



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

November 3, 2014

Ms. Sandee Winchell, Executive Director
Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Post Office Box 3455
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3455

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Developmental Disabilities Council

Dear Ms. Winchell:

I appreciate the Developmental Disabilities Council's acknowledgement of the current efforts to implement Act 3 legislation and help ensure all Louisiana children enter kindergarten ready. Our agency is committed to unifying expectations for early childhood care and education programs, supporting teacher excellence and giving families equitable access to high-quality choices for their children, including equitable access for children with disabilities.

In response to the recommendations by the Council, the Department of Education will:

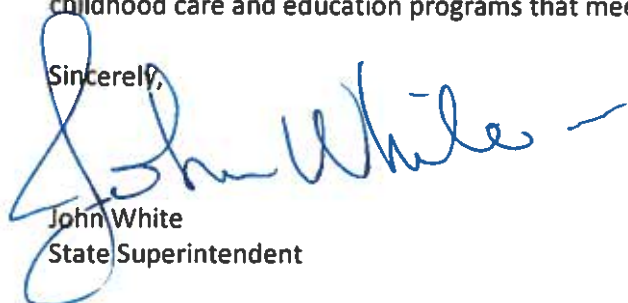
- Work with early childhood stakeholders, including the new Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council, to estimate the funding needed to upgrade quality, create equity and increase access to programs.
- Develop a public, easy-to-use funding model that can be used to explore different investment options and how they would benefit families and children, including children with disabilities. The Department intends to present the funding model at the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council meeting on December 8. The Department will then bring the model to the State Board which must submit the model to the Louisiana Legislature prior to the 2015 Session. The Department appreciates the Development Disabilities Council's offer to support this effort and intends to work closely with Maria Blanco, the Advisory Council member who represents an advocacy or service organization that focuses on serving children with disabilities.
- Ensure equitable access for children with disabilities through local coordinated enrollment. The Department supports Community Network Pilots to develop and implement locally-managed enrollment systems to coordinate information, eligibility, and applications. Community Networks are required to submit annual plans to the Department to ensure local systems include processes for providing information to all families, ensuring equitable access, matching families to their preferred programs and developing procedures for grievances or complaints. Families that have concerns about local enrollment or access are always able to contact the Department toll-free hotline at 1-877-453-2721 for support.
- Explore avenues for continuing and expanding the Early Learning for All Inclusion Grants for Community Network Pilots in 2015-2016.
- Upon request, work with the Advisory Council as well as any interested organization to provide readily available data to help identify gaps, improve services or demonstrate additional funding needs for children with disabilities while ensuring compliance with privacy laws and regulations.

For the efforts listed above, the Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Health and Hospitals, specifically with the Early Steps Early Intervention Program, to ensure access and inclusion of children with disabilities under age three.

Louisiana Believes

The Department is committed to working with the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, are provided with equitable access to early childhood care and education programs that meet their needs and promote learning and development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John White" with a horizontal line extending to the right.

John White
State Superintendent

CC: Jamie Wong, Representative to the Developmental Disabilities Council
Jenna Conway, Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood

Louisiana Believes