has heard positive feedback from individuals who were blocked from being teachers because of these restrictions. He noted, regarding teacher pay raises, that the desire is to increase the salary of teachers. He added that he does not agree with providing incentives to school districts who do more, which may not be fair to districts who may not have the ability to do as much. Mr. Melancon responded that many school districts handle teacher pay raises in different ways and increases are not as easy to institute as some may presume.

Senator Pope noted that the 2022 Session was great for education. Rep. Mincey added that in the initial stages of working on the legislation that created the Teacher Recruitment, Recovery and Retention Task Force, he was advised that there was not a teacher shortage problem. He asserted that the work on elevating this shortage has put Louisiana ahead of the curve, as everyone is now talking about this deficiency in the teaching profession. Rep. Mincey noted that the work of this Task Force has helped highlight key issues and set a course for the future.

Mr. Melancon then gave an overview of the retirement education bills, indicating that only two made it out of the legislative process and are awaiting the Governor's signature. Dr. Roberts asked if the bill requiring a reading exam had passed and he was given an affirmative answer. He followed up with a question regarding whether LDOE will monitor the impact of the bill. Mr. Melancon responded that it was his understanding that the reading exam would be included in the Praxis. Senator Pope asked if this could be done without legislation. Mr. Melancon affirmed it could. Rep. Mincey added that sometimes legislation is necessary to maintain stability in rule changes. Mr. Morris asked if there was an indication of how much the teacher gap might close due to legislative actions. Commissioner Reed noted that according to the Department the Praxis legislation could impact up to one thousand teacher candidates, and that other legislation will help address the shortage. Mr. Melancon noted uncertainty in estimating the impact of all legislation on the teacher shortage.

Mr. Morris encouraged moving from reactive to proactive mode, to get ahead of the teacher shortage. He mentioned that he asked LDOE to conduct a survey regarding the teacher shortage, which generated a 70% response rate and reported an estimated shortage of 2,500 teachers. He asked whether and when this survey should be conducted every year. Rep. Mincey responded that anything being done is helping address the issue and that work needs to focus on the negative culture and tremendous workload teachers have to endure. Commissioner Reed added that there had been discussion regarding the timing of the survey and noted that, in a few months' time, the Task Force would be able to compare teacher preparation programs from this year and last year to see the difference this legislation has made. Rep. Mincey asked what is being done to communicate the Praxis legislation to students, who now may be eligible to enter teacher preparation programs. Dr. Craig responded that she will be meeting with LACTE, the Louisiana Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, to discuss this legislation and the most effective way to disseminate information to potential students who may be eligible if this restriction is lifted. Dr. Craig noted that some programs are hearing from students who are aware of the legislation and asking questions about their eligibility. Dr. Roberts added that they have been reaching out to students they know may be eligible for the fall. His institution is seeing a potential additional fifty students in the teacher pipeline. Dr. Craig added that, in her opinion, Rep. Mincey's bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation to expand the teacher pipeline.

Katherine Whitley, TRSL, gave an overview of the retirement bills that were brought forth in the past legislative session. In regard to a point in her presentation, Mr. Melancon asked whether BESE still had to certify the vacancy posted. Ms. Whitley stated that the local district had to certify that they are declaring critical shortage with both TRSL, and BESE and that this certification will stay in place. Several questions were raised related to the limitations for retirees to return to positions, in particular for those retirees filling special leave positions. Mr. Morris

asked about the reasoning for age and work experience provisions and Ms. Whitley said that she believed it to have originated in an overlaid provision in nursing faculty in the higher education sphere that was incorporated into this legislation. Mr. Melancon responded that, for context, return-to-work has not been the favored solution to fix the teacher crisis and the legislature is trying to limit these initiatives. Mr. Morris asked whether these limitations only apply to these special leave situations and not to the core subject positions; Ms. Whitley affirmed that this was the case. Mr. Morris asked if retirees could return in part-time or full-time capacity for these critical shortage areas. Ms. Whitley responded that critical shortage areas permit both. Ms. Whitley finished her presentation by announcing future information sessions for further clarification and noting that she is happy to share enrollment data in the coming months. Senator Pope asked about the reception of these retirement bills by superintendents. She responded that her presentation had gone well, and she encouraged attendees and their staffs to attend the informational webinar. Mr. Erwin asked for clarity on the critical shortage legislation and how it will affect retirees who return to work. Ms. Whitley stated that if a retiree comes back to a critical shortage position, whether full- or part-time, there is no suspension of benefits. She stated that there will be a bigger pool of teachers with an easier process to fill these roles. Commissioner Reed asked for clarification on return-to-work individuals and how they receive their retirement. Ms. Whitley stated that there is no suspension of retirement for those in critical shortage positions. There were further questions on those retirees who wish to fill a position that is not considered critical shortage and whether a district can declare a critical shortage beyond the core subjects.

