Mary A. Washington, a teacher at Northside High School in Lafayette, was installed Thursday as president of the Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE).

Washington, who has taught at Northside for 17 years, said at a press conference that collective bargaining for teachers throughout the state is at the top of her agenda.

Washington will take a leave of absence from teaching while serving her two-year term as president of the teachers' union.

"It was an extremely big decision for me to leave the classroom," she said. "I'm going to miss it."

The LAE will kick off a radio campaign next month to coincide with the beginning of the school year, she said. The focus of the three advertisements will be; "Parents and Teachers Working Together," "Discipline: Our Number One Problem," and "Learning is Your Child's Job."

"There's a new discipline law that parents need to know about," Washington said Thursday, referring to a law passed by the Legislature which gives teachers greater latitude in removing disruptive children from class.

Washington said the new law "empowers teachers," and will allow them to concentrate on teaching rather than discipline. "The focus will be on learning," she said.

Another priority will be upgrading the state's school buildings, she said. "The environment makes all the difference," she said.

During her two years as president of LAE, Washington said she would like to "take a public campaign around the state to let people know" that Louisiana's children receive a high level of education in the state's public schools.

Washington's support for the state's public school system has led to her appointment to numerous governmental boards, including Mayor Kenny Bowen's transition team and Gov. Edwin Edwards' Education Transition Team for school funding.

Washington is also a member of the Lafayette Public Education Fund board of directors and the advisory board of the Louisiana Systemic Initiative Project at USL.

Teens learn the business world, early

Students get first-hand knowledge about the work world thanks to 5 local firms


Five local businesses had some extra workers helping them for the past two weeks — for free.

Fifteen local students participated in the Teens Volunteer in Business (TVIB) program, which is part of the Tech Prep Consortium. The students worked four hours each morning in the businesses, learning about certain jobs in the business world and what it takes to get them.

"Through this real experience, the students are learning the importance of skills necessary to work," said Margaret Simon, TVIB coordinator. "It will help their transition from school to work."

From June 20-July 1, the students each morning reported to one of the five businesses — either AutoZone Distribution Center, First National Bank, MidSouth National Bank, Our Lady of Lourdes or Vastar Resources — learning about the ins and outs of the businesses.

At AutoZone, there were three Northside High Students participating in the program. Mike McCloud, regional distribution manager, paired each of the students off with employees, with each student spending a little bit of time in different jobs.

McCloud said his company is involved in programs like TVIB not only to help themselves, but to help their future employees better prepare themselves.

"AutoZone learned early that a lot of people aren't prepared for a more automated work place," McCloud said. "Book learning is good, but they weren't getting the practical applications."

Erin Broussard, a junior at Northside High School, spent her two weeks at AutoZone, learning about jobs in the transportation and clerical departments. Broussard said she took part in the program to "see how real working life is." But after spending one of the days working in a hot warehouse, doing less than glamorous work, she's decided this might not be for her.

"I think I am going to stay in school," she said. "I'm not going to rush into anything."

But another of the program's students, Shelley Guidry, worked at First National Bank and said the program confirmed her idea of what she wants to do later. The Lafayette High student said she had been thinking of majoring in management, and now she is sure it's for her.

Simon said these kinds of responses are just what the program is about: Helping the students decide early what kinds of careers they might be interested in, so they have time to take the courses needed to achieve that goal.
Exit exam applies to all under bill

By DOUG MYERS
Capitol news bureau

Private school and home-school students would be required to pass Louisiana's high school exit examination before graduating under a bill approved Thursday by a state House committee.

Currently, public high school students have to pass the test to receive a diploma. The state does not mandate the exit exam for private school students or home-schooled students, or for seniors who transfer into public high schools from home schooling programs, or who re-enter public high school from a degree-equivalency program.

However, the House Education Committee voted 8-3 Thursday to approve HB345, which would require all students to pass the five-part test before graduating. The bill makes no distinction between public and non-public students.

"If we're going to have a standard, then we should have it across the board," said Rep. Willie Hunter, D-Monroe, the author of the proposal.

The proposal may have a hard time passing the 105-member Louisiana House because similar bills have failed there in the past.

"I'm here to maintain standards. I'm not trying to favor any students," Hunter, D-Monroe, said.

Speaking in support of the proposal Thursday were representatives of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers and of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Among those speaking in opposition were representatives of private, church and home schools.

State Rep. Roy Brun, R-Shreveport, said private and home-school students should be left alone because the public schools have no business trying to tell them what to do at a time when Louisiana's public education system ranks near the bottom nationally.

