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## Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home’s Howard School Designated Exemplar in State Review

*April 5, 2023, Ruston, Louisiana* – The Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home’s Howard School scored in the highest category during a recent Alternative Education Site Review by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). Because of Howard School’s high performance, LDOE designated Howard School an “Exemplar” among Louisiana’s alternative schools.

The Lorraine Nobles Howard Education Center, affectionately known as “Howard School,” is a state-licensed alternative school on the campus of the Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home (LMCH) in Ruston. Howard School and LMCH are programs of Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services (LUMCFS), a statewide nonprofit providing an array of children and family services, including residential care at its three Children’s Homes.

Excited by the recognition, Rick Wheat, LUMCFS CEO, said, “Children in care at Louisiana Methodist Children’s Home receive exemplary educational services. However, maintaining an exceptional educational environment is a costly endeavor. Operating Howard School in 2022 cost just over \$1.2 million, and trickling through all its federal, state, and local education funding streams, the State of Louisiana contributed only \$450,000. LUMCFS covered the \$750,000 shortfall in educational funding with charitable dollars. Every year, LUMCFS invests charitable funds into educating children, and we empower teachers who are committed to our Mission. The real-life returns on these educational investments are incredibly gratifying because we care for children from difficult places in a state that does too little to help them succeed.

Unlike other alternative schools in Louisiana, the faculty of Howard School not only educate but also pursue the mission of Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services. LUMCFS’s mission is to guide children and families home to experience God’s love. In pursuing its mission, LUMCFS delivers crucial services to Louisiana’s children by providing hope and healing through its intensive residential care, therapeutic foster care, and community-based services throughout our state.

Howard School's performance was assessed during a site visit and by a review of artifact samples to show how well Howard School meets the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) standards for alternative schools. Standards included Curriculum and Instruction, Transitional Support, Parental Involvement, Safety and Counseling Services, Professional Development, Post-Secondary Education Pathways, Climate and Culture, and Counseling and Community Partnerships.

The Exemplar designation means Howard School is an official model for all Louisiana Alternative Schools. Other schools are encouraged to contact Howard School to discuss its successful programs and the strategies our teachers have implemented to work with at-risk students.

Mr. Danny Bell, Director of Educational Services at Howard School, was presented with a plaque commemorating the recognition by LUMCFS's Board of Directors at their Spring Board Meeting on April 4, 2023. The school was also recognized by LDOE via Zoom on April 5, 2023, during the Alternative Education Community of Practice online meeting.

"Those of us at Howard School are thrilled about the results, but we all know that the school can always continue to improve. We are fully energized to meet the challenges presented by our at-risk population of young people -- they deserve the best in teaching and learning while receiving incredible therapeutic care. We desire to continue supporting our great organization's mission, and we are thankful for the opportunity to serve as educators. I feel certain that great things will continue for our youth when attending school at our Lorraine Howard Educational Center." said Mr. Bell.

For information about Howard School and the mission of Louisiana United Methodist Children and Family Services, visit <https://www.LUMCFS.org>

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