



## Action Alert #11: BESE and LDOE need to hear from you regarding ESSA Plan and IDEA Budget

March 20, 2017

Next Wednesday, March 29th, will be two important education meetings. The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) will consider the state plan to spend federal (IDEA) funds for students with disabilities. And, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) will consider the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan and how to address charter schools who are not serving a fair share of students with disabilities. Additionally, LDOE is offering four informational sessions, one of which will be available online, on opportunities for students with disabilities in Louisiana's draft ESSA plan.

- Should Louisiana's ESSA plan create an accountability system that values ALL students, including students with disabilities?
- What action should BESE and LDOE take when charter schools fail to serve their fair share of students with disabilities, as required by law?
- What should Louisiana prioritize and which initiatives should be funded with the state-level federal (IDEA) funds for students with disabilities?

### SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

#### **LDOE Informational Meetings on Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - Special Education**, four locations/times:

March 20, 2017, 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.  
681 Hwy 594, Monroe

March 21, 2017, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.  
925 West Edenborne Pkwy., Gonzales

[Click here to watch the meeting live streamed](#) (at 1:00 on 3/21/17)

March 22, 2017, 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.  
326 Gauthier Rd., Lafayette, La.

March 22, 2017, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  
2121 Mason St., Alexandria

### **Special Education Advisory Council Meeting**

March 29, 2017, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Claiborne Bldg. (room 1-136), 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge  
Agenda is not available yet; anticipate the IDEA plan and budget to be considered.

### **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)**

March 29, 2017, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.  
Claiborne Bldg. (room 1-100), 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge  
[Click here](#) for agenda

- [A report on student enrollment percentages of students at-risk and students with disabilities](#)
- [Louisiana Every Student Succeeds Act draft Plan](#)

## **How to Take Action**

### **If you are concerned about:**

BESE ensuring that Charter Schools are enrolling and serving their fair share of students with disabilities as required by law;

or,

Louisiana's ESSA Plan revises the education accountability system to value ALL students equally and has adequate stakeholder input considered.

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#).
- Put on your Yellow Shirt and attend the BESE meeting at 1:00 p.m. on March 29th.

**If you are concerned about** how the Louisiana Department of Education will plan to use federal (IDEA) funds to support and monitor school systems with appropriately serving students with disabilities:

- [Contact Patsy White](#), co-chair of SEAP.
- Put on your Yellow Shirt and attend the SEAP meeting at 9:00 a.m. on March 29th.

Additional information on agenda items can be found below.

If you are interested in hearing LDOE's informational presentation on opportunities for students with disabilities in Louisiana's draft ESSA plan, attend one of the four informational meetings listed above or watch it online.

## Additional Information

### **Charter School Enrollment of Students with Disabilities**

Charter schools were established by Louisiana law in 1995 to serve students deemed "[At-Risk](#)." Students with disabilities are included in the original list of definitions for 'at-risk' and are required to be served by charter schools. A bill passed two years ago, [Act 467 of 2015](#), strengthened the intent of the Legislature and Governor related to students served by charter schools. Act 467 required charter school student populations to closely reflect the rate of students with disabilities found in traditional public school systems. BESE is required to determine if a charter school is not meeting the requirements for enrolling an expected number of students with disabilities. And if a charter school does not enroll a fair share of students with disabilities state law requires BESE to establish responsibilities of the charter school, local school board and themselves for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan**

The Every Student Succeeds Act became the latest version of federal law in December 2015 (previously this federal law was referred to as No Child Left Behind and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). According to the ESSA each state must submit a plan for approval from the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. DOE indicated two dates for submitting plans, April 3, 2017 and September 18, 2017. Superintendent John White has indicated he intends to submit Louisiana's plan at the earlier date, April 3rd, 2017.

[Click here](#) to read the draft of Louisiana's plan pursuant to the ESSA.

Governor John Bel Edwards convened an Advisory Council on the ESSA to conduct an extensive review of the ESSA and make recommendations on specific actions necessary for implementation of the ESSA in Louisiana. [Click here](#) to read the initial report and [click here to read the final report](#) from the Governor's Advisory Council on the ESSA. In summary the Governor Edwards Advisory Council on the ESSA recommended Louisiana:

- Delay submitting Louisiana's plan until September to allow for meaningful stakeholder input.
  - Ohio's education leader, Superintendent Paolo DeMaria responded to similar requests and will delay submission of their plan stating, "[The submission of the state's Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) response should be an event that unites us.](#)" Stakeholders have asked for Louisiana to also use this as opportunity to create unity among stakeholders.
- Reduce the number of statewide standardized tests.
- Not take an additional 3% of Title I federal dollars from all schools and redistribute those dollars to schools on a competitive basis. The state has

7% of Title I federal dollars (about 20 million dollars) for improving low-performing schools.

- Develop a quality indicator that meets the intent of the ESSA, address the learning needs of Louisiana's students and for LDOE to provide data to families to ensure understanding of each school's quality.
- Allow for two years of data to be collected prior to making school determinations.
- Have transparency in how funds are distributed.
- Embrace school improvement innovation that emphasizes sustaining community schools and local control of schools.
- Reapply for the Preschool Development Grant (set to expire in 2018).
- Recruit National Board Certified Teachers to work in low performing schools and provide financial incentives for teachers to become nationally certified.
- Extend the timeframe and scope of the Advisory Council to review the application and initial implementation of Louisiana's ESSA.

### **Individual's with Disabilities Education Act State Plan and Budget**

The draft of the IDEA state plan and budget has not yet been released. Each year the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is required to submit a plan and budget for how it will fulfill its role of ensuring students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. While the majority of IDEA funds flow directly to Local Education Agencies for direct services, the LDOE has about \$24.5 million of 'set-aside' IDEA funds for state-level activities. The prioritization of these funds are critical in building an infrastructure that supports school systems and parents in meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities.

## **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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