



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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January 8, 2020

Dear members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,

Eight years ago this week, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) bestowed on me the greatest blessing and privilege of my career, naming me state superintendent of education. I write today to advise you that, with great pride in all achieved over those eight years, I will be vacating the position March 11, 2020, and to recommend that the board identify a new state superintendent.

Our work together has been focused on causes critical not just to the future of schooling but also to the future well-being of our state and nation. We have developed a system of quality early childhood care and education in which our state is now making needed investments. We have restored a focus on curriculum and have supported teachers as practitioners of the curricula they use. We have situated teacher education where it belongs, in the classroom, under the tutelage of mentor educators. We have created pathways to good jobs and funded college education by revitalizing career and technical education and by making financial aid planning available to all high school graduates. Finally, we have developed plans for improvement in the hundreds of schools struggling to provide adequate education for the disadvantaged, from citywide interventions in New Orleans and Baton Rouge to plans for urgent change in remote and rural communities.

Louisiana is a better educated state today than any point in its history. The state's eighth grade students improved in mathematics on the 2019 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) more than did students in any other state in the nation. Over the last decade, Louisiana's improvements rank in the top ten among states on all four main NAEP tests. In 2018, a greater percentage of students than at any point in the state's history graduated from high school. More students in that class than ever before graduated having earned a college credit or an industry credential; the number of Advanced Placement credits they earned nearly tripled the number earned in 2012. More graduates in 2018 than ever before entered community colleges or universities, and a greater percentage of graduates completed financial aid forms in Louisiana than in any state in the nation. Finally, more Louisiana graduates than ever before earned TOPS scholarships to ease the financial burden of a college degree.

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Reflecting on these many years, I am struck first by the thousands of Louisiana parents, teachers, administrators, superintendents, board members, volunteers, and others who came together to make change possible. Their love for Louisiana's young people is the greatest force for good in this state. I am next struck by the blessings that are Louisiana's children. They are as smart and as capable as any children in this land. If our state's struggle to provide many of them a quality education is in part a product of history and circumstance, it remains our responsibility as Louisianans to provide them homes, communities, and schools that nurture their gifts, in spite of history and circumstance. Finally, I am struck by memories of those individuals who at difficult moments demonstrated fortitude in the face of myopia and political self-interest. In this age of social division and of even occasional disdain for public service, I am deeply proud to have served alongside some of the most skilled and principled lawmakers, board members, and public servants in our nation.

Our state's constitution bestows BESE with the power to sustain the progress achieved by these families and teachers, these children and adolescents, these public officials and public servants. Your leadership, and your selection of state superintendent, must continue our state's march toward a fair and just education system, and toward a more perfect Louisiana.

I will assist as requested. In the meantime, I offer you my sincerest gratitude for the chance to serve.

As always, thank you for all you do for our children,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

John C. White

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