Kirby Ducote, a lobbyist for non-public schools, said he can't understand the House Education Committee's decision to approve the proposal.

Ducote said the proposal should be defeated in the House because it is "clearly unconstitutional," and that "it's ridiculous that the committee would even consider this."

Apparently, Ducote said, the purpose of the bill is eventually to get rid of the exit examination for public school students. Hunter said he is pushing it because he wants public and private school students to be treated equally.

However, Ducote said, Hunter is part of an effort that failed last year to get the courts to kill the exit exam because public school students have to take it to graduate and non-public school students don't.

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal last year from opponents of the test, and that meant public school students must pass it to graduate. On the losing side in the case were some black students who had passed their coursework but had failed the exit exam required by BESE.

Beginning with the class of 1991, public high school seniors, in addition to their course work, have been required by BESE to pass all five sections of the Graduate Exit Examination to receive a diploma.

Hunter's bill would take the decision out of BESE's hands and put it into state law.

Each year, nearly 50,000 students take the test as sophomores. Nearly 40,000 students take the science and social studies portions as juniors. Failure to pass the exam denies a student a diploma.

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Exam

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-Voting for the proposal in the House Education Committee were Reps. Naomi Farve, D-New Orleans; Israel Curtis, D-Alexandria; Everett Doerge, D-Minden; Herman Hill, D-Dry Creek; Billy Montgomery, D-Haughton; Renee Pratt, D-New Orleans; Joe Salter, D-Florien; and Tommy Warner, Chalmette.

-Voting against the proposal were Reps. Brun, R-Shreveport; Carl Crane, R-Baton Rouge; and Johnny McFerren, D-Shreveport.
What's an eduction worth today?

**Business Writer**

Business and acade-

Educational leaders agree a better educated workforce will grow Acadiana's economy, and the trend toward new technology-based industries to replace those manufacturers relying on less expensive foreign locations.

But, state and local education experts warn the state's educational structure, combined with short-term business and public policies, could dampen future employment opportunities, effectively restricting economic growth.

James Caillier, system president of the Louisiana State Universities, said economic development cannot be separated from educational advancement. He said that, compared to other states, Louisiana ranks last in both economic development and education.

"If you look at where the state is in comparison to the rest of the country," said Caillier, "it's no secret that we need to restructure our (educational) goals."

One factor restraining educational and economic development, he claimed, lies with antiquated policies that reinforce vocational or trade school programs that are unable to prepare students for tomorrow's jobs.

"Years ago students could go to vocational school to become mechanics for example, and get right to work. Today, we need automotive technicians, two-year associate degrees in automotive technology," he said.

Caillier pointed out that experts agree that in 25 years, 80 percent of most jobs will require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree. And said, "If we are to have a prosperous economy or economic development for our middle class if all we can do is sell pizzas and hamburgers to each other," he said.

Marotta explained post-World War II economic development aptly demonstrates the important factors related to success in a global economy.

"Since the 19th century," he began, "economic development has been the key to success. It required a high degree of workforce development and education."

"We (state residents) will not have a prosperous economy or economic development for our middle class if all we can do is sell pizzas and hamburgers to each other," he said.

Marotta explained that as technology advances, the job market changes rapidly, and those who are not prepared to adapt may find themselves left behind.

"The human capital equation for post-modern societies is to work well and work smart, effectively growing an economy that may not have resources, labor or technical advantages.

"To prove his point, Marotta described Japan's rapid rise following its devastating defeat.

"Here was a country without any capital, little in the way of technical, advantages and no resources," he said. "Today, they can buy the natural resources from us, raw materials, ship them here, and make products that they can then sell here cheaper than we can manufacture here."

According to Marotta, Japan Inc.'s success has many facets, but he is convinced that the nation has learned to capitalize on its human resources.

Michael Smith, chancellor of Louisiana State University Eunice, said the value of education is its ability to give individuals a chance to obtain better paying jobs.

"And he added, it also means a better quality of life."

"In the same token, economists, earned wages are one factor that is directly tied to the quality of life you experience outside your working environment," he said. "There are important life qualities and differences related to educational achievement."

Smith said research shows that high school graduates live longer than high school dropouts and college graduates longer than high school graduates. College graduates have fewer divorces and better health.

"Mobility, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing job markets, Smith said, is also a function of education. He added, "better educated workers mean more flexible life-styles."

Caillier said he believes that the state's economic future is tied to developing a community college network. He said that, in this respect, Louisiana lags far behind other states in the country.

