

## From the Desk of the Interim Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

Have you ever played Connect-the-Dots? You know that simple but entertaining game where all you needed was a piece of paper, a pencil and an eager opponent. The objective of the game, for those who are less familiar, is to connect dots in a strategic fashion to make more boxes than your eager opponent. Since the page is filled with dots that are unrelated until connected the game is similar in strategy to Tic-Tac-Toe but with greater boundaries☺

Games aside, in several ways the process of Connect-the-Dots is quite similar to what we do on a daily basis in the world of college access. There are a number of us along the way that are involved in and influence a student's decision to apply to and actually enter college. From the K-12 sector, to access organizations, to the financial aid and admissions offices at the schools: there are as many of us as there are questions and challenges on the minds of prospective students.

Like the dots on the page in the game, we can exist separately and distinctly or we can make connections and add a tally for the 'boxes' we've created. Coming from one who has no love lost for being confined to a box, I'd rather think of us as making and stacking boxes that allow students to rise to the top in a strategic way: standing on the assistance we provide.

I'm proud to have the privilege of leading a team of individuals who connect those dots and stack those boxes every day. Box Award One goes to our GEAR UP and College Access team for connecting teachers, counselors and principals at GEAR UP schools with TRIO, Admissions Offices, as well as National College Access Network and College Application Week representatives. The box they built at the GEAR UP Summer Institute will provide students statewide with motivation, support and assistance in the college application process this fall.

Box Award Two goes to our Public Information and Communications staff for connecting with our Louisiana Connect vendor (ConnectEDU), professionalschoolcounselors, Department of Education representatives, rising high school seniors and their parents at Trailblazer Camps. The box they built involved focus groups with parents and students on the usage of Louisiana Connect and the soon to be launched Louisiana Connect Mobile App. Stack that box on top of the box they created by

equipping the Trailblazers who attended with information to take back to their peers this fall regarding federal and state financial aid programs and you make even more boxes through peer-to-peer interaction.

Box Award Three goes to our College Access Challenge Grant director who connected with the Big Buddy Program. The box she built connected 95 students, parents and their advisors to the power of Louisiana Connect to prevent 'summer melt'. The connection was so strong she received an email from a parent who attended the meeting and was amazed at the power of this box and the impact it will have on the students she works with as well as her own children at home. The connections didn't stop there; next up is the box our director plans to stack that will allow businesses offering internships to Big Buddy participants to create free profiles in Louisiana Connect via the Talent Connect feature. The result is that students and parents can learn more about companies that provide job opportunities here in our own state.

Speaking of job opportunities, Box Award Four goes to our LOSFA team comprised of Legal, IT and the Executive Director's office. We connected with the Louisiana Workforce Commission team to link Star Jobs to Louisiana Connect. Students and parents will learn about Louisiana jobs in fields that project high demand and high wages. Stack that on top of using Louisiana Connect to find schools that offer programs in fields that lead to those jobs and personality inventories that tell students which jobs they are best suited for and we are well on our way to helping students rise to the top!

Last but certainly not least, is Box Award Five. This box illustrates what all of our efforts are about. It's in the words of the students we serve as they tell us of their dreams, struggles, ambitions and fears. Look at the dots we gave them and check out the boxes they made as you read entries from the GEAR UP Poetry Contest on pages [three](#) and [four](#).

Got goosebumps? We did too☺ So join us as we grab a 'friend', get a 'pen' and connect some dots!

Best-  
S.

### In this edition. . .

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# Trailblazer Camp 2013

## Louisiana Connect App Beta Testing

Members of the ConnectEDU staff traveled to Natchitoches and Thibodaux to test the beta version of the new Louisiana Connect mobile phone application at LOSFA's 2013 Trailblazer Camps. Over 150 senior high school students participated in testing the Louisiana Connect mobile app.

Students at the 2012 Trailblazer Camps suggested the inclusion of the TOPS Tracker, Scholarship Search, College Search, and Communication Center for inclusion in the app. Overall, the beta-testing students were pleased with the functionality and excited about the development of the app. The Louisiana Connect mobile app is scheduled for release in Fall 2013.

### What They're Saying

"I think that it's a really great app that's going to be able to help people by putting everything in one place. It's easy to use. Your parents can use it and help you. It just really puts everything all into one place. It's easy and compact and you can just get it done, quick and painless."

