



2018 EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION PLATFORM

As the lead economic development organization for the Baton Rouge Area, BRAC has maintained a detailed policy focus seeking to improve PK-12 public education in the Capital Region, especially in East Baton Rouge. The organization developed a platform of education and economic policies that the business community hopes will be embraced by all candidates for the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board. Based on input received throughout the platform's development, as well as BRAC policy research, the platform asks candidates for a commitment to actively pursue a set of 10 policies focused on creating a future of better education outcomes for EBR's families.

The foundation of economic growth rests in the quality of public education. Further, research demonstrates that in every aspect of quality of life, higher levels of education attainment predict better outcomes. In this way, providing a high-quality public elementary and secondary education is critical to East Baton Rouge Parish's success. The school board's role in economic development is bigger than ever: its responsibility to provide an excellent education is now coupled with a new ability to attract manufacturing projects to the parish, creating even more of an opportunity to drive prosperity for families in EBR.

However, public education outcomes in East Baton Rouge schools are in need of dramatic improvement. Although the district has introduced some new programs and approved a new facility plan, there remain significant challenges. The district's student enrollment is falling, graduation rates have dropped, and ACT scores are stagnant. While recently-released data show that the overall number of students achieving benchmark levels on state exams has grown, this is not the case among economically disadvantaged students. For these students, who make up the largest population of students in the district, there has been no growth. Public education in East Baton Rouge must continue to transform such that all students are improving every year and all Baton Rouge residents feel they can enroll their children in any public school to receive a first-rate education.

BRAC's platform for EBR school board candidates includes education improvement strategies that have been used elsewhere to great success. The platform seeks a laser focus on tangible actions and policies for school improvement, a meaningful framework for student support, preparation, and intervention, a commitment to responsible asset and budgetary management, and support for economic growth. These strategies focus on improving the lowest-performing schools in the district, ensuring the economic vitality of the parish, and ultimately providing access to an excellent public school for every student in the parish.

BRAC serves as the voice of the business community, a community that relies upon the outcomes of the public education system and has deep interest in the quality of those outcomes. The next school board must unflinchingly drive dramatic and sustained improvement that leads EBR schools to a much higher level of education quality, in pursuit of the district's goal to be among the top 10 public school districts in Louisiana.

COMMIT TO PASSING POLICIES THAT:

1. Create a long-term **school turnaround plan that empowers school leaders and establishes a transformation zone** strengthening the lowest-performing schools in the district;
2. Guide EBR Schools to better and more equitable outcomes for students with **truancy and discipline** issues or who engage in alternative education;
3. Continue to **authorize and open high-performing schools** and annually review all schools' performance with a focus on **closing underperforming schools**;
4. Support the use of the **Industrial Tax Exemption Program** in accordance with new state rules that provide for each project's return on investment to the community and guarantee immediate and sustained local revenue;
5. Attract more middle-class families into the school system; driving student enrollment with **greater diversity in family income levels**;
6. Develop a **portfolio office** to cultivate choice-schools and lead changes resulting from increased school choice opportunities;
7. Ensure approved budgets **do not rely on reserve spending**;
8. Put into practice **district leadership metrics** driven primarily by student growth and achievement levels;
9. Annually review public school portfolio and **enrollment trends** to plan for closing, consolidating, and selling or leasing school facilities; and,
10. Bring a proposition to the voters to **support universal early childhood education**.