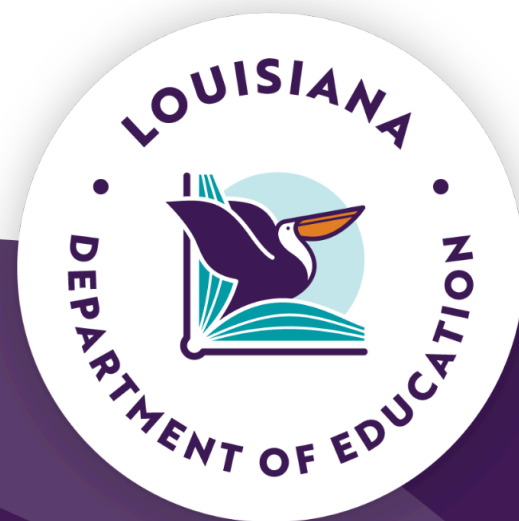


# Let Teachers Teach

## Recommendations

May 2024



DR. CADE BRUMLEY  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT



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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

May 21, 2024

RE: Let Teachers Teach Workgroup Recommendations

Dear Policymakers and Educational Leaders,

The State of Louisiana has made strong strides in educational outcomes. For example, Louisiana now holds its highest recorded ranking on both The Nation's Report Card as well as U.S. News & World Report. Further, in a recent Harvard/Stanford study, Louisiana was listed as one of only three states in the country to academically recover from pandemic learning loss.

The above-referenced accomplishments are a testament to students, parents, advocates, and policy-makers. However, without Louisiana's teachers, the state would not be celebrating these gains. Outside of a parent, there are few factors – if any – more important to academic success than a high-quality teacher. Keeping student outcomes at the forefront, actions can be taken to improve the profession of teaching – for teachers.

In an effort to support the teaching profession, the Let Teachers Teach (LTT) workgroup was launched earlier this year. Comprised of over two dozen educators, the workgroup explored complications within the profession and considered potential recommendations.

These recommendations should be taken seriously and will require efforts from various levels of systems and government. For example, some recommendations can be addressed at the school or school system level. Several require work from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) or from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Others require action from the State Legislature with signature from the Governor.

In order to support educators across Louisiana, we offer the attached recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cade Brumley".

Dr. Cade Brumley  
State Superintendent of Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kylie Altier".

Kylie Altier  
State Teacher of the Year & LTT Chair

# Introduction

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Created by Louisiana State Superintendent of Education Dr. Cade Brumley, the Let Teachers Teach (LTT) workgroup was tasked with identifying common classroom disruptions and unnecessary bureaucracies, as well as formulating practical solutions to help educators focus on the most important aspect of their job — teaching students.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) would like to thank the following LTT workgroup members for contributing their valuable time and knowledge to developing these vital recommendations:

- Kylie Altier, Chair of the LTT Workgroup, East Baton Rouge Parish
- Regena Beard, Zachary School District
- Kim Canezaro, Pointe Coupee Parish
- Barry Carter, Desoto Parish
- Dr. Sharon Clark, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, District 2
- Cory Craig, Bossier Parish
- Diana Curtis, Natchitoches Parish
- Bernita Dunbar, Concordia Parish
- Marvin Evans, Ascension Parish
- Rep. Barbara Freiberg, Louisiana House of Representatives, District 70
- Renee Gotreaux, Evangeline Parish
- Debbie Held, Livingston Parish
- Regina Humphrey, Rapides Parish
- Dena Jinks, Allen Parish
- Sabre Masters, LDOE
- Gladys Melancon, St. Landry Parish
- Dennis Pevey, Tangipahoa Parish
- Catherine Randall, St. Bernard Parish
- Kimberly Robinson, Morehouse Parish
- Ashley Samuel, Caddo Parish
- Sandra Saye-Foucqueteau, Zachary School District
- Valeria Taylor, Monroe City School District
- Dr. Monya Thomas-Criddle, Jefferson Parish
- Mary Lucy Thompson, Ascension Parish
- Tia Trahan, Lafayette Parish
- Lauren Waguespack, St. Charles Parish
- Holly Wilder, East Baton Rouge Parish
- Ebony Williams, Iberville Parish

# Recommendations

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## Professional Learning

Educators are required to participate in professional learning focused on academic curricula, classroom management, and engagement strategies. While teachers understand the importance of professional learning, they are often mandated to repeat the same sessions year after year. These redundant professional learning sessions can leave teachers feeling disconnected and undervalued. Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Tailor professional growth plans.** Rather than a generic or irrelevant professional growth plan viewed as paperwork and disconnected from the evaluation process, a teacher's professional growth plan should be tailored to their individual needs as identified by the refinement area assigned during the teacher's formal observation. Further, teachers should receive support and resources from school leaders to improve in the identified areas of professional growth.
- **Make collaboration meetings worthwhile.** Teachers should attend weekly, job-embedded teacher collaboration to meet with colleagues and plan for upcoming instruction based on student needs. Through collaboration, teachers can identify and develop effective strategies to improve student learning outcomes. Further, this will prevent the professional isolation reported by some teachers. It is imperative to understand that school leaders have a responsibility to ensure collaborations are meaningful and worthwhile.
- **Ensure ample time for classroom preparation.** Professional learning days on school calendars at the beginning of the school year are full of meetings, often leaving little time for teachers to actually prepare their classrooms. School systems should consider providing uninterrupted time for teachers to work in their classrooms prior to the first day of class with students.