~London Peterson, Bowling Green High School

"I have to know where I am all the time, I don't want anything to fall through the cracks. Now I go to the counselor's office and they have to print stuff out and I have to constantly check on how many credits I have and what I need, but with this I'll be able to do it on my phone. I can just pull it right up and it's super convenient, so I'll definitely use it."

~Abbie George, Sam Houston High School



Students beta test the Louisiana Connect App during Trailblazer Camp at Northwestern State University as members of the ConnectEDU staff look on.

## \$1,000 Scholarship Winners



Christie Smith (left) of the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA) presents Lake Providence High School senior Forrest Middlebrook (right) with his \$1,000 scholarship. Middlebrook won the scholarship while attending LOSFA's Trailblazer Camp at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA.



Ann Carmichael (left) of the Louisiana Education Loan Authority (LELA) presents South Lafourche High School senior Jez Cheramie (right) with his \$1,000 scholarship. Cheramie won the scholarship while attending LOSFA's Trailblazer Camp at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA.

# Trailblazer Camp at Northwestern State University



# Trailblazer Camp at Nicholls State University



**MAXIMUM TOPS AWARD AMOUNTS FOR 2013-14  
For All Award Levels**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Semester/Quarter/Term Amount</b>	<b>TOPS Annual Award Amount <sup>(3)</sup></b>
<b>Technical</b>		
Northwest Louisiana Technical College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$860.00	\$1,720.00
Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools (Terms)	TBD	TBD
South Central Louisiana Technical College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$859.92	\$1,719.84
<b>2 Year</b>		
Baton Rouge Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,275.24	\$2,550.48
Bossier Parish Community College	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
Central Louisiana Technical Community Col. <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
Delgado Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
L. E. Fletcher Technical Com. Col.	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
Louisiana Delta Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
LSU – Eunice	\$1,150.00	\$2,300.00
Northshore Technical Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
Nunez Community College	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
River Parishes Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
South Louisiana Community College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
SOWELA Technical Com. College <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,328.16	\$2,656.32
SU-Shreveport <sup>(1)</sup>	\$1,309.00	\$2,618.00
<b>4 Year</b>		
Grambling State University	\$2,225.00	\$4,450.00
Nicholls State University	\$2,237.50	\$4,475.00
LSU – Alexandria	\$2,100.00	\$4,200.00
LSU – BR	Fall \$2,939 Fall/\$2,938 Spring	\$5,877.00
LSU HSC – NO	\$2,882.50	\$5,765.00
LSU HSC – Shreveport	\$2,968.00	\$5,936.00
LSU – Shreveport	\$2,188.00	\$4,376.00
Louisiana Tech University (Quarters)	\$1,648.00	\$4,944.00
McNeese State University	\$2,127.00	\$4,254.00
Northwestern State University	\$2,243.00	\$4,486.00
Southeastern La University	\$2,181.00	\$4,362.00
SU-Baton Rouge	\$2,260.50	\$4,521.00
SU-New Orleans	\$1,750.50	\$3,501.00
UL – Lafayette	\$2,234.50	\$4,469.00
UL – Monroe	\$2,266.00	\$4,532.00
University of New Orleans	\$2,516.50	\$5,033.00
<b>Out-of-State Institutions for Hearing Impaired Students <sup>(2)</sup></b>		
Gallaudet University	\$2,043.00	\$4,086.00
Rochester Institute of Tech.	\$2,043.00	\$4,086.00
<b>LAICU Institutions:</b> Centenary, Dillard, Holy Cross College, Louisiana College, Loyola, NO Baptist Seminary, OLOL, St. Joseph's, Tulane, Xavier (Tech Program, OLOL only)		
All Schools (Academic Program)	\$2,043.00	\$4,086.00
OLOL (Tech Program)	TBD	TBD
<b>TOPS Eligible Students in a Graduate Program</b>		
All Graduate Programs <sup>(4)</sup>	Fall \$2,939 Fall/\$2,938 Spring	\$5,877.00

Notes: (1) Includes all campuses within the designated colleges.

(2) Schools that are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Includes both Academic and Technical Programs.

(3) The total amount does not include summer payments allowed for students enrolled full time in technical programs or students in an academic program that elect to have their award paid for a qualified summer session. The amount of the award may not exceed the tuition amount charged to the student for summer attendance.

(4) The TOPS Award Payment for TOPS eligible students enrolled in a graduate/professional program is limited to the full tuition charged by a school for enrollment in the respective graduate program or the maximum TOPS Award amount listed here, whichever is less.

