



MARCH 2013

Pointe Coupee and E. Feliciana School Districts Hold Graduation Summits

On February 20th, **Superintendent Linda D'Amico of Pointe Coupee Parish School System** convened community and school leaders in a half-day summit to develop strategies to increase the district's graduation rate. The action team focused on strengthening enforcement of truancy policies, improving at-risk student participation in available intervention programs, better informing the community about school supports, and informing the community about the benefits and needs of early childhood education.

Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr., Superintendent of East Feliciana Parish School System, held a graduation summit on February 25th. School and community leaders agreed to increase the district's graduation rate by (1) improving the early detection system for grades four through six, (2) sustaining existing dropout prevention support services, (3) expanding Dual Enrollment, Industry-Based Certifications, Dual Credit, and Career Education programs, and (4) revamping the parish's early childhood education system to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready for success.

Both summits were hosted and facilitated by Louisiana's Promise, an initiative of Education's Next Horizon. As the state's leading dropout prevention program, Louisiana's Promise promotes higher graduation rates through research and community engagement. Since late 2009, Louisiana's Promise has assisted fourteen (14) school districts in developing "community" action plans to tackle the dropout problem. The first two districts assisted, Assumption Parish and Iberville Parish, currently rank 1 and 2 in the state in the percentage increase of cohort graduation rates from 2009 to 2011.

U.S. Graduation Rates Increase

According to a report released at the third annual Building a Grad Nation Summit, the U.S. is on track to meet the national Grad Nation goal of a 90% high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020. The national high school graduation rate has increased 6.5 percentage points since 2001, to 78.2%, with an average growth of 1.25 points each year from 2006 to 2010. As a result of this acceleration, more than 200,000 additional students received diplomas in 2010 than 2006. In large part, the growth was driven by significant improvements in African-American (from 59.2% in 2006 to 66.1% in 2010) and Hispanic (from 61% in 2006 to 71.4% in 2010) graduation rates. The South also contributed to this growth, with five of the top 10 states with the greatest improvements since 2006. The 2010-2011 Louisiana graduation rate stands at 70.9% up from 66.3% in 2006-2007. Click [here](#) for more information.

U.S. Dept. of Education Announces School Turnaround Grant Competition

At the Building a Grad Nation Summit, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Wendy Spencer, Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), announced a competitive grant program that will provide \$15 million in public funds over three years to reinforce and accelerate intervention efforts in the nation's lowest-performing schools. The new **School Turnaround AmeriCorps** will support the placement of a dedicated cadre of AmeriCorps members in persistently under-achieving schools. This approach seeks to increase student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates, as well as college- and career-readiness

in those schools. School Turnaround AmeriCorpos will expand opportunities for national service, and supply struggling schools with the new talent to support the implementation of school improvements plans. A notice of intent to apply must be submitted to CNCS by April 2. Applications are due April 23. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GO TO <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2013/02/announcing-new-school-turnaround-amicorps-program/>.