



East Baton Rouge Parish School System
1050 S. Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806
Phone (225) 922-5400 FAX (225) 226-7900
www.ebrschools.org

MEDIA CONTACT:

Chris Trahan

Director, Department for
Communications &
Community Engagement
(225)922-5620 office
(225)274-6657 cell
ctrahan@ebrschools.org

Media Advisory

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The East Baton Rouge Parish School System Receives Praise and Recommendations From National Accreditation Team

Baton Rouge, LA - From April 19-22, 2009, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System hosted an AdvancED Quality Assurance Review Team that visited the district and a cross section of its schools to evaluate the district's adherence to the AdvancED accreditation standards and to make a recommendation for national accreditation.

The Quality Assurance Review Team was comprised of 21 trained professionals from across the state and nation. The team reviewed district documents and performance data; interviewed over 1,000 district, school, and community stakeholders; conducted site visits to 20 schools; and observed district and school practices.

The team commended the district for: (1) strong and visionary leadership throughout the system, which has provided system-wide focus and purpose at all levels; (2) its strategic plan, which since its 2005 implementation, has provided clear direction and focus for system-wide continuous improvement; (3) the support and trust demonstrated by the Baton Rouge community through the passage of the sales tax referendum, which has provided for long-term funding for high quality staff and technology.

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Superintendent Charlotte Placide commented, “I am quite pleased with these findings. This is a historic moment for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. [This accreditation] serves in more ways than one as a validation of the work currently underway in our system and, quite frankly, a vindication of the many employees who show up each day and work tirelessly on behalf of the students we serve. I thank all of our stakeholders who continue to support us even in the face of harsh criticism.”

In addition, the team recommended that the district assemble a community-wide task force to comprehensively address system issues of poverty, student mobility, truancy, and parental involvement. According to the team, a review of the district profile statistics, interviews with district personnel, and community members clearly indicated that the challenges facing the district were societal issues that cannot be effectively addressed by the system alone. The team suggested that a community-wide task force would provide a forum to develop community-wide strategies and interventions that would ultimately result in increased student achievement system wide.

The team also recommended that the district design and implement a community-wide marketing strategy to address the perceptual gap concerning the quality of education provided by EBR parish schools. Interviews with district personnel and community stakeholders, as well as site visits to individual schools provided evidence that the quality of education provided by the system and public perception of the educational quality were out of alignment. The team reasoned that telling the human story of the EBR educational experience would provide a platform for attracting additional resources and support throughout the system.

The district will be developing plans to respond to, and address these recommendations. In two years, the district must report to AdvancED its progress in addressing the team’s recommendations.

“The accreditation process is a mechanism to help us maintain continuity in our system throughout this period of transition. We have had the opportunity to assess ourselves internally and have that assessment confirmed by an external party using a national protocol. The recommendations that the team has made will be incorporated into the district’s strategic plan, which can result only in systemic, systematic, and sustainable, continuous improvement—the goal of accreditation,” said Angela Lee, special assistant to the superintendent.

Overall, the team found that the East Baton Rouge Parish School System met the requirements for AdvancED accreditation. The team announced that it will be recommending the district for District Accreditation. Their recommendation will be reviewed and acted upon by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

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“Some of us wondered whether news of this national accreditation would be as publicized as the isolated incidents of inappropriate student behavior that often dominates the news. It was bittersweet to read it on page 3B of our local paper, to see a 2:06 spot of it on one of our local television station, and to see only a blurb about it on another of our three local television stations,” noted Chris Trahan, director of communications.

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