Revised 7/19/13

## LA GEAR UP Summer Institute

During the week of July 8-12, LA GEAR UP hosted its Summer Institute, a professional development opportunity providing school teams with expert guidance specific to their LA GEAR UP roles as well as instruction in the area of college access.

The Institute included two tracks, one for Explorers' Club sponsors, on-site school coordinators, and professional school counselors, and another for principals and district administrators. Throughout the week, school teams met to set goals, plan initiatives, and write sub-grants to secure funding for LA GEAR UP special initiatives.

Both Institute tracks included engaging activities and explorations led by FOCUS Training, an interactive leadership development company that has worked successfully with other GEAR UP programs across the country.

Highlights of the week included a luncheon focused on Louisiana College Application Week sponsored by the National College Access Network and the American Council on Education; Louisiana Connect training via ConnectEDU; and school team presentations on the last day of the conference.



*Belinda Baily of West St. John High School and Alecia Lewis of Pleasant Hill High School engage in a development activity intended to foster teamwork, interpersonal communication, and tenacity in overcoming barriers by requiring one member of a two person team to verbally guide their blindfolded partner to meet an objective.*

## The Dream Machine

Following the Summer Institute, a coalition of LA GEAR UP staff, students, and parents joined over 1,700 attendees at the 2013 NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference in San Francisco, California, from July 15-17. The conference theme, The Dream Machine: Engaging Tomorrow's Workforce, reminded attendees that today's students will be tomorrow's leaders and innovators.

LA GEAR UP had a strong presence in San Francisco. Four high school students from LA GEAR UP schools joined over 80 students from across the country as members of the annual Youth Congress. Louisiana students (and their chaperones) had the opportunity to experience a professional conference while interacting and learning with other students from across the country.

Coached by GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy member Timinee Thomas (Bunkie, Louisiana) and other volunteers, LA GEAR UP students represented the Pelican State admirably, even performing on stage with a team in front of the entire audience. Timinee Thomas, a GEAR UP student from the 2002-08 grant cycle, was featured in the July 2013 issue of the LOSFA Loop.

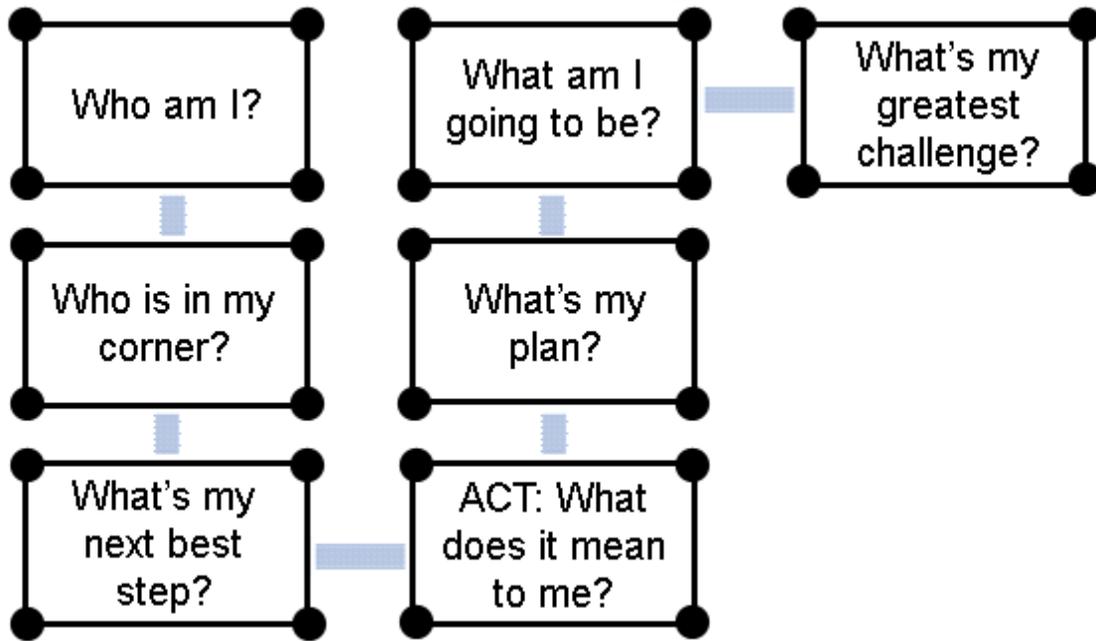
Conference attendees heard from a variety of speakers including Representative Chaka Fattah (D-PA); actress, STEM

advocate, and Texas Instrument's spokesperson (and *Big Bang Theory* co-star) Mayim Bialyk; and renowned economist Anthony Carnevale, who currently heads the Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce. In addition, conference-goers chose from over 143 educational sessions covering the transition to college, increasing stakeholder engagement through strategic communications, and program evaluation.



