



**BELIEVE TO  
ACHIEVE PRIORITY**

Develop and retain a diverse, highly qualified educator workforce.

## BRIDGET BERRY

### Creating a District Wide Virtual Mentoring Program

#### Introduction to the Louisiana Public Interest Fellowship Program

In 2018, the Department, in partnership with the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, launched the inaugural Louisiana Teacher Public Interest Fellowship. The fellowship allows recipients to spend the upcoming school year advocating for a key education initiative of their choosing. These initiatives are aligned to the Department’s priorities. Winners are chosen from the previous year’s list of Louisiana Teacher of the Year Finalists. The fellowship is supported by a stipend of state funding that is utilized to offset the costs incurred while conducting the work of the fellowship.



*The PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIP is another important program helping to drive educational progress in our state, enabling selected Teacher of the Year finalists to focus their talents on the initiatives they are most passionate about. By investing in some of our best and brightest professionals in this manner, we are able to support their involvement and influence in projects that will have a positive impact for Louisiana students and schools. - Sandy Holloway, BESE Board Member*



*Bridget Berry*  
2021 Public Interest Fellow



*Trinette Wallace*  
2021 Public Interest Fellow



*Jessica Borland*  
2020 Public Interest Fellow



*Christopher Dier*  
2020 Public Interest Fellow



*Tasha Jolivet-Jones*  
2019 Public Interest Fellow



*Kimberly Eckert*  
2018 Public Interest Fellow



## Meet the Fellow

Bridget Berry is a 27-year educator and a 2021 Louisiana Teacher of the Year Finalist. She presently serves as the fifth grade reading and English language arts teacher at STEM Magnet Academy of Pointe Coupee. She is a native of Vernon Parish and began her teaching career in 1994 in Fort Polk, Louisiana. She later moved to Rapides Parish where she taught at Phoenix Magnet Elementary. After moving to Pointe Coupee, she taught at Rougon Elementary where she earned National Board Teacher Certification as a middle childhood generalist. In 2006, she transitioned into educational leadership roles in Pointe Coupee Parish as the assistant principal and principal of Valverde Elementary, then later as an instructional supervisor. In 2017, she made a personal decision to return to the classroom. She has been teaching at Stem Magnet Academy of Pointe Coupee since then, serving as school building level committee chairperson as well as a mentor teacher. Berry earned a Bachelor's in Education degree from McNeese State University and a Master's in Educational Leadership from Northwestern State University.



## The Initiative

In Pointe Coupee Parish Schools (PCPS), teacher retention has been a challenge as only 38 percent of first year teachers have continued in the school system in the past five years. Therefore, Bridget Berry's proposal is to develop and implement, *Pass It On*, a district-wide virtual mentoring program for first year teachers. The goal of the *Pass It On* program is to give new teachers the support, knowledge and guidance needed through mentors and district-wide professional learning communities. With experienced teachers in the district sharing insight, ideas and support, the program is aimed to foster growth in the new teachers as well as result in a higher retention rate for teachers in PCPS.



## Overarching Fellowship Goals

The *Pass it On* program is organized to include a New Teacher Induction and eighteen virtual after-school professional learning communities through Zoom for new teachers to PCPS during the 2021-2022 school year. The goal of these impactful mentoring courses is to allow new teachers in the PCPS district to:

- Learn from and collaborate with expert mentor “star teachers” in PCPS. These teachers will deliver short keynotes, give guidance and share best teaching practices during the virtual professional learning communities.
- Participate in virtual professional learning communities with other schools in the PCPS district and receive support in classroom management strategies, lesson planning strategies, effective instructional strategies and support strategies for student well-being while networking with other teachers in the district.

These courses will allow PCPS to:

- Provide support and guidance to new teachers and build faculty capacity at all schools.
- Facilitate a district-wide professional learning culture in which new teachers can be provided with a variety of mentor teachers in which they can learn effective teaching strategies.
- Increase the PCPS teacher retention rate.

These courses will allow the mentor teachers to:

- Communicate and share their knowledge, wisdom and best teaching practices with new teachers and become lead teachers.



## Structure

New teachers will attend a New Teacher Induction before the school year begins and eighteen virtual *Pass It On* meetings held after-school every other Monday. An Instructional Coach will work specifically with new teachers throughout the school year. Each new teacher will also be assigned a mentor.

