

LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

APPROVED MINUTES

November 12, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, November 12, 2021, in John J. Hainkel, Jr. Room at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairman, Judge C. Wendell Manning, called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Judge C. Wendell Manning, Chairman
Sen. Beth Mizell, Vice Chairperson
Judge Randall L. Bethancourt
Fredell Butler
C.C. Copeland
Peggy Cotogno
Barry Erwin
Ryan Gremillion
Sen. Cleo Fields
Rep. Barbara Reich Freiberg
Michael Ince
Polly Johnson
Makenzie Morgan
Jill Roshto
Jamie Staub
Kyle Wedberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Claston Bernard
McHugh David
Kira Orange Jones
Lauren Russell Ladner
Terry Landry
Robert Travis Scott
Joel Watson, Jr.
Jackson Wright

STAFF PRESENT

Megan Bella, Senate Staff and LYAC Coordinator
Tammy Crain-Waldrop, Senate Legislative Researcher
Candace Shields, Senate Senior Secretary

III. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

A. Introduction of Members

Judge Manning welcomed the new members serving on the commission and each commission member introduced themselves, stated how long they served on the commission, and stated their respective roles within the organization they represent.

B. Duties of the Commission

Judge Manning stated that a handout detailing the commission's powers and functions has been provided in the commission member's meeting folders. A copy was made a part of the public record.

IV. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON

Judge Manning stated the commission has an opening for Vice Chairperson. He said Ms. Shan Davis, the former chairperson, is no longer a member of the commission. He opened the floor for nominations of vice chairperson.

Mr. Erwin nominated Sen. Beth Mizell to which Mr. Butler seconded.

Judge Manning asked for any other nominations, but there were no further nominations.

Mr. Erwin made a motion to close nominations which was seconded by Mr. Butler. There being no objection, nominations were closed.

Judge Manning made a motion to elect Sen. Mizell by acclamation. There being no objection, Judge Manning announced the motion passed and declared Sen. Mizell elected by acclamation.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Johnson made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Erwin to approve the minutes of May 21, 2021. There being no objection, the minutes were adopted.

VI. APPROVAL OF 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Butler made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Wedberg to approve the 2020-2021 Annual Report. There being no objection, the Annual Report was approved.

VII. PRESENTATIONS

A. Judges in the Classroom/Teachers in the Courtroom Task Force Program: The Honorable Randall L. Bethancourt, 32nd Judicial District Court, Chair of the LDJA Judges Committee on Civic Education

Judge Manning stated that at the previous commission meeting, Chief Justice Weimer of the Louisiana Supreme Court presented to the commission an overview regarding the creation of the Judges in the Classroom/Teachers in the Courtroom Task Force and its goals and purposes. He introduced Judge Bethancourt.

Judge Bethancourt provided an update on the Supreme Court's program entitled "Judges in the Classroom/Teachers in the Courtroom". He stated the program was actually started twenty years ago by Judge Benjamin Jones who is now retired. He said the program encourages judges to go into classrooms to supplement teacher's lessons in civics and government, and the do's and don'ts of the law. He said information about the program can be found on the Louisiana Supreme Court website and the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education's (LCLCE) website. He stated Chief Justice John Weimer, a former teacher who believed that teachers had a lot in common with judges by fostering healthy rules and productive environments, formed the Judges in the Classroom/Teachers in the Courtroom Task Force. He said the task force is comprised of district court judges, appellate court judges, Supreme Court justices, members of BESE, and members of the legislature. He stated the task force meets monthly via Zoom to discuss how to implement their plan to get judges in the classrooms. He stated for this year's Constitution Week, Chief Justice Weimer sent a letter to all Louisiana judges, which was signed by every justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, encouraging judges to take part in this program. He presented a video narrated by Chief Justice Weimer relative to the program. He said the video was shown at a recent conference of attorneys and judges to encourage their participation in the program. The video was shown to the committee members and a copy was made a part of the public record.

Rep. Freiberg asked how many judges had participated.

Judge Bethancourt stated there are fifty-seven judges in the classrooms and presentations have been scheduled. He said on Constitution Day, twenty-three judges throughout the state participated and another thirty-five judges have done programs.

Rep. Freiberg asked how schools can find out about the program and which grade levels participate.

Judge Manning stated the program is all grade-level appropriate and there even are some pre-school prepackaged lesson plans. He said outreach is through Peggy Cotogno who serves as the executive director for Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education which operates or partners with the District Judges Association and the Judges in the Classroom to help with lesson plans and to assimilate them. He stated Ms. Cotogno has a network of social studies teachers throughout the state. He said she routinely e-mails updates to encourage teachers to sign up with particular emphasis on Law Day in the spring and Constitution Day in the fall.

