



Action Alert #3 - BESE Meets December 6th & 7th

November 30, 2016

The **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)** will meet Tuesday, December 6, and Wednesday, December 7, 2016 to consider major issues related to students with disabilities:

1. Teacher Shortages

Are you concerned your school system is having difficulty finding certified teachers for students with disabilities?

Do you think Louisiana is doing enough to fill the critical shortage of special education teachers?

2. Renewal of Charter Schools

Do you think LDOE and BESE should allow different accountability systems for some charter schools or do you think LDOE and BESE should work to create a universally designed accountability system that counts all students fairly?

3. Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Do you think Louisiana should adopt alternate standards that are really better designed for students with mild cognitive disabilities than for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?

How to Take Action

If any of these issues are important to you:

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#) before December 6th to let them know how you feel about these issues.
- Attend the BESE meetings:

When: **Tuesday, December 6, and Wednesday, December 7, 2016**
9:30 am

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

The agenda for this meeting can be found [here](#). Additional information on agenda items of particular interest can be found below.

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.

Additional Information

BESE Committee Meetings - December 6th

9:00 a.m. Educator Effectiveness Committee

[Report on Teacher Shortages.](#) (Agenda Item 2.2)

Are you concerned your school system is having difficulty finding certified teachers for students with disabilities?

36 (24%) of the 147 listed areas for teacher critical shortages statewide were for teachers certified in special education. Another six positions with critical shortages provide direct services and support to students with disabilities (i.e., Speech, Education Diagnosticians, etc.).

Do you think Louisiana is doing enough to fill the critical shortage of special education teachers?

9:30 a.m. School Innovation and Turnaround Committee

More than half of the Type 2 Charter Schools up for extension have an "F" letter grade. LDOE has not indicated whether it recommends extending or renewing any of the charter schools. 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.

Do you think LDOE and BESE should allow different accountability systems for some charter schools - or do you think LDOE and BESE should work to create a universally designed accountability system that counts all students fairly?

12:30 p.m. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee

[Assessment and Standards for Students with Significant Disabilities Policy Revisions](#) (Agenda Item 5.3)

Alternate standards (now proposed to be called the Louisiana Connectors) are supposed to be designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Click [here](#) to read a summary of public comments on the alternate standards (now called Louisiana Connectors).

When considering students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, respondents indicated concerns over the level of difficulty and lack of functional skills. It seems respondents felt the difficulty level of these Connectors were appropriate for students with more mild or moderate cognitive disabilities, but not so for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Using standards and assessments that favor students with more mild cognitive disabilities over students with more severe cognitive disabilities will create further biases in the accountability system. Schools serving more students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will have their letter grades negatively impacted since student performance on these assessments will be factored into school letter grades.

And, on student level decisions, these standards would encourage more educators and parents to identify more students with more mild or moderate cognitive disabilities as eligible for these alternate standards and assessments (again, intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities). Typically, students identified as eligible for alternate standards and assessments tend to be educated in more segregated settings than students who are accessing the Louisiana Student Standards.

Do you think Louisiana should adopt alternate standards that are really better designed for students with mild cognitive disabilities than for students with the most significant cognitive 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

Website: www.lacanadvocates.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/lacanadvocates



Louisiana Developmental
Disabilities Council

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