



JESSICA BAGHIAN

Assistant State Superintendent of Assessment,
Accountability, Analytics & Early Childhood

Louisiana Department of Education

JESSICA BAGHIAN

[REDACTED], Baton Rouge, LA 70802 • [REDACTED]

SUMMARY

A proven leader in Louisiana's schools and a national leader in education innovation, Jessica Baghian has developed systems that have driven historic improvements for students, including record graduation rates, nationally noteworthy NAEP performance, and significant increases in higher-education participation and success. She also guides the state's efforts to dramatically expand access to high-quality early childhood opportunities. Jessica is a skilled, results-oriented leader and former teacher who is committed to success for all students, particularly those who have been historically under-served. An experienced public servant, Jessica has led large, diverse teams to major achievements, and is deeply versed in operations and finance as well as in academics. A graduate of Louisiana State University, with a law degree from Harvard University, she has made her career as a teacher and education leader in her home state of Louisiana.

EXPERIENCE

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, Baton Rouge, LA

2011 - Present

Assistant State Superintendent

Assessment, Accountability, Analytics, & Early Childhood

2018 - Present

- Shape Louisiana's system of academic measures for 750,000+ children in 3,000+ schools and early childhood centers across Louisiana and 50,000+ educators, incentivizing access and success for every child. Under this system of measures, the state attained record achievement levels:
 - Top 10 for growth on all four core NAEP assessments over the past decade;
 - Highest graduation rate in Louisiana history (81.4%, up from 72.3% in 2012), including record gains among low-income students (75.5%, up from 66.2% in 2012);
 - Highest credential rate for graduates in Louisiana history (50.4%, up from 37.5% in 2013);
 - No. 1 in the country for FAFSA completion (82.6%);
 - Highest college enrollment number (23% increase since 2012; now 25,803);
 - Highest TOPS-eligibility rates in Louisiana history (31% increase since 2012; now 21,280); and
 - 50% reduction in low-quality early childhood sites, and nearly tripled the number of Excellent-rated sites since 2016-2017.
- Lead a diverse team of nearly 300 team members to execute statewide strategies, programs, and policies in support of student learning, including:
 - Developing system of community-based governance for early childhood community networks across Louisiana to drive expanded access and improved quality among early childhood providers;
 - Designing first-ever, federally-approved Innovative Humanities Assessment focused on building reading comprehension through equitable knowledge building and reduced testing;
 - Publishing *LouisianaSchools.com*, the nation's first comprehensive, birth to grade 12 website to inform parent educational choices and to engage educators in order to improve student outcomes; and
 - Managing budgets of ~\$170M annually, collaborating with the state superintendent, executive staff, legislators, advocates, and educators to spend effectively for the children of Louisiana.
- Engage critical educational stakeholders to advise the State Board on key initiatives through facilitation of the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, the Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the Louisiana Accountability Commission.

- Collaborating with diverse stakeholders – school system leaders, advocates, other state agencies, and elected officials -- to ensure sound policies that best serve children and to secure strategic investments to drive achievement and access (e.g., receiving the state’s first investment for early childhood in more than a decade).
- Represent Louisiana with the United States Department of Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers, presenting critical updates on Louisiana’s advancements, securing approval and funding for key Louisiana initiatives, and providing feedback on national education research.

Assistant State Superintendent, Academic Policy and Analytics

2014 to 2018

- Developed and executed Louisiana’s annual academic strategy for all schools and districts as the lead of the assessment, accountability, data system, and research functions for the Department.
- Guided development of Louisiana’s key academic policies including:
 - Designing, vetting, and securing approval of Louisiana’s nationally-acclaimed ESSA plan through extensive engagement and collaboration with hundreds of Louisiana stakeholders and elected officials, as well as the United States Department of Education.
 - Improving teacher and principal evaluation policies to ensure a sustainable, high quality feedback system for 50,000+ teachers and 1,500+ school leaders.
 - Supervising critical academic operations, including assessment administration for 700,000+ students.

Deputy Chief of Staff

2012 to 2014

- Designed and implemented Louisiana letter grades requiring schools to achieve higher levels of proficiency with all students, as well as to provide increased access to postsecondary opportunities.
- Guided the early childhood team through implementation of Act 3, which built a unified system of early childhood education, serving Louisiana’s most in-need children, ages birth to five.

Policy Consultant/Advisor

2010 to 2012

- Led the development of Louisiana’s approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver to secure significant funding flexibility for districts, implementation of nationally-comparable standards and assessments for all students, a quality educator evaluation system, and a rigorous statewide accountability system.
- Guided all K-12 policymaking through coordination of internal staff and external stakeholders, including state Board members, parents, and district staff.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Garyville, LA

Middle School Mathematics Teacher

2006 to 2008

- Achieved significant gains with students including surpassing the statewide proficiency rate by 26%, as measured by the LEAP assessment, and achieving 1.6 years of growth, as measured by the Measures of Academic Progress.
- Honored as school’s Teacher of the Month in first month of teaching and school’s Teacher of the Year in first year of teaching.