"Nationally, 45 percent of adults are enrolled in community colleges," he said. "In Louisiana, there are only 25 percent."

Caillier said the state could have as many as 40,000 more students if there was a community college system in place. He said so far, the state has only 10 community colleges.

"The problem is we are assigning, high school students other alternatives," the chancellor said. "They either have to go on a four-year institution, or to a two-year technical school, which puts us well out of step with the rest of the country."

**Workers Educational Attainment & Earnings and Projected Growth by Major Occupational Group, 1992**

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<td>Executive, admin., and managerial</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>80</td>
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"We (state residents) will not have a prosperous economy or economic development for our middle class if all we can do is sell pizzas and hamburgers to each other."
Industry-education teamwork means better vo-tech training

By Bill Brocato
Business Writer

KIDS CAN DO REAL THINGS.

That’s what New Iberia business leaders, city officials and parish school board employees heard during a Wednesday teleconference sponsored by the Iberia Parish Industry and Education Council (IEC).

Joan Wilson, a vocational educator in the Iberia Parish School Board system and IEC chairperson, said Wednesday’s teleconference was presented to better inform area educators, government officials and industry leaders as to new changes implemented in vocational programs throughout the United States — programs that give secondary students more responsibility and realistic occupational experiences.

Following enactment of the 1994 School to Work Opportunities Act, Wilson said, state education commissions are having to grapple with implementing their programs at local levels.

A major concern facing Louisiana educators, she added, is how much flexibility will the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) give to local school boards.

Eugene D. Broussard Jr., a supervisor with the Iberia Parish School Board, said he believes changing the structure of vo-tech programs is long overdue. He said research indicates that industry leaders are far from satisfied with the work ethic of graduating high school students.

“Vocational education needs private industry’s input,” he said. “We need all aspects of industry brought into the classroom.”

Broussard said he agrees with Wilson’s concerns, adding that innovative programs need to be closely tied to local industry and education resources. He said the teleconference best illustrated that successful implementation of local vo-tech programs will require that teachers be placed in a business environment, learn what are industry’s expectations, and then return to the classroom to develop a better educational curriculum.

“What we’re looking at is making vocational education more meaningful,” he said.

Broussard said research indicates that industry leaders are primarily concerned with worker tardiness, absenteeism and their work ethic. He said these “soft issues” can be better addressed if students believe their classroom experience better reflects the workplace.

New Iberia City Mayor Cliff Aucoin said industry leaders believe today’s public school system is not producing quality products. He said he agrees with implementing changes in the state’s vo-tech programs that would allow additional latitude in curriculum design, implementation, and “meaningful dialogue with industry representatives.”

Vince Cuevas, vice president of Allen Tank Inc., and chairman of the Iberia Industrial Development Foundation, said he believes industry needs to take a leadership role in helping to develop better vo-tech curriculum.

“We (industry representatives) have to understand that we’re not competing with someone in the next town anymore,” he said. “We’re in a global economy, competing globally for jobs and opportunities.”
Improved education a top priority, says Cravins

By Jonas Breaux

BREAUX BRIDGE - If Louisiana is going to stop being last on lists it wants to be first on and first on lists it wants to be last on - legislators are going to have to change how they do business, says state Sen. Donald Cravins.

Cravins told members of the St. Martin Parish School Board Wednesday that the keys to educational success for the state aren't from revenues generated by gambling, oil and gas or the lottery.

If Louisiana wants to move forward on the educational front legislators need to upgrade the state's education system and promote diverse forms of economic development.

"The whole issue of education, in general, will have to be discussed by the Legislature," Cravins said. "Education has to become a priority project."

Cravins agreed with board member Chip Maraist who said the voters of the state were lured into backing gambling because "legislators used education as a tool to get gambling passed."

The senator from Lafayette said voters were led to believe that a majority of the revenues generated from riverboat and casino gambling, the lottery and scratch games would be used to overhaul the state's last-on-the-list rankings in most national education statistics.

Cravins said gambling should be addressed on the local level, with each parish or community having the option of saying no to gambling.

"The way things are set up now you'll be able to put a riverboat in your back yard," he said. "People should be able to vote on the issue on the local level."

Cravins said the state also should look at discontinuing industrial exemptions for big business which have or are looking to locate in the state. The senator also said he favored a refining or hydro-carbon tax.

"I think we need to challenge companies like Exxon and Texaco to try to move if the exemptions are stopped," he said. "There aren't too many communities in America that want an oil refinery in their back yards."

According to Cravins, doing away with the industrial exemptions would generate more than $1 billion in additional revenues for the state.