#### UPDATES ON RECOMMENDATIONS TO DATE

Mr. Erwin transitioned to Dr. Craig, who provided background of what the resolution required the Task Force to accomplish, then outlined the recommendations accomplished to date and what is left to be done. Rep. Mincey asked whether work is being done regarding the recommendation on the content exam. Dr. Craig confirmed that they are working on this as part of Phase 2. Dr. Pope raised concerns on the teacher compensation piece, noting that the perception is that the average teacher salary is in the range of \$50,000 annually, though this number is considerably lower in rural parishes. She emphasized the need to pinpoint outliers so they are not forgotten in the statistics. She also noted the gaps in salary schedules, indicating that beginning teachers may start out at a decent salary but may not see the progression in pay over the years similar to individuals in other professions. This pay gap can affect retention of teachers. Dr. Craig responded that she would share these points of concern with Ms. LeBlanc-Cooper. Mr. Morris asked if the group has looked at teachers who have migrated from the classroom to administration and asked whether there are pathways being considered to incentivize teachers to stay in the classroom. Commissioner Reed responded that the group had previously discussed career ladders for teachers. Dr. Pope added that teachers may not see the incentive to move into leadership roles because the financial incentive is not worth the amount of time required by these

roles. She stated that when the salary schedule changed to be dependent on education level, many teachers did not see the benefit of stepping into these roles as they had to pay out of pocket for these extra credentials. Dr. Pitre added that some school districts have a designated ladder for teachers to go from regular teachers to mentors and then on to master teachers, with pay differences within these levels. Senator Pope stated that the group must also look at the national shortage of individuals going into school leadership positions.

Dr. Craig highlighted the Aspiring Principal Fellowship, Teacher of the Year program and LDOE efforts on teacher programs, including new teacher induction programs and a teacher experience pilot program. Dr. Craig stated that specific questions raised regarding these programs would be gathered and provided to Ms. LeBlanc-Cooper for response. Dr. Craig noted that LDOE is creating a new teacher guidance document for school districts, which highlights the five key elements for an effective teacher induction program, as well as upcoming events for teacher recognition. Rep. Mincey asked whether the Task Force had reached out to district-specific programs that have already implemented recognition programs similar to these, to glean best practices. Dr. Craig offered to relay the question to Ms. LeBlanc-Cooper. Ms. Gladys Mouton indicated that she knows individuals who have participated in this fellowship program and that they grew tremendously from the experience. Rep. Mincey suggested that it may be of value to reach out to districts who conduct similar programs to learn from their experiences. Mr. Melancon noted that EBR has a principal pipeline program. Mr. Morris added that he met with the Louisiana Association of Math Teachers on the quantitative assessment of the location of shortages of math teachers across the grades. He expressed interest in the specific count of math and science teachers, to determine the level of shortage. Dr. Pope stated that she is curious how individuals are selected for these programs and if LDOE is running these programs or using a vendor to implement. She identified programs in the past, such as ones operated by the Wallace Foundation, that provided stipends to future leaders, as well as an overflow of Title II funding that was utilized to help teachers. She observed that universities do not seem as involved in these teacher programs as they used to be. Mr. Morris stated that an education scholarship that he and his wife sponsor at a university has the stipulation that a student must be enrolled in the university to apply and he believes it may be more effective if application could occur before enrollment in order to draw an individual into that profession. He asked whether this stipulation is a university rule or one instituted statewide. Dr. Craig responded that this provision is stipulated by the university at which the scholarship is located.

Dr. Michelle DeMeulenaere, BoR, provided a preliminary status update on the listening sessions, which include listening sessions via Zoom and a survey to everyone in the state. Dr. DeMeulenaere then provided an overview of the structure of these statewide listening sessions. Mr. Morris asked who was selected to participate in the listening sessions; Dr. DeMeulenaere responded that participants were selected by their superintendent but that the survey is open to teachers and administrators across the state. Dr. Pope asked for clarification on the selection

process. Dr. DeMeulenaere responded that the superintendent selects the principal, who selects the teacher, who then selects the parent. Dr. Pope expressed concern that this line of selection could muddy the qualitative data, as these individuals could have the same line of thinking on education. Dr. Pope also noted that school boards are not represented in these listening sessions.