## Team Members

TEAM MEMBER	TITLE	ROLE
Bridget Berry	Fellow	Research, plan meetings, conduct meetings, complete needs assessments
April Dos Ramos	Instructional Coach	Assist in planning program; help conduct meetings, provide in classroom support and guidance to all first year teachers
Dr. Rosie Courville	Instructional Coach (Literacy)	Assist April Dos Ramos in providing guidance to first year reading teachers
Rebecca Stephenson	Director of Professional Development	Advisor
Natalie Aguiard	Director of Human Resources	Advisor, Provide data regarding personnel
Kim Canezaro	Superintendent of Schools	Advisor
Karla Jack	Title 1 Director	Advisor
Stephen Langlois	Chief Financial Officer	Advisor
Lacy Morel Bueche, Aiman Bayoumi, Cleotha Johnigan, Tara Glaser, Carolyn Wells, and Kent Smith	Principals of Schools	Advisors/Guest presenters
Mentor Teachers		Mentors to the new teachers
Star Teachers/Expert Teachers		Guest presenters
New Teachers		Mentees

## Budget

Stipend Pay.....	\$14,495
Retirements .....	\$3,605.12
Medicare.....	\$210.18
Materials and Supplies .....	\$566.41
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$18,876.71</b>



## Timeline



## Pre-Implementation Planning

ACTION STEPS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
Research new teacher's needs/induction	Berry	June/July 2021
Meet with District Leadership Team	Berry	June 7, 2021
Inform school board members	Berry	June 24, 2021
Collaborate to plan year	Berry/Dos Ramos/Stephenson	June/July 2021
Meet with Human Resources for new teacher information	Berry/Aguillard	June/July 2021
Meet with District Leadership Team	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 13, 2021
Create Microsoft Teams for new teachers, mentors, and principals	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Plan for New Teacher Induction	Berry/Dos Ramos/Stephenson	June/July 2021
Create PowerPoint for New Teacher Induction	Berry/Dos Ramos/Stephenson	July 2021
Create handbook for new teachers	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Create contract for new teachers and mentors	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Ask principals about specific needs of the new teachers	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Create a brief needs assessment	Berry	July 2021
Examine responses of needs assessment	Berry	July 2021
Call new teachers to inform them of New Teacher Induction	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Begin contacting and organizing speakers for Virtual Zooms	Berry	July 2021
Meet with Professional Development Director to plan in-person Induction with new teachers and plan for first Zoom meeting	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021
Finalize dates for <i>Pass it On</i> virtual meetings	Berry/Dos Ramos	July 2021



## Resources Used for Research and Planning

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- Gonzalez, J. (2013, Aug. 29). Find your marigold: The one essential rule for new teachers. *Cult of Pedagogy Blog*. <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/marigolds>
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- Mason, V. L., (2021). *Teach up! Empowering educators through relationships, rigor, and relevance*. International Center for Leadership in Education.
- Mekos, T. (2018, Feb. 5). The tale of the spoon: Closing the achievement gap one utensil at a time. *Southern Regional Education Board Blog*. <https://www.sreb.org/spoon>
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- Thompson, J. (2018). *The first-year teacher's survival guide* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
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- Whitaker, T., Whitaker, M., and Whitaker, K. (2016). *Your first year: How to survive and thrive as a new teacher*. Routledge.





## Phase One

### Goals

- Provide new teachers with an in-person induction to start the school year successfully
- Provide new teachers with five virtual professional development sessions to continue the school year with the supports that are needed
- Examine continuous feedback from teachers as they begin their school year

DATE	MEETING TITLE/TOPIC	RESOURCE LINK
August	New Teacher Induction	
August 16	<i>Pass It On: Inspiring Start to the School Year</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
September 13	<i>Pass It On: Ask the Teacher Panel Discussion</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
September 27	<i>Pass It On: Using Reflective Practices to Empower and Engage Students</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
October 4	<i>Pass It On: Cool Tools for Implementing the Curriculum with Miranda Britt</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
October 18	<i>Pass It On: Principal and Teacher Panel on COMPASS Observations</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>





## Phase Two

### Goals

- Work on getting teachers excited and engaged during the holidays as it is one of the hardest teaching times of the year
- Work with the teachers needing the most assistance in finding their way in teaching
- Continue hosting *Pass It On* meetings based on needs of new teachers