"We need more diversification," he said. "We can't be another Silicon Valley because we don't have to trained people available to support such industries. That's why improving education is so vital."

"Bringing in just big businesses isn't always good," said Cravins. "We can't continue to work under the Wal-Mart mentality."

Cravins used the example of a new Wal-Mart store moving into a community in making his point about big business.

"When a new Wal-Mart comes to a community, sure, it provides some new jobs but it also causes jobs to be lost when small retailers are forced out of business because they can't compete with a large retailer," he said. "Wal-Mart pays minimum wage, employees work a 32-hour week and local business are forced to close."

"This is not true economic development," he said.
La. justice urges students to work against negatives

By CHANTE DIONNE WARREN

A federal judge ruled in 1988 that the state's judicial election system violated the U.S. Voting Rights Act by diluting black voting strength.

The judge's ruling led to the creation of a black-majority district for the Supreme Court, and Johnson won election in that district last year.

As a result of changes in the election system, Johnson said, she has watched the number of black judges in Louisiana grow from eight to 50.

"It takes courage to file a lawsuit against Louisiana... There are some courageous leaders in this community," Johnson said.

Johnson told students that the news media fail to report enough positive stories about young blacks.

"You've got to see black lawyers and judges..." Johnson said about the importance of role models.

"Have you ever read the Invisible Man?" she asked, referring to the novel by Ralph Ellison. "Sometimes you felt invisible."

Johnson warned the students not to expect success overnight, "Nothing happens in an instant, though we live in a culture where people expect immediate results. Just look at a young child. It takes time to learn to crawl, walk and then control a bicycle," she said.
Nearly 1,500 fail test
Many lawmakers blast exit exams
Baton Rouge Advocate
By DOUG MYERS

Nearly 1,500 Louisiana high school seniors failed their latest try at passing the state graduation test and won't get diplomas this spring, even if they have passed the necessary courses and haven't missed too many days of school, according to figures released Friday.

And some black lawmakers aren't too happy with that situation or the fact that 78 percent of those seniors are black.

Rep. Naomi Farve, vice chairman of the House Education Committee, said it is not fair for students to complete 12 years of school, pass all the necessary courses and then fail to get a diploma solely because of the exit exam.

"We need to allow these students who have completed 12 years of school to receive the diploma that they deserve," said Farve, D-New Orleans.

Farve and other black lawmakers continue to attempt to get the Legislature to do away with the "exit examination" requirement and use the test only as an assessment tool.

However, their efforts have been unsuccessful in a Legislature where only 31 of the 144 members are black.

Two bills to stop requiring that public school students pass the five-part test to graduate were killed last week in the Legislature—one in committee and another on the House floor.

Education officials say the defeat of the anti-exit exam proposals has nothing to do with race. They defend the exam by saying it helps ensure students have learned basic skills and have the ability to read, write and do arithmetic. State Superintendent of Education Raymond Arveson said all students should meet certain standards to be valid high school graduates.

A total of 1,486 seniors will not graduate with their classes this spring, but state officials won't know until later this summer exactly how many failed to graduate solely because they flunked the exam.

Even if they had passed the exit exam, some of those students might not be graduating because they haven't earned all the required course credits or they missed too many days of school to qualify for graduation.

And some of those students might not be graduating because they flunked the exam.

Statistics released recently by the state showed about 2 percent of Louisiana public high school seniors couldn't graduate on time in the past two years because they hadn't passed the state exit exam.

Each year, the state has about 37,000 public school seniors. Private school students are not required to take the exam.

Among groups that favor scrapping the exam are the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Legislative Black Caucus.

An effort by a group of black students to overturn the constitutionality of the exit exam recently failed when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

The black groups charge that the exam sometimes asks questions about matters students were never taught. For example, Farve said, it isn't fair to test students and require them to pass the test to graduate when they sometimes have textbooks that are 15 years old.

The state argues that everything asked on the test is included in the curriculum.

Rep. Roy Brun, one of the strongest advocates of the exam, said the exam only requires students to show minimal skills and prove they deserve a diploma.

"If we want to give students titles that don't mean anything, then we should do away with the exit exam," said Brun, R-Shreveport.

Rebecca Christian, who heads the testing program for the state Department of Education, said 1,486 of the 2,818 seniors who retested in April failed one or more parts of the five-part exam.

The seniors who retested in April had their highest passing rate in written composition (72 percent), followed by social studies (58 percent), English language arts (55 percent) and science (52 percent). They had the lowest passing rate in mathematics (46 percent).

