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Teach For America Greater Baton Rouge Expands Tutoring Program To Help Accelerate Student Learning Recovery

The Ignite Fellowship Provides Tutors to Support K - 3rd Literacy for Capital Area Students Through Small Virtual Cohorts

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana, October 1, 2023—Education nonprofit Teach For America Greater Baton Rouge announced the expansion of its tutoring program, the Ignite Fellowship, to two East Baton Rouge schools, Kenilworth Science and Technology Academy and IDEA University Prep, this month. The tutoring fellowship supports a total of five schools across the Capital Area. The expansion was made possible through the generous public and private support of community partners, including ExxonMobil, Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, and The Excellence Fund.

The Ignite Fellowship, launched in Greater Baton Rouge in 2021, continues for a third school year at East Feliciana Parish's Jackson Elementary School and Pointe Coupee Parish's Rosenwald Elementary and Upper Pointe Coupee Elementary Schools. Through the Ignite program, Teach For America recruits college students to partner directly with local schools and students to lead small-group learning. Each fellow works with 2-4 students, meeting in virtual learning communities during school hours.

Focusing on early literacy for kindergarten to third-grade students, since its 2021 launch in the Capital Area, the program has shown promising results:

- 100 students impacted in the program's first year
- 200 students impacted in the program's second year
- 100% of students stated they enjoyed their Ignite sessions
- 99% of schools reported that students grew in academic learning and engagement

This fall, 150 fellows working across the five Greater Baton Rouge schools are on track to serve approximately 350 students across the community.

Designed to accelerate learning and foster belonging with students, Ignite builds on Teach For America's over 30 years of experience recruiting, developing, and supporting talent and partnering with communities across the country to help students overcome the systemic

barriers to an excellent education. The Ignite Fellowship brings exceptional, equity-oriented leaders into classrooms virtually to add immediate value for students, while creating shifts toward the future of learning.

“We made a deliberate decision to anchor our Ignite program in Teach For America Greater Baton Rouge’s 2030 goal: by 2030, twice as many children in Pointe Coupee, East Feliciana, Donaldsonville, and East Baton Rouge will reach proficiency in 3rd-grade reading,” said Laura Vinsant, Executive Director of the region. “We’re excited to see Ignite take off across the Capital Area, providing interventions to our young students and providing schools and teachers with necessary classroom support. 3rd-grade reading is a critical educational milestone, with research showing a correlation between 3rd-grade literacy and students’ futures and potential earnings over time. Greater Baton Rouge is at 37% of 3rd-graders reading proficiently, according to the 2023 LEAP scores. TFA Greater Baton Rouge is committed to improving student literacy, and we are aiming for 82% of students to reach proficiency by 2030,” Vinsant shared.

Echoing Vinsant’s urgency around literacy interventions is IDEA University Prep Regional Literacy Coach and Ignite trainer Debricca Webster, who welcomes the program to her school this month. “Closing early literacy gaps will ensure our students can read on grade level, which is necessary to access the texts presented in their ELA classes. With strong literacy skills, our students will gain mastery on DIBELS, LEAP, AP courses, and ultimately the ACT,” shared Webster. “Our mission at IDEA is ‘College for All,’ and we can meet this mission because we instill a college-going mindset as early as Kindergarten. Launching the Ignite program will be another way to make this a reality for students in Baton Rouge.”

[Research](#) shows that tutoring, particularly in-school tutoring, is one of the most effective tools available to improve students’ academic outcomes. Teach For America Greater Baton Rouge focuses on 3rd-grade reading based on the predictive power of those outcomes as they relate to future academic and life opportunities. The Ignite program is also layering an additional focus on student wellbeing and engagement, including growth mindsets, belonging, and self-efficacy. Fellows receive ongoing training from Teach For America and their schools to accelerate student learning, with students’ academic and personal growth measured through school-based assessments and surveys.

“We’ve seen the long-term toll the pandemic has had on student learning and teacher wellbeing. Schools alone cannot solve these problems. It takes community support and innovative programming, and we couldn’t be more excited to have Teach For America’s Ignite Fellowship continue for a third year on our campus,” said Megan Phillips, Principal at Jackson Elementary. “The proof is in the numbers. Our students’ scores are up, and our teachers feel supported,” added Phillips.

Teach For America Greater Baton Rouge is thankful for the partnership with the REAL Tutoring initiative, along with a groundswell of community support and generosity that has allowed the Ignite Fellowship to grow and impact students. “With the support of our donors and champions, we’re on our way to ensuring Capital Area students are on track to thrive and read proficiently. This work can’t be done without their tremendous support and we thank them for it,” shared Vinsant.

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities across the country to expand educational opportunities for children. Founded in 1990, Teach For America finds, develops, and supports a diverse network of leaders who expand opportunity for children from classrooms, schools, and every sector and field that shapes the broader systems in which schools operate. Today, Teach For America is a force of over 70,000 alumni, corps members, Ignite fellows, and staff working in pursuit of profound systemic change so that one day every child has an equal opportunity to learn, lead, thrive, and co-create a future filled with possibility. Teach For America is a proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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