



**LATEACH**  
Louisiana Together Educating ALL Children

Join Fellow LaTEACH Members!

## Put on your Purple

SEAP needs to hear your voice!

February 6, 2014

Greetings!

Next week SEAP will consider making recommendations on the following issues:

- Minimum Foundation Program - How the state will distribute \$3.5 billion in state dollars to schools
- High School Diploma options
- Annual Performance Report (APR) 2012-2013 for Students with Disabilities



Join other LaTEACH members and let SEAP know how you feel about these issues!

**WHEN: Tuesday, February 11, 2014  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (noon)**

**WHERE: Claiborne Building  
1201 N. Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802**

Need a purple LaTEACH shirt? Contact your [LaTEACH Regional Leader](#) or email [info@lateach.org](mailto:info@lateach.org).

## What To Do?

Put on your purple shirt and join fellow LaTEACH members! Share your thoughts and concerns with SEAP members. LaTEACH promotes policies and practices to reflect the best interest of ALL students.

LaTEACH members are also encouraged to contact SEAP Members and let them know how you feel. Send Patsy White, co-chair of SEAP, your thoughts and comments at [patsywhite@bellsouth.net](mailto:patsywhite@bellsouth.net)

## Additional Information

### **Funding (Minimum Foundation Program or MFP)**

The MFP Task Force is recommending to double the amount of funds in the High-Risk Pool for students with very high-cost disabilities (i.e., cost more than \$33,000/year) by adding \$4 million from the MFP.

Will increasing the High-Risk Pool ensure that schools serving students with the highest costs receive adequate funding? Probably not. This strategy is the same approach being used now - and schools are not receiving adequate funding for students with the highest cost needs. The amount of funds in the High-Risk Pool doubled from just a few years ago - it went from \$1.7 million in 2009 to \$3.8 million in 2013. However, this year the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) only gave 53 %, barely half, of what schools indicated they needed to serve students with high-cost needs. And the Department staff responsible for this program informed LaTEACH that even doubling the amount of funds again is not expected to be sufficient for the schools that need them.

Since the strategy of increasing the high-cost fund has yet to meet the need, advocates are asking BESE to adopt a strategy that will ensure adequate funding actually follows students with high cost needs.

Also, the MFP Task Force recommended consideration of higher funding levels to schools serving large populations of students with Dyslexia. While this recommendation was listed as a way to address special education needs, Dyslexia is not a special education classification.

Lastly, The MFP Task Force and BESE did not make any recommendations to address inequities in the MFP formula. Because of the inequities in the current formula, adequate funding does not follow students with more significant disabilities if they choose choice options (charter schools, course choice, etc.) while too much funding is allowed to flow out of traditional school systems for each student without a disability that chooses an optional program. One of the main reasons the MFP Task Force was created was to fix this inequity. Two years ago the Legislature listened to parents of children with disabilities and urged BESE to study and determine the most equitable funding methodology in the MFP (see [SCR 124 of 2012](#)). Last year one of the reasons the Legislature gave for not passing the MFP was because BESE did not properly study changes to funding for students with disabilities (see news articles: [Louisiana Senate panel rejects school funding formula, will revert to 2011-2012 numbers](#)).

Some will support the MFP recommendations merely because of the increase in total MFP dollars distributed to schools. But the funding formula will continue to be inequitable across traditional and choice schools for students with disabilities. With the changes in school structures and approach for money to follow the student, LaTEACH continues to advocate for an equitable funding formula that ensures adequate funding goes with, or stays with, every student - regardless of the severity of their disability.

### **Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities**

LaTEACH members have been advocating for exit options from school for ALL students. Louisiana has some of the strictest policies for grade promotion and graduation in the nation. The long term impact of these policies is denying thousands of citizens the ability and desire to work because they leave school with nothing to show employers that they are employable. Many leave school earlier than they should because it becomes clear they cannot earn their way into ninth grade, much less a diploma. Advocates teamed with Special Education Directors to research other states' outcomes and policies. Louisiana students with disabilities are denied access to diploma options that would be accessible to them in most other states. A proposal based on other states' policies was developed to change Louisiana's promotion and diploma policies. Better diploma options are needed for all children to exit school with something that informs employers of their abilities and skills.

Fact Sheet: [Accountability Based on Maximizing Student Potential](#)

Proposal for Promotion and Graduation Chances: [Letter to Superintendent John White](#)

### **The Annual Performance Report**

Every year, the LDE submits their Annual Performance Report to the U.S.

Department of Education. This report details Louisiana's performance in important areas of special education. Some major concerns regarding their report are:

1. Stakeholders had no input into the targets Louisiana should be striving for or the activities to address issues. Advocates are wondering why the Department did not seek stakeholder input, particularly when the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) specifically requested the Department convene a stakeholder workgroup for input a year ago (at the February SEAP meeting). For years there was a State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) Steering Committee that provided an opportunity for meaningful stakeholder input. The Department discontinued this committee two years ago, along with many other stakeholder groups for students with disabilities. What will the process be for selecting targets for the next SPP/APR and more importantly getting adequate stakeholder input in general?
2. Advocates have raised many questions about the support and training for teachers and parents of students with disabilities in teaching the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The APR indicates very few activities by the Department specific to meeting the needs of teachers and parents of students with disabilities.
3. The percentage of students with disabilities in Louisiana (age 14-21) who dropped out increased from 33% (FFY11) to 39% (FFY12). This is consistent with the trend of dropout rate increases for students with disabilities in Louisiana since the adoption of high stakes testing policies. Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of school than to graduate. And 40% of students with disabilities who drop out never even make it onto a high school campus. Advocates have requested the Department, BESE and the Legislature consider changes to the promotion and graduation policies.

## Did You Take Action?

Please let us know if you plan to attend the SEAP meeting or sent any comments for SEAP to consider 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  
Website: [www.lateach.org](http://www.lateach.org)



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