The state has not released figures for individual schools and school districts.

Last week, East Baton Rouge Parish officials said 157 of the estimated 3,500 seniors in the district haven't passed the test. Another 85 seniors from previous years also failed the test this year.

To earn a diploma, public high school students must pass all five sections of the test, earn 23 course credits and meet attendance requirements. The tests are administered as part of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program.

High school students take math, English and written composition sections as sophomores and the science and social studies sections as juniors. Before their senior year ends, they can repeat sections of the test up to six times for the three parts taken as sophomores and up to four times for the two parts taken as juniors.

Students also can take the test after their classmates graduate. Those seniors who failed in April will be able to take it again in June.

"If we want to give students titles that don't mean anything, then we should do away with the exit exam."

— Rep. Roy Brun
R-Shreveport

Monday, May 15, 1995
Column 1 Article
Section 1A
By Mike Hasten
State Editor

BATON ROUGE - Board of Elementary and Secondary Education members say they never intended to reduce the number of days students have to be in class when they adopted a new policy in June.

But since its new rule brought widespread criticism when it was interpreted to say students had to be in school only 171 days instead of 175, the board is expected to vote Tuesday to rescind the earlier vote.

BESE's Elementary and Secondary Education Committee voted 6-3 Tuesday to go back to what was basically the original 175-day policy.

BESE member John Bertrand of Crowley said he received numerous resolutions from schools and school boards protesting the new policy. But with the committee vote Tuesday and the expected board vote Thursday, "I believe we've got our school days back on track," Bertrand said.

"Everybody is against shortening the school year," he told board members, "and I don't want students to be cheated out of an education."

Louisiana technically requires 180 days of school but five days can be dismissed for emergencies, educational activities, parent-teacher conferences, staff meetings and teacher training sessions.

Most schools in the state extend the five days by having half-days of school and utilizing the rest of the days for conferences. Since teachers are to be busy all day, the entire day counts toward the 175.

The board in June said the Jefferson Parish school system was going too far with its 12 half-days, so it offered an option of having 171 classroom days, if a school board wanted that option. The action was then interpreted as requiring only 171 days next year, setting off the criticism.

The policy adopted Tuesday is basically the same as it is now, since the 171 days was to go into effect in the 1995-96 school year. It varies, though, because it allows school systems that have longer school days to accumulate time that can be used for an additional day off from class.

Most schools operate on a 330-minute class day. A few, though, have 360-minutes of class. At the end of six months, the schools might have an additional accumulated day that could be allotted for other purposes than having students in class.

Thirty-two states set their school year at 180 instructional days. Ohio requires 182 days and 14 states (including Louisiana) have 175-179 days.

The number of hours spent in class varies greatly, even among states that require the same number of school days.

Louisiana requires students to be in class 962.5 hours a year. If a school board had been able to use the 171-day option, students would be in class 940.5 hours.

In Wisconsin, which requires the same 175 days as Louisiana, students are in class 1,137.5 hours a year — 175 hours a year more than Louisiana students. But in Maine, the 175 days equal only 875 hours of instruction — 87 hours fewer than Louisiana. Maryland and Tennessee
By Mike Hasen

State Editor

BATON ROUGE - Board of Elementary and Secondary Education members say they never intended to reduce the number of days students have to be in class when they adopted a new policy in June.

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see, each with 180-day school years, have 1,170 hours of classes.

Bob Crowley of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, which represents a large number of Jefferson Parish teachers, protested the change back to the old policy, saying it puts more demands on teachers.

"A lot of demands are being put on schools and teachers to improve themselves with no time (off) and no money," Crowley said.
Parish program gets national coverage

A new alternative program in Lafayette Parish for children who have been suspended from school will be featured on the national news Wednesday in a story by Peter Jennings.

The story, which will be broadcast at 5:30 p.m. on KATC (Channel 3) is about the recently-opened Student Referral Center at Holy Rosary Institute.

At the center, students can study, do homework and are given credit for completed assignments. They also can make up any tests they miss and go to the center for seven hours during school sessions and eight hours during the summer.

Twenty students now attend the center, but it can accommodate 40 students.

The State Department of Education is funding the project through the office for church-based tutorial programs, and the Diocese of Lafayette provides the facility and coordinates the effort. The Lafayette Parish School Board also provides daily lunches for the students.

The coordinator of the center is Sister Marie Miksch, a former principal of a high school in Texas. Miksch said the center offers students personal attention from teachers.

“We talk about self-esteem, and we let them know that they are free to talk to their teachers.”

