

Louisiana Department of Education

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TEN SCHOOLS OVERCOME UNACCEPTABLE LABEL

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORES SHOW OVERALL IMPROVEMENT

BATON ROUGE, La. – Improved School Performance Scores (SPS) will allow 10 Louisiana schools to exit the State's list of Academically Unacceptable Schools (AUS).

This improvement in School Performance Scores has also resulted in reducing the number of schools eligible for placement into the Recovery School District (RSD) by more than one fourth. Based on prior years' scores, there were 44 schools, including two school districts at risk of being placed in the RSD. However, districts and schools have improved their efforts leaving only 32 schools eligible for placement this year.

Education leaders are encouraged by these improvements.

“We want to congratulate the districts and schools for making good progress in spite of the challenges,” State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek said. “It’s encouraging to see schools responding to the need to turn schools around, especially considering that these schools have held the AUS label for up to three years. Their progress demonstrates what can be achieved when schools commit to identifying and focusing on critical issues. We need to maintain focus on building a world-class education system in Louisiana, and we look forward to the day when none of our schools are Academically Unacceptable.”

Among the list of schools designated AUS today, are 32 that have been assigned the label of AUS 4. The AUS 4 label means they are now eligible for State takeover.

“The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will work very closely with Superintendent Pastorek and local school districts as we consider the future of these schools that are eligible for placement in the RSD,” said BESE President Linda Johnson. “As always, our primary motivation will be to do what’s best for the children in each of those schools.”

The schools eligible for State takeover fall within 12 school districts across the state. Over the next few months, the Department will evaluate each school separately. Later in the fall, it will make a recommendation to BESE that schools be placed in the RSD or reconstituted by the local district. Officials say their first step in addressing this will be to meet with local superintendents.

“Interaction with district and school leaders is critical to this process,” continued Pastorek. “We realize the impact our recommendation will have on these school communities. Our aim is always to support schools through interventions that reshape their climates. But more intervention is clearly required in the case of these schools. While our primary responsibility is to meet the needs of the children in these schools, we also recognize the benefit of working closely with district leaders as well as the dedicated teachers and school administrators who invest so much of themselves in these students daily.”

The process for determining the Department’s recommendations will begin in late August and early September when superintendents in the impacted districts will have the opportunity to present proposed addendums to their current reconstitution plans.

“Beyond this, our teams will study test data and trends, review existing qualitative analyses, consider the progress schools have achieved through the implementation of their reconstitution plans, and visit each school site to interact with district and school leaders,” said Deputy Superintendent Ollie Tyler. “There is no universal prescription that we can administer to recover these failing schools and no precise recognized formula we can use to make these decisions. This is leading edge work for which there is little precedent. Our deliberations will involve fair assessments of the schools, but ultimately will center on the compelling interests of the children in these school communities.”

The Department identifies AUS schools based on their SPS, which is derived from test data (LEAP, iLEAP, GEE), attendance and dropout data, and graduation data if applicable. A school designated AUS must usually offer students the choice to attend another school within their district. In addition, each consecutive year that a school is labeled AUS, it moves to a higher level, ranging from AUS 1 – AUS 6+. Schools proceeding to higher AUS levels face additional and more stringent consequences.

Statewide, the total number of schools receiving a score below the 60 mark fell from 111 last year to 103 this year. The percentage of schools below 60 fell from 9.5% in 2007 to 8.9% in 2008. These calculations are based on the total number of schools with either an SPS or Assessment Index below 60.

Schools identified as AUS are located in the following districts:

- East Baton Rouge Parish (18, including 11 eligible for RSD)
- Caddo Parish (14, including 10 eligible for RSD)
- Jefferson Parish (8)
- Rapides Parish (3, including 2 eligible for RSD)
- Lafayette Parish, Richland Parish*, St. Landry Parish*, Pointe Coupee Parish (2 each)
- Ascension Parish, Avoyelles Parish, Calcasieu Parish*, City of Monroe, DeSoto Parish, East Carroll Parish*, Evangeline Parish, Franklin Parish*, Iberville Parish, Madison Parish*, Natchitoches Parish, Orleans Parish, St. Helena Parish*, St. James Parish*, Union Parish, West Baton Rouge Parish, and City of Bogalusa (1 each)
- Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Special Schools* (2)
- Type 2 Charter School (1)

*Denotes districts with one school eligible for placement in RSD.

Included on the list of AUS schools this year are four schools in East Baton Rouge Parish and one school in Pointe Coupee Parish that were placed into the Recovery School District (RSD) effective July 1, 2008. These schools will open this month under the direction of two public charter schools. Also included in the list is one regular education school that began operating under a State mandated Memorandum of Understanding July 1, 2008.

Department of Education officials also announced today that 21 additional public schools across the state must offer students the option to attend another school in their district due to their inability to attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading and math for identified subgroups. Designated as School Improvement Level 1 (SI 1), sanctions for these schools are based on the criteria outlined by NCLB in 2001. Two Louisiana schools fall into the NCLB status of School Improvement Level 2 (SI 2). These schools are required to offer students choice as well as the opportunity to receive Supplemental Educational Services (SES).

School Performance Scores for all public schools will be released in early fall. Today's announcement centers on the NCLB requirement that all states must release a preliminary list of schools required to offer students choice prior to the start of the school year. For complete details, including 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 scores for current AUS 1 – AUS 6+ schools, please refer to the attached appendix.

Also, individual school results for Spring 2008 LEAP, *i*LEAP and GEE tests are now available online at the Department of Education's Web site, www.louisianaschools.net.

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Appendix 1: 2007-2008 AUS Tables
Spring 2008 LEAP State/District/School Reports
Spring 2008 *i*LEAP State/District/School Reports
Spring 2008 GEE State/District/School Reports