

# Cody says education must keep up with times

By MIKE JONES

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"Fundamental reform" in Louisiana's education system is a vital ingredient to preparing children to be successful in an increasingly complex and technological world, according to Dr. Wilmer Cody, state superintendent of education.

Cody made his comments on the future of education to a public forum Monday night at McNeese State University. The program was sponsored by Pride In Education, an independent, non-profit organization created to mobilize community support and stimulate excellence in public education.

As part of his visit to Calcasieu Parish, Cody also toured parish schools, met with educators and held a press conference. He is the state's first appointed superintendent of



**DR. WILMER CODY**  
Education superintendent

education.

At the forum, Cody said education continues to be Gov.

Buddy Roemer's No. 1 agenda item. He said the climate of expectation and desire to do better is what is driving the reform movement.

He said the common goal is for substantial change and reform in education.

"The good old days won't be good enough," Cody said, "Schools have to be better than they have ever been."

Cody outlined a four-point "mission" that he and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) have planned.

He emphasized that the plan is an incomplete blueprint that can be changed as needed.

The first mission is to clarify objectives and raise standards. He said the state is requiring a criterion reference test for grades 3, 5 and 7 that is linked to the state curriculum guide.

In addition, the state has established higher high school graduation requirements including three years of math, with algebra and geometry part of the requirement.

He pointed out that although the requirement has been controversial, Louisiana student SAT scores have gone up, especially in math.

Cody said another part of making standards higher is the high school exit test. He noted the test will be a failure if it just makes more students drop out, but will be a success if the students learn what they need to know to pass it.

The state superintendent said that other states use exit tests and Louisiana can learn from their experience.

The second mission he outlined is to improve the practice of teachers and administrators.

To accomplish this goal the state has a leadership academy for administrators and is supporting salary increases for teachers.

He pointed out that surrounding states are paying teachers higher salaries and Louisiana must keep up in order to attract and keep the best qualified teachers.

"Salaries will have to become substantially higher every year," he said, noting that this would be a local as well as state responsibility.

Also the state is planning to create a uniform evaluation program for teachers. He said under this program teachers will be issued five-year renewable certificates based on taking the required courses.

The third mission he spoke of was monitoring results in a fair, constructive manner.

He said schools will be given a "report card" on how they compare with schools with a similar student population.

Cody said such comparisons have been avoided in the past as being unfair to schools with a low socio-economic student population. However he said only similar schools will be compared.

The fourth mission identified by Cody was identifying success, progress and excellence of students, teachers, schools and programs.

Part of this mission will be to publicize the success both as recognition and as a way of giving others winning ideas.

Cody cited several examples of successful programs he saw in Calcasieu Parish Schools. He cited the French immersion program, personal computer training courses and vocational preparation courses.