One of the unique things about the center is its emphasis on improving a child's self-esteem. Students are praised heavily when they do something good or something that is worthy of praise.

Another teacher at the center is Sister Lorraine Landry, whose diocesan Office of Parish Services is sponsoring the effort.

“Unlike the public schools, we can talk about God, we can pray, we can talk about values — all of these are such a big plus in helping the student face his or her problems,” she said.

The center also offers counseling sessions, both on an individual basis and in group sessions. Parents are expected to attend a parenting class during the day and in the evenings.

The program is voluntary. Students are allowed to participate only if they follow the rules, and non-compliance means expulsion.

The center comes at a time when Louisiana is desperate for ways to handle the decreasing number of students who finish high school. During the 1991-92 academic year, Louisiana recorded 128,000 suspensions.

Note: This article was based on an article by Barbara Gutierrez in "Acadiana Catholic."
The Lafayette Parish School Board voiced unanimous support of prayer in school Wednesday and will send a resolution to the Louisiana Legislature and the Governor urging them to pass similar legislation.

Board member Edward Sam added the item to the board’s regular meeting agenda. He said the issue of prayer in school is frequently discussed when he speaks to his constituents.

“People in our area want prayer to be reinstated in our public schools,” Sam said. “One reason for so many misgivings in our school system is lack of prayer in school.”

Sam said school boards throughout the state have taken similar action on this issue, and he thanked the seven board members present at the meeting for supporting the resolution. Board member Billy Toups was not present at the meeting.

Besides Gov. Edwin Edwards and the Louisiana Legislature, the resolution will also be forwarded to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, members of the area legislative delegation, the Louisiana School Boards Association and to all city and parish school boards in the state.

The resolution “urges all cities and parishes across the state to join in an effort to reinstate prayer in the public schools by passing similar resolutions and uniting in a ‘grass roots’ movement for that purpose.”

The resolution states that prayer in school will “move this nation toward those religious ideals and beliefs upon which this nation was founded.”

In other business, the board:
- approved a salary hike for Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services Jerri Callier, whose salary will be raised from $60,150 to $64,050. A salary adjustment for Director of Instruction Burnell Lemoine was deferred for a future meeting;
- approved a voluntary teacher transfer policy that will give teachers more flexibility in their teaching assignments;
- and could not reach an agreement on a proposed automobile expense allowance that would raise the mileage rate allowance from $.23 a mile to $.26 a mile. This issue will be brought up at future employee relations committee meetings.

The Lafayette Parish School Board voiced unanimous support of prayer in school Wednesday and will send a resolution to the Louisiana Legislature and the Governor urging them to pass similar legislation.

Board member Edward Sam added the item to the board’s regular meeting agenda. He said the issue of prayer in school is frequently discussed when he speaks to his constituents.

“People in our area want prayer to be reinstated in our public schools,” Sam said. “One reason for so many misgivings in our school system is lack of prayer in school.”

Sam said school boards throughout the state have taken similar action on this issue, and he thanked the seven board members present at the meeting for supporting the resolution. Board member Billy Toups was not present at the meeting.

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The Lafayette Parish School Board found another temporary home for its school away from school Wednesday when board members agreed to lease a building in the northeast area of the city.

The new home for the facility is a 13,750 square foot shopping center on the corner of Carmel Drive and Louisiana Avenue.

At its regular meeting, the school board approved leasing the building on a monthly basis for $3,200, not including utility and custodial services, beginning Nov. 2.

The school board staff recommended the shopping center after touring five locations for the program Tuesday with board members Clarence Baldridge and Mary Lib Guercio.

The school away from school, which serves students who have been expelled form Lafayette Parish schools, has been operating at the Girard Park and Recreational facility but must be moved because of renovations and construction there in the next few months.

The board may again decide to use the Girard Park facility after construction is completed.

Superintendent Max Skidmore said eight students are attending the school so far this year and operation is progressing smoothly.

Skidmore said the students at the school away from school complete assignments and do class work much the same as other students.

“The emphasis is helping them get back on the right road again,” Skidmore said.

Skidmore said the school is not a high pressure or punishment-oriented environment as some people might think.

“It’s not a prison,” Skidmore said. “It supports learning.”

The difference, Skidmore said, is that the students are taken out of the regular school environment, which they have not succeeded in, and are able to work with an instructor on an individual basis.

The program is also called CAPS, an acronym for Continuing Academic Programs for Students.