Rep. Freiberg stated it would be very influential to the students for a judge to go into the schools as it would humanize the judge. She said the judge could speak to what his role is and how he helps the community.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Judge Randall L. Bethancourt, Chief Justice John Weimer, Houma, LA

B. New Louisiana Social Studies Curriculum Standards and Status of the Approval Process: Chanda Johnson, Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Academic Content, Office of Teaching and Learning, Louisiana Department of Education

Ms. Johnson provided an update to the commission on the new Louisiana Social Studies curriculum standards process. She said current discussions regarding standards are relative to the goal or outcome – what students are supposed to do at the end of a year of instruction. She stated standards do not give an objective of a particular date's lesson or dictate exactly what a teacher will do or say in a classroom. She said the standards provide a broad goal for the student by the end of the year. She stated people often confuse curriculum with standards. She said the curriculum is when the standards make the transition into what will happen in the classroom. She stated at that point lesson plans, objectives, and the way that the goals will be translated into what will happen day to day between the teacher and students in the classroom are discussed. She stated Louisiana's social study standards were last revised in 2010-2011. She stated the standards are revised every seven years and this revision process is actually overdue. She said the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is nearing the end of this process.

Ms. Johnson presented a PowerPoint to the commission, a copy was provided to the members and a copy was made a part of the public record.

Judge Manning asked about the new extended timeline for public comment and adoption.

Ms. Johnson stated the process is currently in the public comment phase. She said public comment was going to be for one month in October, but the time has been doubled to allow everyone the opportunity to comment which will end in November. She stated her team will collect the comments that are received and present them to BESE at their December meeting. She said BESE will make a decision at their January meeting. She stated her team will deliver to BESE the revised standards as endorsed by the Steering Committee for BESE to consider. She stated if BESE adopts the revised standards at the January meeting, LDOE plans for the 2022/2023 year to be a learning year. She said the new standards will not be in effect, but her team will be preparing educators for that to happen. She stated they will be reviewing the current scope and sequence documents and companion documents. She said they will be making edits and helping teachers understand what the transition will look like. She stated the new standards will be implemented for the 2023/2024 school year.

Mr. Butler asked if all of the schools would receive the materials in a timely manner once BESE adopts the standards.

Ms. Johnson stated once the standards are adopted, her team will work with teachers who are currently in the classrooms. She said the Teacher Leader Advisors will help her team understand what would be most useful in the classrooms. She stated during the first learning year, it will be important to review what the teachers are currently using, what the new standards are going to be, and providing materials to help them. She said while that is happening, her team will also be working with text book publishers to ensure that they understand the new standards so they can develop new materials which will be brought into the classrooms.

Mr. Butler asked what the principal's role would be in this process and if the teachers would be supported properly so the materials could be used appropriately.

Ms. Johnson stated communication will be very important. She said the annual Teacher Leader Summit where LDOE provides sessions for system leaders, building leaders, and teachers will be the big event where the new standards will be explained to principals and they will be shown what is different and what is similar about them. She stated the principals will be provided different resources that they can use in their buildings to help their teachers. She said LDOE will have follow-up training during the year for all topics in Louisiana education and social studies will be included.

Sen. Mizell asked if there will be text book options available or if there will only be on one set of text books available.

Ms. Johnson stated her goal is to have as many options available as possible. She said across all content areas once standards are set by BESE for each grade level, her team shares this with

publishers and hopefully they already have materials that align with the standards. She stated sometimes they do, and sometimes they do not and have to make a specific Louisiana version. She said this will be the case because Louisiana history is embedded in every grade level. She stated rubrics will be created to evaluate the materials in social studies just like ELA, math, and science. She said Louisiana teachers evaluate the text books according to the rubric and the reviews are posted on LDOE's website. She stated Tier 1 materials would be fully aligned with the standards and the easiest for teachers to implement in the classrooms.

Sen. Mizell asked if each school district could choose a set of materials.

Ms. Johnson stated the standards would be the same across the state, but it would be up to each individual school system to decide which set of materials were appropriate in their local context.

Judge Manning asked what links the public could access to view the various standards and to provide public comment.

Ms. Johnson stated the team created a document so that anyone can compare the current standards with the proposed new standards. She said the Standards Crosswalk link is <https://bit.ly/3w4dg2D> and the Public Comment link is <https://bit.ly/3BHRITk>.

Rep. Freiberg asked how responsive people have been to the survey.

Ms. Johnson stated currently 800 form submissions have been received which does not mean 800 unique users.

Rep. Freiberg asked if there were more public comments for certain grade levels, such as elementary school, middle school or high school.

Ms. Johnson stated there has not been much analysis yet, but a lot of comments are expected towards the end of the public comment deadline. She said so far it appears fairly even, but not as much for high school as for K-8.

Mr. Wedberg asked if the standards are baseline and if teachers have the ability to go beyond the standards.

Ms. Johnson stated educators are experts in their area and may bring in extra things. She said they are encouraged to do so.

Mr. Copeland asked if the survey was mobile device friendly because many people do not have computers. He was also concerned if a person had to start all over again if they were only able to partially complete a survey.

