Good morning everyone.

Michelle Bridges here.

Glad you could join me today.

This presentation was prepared as an introduction to Louisiana School Employees Retirement System, virtually with new membership in mind, but those of you seasoned members may find it interesting as well.

Let's get started with a little history on LSERS.

Alzers was created on July 31, 1946 and became fully operational in 1947.

We operate under Title XI of the Louisiana Statutes, numbered 11-1001 through 11-1206.

We are governed by the Alzers Board of Trustees, consisting of 12 members,

Four active member seats, which are elected by ELSER's active membership who reside in each district across the state.

Two retired member seats, which are elected by retired members throughout Louisiana, and six ex-officio seats, which are appointed.

One is the president of the Louisiana School Bus Operators Association, two legislators, and three from various state departments.

ELSERS currently has over $26,000 in membership, active and retired, and funding to operate your retirement system essentially comes from contributions made by you and your employer and ELSERS investment gains made on those contributions.

As mentioned, the four active members on Elser's board are elected by the active membership residing in each of the four districts outlined by Parrish, which you see here.

Each board member serves a four-year term, and when an election is forthcoming for your district, you will receive a ballot in the mail to cast your vote.

By the same token, if you are a retiree, your voice too can be heard when a retiree seat election takes place.

We encourage you to participate in any election you receive a ballot.

This allows you, as an LSERS member, to have a voice in your retirement system.

Once elected, your trustee on the board is your direct connection to your retirement system to voice your cares and concerns regarding statutes, policies, etc.

They are there for you.

We encourage you to become more familiar with your trustee and their responsibilities affecting your retirement system.

There is additional trustee information located on our website.

Your membership in LSIRS is mandatory because of the position in which you are employed.

Once enrolled, your membership account is created and your employer begins deducting retirement contributions from your pay.

Your employer then sends the contributions to LSIRS and your account is updated with the information.

Thus, the cycle begins as you begin ownership of your retirement.

As previously mentioned, LSERS operates under Louisiana statutes and is governed by a Board of Trustees.

As you become familiar with your retirement system, we encourage you to voice your concerns to your trustee and legislator.

You, as well as your employer, share the responsibility of providing ELSERs with information necessary to create your account.

Your employer was responsible for assisting you in completing the necessary paperwork.

You were responsible for understanding the paperwork and your membership, as well as providing ELSERs a copy of supporting documentation, such as a copy of both yours as well as your beneficiary's

birth certificates and social security cards.

No worries if you didn't have copies of the documents readily available, but we do ask that you provide us with the copies as soon as possible.

These documents must be on file prior to release of any benefits.

Let's take a minute to understand the enrollment forms involved in establishing your retirement account.

The enrollment form notified us of your personal information and the position you were hired into, as well as assists us in determining the percentage of your pay required for retirement contributions.

The forfeiture of benefits form was to ensure understanding that your retirement account could be taken from you if you were convicted of a crime in connection with your employment.

The Social Security form was to ensure you understood that by contributing to ELSERs, you would not be contributing to Social Security.

Essentially, your entitlement to Social Security benefits may be hindered.

And lastly, the Designation of Beneficiary form, which notified us of the person or persons you wish to receive your contributions in the event of your death prior to retirement.

Once your pay begins, your employer will automatically deduct a percentage of your pay, typically described as retirement contributions, and forward that amount to ELSERS to be placed in your retirement account.

The percentage deducted is typically 8%.

Depending on special circumstances, your contribution percentage may be slightly different and once contributions post to your account, your retirement service begins.

We encourage you to keep abreast of your retirement account.

You should keep us informed of your beneficiary designations, mailing and address or contact information, and any changes in your marital status.

Keep your marital status current.

Louisiana is a community property state.

Once your retirement begins to accumulate contributions, your spouse immediately becomes part owner.

Should you divorce, ELSERs will pay an ex-spouse, but only if we receive a court order demanding that we do so.

However, we will not pay an ex-spouse any benefits until you, as the member, begin drawing the benefits.

And again, that is only if we have a court order.

When you begin paying retirement contributions, you begin receiving service credit.

Service credit is calculated based on the number of days you receive pay divided by the number of days in your annual contract.

Due to the variety of positions subject to enrollment in this system,

We have members with various annual contracts: 9-month, 10-month, 11-month, and 12-month employees.

Basically, if you receive pay for every day in your annual contract throughout the year, you'll receive one full year of service credit.

If you experience any leave without pay, you will not receive credit for those days.

For example,

A nine-month employee generally has to work 180 days to fulfill their annual contract.