Mr. Morris stated that he is interested if certain responses of the listening sessions are coming from teachers who are relatively new to the profession or if these themes and concerns have been around for many years. Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that they have received 168 qualitative responses from across the state, but they are not hearing from everyone in these sessions. For this reason, they distributed the survey to collect quantitative data. Mr. Morris asked about the participation rate and Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that they received 5,900 responses out of the 40,000 teachers in the state. Dr. Pope asked how this survey was distributed and the timing, as both are crucial to generating a higher response rate. Mr. Morris asked what a representative sample size would be. Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that they hoped to be above 6,000 responses and that the survey will remain open for another two weeks. Ms. Mouton stated that her superintendent had not received the link until she sent it to him to distribute. Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that they put it in multiple newsletters and Dr. Craig added that Mr. Bruce Chaffin sent the link to all HR directors in the state, to send it directly to teachers. Dr. Pope noted the difficulty of collecting information in the summer and suggested that the sample size should be larger. Commissioner Reed stated that this does not have to be a “one-and-done” survey and teachers can continue to be polled. Rep. Mincey added that the survey he received said the deadline for completion was June 10<sup>th</sup> and that teachers may not be aware that it is still open. Dr. Craig responded that she would look into that. Rep. Mincey stated that efforts to collect this information should not stop in December. Mr. Melancon followed up that he believed that this conversation was continuing with Ms. Leblanc-Cooper and her team. Rep. Mincey stated his concern with the listening sessions and that the data could be skewed by selecting teachers without consideration of the diversity in teachers’ experiences. Dr. DeMeulenaere highlighted the efforts of Dr. Nathan Roberts and Dr. Pope in Lafayette with the teacher workshop as their panels shared real experiences. A number of suggestions were made to attempt to increase the teacher participation in the survey. Dr. Craig suggested that they reevaluate their timeline to continue to collect survey responses into August and the data can be presented at the October meeting.

Dr. DeMeulenaere then provided survey data and demographics. Dr. Pope asked if they have any idea of why teachers who have fewer years of experience have a lower participation rate. Mr. Melancon responded that, in his opinion, his age group is inundated with surveys and lack time and interest in completing them. Dr. DeMeulenaere continued with response data and added that Region 1, which is a more populated area, had the lowest response rate, which came as a surprise. She highlighted the demographics of respondents and noted that the rate of African American respondents is lower than the state average. Commissioner Reed asked if the listening

sessions and the survey ask the same questions and Dr. DeMeulenaere responded that the questions were slightly different. Commissioner Reed noted that Dr. Pope asked about school board participation in the listening sessions and other Task Force members raised concerns about participation due to teachers being out for the summer. It was agreed that Dr. DeMeulenaere will resend the survey. Rep. Mincey stated that superintendents need to encourage their teachers to take this survey. Commissioner Reed welcomed any ideas and thoughts from the group and committed to any actions needed to collect a robust response for this survey. Mr. Morris asked how many times the Task Force will meet before December. Dr. DeMeulenaere responded that the group will meet in August and November and then it the survey will be brought to the December Joint BESE/BoR meeting.

### DETERMINING FUTURE PRIORITIES AND TIMELINE

Commissioner Reed noted that the Task Force was asked for their thoughts on future priorities and additional work that needs to be done. Dr. DeMeulenaere provided an overview of member responses in ranking priorities from the original list. Dr. Pope asked about teachers' perception of how we can support them in the classroom. Dr. DeMeulenaere noted this point for future consideration and commented that teachers at the Lafayette teacher workshop identified specific forms of support that would be useful. Dr. Roberts listed more items of needed support that teachers spoke about at the workshop. Dr. Pope noted that many expressed discontentment with having to teach from a script. Dr. Roberts noted the pay discrepancy for college graduates who may go into engineering versus teaching. He asked whether the Board of Regents would be able to develop a form of tuition assistance to help mitigate the financial burden. Commissioner Reed responded that the Geaux Teach program could potentially help with this area of concern. Dr. Pitre stated that there used to be a program that would help pay for an in-service teacher to pursue a master's degree. Multiple Task Force members voiced their opinion on the importance of opportunities to advance their degrees. Mr. Morris asked if the Task Force has discussed recognizing the professional credential of national certification. Commissioner Reed responded that this particular topic has not been discussed. Senator Pope noted the tremendous number of education bills, including laws and resolutions, that came from the 2022 Session. He added that teachers and administrators cannot take many more directives that are coming down through new legislation. Dr. Pope added that there were twenty-seven bills related to new training for teachers, support workers and administrators. Commissioner Reed stated, in response to Sen. Pope's comments, that it would be interesting to see all that teachers are required to do. Dr. Pope stated that LSBA has a document that she would send to the Task Force. Dr. Roberts added that it would be wise to have superintendents make legislators aware of the breadth of the requirements added by new legislation, which would engage superintendents in helping legislators understand the requirements of teachers. Mr. Morris asked if the Task Force had talked about the social and emotional needs of teachers resulting from the ever-increasing teacher workload. Dr. Pope stated that others may say in response that teachers do not have

classroom management. Ms. Mouton added that burnout is also coming from an increase in requirements on administrative staff.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, the Task Force meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES & GUESTS

Name	Affiliation
Mellynn Baker	Board of Regents
Dr. Susannah Craig	Board of Regents
Dr. Michelle DeMeulenaere	Board of Regents
Cara Landry	Board of Regents
Hannah Courtney	Board of Regents
David Spicer	Louisiana Governor’s Fellow
Katherine Whitley	TRSL