*GEAR UP students (pictured from left to right) Khalil Roy of Bunkie New Tech High School, JaMarcus Goudeau of East Feliciana High School, Jameshaulyn Fernandez of Plaquemine High School and Emily Ryan of Marksville High School settle into the second row of seating in the Youth Congress meeting room shortly after commuting from the airport on the BART, one of San Francisco's public transit systems.*

# Connect the Dots: College Access Edition



## GEAR UP Poetry Contest Winners

LA GEAR UP issued a call to students for original poems, songs, or raps.

11th graders were given the theme: What's "Next" for Me?

For these students, who are heading into their senior year of high school, graduation and the idea of what's "next" after high school is a prevalent theme.

Students chose from two prompts and were asked to incorporate at least two literary devices in their original works.

The two prompts given to students were:

1) Write about your thoughts and feelings about a factor involved

in your decision making process regarding what's "next" for you after high school. You may know exactly what your path is and how you must go about achieving your goals. Or, you may be a wanderer exploring your options, searching, and hoping for a discovery about yourself. Most fall somewhere in between. All face challenges.

2) Soon you'll be taking the ACT, if you haven't already. Write about what the ACT symbolizes for you in your journey towards what's "next." What might it mean for you? How do you feel about that?

Winners were awarded \$100 (1st place), \$50 (2nd place), and \$25 (3rd place).

### Why Apply?

I apply

Because college is like my wings; it will help me fly!

I apply

Because high school did not satisfy my drive!

I apply

Because I am more than just a statistic that tries to bind me and give me limits.

I apply

Because I am drowning in a sea of doubt and college is my only chance to survive!

I apply

Because college is my passion, purpose, and pride!

I apply

Because just like Lebron, I want to win, to be able to wear that title: SUCCESS.

To achieve my ultimate goal

To save my drowning soul

To answer my deep despairing call

To prove to me and to them all!

That is why I apply!

*1st Place  
Jeanerette High School*

# GEAR UP Poetry Contest Winners

*2nd Place  
Jeanerette High School*

## What's Next?

When I look into the future,  
I see wealth.  
A happy family and nice house,  
That kind of stuff.  
First I need my career,  
Which I haven't quite chosen yet.  
A pharmacist or a nurse?  
I'm not sure.  
But I do know,  
I want to attend Nicholls, though.  
They offer pre-pharmacy.  
Pharmacy was my main goal,  
My main career for me to choose.  
But I feel nursing is calling me.  
It comes buzzing in my ear.  
Pharmacists make good money,  
Better than nurses.  
But you have to be in school long,  
Longer than nurses.  
And sad to say,  
I want the easy way out.  
I've been in school 13 years  
Including kindergarten,  
And nursing wouldn't take that long.  
And for me to achieve wealth,  
I need my head in the books.  
Staying focused and determined  
To do what I have to do to achieve  
Right? Right!  
And that's what I'll do.  
So I think I'll be that nurse!

*3rd Place  
Jeanerette High School*

## After High School

After high school I want to work.  
After high school I want to play in dirt.  
After high school I want to make big money.  
After high school I want to relax.  
After high school I want to get rich.  
After high school I will miss my class.  
The laughs we shared and good times we had.  
After high school I hope to keep in touch.  
The best future for all and wish each other luck.

*1st Place  
Scotlandville Magnet High School*

## What's Next for Me

I'm a junior, just lost in between  
All the mishaps in my life, feels like misery

Not knowing what to do  
Where am I, what's coming next  
I'm so confused!  
I made it thus far, so I'm unable to quit  
Every time I want to, I push myself through it

It's not hard to do, but sometimes it is  
Not knowing all the answers, life's like a quiz  
You have a few choices, unable to decide  
Making a big decision, sometimes takes pride

Consequences follow, whether good or bad  
After making a big step, you're either happy or sad  
I know I want to pass, but my actions don't show it  
I'm getting close to the end, I just might blow it

Life after school, will I ever see it  
I'm desperate for answers, unleash the hidden secrets  
Twelfth grade is near, college is too  
Why is there so much to fear, in me deciding what to do

