Louisiana's school superintendents have voted to support state Superintendent of Education Raymond Arveson amid rumblings on the state's top school board about his job performance.

The Louisiana School Superintendents Association late last week passed a resolution supporting Arveson, two days after a newspaper column noted some members of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education privately questioned his performance.

BESE directs Arveson, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the state Department of Education.

James V. Soileau, executive director of the superintendents association, said the resolution favoring the ex-superintendent of East Baton Rouge Parish public schools was passed Friday during a meeting with the Department of Education.

Soileau said copies of it are going to be sent to Gov. Edwin Edwards, BESE President John Bertrand and The Advocate.

"He's (Arveson) always there to support and defend and to get involved," Soileau said Monday. "He's a good leader."

Soileau said Arveson has "done as much and more so" than previous state superintendents of education and would do more if there wasn't such a "scarcity of money."

Soileau said Arveson effectively worked earlier this year to get the Legislature to pump more dollars into the nearly $1.8 billion funding formula for the state's 66 public school districts.

Arveson said the superintendents' support is "much appreciated" and added that he has always "worked well with them."

Arveson said all he can do is do the best job possible.

"I have a job to do and I do it to the best of my ability," Arveson said. "What more can you say?"

In recent months, some board members have been giving Arveson's staff a hard time in public — and blasting Arveson in secret for the department's handling of education programs.

Arveson has had problems, in part, because not all board members wanted him to be permanent when he was signed to a three-year, $95,000 annual contract in February.

As a result, the last 20 months haven't been easy for Arveson.

He's had to deal with budget cuts, with employees in the state trade school system getting in trouble and with board members chiding his staff members for reportedly not doing what they were told to do.

Arveson has also had to deal with allegations that his staff is keeping information from some board members.

Arveson hasn't been evaluated by the board since the contract was signed, although his contract calls for it each year — in July 1993, in July 1994 and in July 1995.

The contract also says that Arveson could be removed if a majority of the board finds him guilty of "incompetency, insubordination, or willful neglect of duty."

Such a move would require six votes on the 11-member board after Arveson is given written notice of the charges and a hearing is held.