In other business, the school board:

- approved a report on Chapter 1 programs, which are conducted in 21 Lafayette public schools;
- granted the school board staff permission to apply for subgrants for the Goals 2000 program;
- approved an update on the Edulog system, a computerized transportation management system scheduled to be completed for Lafayette schools by the end of the 1994-95 school year.
OPELOUSAS - The St. Landry Parish School Board will decide on a new schools superintendent Thursday and although the list of applicants may be short, board president Ronald Carriere feels the parish will get a qualified leader.

"We've got good quality applicants," stated Carriere during a telephone interview Wednesday, "but I'd be lying to you if I said I wasn't disappointed by the lack of interest."

Four applicants, three from St. Landry Parish, expressed interest in the parish's top education position. On Tuesday, three were interviewed by board members. Lanny Moreau, Freddie Alfred and Ryan Fontenot, all of St. Landry Parish, fielded questions from board members. Juanita Haydel, a middle school principal from St. Charles Parish, indicated by fax on Monday that she was withdrawing her application.

"I talked to a former superintendent in another parish today and he seemed to sum up why we may have a shortage of applicants in St. Landry," Carriere said. "First of all, he said, the position is very political, it's time consuming and the position only pays a few thousand dollars more than most administrative jobs. They're just not beating down the doors for this job."

Moreau, of the Arnaudville-Leonville area, is the principal of Arnaudville Elementary. He formerly served as principal of Arnaudville High School before the creation of Beau Chene High, a consolidation of Sunset, Lawtell, Leonville and Arnaudville High Schools.

"Lanny is a fine administrator. He has an excellent reputation as an educator in this parish," noted Carriere.

Freddie, an educator at Eunice Junior High School, is the only black applicant.

"I don't know much about Freddie, to be perfectly honest, but everyone I've heard about him has been positive. I'm sure he'd make a fine superintendent," Carriere said.

Ronald Carriere

Fontenot, assistant superintendent in charge of operations and former principal of Lawtell High School, is a longtime educator. "Ryan is a highly respected educator and administrator. He could serve us well," Carriere said.

Unlike most selections, Carriere, who has served under five different superintendents, feels a strong sense of independence from his peers regarding this choice.

"This is the most objective selection process I've been through. I honestly couldn't call this vote. Everybody is being so independent on this one. There's really no coalition," Carriere said.

The swing votes may prove to be the board's three new members, Armand Castille, a former state representative, Mary Jane Guidry and Quincy Richard.

Although he feels the next superintendent's approach will likely be dictated by the individual's personality, Carriere says the board is not waiting for guidance.

"We have an agenda. Our immediate concern is the implementation of a high-tech program in the schools. We're currently getting ready to place some of those in the labs. We're building classrooms. Shifting everything around is a pretty awesome job, but it's all coming together," Carriere continued.
be counted as suspended or expelled," Fleet explained.

Outgoing School Board member Ron Johnson said he originally proposed the idea of alternative schools after examining the patterns of children who were suspended and sent home unsupervised and away from the classrooms.

“When I saw kids suspended, by and large they were children of working parents. The child was receiving little supervision and often roaming the street or malls and stores and committing criminal offenses,” he said.

Under the alternative schools, parents have the choice of sending their children to the program, where the suspension or expulsion won’t be counted against the child.

The Second Opportunity for Success Academy (SOS), which houses students who have long-term suspensions or expulsions, fills a void for students who might otherwise have to stay at home.

When a 10:30 a.m. bell rings, a dozen students head for Julie Cherry’s math class.

Joseph, eighth grade, walks in with an unsettling demeanor. He’ll be spending the rest of the school year at Valley Park in the SOS program after he was expelled for bringing a beeper to school and refusing to cooperate with the school’s principal.

He didn’t explain why he brought the beeper to school, but he said that since he’s been at Valley Park, things are “going better for me.”

Denise sits behind Joseph and starts helping him work out several of the distributive property problems he’s confused over.

Valley Park teacher De’Ette Wilson instructs her class Friday morning. Facing the camera are, from left, Kedrick Wilson, Denise Gaines and Jewan Young.

She was expelled for fighting and losing her temper.

“People calling me names and the “B” word and then to call my mother names too ... that makes me angry,” Denise said. She also fell out with her teacher on a couple of occasions.

“I had a teacher who called us dumb and told us to shut up. I’d burst out answers because she wouldn’t call on me,” said Denise, slightly frowning.

Since spending the past two weeks in the alternative school, Denise said she doesn’t want to leave.

“Here they give you a second chance and then they talk to you and encourage you. I do my work and try to stay out of trouble,” she said.

De’Ette Wilson, teacher in the SOS program, takes the time to find out the kinds of problems her students face.

