



Action Alert #1: BESE needs to hear from you!

October 11, 2017

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meets next Tuesday and Wednesday (October 17th and 18th).

Put on your Yellow Shirt and Contact your BESE Member if any of the issues presented in the following questions or the "More Information" section below concern you:

- Do you want the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to provide information about how special education funds will be used before the funds are spent so stakeholders can have input as required by federal law?
- Do you agree with special education dollars covering half the cost of a teacher training program if the teachers being trained are not being certified in special education or demonstrating competencies in teaching students with disabilities?
- Do you want parents of students with disabilities to have adequate representation on the Special Education Advisory Panel as required by federal law?
- Do you want students with disabilities to be equally valued in the school accountability system so administrators will be equally concerned about serving all students?
- Did you know the Legislative Auditor just released a report indicating LDOE monitoring of BESE authorized charter schools does not ensure these schools follow the law regarding enrollment of at-risk students and special education services? Do you think now is a good time to change the charter school rules related to monitoring that removes language about requiring these schools to follow the law?

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Committee Meetings

October 17, 2017

Claiborne Bldg. (room 1-100), 1201 N. Third St., Baton Rouge

9:00 a.m. Educator Effectiveness Committee

9:30 a.m. Administration and Finance Committee

10:30 a.m. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee

1:00 p.m. School Innovation and Turnaround Committee

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Meeting

October 18, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

How to Take Action

If you are concerned about any of the issues highlighted here:

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#).
- Put on your Yellow Shirt and attend the BESE meeting at 9:30 a.m. on October 17th or 10:00 a.m. on October 18th.

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.

MORE INFORMATION

Below are the major issues related to students with disabilities being considered at each BESE Committee meeting on October 17th, 2017:

9:30 a.m. Admin & Finance Committee

FHF Funding and Stakeholder Input ([See Item 2.2 Contracts < \\$50,000](#))

- In June, Families Helping Families Regional Resource Centers received contracts for the July-September 2017 quarter which reduced their funding levels by 37% for that quarter. Information about these funding levels and contracts was not presented to stakeholders as required by federal law for IDEA funded state initiatives such as these. It is not clear how stakeholders can have any input when information is provided after activities have occurred.
- [Click here](#) to read the letter from the La. Developmental Disabilities Council to BESE related to IDEA funded projects, including FHF Centers.

Teacher Training ([See Item 4.3](#))

- IDEA (special education/federal) funds will cover 100% of the costs for teacher training with mentors if the teacher in training is pursuing a special education certification and 50% of the costs if there is an opportunity for direct practice/training working with students with disabilities.
 - Shortages of teachers certified in special education have been consistently reported as a problem by parents and local school systems (see [Critical Certified Teacher Shortage Report from 2016-2017](#)).
- Six grants of \$10,000 each will fund Teacher Preparation Transition Support Programs for teachers in training specific to special education. All six programs are located in southeast Louisiana

Stakeholder Input - Special Education Advisory Panel

- The Special Education Advisory Panel does not have enough people with disabilities or parents of students with disabilities to meet the requirements of federal law (i.e., a majority of SEAP members are supposed to be self-advocates or parents of students with disabilities). To address this violation with federal law SEAP voted to expand the number of SEAP members; however, the [SEAP minutes from the September 27, 2017 meeting](#) reveal the number of members on SEAP (20) already exceeds the maximum allowed by [SEAP bylaws](#) (19) at the time of that meeting.
 - If you are a person with a disability or a parent of a person with a disability and are interested in serving on SEAP [click here to apply](#) (deadline to apply to SEAP is October 13, 2017).
 - [Click here](#) to read the letter sent by the La. Developmental Disabilities Council to the U.S. Department of Education related to these SEAP violations.

Pupil Progression ([Item 5.2](#))

- Changes are being proposed in how students get promoted to the fifth grade that mimic the approach taken in Act 833 of 2014 by giving local school systems more authority on student promotion decisions for students who are not performing at grade level. Shifting authority on student-level decisions to people closest to the student, as is being proposed here, is aligned with previous DD Council advocacy efforts.

[Assessment](#) and [School Accountability](#) (Item 5.3)

A lot of changes are being proposed related to assessment and school accountability due to the state plan related to recent changes in federal law (ESSA).

- Alternate Assessments (i.e., LAA-1 / La. Connectors)
 - Changes include changing from three to four levels of achievement or complexity. While the proposed changes remove the three levels of achievement and the corresponding scoring system there are not proposed descriptions for the four levels of complexity nor specific scoring ranges to replace what is being deleted.
- LAA-2 is being eliminated in its entirety. (This is consistent with changes to federal law.)

How schools are measured impacts administrative decisions, including how resources are used for which students and the worse case being pressure to not serve or get rid of students who are not expected to earn the school points.

- It is not clear how school scores will be calculated related to students taking the alternate assessment (i.e., LAA-1/La. Connect) without defined levels and scoring ranges for those assessments (see previous section on Alternate Assessments).
- Recent progress made toward counting students with disabilities more fairly in school performance scores seems to be taking a move backwards with proposed school score calculations expected to present more bias against schools serving more students with more significant disabilities by

having these schools tend to have lower scores due to:

- reductions in points for scoring less than the highest level of achievement (i.e., "Advanced") on standardized tests.
- expected challenges many students with disabilities will face with meeting growth targets relative to reaching Mastery level of achievement by 8th grade.
 - This bias will be partially mitigated by value-added targets relative to student characteristics; except for schools without a sufficient number of comparable students to make a valid calculation.
- Reduces points in the "Strength of Diploma Index" for diplomas of students with disabilities earned through the Act 833 pathway and diplomas earned by students assessed on alternate assessment (from 100 points to 75 points).
- Adds an "Urgent Intervention and Comprehensive Intervention" for schools based on academic results of students in subgroups, including students with disabilities, or excessive out-of-school suspensions.
 - These Interventions only apply to schools with a minimum number of students in each category.

1:00 p.m. School Innovation and Turnaround Committee

Charter School Monitoring Changes ([Item 3.1](#))

- [A recent report by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor](#) found the La. Department of Education's monitoring process of charter schools authorized by BESE did not account for critical violations and LDOE staff failed to monitor two provisions of charter school law related to enrollment of at-risk students. Specific to students with disabilities, the Legislative Auditor found issues with excessive disciplinary removal, manipulation of special education services minutes, rushing the special education identification process to inappropriately obtain additional funds, failing to provide most students with their full scope and amount of special education services, and inappropriately retaining students based on their likelihood of passing tests in the next grade.
 - Each of these findings relates to potential impacts of school accountability scoring issues discussed in the above section on school accountability.

Changes being proposed to BESE related to charter school monitoring will remove language explicitly referencing monitoring of applicable laws and regulations.

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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