If the employee is on leave without pay for 90 days and receives pay for 90 days, then the employee will receive only 50% credit for the year.

It's simple math.

90 is 50% of 180, so on and so forth depending on the length of the contract.

While you cannot earn more than one year of credit per year, there are other possibilities available to potentially add credit.

Perhaps you had prior employment history as part-time or substitute and were unable to contribute.

Did you ever serve in the military?

Were you a previous member of LSERS and refunded that service?

Were you ever a member of another public retirement system?

If any of these topics apply to you, we encourage you to notify us or speak to your employer for the possibility of receiving credit can be investigated as soon as possible.

Everything you've learned about Elser so far helps you to prepare for your golden years of retirement.

Once you've been a member for a certain period of time and attained a certain age, you may draw a monthly benefit for your lifetime.

Not only a benefit for you, but you may choose a retirement option that will allow us to pay one single beneficiary of your choice

a monthly benefit for the rest of their life in the event of your death after retirement.

As you see here, if your membership began on or before June 30th of 2010, your eligibility requirements to draw a monthly benefit are at least 10 years of service at age 60, at least 25 years of service at age 55, or at least 30 years at any age.

We also have a 20 years of service retirement prior to reaching age 60.

However, that is a reduced benefit.

The reduction is based on how far away from regular retirement eligibility you are.

Keep in mind that the reduction is a permanent reduction.

If your membership began on or after July 1, 2010, your eligibility requirements are rather simple.

Simply five years of service at age 60.

Of course the 20-year early retirement is also available to you in that membership group as well.

The standard benefit calculation, which determines your monthly benefit, consists of three main components: your FAC, or highest

average salary times your accrual rate times your total service credit.

Service credit mentioned here is the same service credit just explained.

Days paid divided by days in your annual contract.

Your FAC and accrual rate depends on when you became a member of LSERS.

As you see here, if your membership began before July 1 of '06,

your FAC is comprised of your highest three-year salary.

If your membership began on or after July 1, '06, your FAC is based on your highest five-year salary.

Your accrual rate is 3 1/3 percent if enrolled prior to 7/1/10 and 2 1/2 percent if enrolled on or after July 1 of '10.

Specialized benefits are available should the unfortunate occur while you are actively employed.

Although available, these benefits are not automatic as certain criteria must be met.

If you have the number of years necessary to qualify for a disability benefit prior to regular retirement eligibility, it will be necessary for you to furnish copies of medical records along with the application, doctor's statements, and various other forms.

You must support your claim that you are unable to perform your regular job duties as outlined in your official job description.

The final award of a disability benefit is determined by the State Medical Disability Board.

And in the unfortunate event you die while actively employed, your spouse and/or eligible children may be entitled to monthly benefits.

At any time you are no longer employed in the position that created your retirement account, you may refund your retirement contributions.

Your application for refund cannot be submitted to our office until 90 days after your last day of employment.

The refund will be subject to a 20% federal tax withholding, however,

you may choose to have the funds rolled over into another qualified plan and avoid the 20% withholding.

Again, in the unfortunate event you die prior to retirement, your beneficiaries should make application for refund of your contributions.

In this instance, the 90-day waiting period does not apply.

However, keep in mind,

that if it is determined that your spouse and/or children are eligible to receive monthly survivor benefits, your designated beneficiaries will not receive a refund of the contributions.

The survivor benefits will be paid in lieu of the lump sum refund.

and regardless of the method of refund, the employer portion of your retirement contributions are not refundable.

You have alternatives available to you in lieu of refunding your contributions if your employment ends or changes.

You may vest if you have the number of years necessary to draw a benefit but don't have the age requirement.

This means you leave your contributions, i.e.

your service credit, here until you attain the required age to draw a monthly benefit.

Once you have the age, you'll be able to draw the monthly benefit.

If your new employment mandates membership in either Teachers Retirement System or State Retirement System, and you have at least five years of service credit in ELSERS at that time,

you may continue your membership here at ELSERS.

And lastly, if your new employment mandates membership in another system and you do not have the required five years to retain your ELSERS membership, you may leave service credit here and apply for either a reciprocal or transfer.

The reciprocal means you can consider your time in both systems to reach the required number of years to retire.

Simply draw benefit from each system at no cost to you.

Or you may transfer your ELSER's time to the new system and there may be a cost to you for this transaction.

Okay, let's take a minute to have a little fun with what we've learned here today.

True or false?

ELSERs must have copies of your and your beneficiary's birth certificates and Social Security cards.

The answer is true.