“We are not dealing with kids who go home to a nice, happy family,” Wilson said.

Wilson said some of her students come from group homes and others from broken homes.

“We have to take all that into consideration. Some don’t have a mother and father to go home to... and when kids come, they come with more than a suspension or an expulsion,” she said.

In some cases, students are up all night and come to class inattentive and sleepy.

That leaves Wilson with the responsibility of keeping her class sessions lively enough to keep her students awake.

Parental involvement is another requirement for the program’s success.

Parents must agree to provide transportation for their children.

Just ask Trish, who commutes with her mother or grandmother to the school every day from Zachary — a one-hour drive.

So far, she’s managed to pull her grades up at the school’s Help, Opportunity, Promotion, Education program.

Trish is two grade levels behind, but she’s made some progress since she began attending the school.

“At my other school I made D’s and F’s. Now I’m making A’s, B’s and C’s,” she said.

The majority of the students in the program are at least one or two grade levels behind and are at risk of dropping out of school.

Hattie Young arrived at the school one day at noon to visit her son Jewan, who is a seventh-grader in the SOS program.

He was expelled for an uncontrollable temper, but is slowly learning to deal with the problem, Young said.

“He gets confused when people yell at him. When he gets pushed, he lets his feelings come out ... This (alternative program) is the best thing to happen for him. If the kids come out here, it takes them off the streets,” Young said.
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Valley Park teacher De’Ette Wilson instructs her class Friday morning. Facing the camera are, from left, Kedrick Wilson, Denise Gaines and Jewan Young.
La. public school enrollment continues decade-long slide

By DOUG MYERS
Capitol news bureau

Continuing more than a decade-long slide, Louisiana public school enrollment dropped by nearly 12,000 students this school year to about 754,000. That is far less than the nearly 793,000 counted when enrollment peaked in 1986.

"We keep thinking at some point it's going to bottom out," said Marilyn Langley, chief of the state Department of Education's Office of Management and Finance.


Livingston, Ascension, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, and Feliciana and Lafayette parishes are among only 11 public school systems to gain enrollment over the past year. Of those, only Livingston showed a significant gain with 394 more students, bringing total enrollment there to 19,191.

East Baton Rouge, which lost 822 students this year, is the second-largest school district with 55,614 students overall. It trails only Orleans Parish, which has almost 80,000 students.

Gary Mathews, superintendent of East Baton Rouge public schools, said the state's report showed that enrollment dropped by nearly 12,000 students this year to about 51,954, 4.4 percent fewer than last year. The rest of the area gainers grew by fewer than 100 students.

Even with a dramatic decline in enrollment in recent years, East Baton Rouge still remains the state's second-largest school district with 55,614 students overall.

It stands only Orleans Parish, which has almost 80,000 students.

Continuing more than a decade-long enrollment decline, East Baton Rouge public schools and other officials have said they hope voter passage of a school improvement package will help reverse the downward trend.

East Baton Rouge gained nearly 1,000 students over the past year, but Mathews, superintendent of the district, said the downward trend will not end immediately.

Despite the overall decline, enrollment in the rest of the area gainers grew by fewer than 100 students.

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Continuing more than a decade-long enrollment decline, East Baton Rouge public schools and other officials have said they hope voter passage of a school improvement package will help reverse the downward trend.

Broken down by school systems, private school enrollment jumped by nearly 1,000 students this year to about 61,282 students.


Enrollment ups and downs

Most school districts in Louisiana lost students since last school year. Most districts that did pick up students are in the greater Baton Rouge or Lafayette areas. Number of students enrolled in each system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School System</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LaSalle</td>
<td>2,733</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livingston</td>
<td>18,797</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pointe Coupee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>4,308</td>
<td>-257</td>
<td>-6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helena</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>-98</td>
<td>-6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>3,237</td>
<td>-653</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STATE TOTAL 765,383 753,722 -11,661 -1.52%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Enrollment

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

Her staff plans further analysis to see what factors have hurt the most.

Langley said the statewide decline can't be blamed exclusively on children switching from public to private and parochial schools.

She said statistics indicate that about as many students enter public schools from private schools each year as leave to attend non-public schools.

Others said home schooling explains some of the loss.

Elizabeth C. Scoles, director of the Division of Education Finance for the state Department of Education, said several school districts contacted by her staff cited home schooling as a factor.

From 1994 through last school year, the number of "home schoolers" around Louisiana increased in the state increased from 5,808 to about 2,500 pupils — about 5,300 students. No statistics were available for the current school year.