

Legislators Mills, Hughes Recognized for Literacy Efforts; Awards Presented during Literacy Day at La. Capitol

BATON ROUGE - The Center for Literacy & Learning has awarded its annual Literacy Advocate of the Year award to Louisiana State Sen. Robert Mills (R-Minden) and Louisiana State Rep. Jason Hughes (D-N.O.) for helping advance the vision of empowering everyone through literacy.

The awards were presented during Literacy Day at the Louisiana State Capitol on Wednesday, May 4. Both the Louisiana House and Senate designated the day as Literacy Day to recognize The Center for their work on improving reading proficiency in all of Louisiana's students, as well as bring attention to the work and policy changes that still need to be made to continue improvement.

"We appreciate the overwhelming support of the Legislature as we work to put in place legislative and policy changes that will help us increase the state's literacy rates," said The Center's President and CEO John E. Wyble, Ph.D. "It is through the work of legislators like Senator Mills and Representative Hughes that we will break the cycle of illiteracy and realize our vision that everyone is empowered through literacy."

During the 2021 Legislative Session, Sen. Mills sponsored SB 216, which put into place requirements for kindergarten through third-grade teachers, as well as administrators at the school to complete a foundational literacy skills instruction course. The bill, which was signed into law by Governor John Bel Edwards, also put requirements in place for teachers and newly hired teachers to complete professional development courses based on the science of reading.

Rep. Hughes is being recognized for his literacy efforts, including the sponsorship of HB 911 during the current legislative session. The bill would provide for additional literacy screenings for students in grades K-3, requires individual reading plans for certain students and requires literacy coaches for teachers.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, Hughes sponsored HCR11 which requested the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a plan for providing school literacy coaches for students in kindergarten through second grade in elementary schools that needed improvement. He also sponsored HR 119 which requested the Department of Education to re-create a commission to study and make recommendations relative to improving reading proficiency for certain students.

As part of Literacy Day, the Center for Literacy & Learning provided every member of the Louisiana legislature with a children's book written by a Louisiana author and/or with a focus on Louisiana. Also, various partners and stakeholders provided information to legislators, stakeholders, and the general public through various displays occupying the Capitol's Memorial Hall.

Louisiana ranks 49th in literacy among the nation with only 1 out of every 4 fourth graders reading proficiently, according to the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The pilot program is widely regarded as an important first step toward implementing comprehensive reforms modeled after the state of Mississippi, which currently leads the nation in student growth for literacy.

In January 2020, the Early Literacy Commission released a report of recommendations that urged the legislature to commit recurring funding specifically for literacy. The Early Literacy Commission was legislatively created in 2019, led by the efforts of the Center for Literacy & Learning in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education.

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About The Center for Literacy and Learning

Founded in 1992, The Center for Literacy & Learning is an educational non-profit whose mission is to advance literacy and learning through evidence-based practices in the classroom, home, and community.

The Center, celebrating its 30th anniversary, works toward helping close the achievement gap by providing educators with customized professional learning that is designed to empower educators in recognizing, assessing, and responding to the multiple needs of diverse learners. The Center's proven and research-based methods are built on the Science of Reading which has resulted in positive change in schools and communities.

The Center's core programs include Louisiana Reads!, Cornerstones, Lit Academy, and Growing Reading Brains. The Center also hosts in New Orleans every February Plain Talk about Literacy and Learning®, the largest literacy conference in the world, bringing together literacy and learning experts and attracting education industry professionals from all levels.

For more information about The Center for Literacy & Learning, visit www.mycli.org