This is because your benefits are determined partly because of your age and the age of your beneficiaries and your account is identified by your social security number.

Another true or false.

LSERS is the same retirement system as teachers and state retirement known as LASERS.

That's right.

False.

All three of the systems are three of the main systems here in the state, but they are separate systems.

Okay.

Another true or false.

Employer contributions are not included as part of a refund.

If you guessed true, you are absolutely right.

Okay, what is the term ELSERS uses to describe your highest average salary?

The correct answer, of course, is Final Average Compensation or FAC for short.

What is the term ELSERS uses to describe the retirement deduction from your salary?

If you guessed contributions, you were correct.

In this multiple choice, can you choose what letter best describes what FAC stands for?

If you selected letter C, you are correct.

It is the average salary used in your benefit calculation.

And let's match the term with the description here.

Retirement contributions.

If you guessed a percentage of your pay, you are correct.

Specialized benefits.

Yep, disability survivor benefits may be available due to unfortunate circumstances.

Service credit.

Service credit is determined by dividing days paid by days in your annual contract.

FAC?

Yep, FAC is the term used to describe your highest average salary.

And lastly, retirement benefits, the monthly income you'll receive when you become eligible to draw your retirement.

LSERS has an exciting feature that we encourage our membership to become familiar with.

The feature is called Your Member Access.

Member Access is viewable through our website.

Through the Member Access, you can not only see your current account information, but you can view all your prior year information.

In addition, this access has a link available for you to estimate your monthly benefits and to change your personal information on file, such as your address.

Of course, as with any online features, there is a registration process to complete prior to accessing your information.

We encourage you to follow the prompts to the procedures on how to register for your member access and begin your ELSERS online experience.

If you are having difficulty with the registration, please contact us.

We will assist you.

We're confident you'll be glad you did.

Forms and fact sheets are also available on our website.

Here you see the list of all fact sheets available.

These fact sheets are just that, facts about your retirement system that you may find interesting.

and more detailed information about the subjects you heard about here today.

The forms listed here are those most common used in your active membership, although all ELSERS forms are accessible on our website.

In reality, there is an entire ELSERS universe that you may access 24 hours a day by visiting our website.

You do not have to register to view the public information.

Note the tabs across the top of the page.

Read about ELSERS, the legislation that may affect your system, on to our investment strategies.

The Resources tab is your main source for the forms and fact sheets previously mentioned, as well as all other news links.

The bottom of the page provides you a direct e-mail link to forward your questions directly to us.

You will also find other various links.

Here, too, is where you subscribe to receive Elser's news directly to your e-mail.

And yes, we are also on Facebook.

Aside from Facebook, subscribing is the best method to receive ELSER's up-to-date news and information.

We would like to specifically highlight our ELSER Satisfaction Survey.

This provides you an opportunity to voice your opinion.

Not only can you rate our services, but you can also provide your own thoughts, comments, or ideas on how we can better serve you or manage your retirement system.

To reach this survey, simply click on the

contact us link on our website's homepage.

We would be delighted to hear your feedback.

I sincerely hope today's presentation provided you with a clear understanding of your retirement system and the important role it plays in your financial future.

We encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

As previously mentioned,

The website is a great tool to use.

Like us on Facebook.

Keep on the lookout for future workshops in your area as well as future webinars.

Webinars that have been presented in the past will be posted to our website as well.

Not only can you listen to a previously aired webinar, but you may print the coinciding PowerPoint presentation to assist you with following along and making notes.

But most of all, remember that ELSER staff is here to help you understand your membership regardless of your method of contact.

At this time, I'd like to open up the floor for some questions to come through.

While we are waiting for questions, I would like to let the employers know who may have attended today's session that if you're interested in continuing education certificates, we do issue them.

just simply make the request through the webmaster e-mail on our website or the, of course, the direct e-mail address you see here on your screen.

We ask that you allow about two weeks for us to issue that certificate.

Also, we

do encourage anyone to view the website, navigate around in it just to see what's available.

We encourage you to visit our Facebook page and we also encourage you to share some of this information with coworkers so that they may become more involved and

view our website or contact us just to share an interest and an excitement in the retirement system.

It is such a valuable part of an extension of your employment.

I would also like to invite the employers to use this in their orientations or in service meetings if you think it would be helpful or valuable.

This webinar, this exact webinar will air once again this afternoon at 1:30 and after that it will be posted to our website.

I do not see any questions coming through.

I appreciate everyone's attendance today.

Hope it was enjoyable, valuable information.

Until next time,

Have a great day.

Bye.