

PREPARING FOR MARCH 15, 2012

1. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FORUM in CECILIA, LA

The gym of Cecilia High school was packed with an estimated 500+ concerned parents and educators to hear the panel explain the issues. THANK YOU for the Acadia folks there to show support! Three presenters impacted me the most based on the information in their presentations. First, Mr. Graig Luscombe of the TRSL (retirement system) outlines bills that will affect our retirement---his presentation is attached, please view it and stay informed. Also, Mr. Mike Deshotel (follow his blog at: <http://louisianaeducator.blogspot.com/>) explained four bills—two House bills (HB) and the corresponding two Senate Bills (SB)—he refers to as *the most destructive legislation* he has seen in his entire career. Those bills are: **HB 976 & SB 597** which will haphazardly expand charter schools in our state. The other two are: **HB 974 & SB 603** which will essentially phase out TENURE by making it impossible to attain TENURE since it requires **5 years** of ‘effective’ Value Added ratings without a single ‘ineffective’ rating earned by the teacher. The language does not explicitly call for the end of TENURE, but experts agree it is near *statistically impossible* to have the Value Added results required in the bills; therefore, it effectively kills TENURE. Read the bills for yourself and stay informed.

On a slightly positive note, **HB 100** slows down the teacher evaluation process until LDE can finalize it. That’s right, ‘reformers’ are hastily ramming this through as fast as they can. BEWARE!!

Another eye-opening presentation was that of a NOLA-RSD parent with children in ‘the system’ there. Her name is Karran Harper Royal, founding member of *Parents Across America* (<http://parentsacrossamerica.org/>) If this reform is so great, why are parent ALL ACROSS the nation standing up after these ‘reforms’ are implemented and calling for change? Another reliable resource is, *SOS: Save our Schools*: <http://www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/> ---leading expert, DIANE RAVITCH is a supporter of this cause.

II. WHAT CAN I READ TO LEARN MORE?

I’ve had requests from several people asking me to send them the essay I wrote about the forces across the U.S. affecting policy in LA. It was published in February. Here is a link: <http://louisianaeducator.blogspot.com/2012/02/guest-essay-on-education-reform.html>

Read the work of leading education historian and author, Diane Ravitch. She **posted 13 questions every politician should be able to answer** about education. Here is a link to that excellent article: http://www.niemanwatchdog.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ask_this.view&askthisid=552. BEST ADVICE if contacting lawmakers or testifying for public education: **DO NOT COMPLAIN OR MAKE EMOTIONAL APPEALS---STATE THE FACTS!** Use these 13 questions, filled with good data sources, to make your point. FACTS speak for themselves---**NO COMPLAINING**, they will use complaining against you and label you as *lazy status quo*. Diane’s book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* is excellent. I’ve read it----you should too. If no time for the whole book, READ THE 13 QUESTIONS!