



## Action Alert #5: BESE, MFP Task-Force and SEAP need to hear from you

January 20, 2017

Important issues related to students with disabilities will be considered at three meetings next week.

- Do you think parents should be included in the special education monitoring process?
- Do you believe schools should receive the necessary funding to provide students with the supports and services they need? Do you want to make sure the right amount of money goes to schools based on students' needs?
- What are your priority areas for state initiatives to help school systems meet the needs of students with disabilities?
- How should the state support educators in teaching students the new Louisiana Connectors (alternate standards) for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Schedule of Meetings:

What: [Board of Elementary and Secondary Education \(BESE\)](#)

When: Monday, January 23, 2017, Committee Meetings begin at 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 24, 2017, Full Board Meeting begins at 9:00 a.m.

Where: Claiborne Bldg, Room 1-136, 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

What: [Minimum Foundation Program \(MFP\) Task Force](#) (Funding)

When: Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 1:00 p.m.

Where: Claiborne Bldg, Room 1-136, 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

What: [Special Education Advisory Panel \(SEAP\)](#)

When: Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 9:30 a.m.

Where: Claiborne Bldg, Room 1-136, 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

### How to Take Action

If you believe parents should be part of the special education monitoring process:

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#).
- Attend the BESE Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee on **Monday, January 23, 2017, 9:30 a.m.**

If you are concerned about education funding and whether schools are being funded appropriately based on the students they enroll:

- Contact [Ashley McReynolds](#), LaCAN Leader and BESE Member [Tony Davis](#).
- Attend the MFP Task Force on **Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 1:00 p.m.**

If you want to share your priorities for how the La. Department of Education should use special education funding to support teachers and schools:

- Contact [Patsy White](#), co-chair of SEAP.
- Attend the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Meeting on **Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 9:30 a.m.**

Additional information on agenda items of particular interest can be found below.

## **Additional Information**

### **BESE Committee Meetings - January 23**

#### **9:30 a.m. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee**

Monitoring of local school systems is the only way LDOE can assure students with disabilities are receiving an appropriate education. BESE will be considering public comments related to proposed changes to the rules for special education monitoring (Bulletin 1922). The main problem parents had with the proposed changes was the reduction of parental involvement in the monitoring process. Parents expressed a desire to be more involved on the front end - when decisions are made about what should be monitored - and on the back end - specifically, participating as members of the monitoring teams to facilitate town hall meetings and gather parental concerns and experiences.

#### **The Louisiana Department of Education recommends BESE to go forward with changes to the rules that will limit parental involvement in the special education monitoring process**

BESE members need to hear from you before they re-consider one of the most relevant issues to students with disabilities - how their school systems are held accountable for providing special education services.

#### **11:30 a.m. School Innovation and Turnaround Committee**

BESE has the option to approve probationary extensions for charter schools not meeting their contractual requirements. And these requirements do not include the legal requirement of enrolling students with disabilities at similar rates found in local public school districts.

Since one of the charter schools up for extension only serves students with dyslexia (and has an "F" letter grade) LDOE is recommending using a different method to determine whether the school should receive an extension. Federal law requires a single accountability

system. Creating multiple accountability systems will further incentivize schools to not serve certain types of students and create a segregated educational structure - which is likely why this approach is prohibited by federal law. There is a problem with our accountability system; however, the solution LDOE recommends will not solve the fundamental issue. Creating separate accountability systems (as LDOE recommends) will create more problems. Instead we should work toward creating a universally designed accountability system that fairly accounts for the progress made by all students enrolled, regardless of each student's starting point or personal struggles.

Louisiana's school accountability system is biased to favor selective admissions schools and tends to penalize schools that serve large numbers of students who are poor and/or with disabilities. While this is a fundamental flaw in the accountability system this method used to deem schools as successes or failures is what resulted in the development of charter schools. The bias in our accountability system creates incentives for schools to not enroll students with disabilities. Yet, LDOE does not require charter schools to serve their fair share of students with disabilities - or students in poverty - as is required by law.

## MFP Task Force

The MFP Task-Force will meet January 24th at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the proposed draft of the MFP. The agenda can be found [here](#).

Did you know that across most of Louisiana a different funding formula is used with the local share of monies for traditional public schools and charter schools? And using different formula causes major inequities in schools getting the right amount of money to serve their students.

The major reason for funding inequities is the use of different funding formulas for the local share of the MFP for traditional public schools than for school choice programs **and** differences in the number of students with severe disabilities enrolled in each school system. Louisiana's state funding formula, the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), provides more funding for traditional public schools for students with disabilities than for students without disabilities. However, the La. Department of Education calculates the amount for charter schools based on an average of the local funds for every student - regardless of the student's needs.

Using an average amount of funds would not be a problem for charter school funding IF charter schools served an average amount of students with disabilities - but charter schools do not always serve a fair share of students with disabilities. So, using an average amount for any student is problematic considering students with disabilities make up 12.5 percent of traditional public schools but only eight (8) percent of charter schools and three (3) percent of private schools. Even more problematic is that in many cases students with disabilities enrolled in school choice programs do not have the most severe, and costly, disabilities. The result is LDOE is removing more local funds from the traditional public school systems than the MFP formula indicates should be in traditional public schools based on the students enrolled in the schools. The funds removed from the traditional public school systems are provided to the charter schools - even if those charter schools do not have students identified with the high costs needs to justify the additional funding. The result, when all transactions are complete, is that schools serving higher percentages of students with disabilities, particularly students with severe disabilities, tend to have less funding than expected according to the state funding formula (MFP).

Across the state **the inequity exceeds five million dollars - that is five million dollars of local funds that should be left in** traditional public schools for services needed by students with disabilities and other high cost factors.

In New Orleans this issue was corrected to some degree. New Orleans no longer uses an average funding formula since it was unfair to charter schools serving high rates of students with disabilities. The DD Council and LaCAN seek equity in funding for schools across the state.

Contact [Ashley McReynolds](#) and Chair BESE member [Tony Davis](#) if this issue is important to you.

## SEAP meets January 25 at 9:30 a.m.

SEAP will meet and consider several important topics related to students with disabilities. Click [here](#) to view the agenda.

Where: Claiborne Building  
Room 1-136 Thomas Jefferson  
1201 N. Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

## Confirm Your Action

**Don't forget to let us know that you took action!** Reply to this email or notify your [LaCAN Leader](#) to confirm your action.

Why confirm your action? This helps the Council know how important these issues are to you and allows us to better work together in advocating for educational policies and practices that improve services and outcomes of students with disabilities.

## Contact Us

LaCAN is an initiative of the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information in this email, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108  
email: [info@laddc.org](mailto:info@laddc.org)  
website: [www.lacanadvocates.org](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)  
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