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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **DESOTO PARISH SCHOOL SYSTEM IN LOUISIANA RECEIVES TAP AWARD OF DISTINCTION**

### **Honoree is one of four organizations in the U.S. to receive surprise recognition for commitment to TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement**

Los Angeles, CA—Leaders of the DeSoto Parish School System were surprised with the TAP Award of Distinction, which honors an organization for its dedication and commitment to TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. The Award was presented before more than a thousand educators and policy leaders attending a Friday luncheon at the 12th National TAP Conference, *Building a System of Teacher Leaders*. Kathy Noel, director of curriculum and instruction at the DeSoto Parish School System accepted the award on the parish school system's behalf.

TAP: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement is a revolutionary education reform that offers teachers opportunities for career advancement, ongoing job-embedded professional growth, educator evaluation and performance-based compensation. The implementation of TAP's comprehensive elements is proven to strengthen teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The DeSoto Parish School System adopted the TAP system in the 2008-09 school year and implementation is now parish-wide.

"Thanks to Superintendent Walter Lee's inspired leadership—and the collaborative efforts of stakeholders at every level—DeSoto Parish has grown from two TAP schools to all 13 schools pulling together for the betterment of educators and students," said Dr. Gary Stark, president and CEO of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, the non-profit public charity that manages and supports the TAP system and presents the TAP Award of Distinction. "We are proud of the DeSoto Parish School System's strong dedication and partnership with TAP, clearly worthy of this prestigious recognition."

DeSoto Parish represents one of the first districtwide implementations of the TAP system. "Before we worked hard, but we weren't hitting the marks," explained Noel. With TAP, DeSoto Parish can address a variety of priorities such as teacher quality, classroom instruction and new curriculum efforts, in a coordinated, integrated manner.

Each school has selected master and mentor teachers who, along with the principal and other administrators, form the TAP Leadership Team. This team drives instruction through weekly collaborative professional development and follow-up, classroom observations and pre- and post-conferences with every teacher.

During his more than 30 years as a school superintendent, Walter Lee has seen many programs come and go. However, "TAP sustains itself," he said. "The TAP system is a comprehensive, well-researched program that works."

The nine schools with value-added growth data available have met or exceeded those targets for the 2010-2011 year compared to similar schools in Louisiana. Logansport Elementary School, Logansport High School and North DeSoto Middle School posted value-added scores of "5," indicating "far above average" growth compared to similar schools in the state. The parish school system has also improved its District Performance Score each year since implementing TAP.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal attended North DeSoto Middle School's celebration of progress in December 2011, where educators were rewarded with TAP performance bonuses for their achievement growth. "Educators in DeSoto Parish and at North DeSoto Middle School have chosen to identify, reward, and keep excellent teachers through TAP, and they are better preparing their students to further their studies and enter the workforce," he said.

Other districts receiving the TAP Award of Distinction are Lancaster Independent School District in Texas, Laurens County School District 56 in South Carolina and Lincoln Consolidated School District in Arkansas.

Photos of the TAP Awards of Distinction are [available for download in the TAP website newsroom](#). The TAP Award of Distinction profile video for DeSoto Parish School System is [available on the TAP website videos page](#) at and on the [TAP system's YouTube channel](#).

The TAP Recognition Awards are funded by the [Lowell Milken Family Foundation](#).

Introduced in 1999, TAP impacts more than 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students. For more information on TAP or the 12th National TAP Conference at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza in Los Angeles, visit