



**LATEACH**  
Louisiana Together Educating ALL Children

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## Put on your Purple

BESE needs to hear your voice!

February 29, 2016

Greetings!

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meets this week.

WHEN: **March 3-4, 2016**

WHERE: **Claiborne Building  
The Louisiana Purchase Room (1-100)  
1201 N. Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802**



BESE members need to hear from you before they consider the following issues most relevant to students with disabilities:

### 1. Funding to Schools

BESE will vote on how schools receive money next year. Efforts have moved Louisiana toward using a more equitable funding formula across traditional and charter school systems. There continues to be disagreement on distributing local share of funds to charter schools based on student needs. Language in the MFP clarifies some of these differences, but it is not clear how LDOE or BESE will interpret this language in calculating funding levels to schools relative to students with disabilities.

- Will LDOE/BESE interpret the language in the proposed MFP to distribute funding equitably across charter and traditional schools statewide based on student needs?

BESE will also consider a new funding formula just for schools in Orleans Parish. The funding formula is not publicly available, so details are unclear. The previous plan provided schools with different amounts of money depending on which disability a student has and how many minutes of service are in the student's IEP.

Some additional questions to consider:

1. Why is the proposed Orleans Parish formula not available to the public for review?
2. Is the Orleans Parish formula based on an analysis of actual costs for serving students (i.e., is the base rate the minimum amount needed to educate students without any of the weighted

characteristics and how were the amounts to assign/increase funding in each weighted category/tier determined)? If so, will LDOE make the analysis publicly available?

- The answer to this question can and should influence how much money is requested to support schools in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
3. How will LDOE/BESE ensure more schools do not engage in fraud related to this differentiated funding formula? [Click here](#) to read how one school "snagged almost \$320,000 in public money for the school in the 2014-15 academic year by artificially inflating special education services."
4. Since the MFP funds going into Orleans Parish are based on a different funding formula than the formula used to distribute funding across schools in the rest of the state, how will LDOE/BESE:
- ensure the distribution of funds remains within the parameters of the initial funding allocation to Orleans Parish School System (i.e., ~ 390,640,000)?
  - use or distribute any excess funds if the amount of funds distributed to schools within Orleans are less than the initial funding allocation to Orleans Parish School System?
  - continue to justify not using the local share of funds in calculating weighted funding amounts to charter schools outside of Orleans?
    - The base rate for each student in Orleans is nearly double the base rate for each student used to calculate add-on funds relative to student characteristics in the MFP (i.e., Orleans Base = \$7,495 vs. MFP Base = \$4,016). It seems the base amount used to calculate the weighted add-on amounts in Orleans includes the state and local share of funds. This is inconsistent with LDOE/BESE only applying the weighted characteristic add-on amounts to charter schools outside of Orleans to state funds, but not local funds.
    - LDOE/BESE sent a letter requesting an Attorney General's opinion regarding LDOE's interpretation.

## **2. Diplomas of Students on LAA-1 will Count in School Performance**

A proposal is being considered that will count diplomas earned by students on LAA-1 in high school performance scores beginning with students graduating this year! This change improves our school accountability system by counting the accomplishments of students with the most significant disabilities in the graduation index. While there are some other ways we can make sure all students count, this is a huge step in the right direction!

## **3. Academic Content Standards**

Much ado has been made about the content standards and the work of the committees reviewing and fine tuning the standards should be commended. However, it is the achievement standards, not the content standards, which determine success or failure for students and schools.

Do you think the committees who developed the content standards should continue to give input on how the achievement standards are developed?

Previously achievement standards were set by ranking students, ensuring some kids succeeded and some kids failed. And guess which students tended to look like failures? Every student can and does learn. The question is not whether every student can beat every other student. In fact, the way our achievement standards have been set and used in the past have directly contradicted the goal of public education in Louisiana. As stated in Louisiana's Constitution:

"The goal of the public educational system is to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential."

Do you want more guidance for educators and parents on how to ensure every student is offered access to content regardless of how they compare to other students?

It is the Achievement standards, not the content standards, that drive much of our education system. Let BESE know if you want our state to pay at least as much attention to setting and using achievement standards as we have on content standards.

If you don't have a purple LaTEACH shirt, contact your [LaTEACH Regional Leader](#) and we will provide one for you at the BESE meeting.

## BESE Agendas

Click the links below to see the agenda items for March 2016 BESE Committees and Board meeting.

### **Thursday, March 3rd**

#### **9:00 AM Educator Effectiveness Committee**

2.1 - 2.3 Two of three teacher training programs for consideration include certifications or endorsements in special education.

#### **9:30 AM Administration and Finance Committee**

3.1 [Minimum Foundation Program](#) proposed for next year (FY16-17)

5.2 Orleans Parish Differentiated Funding Formula

#### **11:00 AM School Innovation and Turnaround Committee**

#### **1:00 PM Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee**

4.2 [Rule change](#) to have diplomas of students on LAA-1 count in the graduation index, a part of the high school performance score.

4.3 Content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics

### **Friday, March 4th**

#### **9:00 AM Full Board**

Contact your BESE member to tell them how you feel about these issues. Click [HERE](#) for the list of BESE Members by district.

## Did You Take Action?

Please let us know if you contacted your BESE Member or attended a BESE meeting by emailing us at [info@lateach.org](mailto:info@lateach.org).



## Any questions?

If there are any questions about the information in this alert, contact LaTEACH at:

Email: [info@lateach.org](mailto:info@lateach.org)

Phone: 1-800-450-8108

Phone: 1-800-894-6558

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LaTEACH is an initiative of the [Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council](#).