DATE	MEETING TITLE/TOPIC	RESOURCE LINK
November 1	<i>Pass It On: Part I of the Blossom and Thrive Series with Literacy Instructional Coach, Dr. Rosie Courville</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
November 15	<i>Pass It On: Part II of the Blossom and Thrive Series with Literacy Instructional Coach, Dr. Rosie Courville</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
November 29	<i>Pass It On: The Teacher Self Care Edition</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
December 13	<i>Pass It On: Teacher Reflections As We Look to 2022</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
January 10	<i>Pass It On: Choose to Teach and Mastering the Second Semester</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
January 24	<i>Pass It On: Ask the Teacher Featuring Pointe Coupee Teachers of the Year</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>





## Phase Three

### Goals

- Plan spring meetings toward needs that include supporting diverse learners, pacing and planning for testing
- Planning a great culminating meeting in the spring to celebrate success
- Plan to survey principals and teachers to plan for the upcoming year

DATE	MEETING TITLE/TOPIC	RESOURCE LINK
February 7	<i>Pass It On: Special Education</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
February 21	<i>Pass It On: Persevering Through Challenges</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
March 7	<i>Pass It On: Panel Discussion with Assistant Principals</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
March 21	<i>Pass It On: Relationships, Rigor, and Relevance</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
April 4	<i>Pass It On: Assessment</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
April 25	<i>Pass It On: Pupil Progression Plan</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>
May 9	<i>Pass It On: Finding Your Marigolds and Reflections</i>	<a href="#">Video</a>

### Note

During the final *Pass It On* session, the new teachers shared qualities great mentors possess and identified a person at their school who served as a marigold. The new teachers were each given marigolds by the PCPS superintendent for participation in the program. Teachers who were identified during the program as marigold teachers were presented with a gift bag.





## In Conclusion

Throughout the school year, a total of 35 teachers participated in the *Pass It On* program with three additional long-term substitute teachers. Of the 35 teachers, the retention rate is slightly over 85 percent which is substantially greater than the 38 percent in previous years. Of the three long-term substitute teachers, one decided to enroll in a baccalaureate program to become a certified teacher. PCPS believes that several factors from the *Pass It On* program contributed to this success.

First, the *Pass It On* program was a true system-wide collaboration. Mentor teachers were guided throughout the school year with suggested topics for individual support as described in the new teacher handbook. The school system maintained an instructional coach whose sole dedication was the new teachers in PCPS. This instructional coach fostered a supportive, nurturing role throughout the process. In addition, presenters for the *Pass It On* meetings included school and school system leadership, instructional coaches, veteran teachers and even the new teachers had opportunities to present. Throughout the year, breakout groups on Zoom were utilized to foster a sense of community and collaboration with the mentees.

A second factor in the success of the program was that the session topics were based on a variety of stakeholder input. Principals, instructional coaches, mentors and mentees provided input through regularly administered needs assessments. Due to these needs assessments, the program facilitated a balance of both inspirational as well as pedagogical topics. The inspirational session with the highest ratings for feedback was when Mickey Smith, Jr., 2020 Grammy Music Educator Award Recipient, served as a guest speaker. For pedagogical topics, participants rated highly presentations by Miranda Britt, author of *The Tier One Curriculum Trap*, who discussed curriculum fidelity and Torrence Williams, 2017 Louisiana High School Teacher of the Year, who presented on reflective practices.

As PCPS transitions into the next school year, principals, instructional coaches and the new teachers who piloted this program will continue to be utilized in the *Pass It On* meetings for new teachers. However, there will also be some changes to the program. Based on the program's findings of a clear discrepancy between true first year teachers and those who have had prior experience in another school system, the *Pass It On* program will be divided into two groups to best address their needs. Those that have had teaching experience and are new to the school system will have a virtual check-in program quarterly next year. The first year teachers will be the only participants in the New Teacher Academy and *Pass It On* virtual sessions. These sessions will be held once a month next year on the second Monday. An additional supplement in the coming year is to add a Praxis study group as an elective to assist teachers in gaining teacher certification which was indicated as a need in the final teacher survey. The *Pass It On* program will continue to adapt and evolve to fit the needs of the new teachers in their career growth. PCPS looks forward to continuing to make significant gains in teacher retention in the future.

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## Contact Information

**Bridget Berry, 2021 Louisiana Public Interest Fellow**

Email: [bridget.berry@pcpsb.net](mailto:bridget.berry@pcpsb.net)

School System: [Pointe Coupee Parish](#)

School Name: [Stem Magnet Academy of Pointe Coupee](#)