## Required Trainings

Educators must complete legislatively-mandated trainings. It is common for teachers to complete these trainings outside of the normal school day and without compensation. Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Shift legislatively-mandated trainings to a cycle.** Policy revisions should be enacted to update the frequency of required trainings. The repeal of trainings in law would allow for a revision of their frequency and duration.
- **Enact pre-test exemptions from required trainings.** Policies could exempt teachers from required trainings, provided they pass a pre-test. This exemption would save teachers valuable time by honoring knowledge retained from previous training sessions on the same topics.

## Student Behavior and Discipline

Too often, students are not removed from class or school for extreme, disruptive behavior. Furthermore, some students are chronically absent creating challenges for teachers to ensure learning. Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Decouple student behavior and the school accountability system.** Policy revisions should remove suspension rates as criteria within the school and system accountability model.
- **Trust us — don't blame us.** Students who are excessively disruptive to the learning environment should be removed from the classroom.
- **Place ungovernable students at alternative sites for behavior support.** School systems should place ungovernable middle and high school students at alternative school sites to maintain classroom order for all students and while also providing an environment for misbehaving students to receive needed support.
- **Address challenges of chronic absenteeism.** Keeping habitually tardy or absent students on track is overwhelming for teachers, as they struggle to manage students' incomplete work and lack of structured instructional time. There must be engagement between school systems, district attorneys, juvenile judges, and safety-net organizations creating clear guidelines for addressing student absenteeism.
- **Limit cell phone use.** Devices should be off and put away throughout the instructional day.

## Non-Academic Responsibilities

The responsibility of supporting students' mental and behavioral health has fallen increasingly on teachers. Teachers should not be expected to be mental health professionals. Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Support student mental health challenges through trained professionals.** Access to mental health professionals should be available for students. Families should approve and be fully engaged if students are recommended for professional support.
- **Stop forcing teachers to be mental health professionals.** While teachers deeply care for the mental health needs of the students, they are not licensed mental health professionals. Asking teachers to fill this role places teachers in difficult situations. Further, it distracts from the important academic work for which they're trained and hired to perform. An increased amount of legislation requires teachers to perform mental health duties, and it's becoming an undue burden on the profession and a disservice to students.
- **Pay teachers for additional, non-academic work.** Teachers spend hours outside of the normal day completing work for which they are not paid. While we understand that teachers often plan, communicate with families, or grade papers beyond the normal day, there are non-academic assignments, such as required duty at extracurricular events, for which teachers should be compensated.

## Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers are often forced to “follow a script” and adhere to it strictly, rather than having the freedom to teach with integrity and utilize their own knowledge of best practices. While this may be helpful for novice or struggling teachers, the approach is not appropriate for the vast majority of Louisiana’s educators. Curriculum should be used to best serve the needs of students.

Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Eliminate the mandate to read verbatim from teaching manuals, excluding direct instruction.** Practices have been erroneously adopted which mandate teachers to “follow scripts” provided in many curricula. Scripts contained in curricula are for guidance in planning and implementation and should not be mandated at the system or school level to be followed verbatim unless it is a component of a direct instruction model.
- **Create a repository of high-quality, easy-to-access teacher resources.** LDOE regularly produces a plethora of outstanding guidance and resources around core content areas, but these documents can sometimes be difficult to locate, thus affecting accessibility and level of use. The LDOE website could be updated for easier retrieval of content-specific guidance and resources.
- **Provide scheduling, pacing, and implementation guidance for core content areas.** LDOE could further support teachers and school systems by developing guidance on scheduling, pacing, and implementing curriculum.

## Planning

Some teachers are forced to write lesson plans that are burdensome and sometimes do not align with curricula. This causes unnecessary paperwork and many hours of additional work, often outside of school hours. Therefore, the LTT workgroup recommends:

- **Effective teachers should have professional autonomy in their classrooms.** Teachers with an evaluation rating of proficient or higher should be allowed to internalize lessons within their curriculum and plan to use those materials to meet the individualized needs of their students.
- **Abolish antiquated lesson planning requirements.** Lesson planning should be modernized and represent an authentic planning process of what best fits teachers’ preferred method for planning, not an arbitrary template. At this point, most high-quality curricula provide lesson plans for teachers, eliminating the need for them to create their own lesson plans unless they so desire.