

**ACT 833 LEADERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 3, 2014
MEETING SUMMARY**

Claiborne Building
Baton Rouge, LA

1:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sen. Dan Claitor
Donnica Conway, LaDDC
Alan Coulter, LSU-HDC
April Dunn, Self-Advocate
Rebecca Ellis, Northshore FHF
Shawn Fleming, LaDDC
Liz Gary, Parent
Rebecca Hanberry, Bossier Parish
Community College Program for
Successful Employment
Sherri Houin, Parent
Kelli Joseph, Superintendent, St.
Helena Parish Schools
Laureen Mayfield, President, LaSEA,
Bienville Parish
Ashley McReynolds, LaTEACH
Rep. John Schroder, Chair
Debra Schum, La. Assoc. of Principals
Carol Tall, Vice Pres., LaSEA, Acadia
Parish
Sarah Voigt, Advocacy Center
Mauricia Ledet-Walters, FHF of
Acadiana
Patsy White, LaDDC
Jamie Wong, LDE

MEMBERS ABSENT

Shelia Jackson, Superintendent, Grant
Parish Schools

LaDDC Supporting Staff

Derek White, LaDDC

GUESTS PRESENT

Bridget Bergeron, St. Martin Parish
Belinda Dumas, Livingston Parish
Joanette Dunn
Jeanne Ebey, Livingston Parish
Nancy Hicks, LDE
Shane Riddle, LAE
Ellis Roussel, Governor's Office of
Disability Affairs
Debra Washington, Lafourche Parish
Kay Rone Wilson, LDE

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Representative Schroder called the meeting to order with a quorum at 1:00 p.m... All participants were welcomed and introduced themselves.

Mr. Fleming expressed appreciation for participants on behalf of the DD Council, provided a brief synopsis of the collaborative advocacy efforts to change Louisiana policies related to promotion and graduation requirements, and indicated the purpose of the committee. The purpose of the Act 833 Leadership Steering Committee is to provide guidance and recommendations related to the implementation of alternative pathways for promotion and graduation requirements of certain students.

Questions were raised about the scope of the Committee's role, the target(s) of the Committee's recommendations and/or actions, and the process for taking such action. Information provided below provides references that were not indicated explicitly during the meeting. Recommendations may include, but not limited to, policy changes, guidance documents, monitoring strategies and communications with the public that strive to maintain high expectations for all students and enable each student the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. As an activity of the Louisiana Developmental Disability Council, the Act 833 Leadership Steering Committee is authorized to offer recommendations for the Council in the form of information, model policies and procedures, approaches, strategies, findings, conclusions, and recommendations to policy makers. Act 833 Leadership Steering Committee recommendations will be presented to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council for consideration of action. The Council is charged to "provide the information directly to Federal, State, and local policymakers, including Congress, the Federal executive branch, the Governor, the State Legislature, and State agencies, in order to increase the ability of such policymakers to offer opportunities and to enhance or adapt generic services to meet the needs of, or provide specialized services to, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families."

Dr. Laureen Mayfield requested to change the date of the November 5th meeting to November 12th to avoid a conflict with the LaSEA meeting. As no member objected, Representative Schroder indicated an effort will be made to honor this request.

Representative Schroder requested Council members to indicate issues for Committee consideration in making recommendations. Most Committee members expressed concerns over the lack of clear guidance from the Department. Specifically, members indicated the confusion and lack of clarity in the Department issued Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) of August 8th and August 18th. These FAQs include contradictory requirements for LAA-1 students and uses language that principals and others have interpreted to imply IEP teams should wait for further guidance from the Department prior to determining an alternative pathway for any student with a disability to graduate. Department staff indicated they are considering re-issuing a corrected FAQ sheet and felt school districts had enough information to proceed with implementing Act 833.