EDUCATION

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL , Juris Doctor Dean’s Scholar Award, Public Service Award	2011
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY , B.A. in Mass Communication, <i>summa cum laude</i> Manship School of Mass Communication Top Female Senior	2006

SELECT PRESENTATIONS, PROGRAMS, and PUBLICATIONS

- [“Five Lessons on How States Can Invest in High-Quality Child Care and Early Education,”](#) published in *The Hechinger Report*, February 20, 2020.
- Broad Superintendent Academy, Fellow, 2019.
- Chiefs for Change, Future Chiefs Cohort, 2019.
- Tulane University’s Early Childhood Policy Leadership Institute, 2019.
- [“To Ensure Success For All Students, State Assessment Makers Must Be Learners, Too,”](#) published in the *Thomas B. Fordham FlyPaper Blog*, November 8, 2019.
- Future of American K-12 Education Working Group, American Enterprise Institute, Fall 2019.
- “How Innovative Assessment Approaches Can Support Student Learning,” plenary presentation with Dr. David Steiner, David Cook, Joyce Zurkowski, and Carissa Moffat Miller at the National Conference on Student Assessment, 2019.
- “Louisiana’s Innovative Assessment Pilot,” joint presentation with Nathan Dadey, Chris Minnich, and Liz Davis at the National Conference on Student Assessment, 2019.
- [“ESSA Seeks a Well-Rounded Education. Louisiana Seeks Partners to Explore New Measures,”](#) published in the *Thomas B. Fordham FlyPaper Blog*, January 15, 2019.
- “From Design to Implementation: How School Report Cards Can Drive Continuous Improvement,” joint presentation with Ryan Reyna and Alison Timberlake at the National Conference on Student Assessment, 2018.
- “Going Beyond ESSA: Criteria for Evaluating State Accountability Systems,” joint presentation with Jacob Mishook and Ryan Reyna at the National Conference on Student Assessment, 2018.
- “Revising State Accountability Systems Under the Every Student Succeeds Act,” policy talk with Mary Batiwalla, Noah Bookman, and James Riddlesperger at the Association for Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference, 2017.

February 26, 2020

Members of the Louisiana Superintendent Work Group,

I am writing to express my interest in serving as the next State Superintendent of Education for Louisiana. I know first-hand the great potential of Louisiana's education system to serve children. I was born in Louisiana, educated in our public schools, and am now the mother of children being educated in Louisiana's public education system. As a graduate of LSU and Harvard Law School, I have spent my entire career in service of the children in Louisiana, first as a teacher and then as a leader at the Department of Education. I have worked in every corner of the state to make things better for children, especially those who do not have what my own children have. I know our educational successes and struggles, and am ready to take the next step as the leader of education for the state of Louisiana.

I bring to this role the experience, the relationships, the skills, and the track record to lead our state forward starting on day one. I am a co-designer of the plan that has guided Louisiana to become a national leader in academic progress for our students. In my role today, I manage the majority of the state Department of Education's team and operational budget.

As proud as I am of the progress that our state's teachers, principals, families, students, leaders, and other educators have collectively achieved, we have further strides to make to achieve excellence for all students, and specifically for those in communities of color and living in poverty. This moment calls for a leader with a vision for accelerating progress and the expertise to collaborate with our state Board, communities, superintendents, and many others to get there. I believe my record demonstrates that I am that leader.

Upon graduation from LSU, I taught middle school mathematics in rural Louisiana. My teaching experience solidified my passion for education, leading me to Harvard Law School where I focused on education law and policy. I then returned to Louisiana, where I have served in leadership roles across the Department of Education for nine years, building on my leadership and management skills. Through these roles, I established a strong record of increased achievement and expanded access to educational opportunities for more than 750,000 of Louisiana's children across 3,000 schools and early childhood centers. Our successes were achieved only through collaborative relationships with Board members, teachers, advocates, community partners, families, and students across our state.

As the Assistant State Superintendent for Assessment, Accountability, Analytics, and Early Childhood, I oversee a broad and diverse portfolio of programs and policies that reach all children, educators, schools, and centers in our state, from birth to graduation. This includes leading the expansion and improvement of early childhood programming across the state. I manage the statewide assessment system, including the nation's first Innovative Assessment pilot aimed at closing equity gaps on assessments. Additionally, I guide the implementation of our ESSA plan, including school and school system letter grade and reporting systems to ensure schools and early childhood centers achieve at nationally-comparable levels for all of Louisiana's children and to ensure educators are supported in pursuit of those goals. These goals are only accomplishable with a committed Board, strong stakeholder relationships, and

collaboration at each level and in every corner of the state, from early childhood to K-12 to higher education.

During my nine years of experience at the Louisiana Department of Education, I have been proud of the work our community has accomplished, which has lifted student outcomes and with them, life opportunities. Some notable milestones include:

- Top 10 for growth on all four core NAEP assessments over the past decade;
- Highest graduation rate in Louisiana history (81.4%, up from 72.3% in 2012), including record gains among low-income students (75.5%, up from 66.2% in 2012);
- Highest credential rate in Louisiana history (50.4%, up from 37.5% in 2013);
- No. 1 in the country for FAFSA completion (82.6%);
- Highest college enrollment number (23% increase since 2012; now 25,803);
- Highest TOPS-eligibility rates in Louisiana history (31% increase since 2012; now 21,280); and
- 50% reduction in low quality early childhood sites, and nearly tripled the number of Excellent-rated sites since 2016-2017.

However, when examining the academic performance data of students across our state, it is evident that our results are still not achieving educational equity for students with historical disadvantages. These gaps require us to build the conditions necessary for all students to succeed and to advance a system that can better serve all of our students. Through systemic implementation of critical policies and programs, we can support improvement for children all across Louisiana. My experiences uniquely prepare me to take the work we have done together and build on it for the next stage of educational progress in our state.

I have deep respect and appreciation for the Board and its priorities, and believe I represent the desired qualities you seek in the next state superintendent. I am dedicated to our state, our schools, the students we serve, and the ambitious yet achievable goals we hold for the future. I am committed to collaborating with the Board, educators, and advocates to realize our common vision – and I have the sense of urgency this position demands.

I appreciate your consideration of my candidacy, and the opportunity to discuss my proven ability and professional record. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,



Jessica Baghian