Ms. Johnson stated the survey can be performed on any mobile device. She said the system does remember if a survey is partially completed.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Chonda Johnson, LDOE, Greenwell Springs, LA
Sharon Necaie, LDOE, Zachary, LA

VIII. UPDATES

A. Legislative Youth Advisory Council: Megan Bella

Megan Bella introduced herself to the committee. She stated at the last meeting, the commission was advised on how the applications were scored. She said she has been in touch with commission members who score the applications to receive feed back on how to improve the process. She stated there were two things that were decided upon moving forward. She said one is to limit the short answer questions with a word limit. She said the other is to allow for just two letters of recommendation instead of two letters of recommendation being the minimum.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Jaren St. Clair, representing Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC).

Mr. St. Clair stated he is a student of Opelousas Catholic School in Opelousas, Louisiana. He said the Education Committee focused on voter education, incorporation of subjects, discrimination and club funding. He stated the Mental Health Committee focused on conversion therapy and ethical standards.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Sean Myers, representing LYAC.

Mr. Myers stated he is a student of Church Point High School in Church Point, Louisiana. He stated the LYAC seminar was held in July at the State Capitol during the historic veto override session. He said there were many guest speakers who spoke regarding their jobs. He stated LYAC also held elections to elect new officers.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Alexander Oliver Minagar, representing LYAC.

Mr. Minagar stated he is a student of Caddo Parish High School in Shreveport, Louisiana. He said for LYAC's first summer meeting, there were many notable speakers, including Senator Fields, Representative Davis, and Speaker Schexnayder. He stated several activists also spoke, including Laura Langner and Myra Richardson. He said at the second meeting in September, there was another panel of speakers, including former LYAC member Rob Lancon with Pivotal GR Solutions, Representative Bacala, and Representative Frieberg. He stated October 20th will be the third official LYAC meeting.

Testifying and providing information to the committee was Alexis Ellis, representing LYAC.

Miss Ellis stated she is a student of Destrehan High School in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana. She spoke relative to opportunities of being on LYAC. She said she has spoken at her school board meetings regarding what LYAC is and what it does for the state and community. She stated recently the LYAC officers appeared on Louisiana Public Broadcasting to discuss vaccines.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Alexis Ellis, LYAC, Saint Rose, LA

Alexander Oliver Minagar, LYAC, Shreveport, LA

Sean Myers, LYAC, Church Point, LA

Jaren St. Clair, LYAC, Opelousas, LA

B. Legislator's Back to School Program: Makenzie Morgan

Ms. Morgan stated last year four senators and seven representatives participated in the program which is a low number, but that was due to COVID. She said this year there is hope for more participation. She stated she is seeing more interest for the upcoming year. She said the Legislative Communications Office is currently in discussions on how to revamp the coloring and activity books which are outdated. She stated the thought is to add more engaging information. A copy of the pink activity book and the blue activity book were provided to the members and a copy of each was made a part of the public record. She said the blue book is a coloring book for younger children. She stated the pink book explains the legislature, how it functions, and mentions the governor's mansion. She said there are discussions to create new books for K-2nd grade, 3rd-6th grade, high school, and so on.

Ms. Johnson asked when the activity books were last updated.

Ms. Morgan stated she did not have that information. She said she was appointed to the position in June, but she can find out the answer.

Judge Manning stated the pink book was last revised in January 2013 according to the inside of the book.

Rep. Frieberg stated the blue book was updated in February 2016.

Mr. Copeland asked how the books were available to the public.

Ms. Morgan stated the legislators can request the books through the Legislative Communications Office where they would then be disseminated to the schools. She said the schools can request books through their legislator.

Mr. Butler asked if the books could be more colorful, especially for the younger children which could prompt them to be more engaged.

Ms. Morgan stated she agreed and there are discussions on how to make the books more colorful and engaging.

C. Civic Education Events Calendar and Submission Link: Peggy Cotogno

Ms. Cotogno presented to the members a visual of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education Events Calendar disclaimer statement which has been recently added to the homepage. A hard copy was provided to the members and a copy was made a part of the public record. She stated to request to add an event to the calendar, the user would need to click the provided link which would bring them to a form to complete.

Sen. Mizell asked if the calendar could also include essay deadlines for the American Legion.

Ms. Cotogno stated yes, but she has found that a lot of websites have outdated information, some as far back as two years. She said pictures can be submitted so people can see what the program is about.

Mr. Butler stated if event searches could be made on the calendar by parish, it may engage more people to participate.

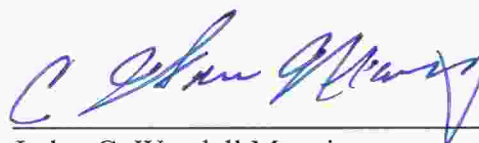
VI. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

There were no other matters that came before the commission.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the commission, Sen. Mizell moved to adjourn that was seconded by Ms. Johnson. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Judge C. Wendell Manning
Chairman

May 20, 2022
Approval Date