Committee members identified the following issues for consideration:

- Extending Committee Membership to include a representative of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana School Board Association.
- Proficiency needs to be further defined. Committee members wondered whether proficiency would lead IEP teams back to the state-established cut score on academic assessments that Act 833 clearly allows flexibility for IEP teams to consider the requirements.
- For at least the 2014-2015 school year, extending the 30-day requirement IEP teams have for determining requirements students must meet for an alternative pathway to earn credits for graduation.
- Committee members requested for the Department of Education to:
 - Clarify the Department's interpretation of Act 833/BESE proposed policy revision to Bulletin 1566 regarding which students need Carnegie credits to graduate and which students can graduate without earning Carnegie credits.
 - Vet guidance documents prior to official release. Specifically, members indicated the stakeholder group vetting documents include a parent, special education director, and a principal. Mr. Fleming indicated Department staff did attempt to receive input prior to sending out FAQ sheets, however, technical errors prevented recommended changes from being included.
 - Provide guidance as to why the FAQ addresses Carnegie credits since Act 833 mentions only course credit for graduation
 - Provide timelines for future Department activities and products
 - Offer training and support for IEP teams in developing individualized standards.
 - Ensure Department Network support staff have information to adequately support and inform school systems in appropriate practices. Committee members indicated Department Network staff could not answer any questions about Act 833 implementation.
 - Provide clear written guidelines on what school systems can and should implement
 - Re-instate regular updates for special education directors.
- Allow applied and modified high school courses to be Carnegie credit worthy vs. require all students to have access to certified teachers.
 - If students in modified/applied courses cannot earn Carnegie credit what is the plan for them.

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- Changing IEP and SER (LDE data for special education) to reflect students on alternative pathways, changes to 'non-diploma' bound status,
- Expansion of LAA-1 criteria.
- Defining what a high school diploma means. Initial comments included:
 - College and Career Ready is currently how a diploma is being defined. That is a very high level of academic proficiency, essentially indicating the student is likely to succeed in post-secondary educational settings, like a university or technical school. There is a need to differentiate between a high school diploma and a college diploma. Joe Willhoft, executive director of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, like PARCC, said proficiency on tests of Common Core State Standards will determine whether a student is ready to take college-level classes in those subjects, and that may not be the appropriate standard for a graduation exam, since college readiness is a goal of K-12 education but not yet a diploma requirement.
 - Prepared for post-secondary options.
 - Diploma should be an individualized determination of student skills and proficiencies.
 - Diploma reflects the student is ready to enter whatever the next level of life is for that student: employment, technical school, university, etc.
 - A diploma is a course of study and Act 833 indicates the IEP team could define what the course of study will be for some students.
- Monitoring and research considerations included:
 - Students access to highly qualified teachers.
 - Number of students in applied/modified courses.
 - Number of students on alternative pathway to graduation and the criteria they met to graduate.
- Non-diploma bound designation and implications for removing this option.
- Examples of how IEP teams have developed alternative pathways for some students. Mr. Fleming indicated he will request special education directors to share some examples with participants on Council hosted webinars.
- Changing the date of the November 5th meeting to November 12th.

Committee members indicated a timeline for Department guidance would be helpful to allow school personnel to anticipate what to expect from the Department.

Some Committee members wondered if any action can be taken to address the issue of students not being offered an alternative pathway within the 30-day timeline as specified

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in Act 833. One suggestion mentioned was to offer an extension to 30-day timeline, however, this change would require legislative action.

Representative Schroder requested for Department staff to request for Superintendent White to provide timelines on publication of guidance; whether anything can be done to address 30-day timeline for this year, and a schedule of planned activities to train and support school personnel and parents about the requirements in Act 833.

Senator Claitor indicated a desire for clarity when the Superintendent addresses the Senate Education Committee at its December meeting. Senator Claitor expressed concern with the problems shared since the Superintendent did not reveal during Senate committee hearings that there would be problems to implement in a timely manner.

Committee members discussed the lack of response from the U.S. Department of Education to Representative Schroder's questions sent on August 12, 2014.

Representative Schroder indicated he was going to send a letter to Superintendent White regarding the issues discussed during the meeting. Representative Schroder urged other members of the Committee to consider issuing letters from their individual organizations to Superintendent White.

Meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.