Dropping out was a thought, never became a choice  
The disappointment it brought, was in my parents' voice  
I just don't think I could bear, the unsuccess and shame  
Just another accomplishment, leached to my name

Job core was next, but it still wasn't the same  
If my siblings didn't graduate, I knew I'd be to blame

I have to set a state  
I don't just live for myself  
There's plenty of ways to go, but when there's a right  
Why choose left

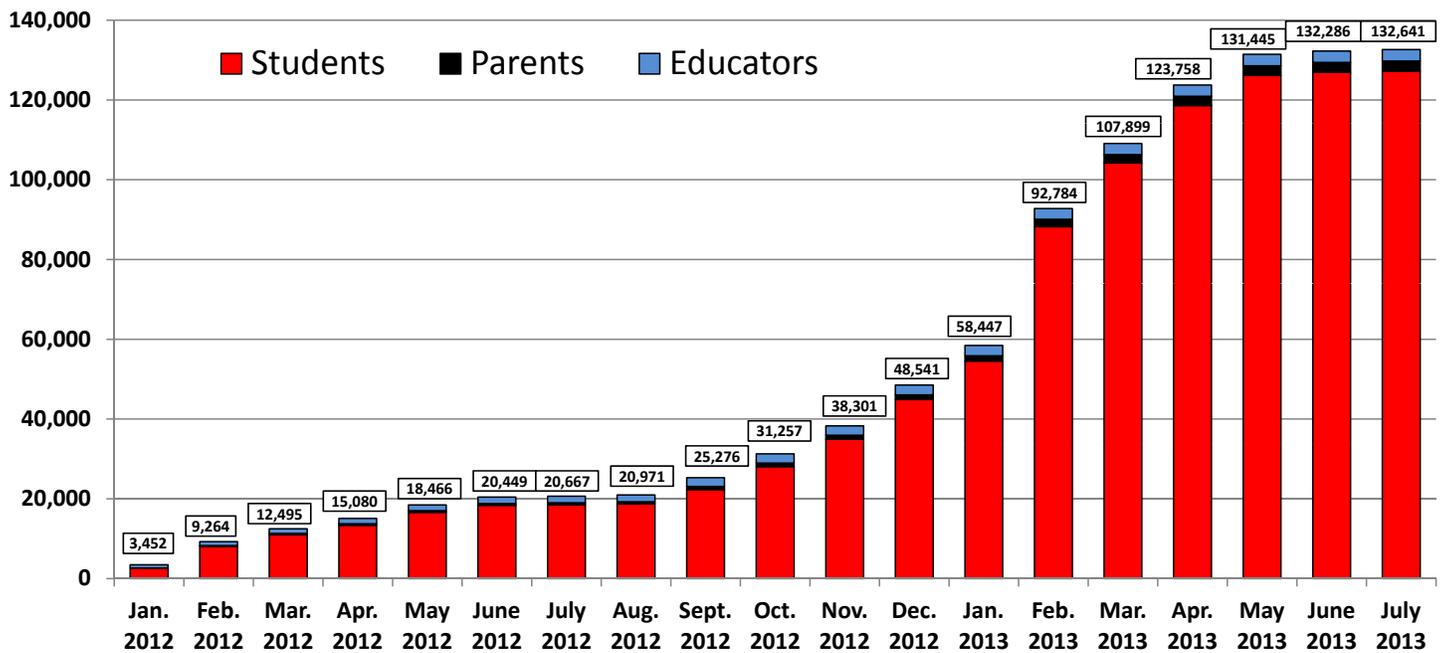
A GED and a diploma  
Both papers certify  
But which would be ranked higher  
In the success blank on a profile

It takes step by step, to get a role in life  
You have to conceive and believe  
To achieve your goal in life  
So I want to graduate, my mind is set

Priorities in order, twelfth grade is next!!!



**Active Users**



July 2013 data as of 7/31/2013.

The current total of 132,609 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 127,243 Students, 2,524 Parents, 1,469 Community Administrators, 533 Professional School Counselors, 855 Teachers, and 17 Scholarship Managers.

## LOSFA's Social Media Sites



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000>



[www.Flickr.com/LOSFA](http://www.Flickr.com/LOSFA)



**LOSFA**

Louisiana Office of  
Student Financial Assistance

For more information, contact the  
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance:

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)

By Mail: P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202

Web Address: [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

For submissions, opinions, or comments for LOSFA LOOP, please  
contact Gus Wales at [Gus.Wales@la.gov](mailto:Gus.Wales@la.gov).