

LDOE Quarterly Report to the DD Council April 2018

Update/progress on agency initiatives

New Vision for the Louisiana Special School District:

The Louisiana Department of Education outlined initial plans to redesign the state's Special School District (SSD) to be a model of excellence in serving students with disabilities. The plan of action, presented in March to the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), is in response to a recently conducted independent review of the SSD, which called for a new vision for the district. Among the immediate actions, the state will:

- **Redesign the position of SSD Superintendent.** The role of Superintendent will be redesigned to focus on developing a statewide model of excellence in serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, identified as having other low-incidence disabilities, or are participating in state-run behavior and mental health programs. The Department will launch a national search for a leader who has extensive experience in the education of students with low-incidence disabilities and is an expert in managing systemic change. This leader will be selected by the State Superintendent of Education after a series of public and private interviews.
- **Conduct an in-depth analysis of the SSD organizational and financial structure.** A management consultancy with expertise will analyze the SSD's organizational structure and finances to provide a clear overview of the current landscape of the district to the new leader once he or she begins.
- **Prepare regular SSD updates for BESE.** The new leader will create a new strategic plan for the district to become a statewide model of excellence and will present regular updates to BESE on the plan and on progress toward achieving its goals.

The SSD was established by the Louisiana State Legislature to provide education to students housed in state or privatized facilities and hospitals. The SSD oversees Louisiana's three special schools: the Louisiana School for the Deaf, the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired and the Louisiana Special Education Center. It also manages educational programs for eligible students enrolled in Office of Youth Development, Office of Behavioral Health, Office of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Public Safety and Corrections and privatized facilities across the state.

The plan of action follows a recent external review of the three schools in the SSD. In July 2017, the Department, concerned with low student outcomes and opportunities, released a Request for Proposals for an external evaluator to review each school and provide recommendations on how each school could become a model of excellence in the state. In October 2017, BESE [approved a contract](#) between the Department and nationally recognized organization Education Development Center, Inc.

The Education Development Center, working with subcontracted experts from the American School for the Deaf, the Perkins School for the Blind, and the Cotting School, visited each site, conducted interviews and focus groups, reviewed current and historical data for the schools, and looked to national

academic models that could be implemented in Louisiana. These efforts resulted in a 17-page report of findings and recommendations for improvement.

Among the recommendations, the reviewers suggested the SSD:

- Hire leaders who have the appropriate levels of expertise;
- Organize the district so that decisions related to operations reside at the district level and decisions related to instruction occur at the school level;
- Allocate resources strategically;
- Create and implement staff recruitment and retention plans;
- Provide districtwide supports to guide and build transition services, student independence and self-advocacy, residential and school connections, security and emergency response, and professional school culture;
- Maintain high academic standards and opportunities for all students to participate in them.

Funding Special Education in the 2018-2019 School Year:

The LDOE released a public comment survey that allows members of the public to provide written comment on Louisiana's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2018 grant application. Respondents are required to provide personally identifiable information and may be contacted by an employee of the Louisiana Department of Education for further feedback. All submissions of written public comment are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and may be made available to the public.

To provide public comment, please submit this form by 5:00 p.m. on April 28, 2018.

<https://goo.gl/forms/4IYHh6dm32ylcBmN2>

Respondents should review the documents below before submitting feedback:

A copy of FFY18 IDEA funding information presented to the Louisiana Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) on March 28 can be found here:

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/links-for-newsletters/slides-idea-ffy18-pptx.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

A copy of Louisiana's draft application can be found here:

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academics/draft-ffy-18-idea-grant-application.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

An outline of proposed activities included in the draft grant application can be found here:

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/links-for-newsletters/ffy18-idea-grant-application-project-description.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

IDEA State-Level Activities Funding	
January 22 nd – February 14, 2018	Public survey open on 18-19 IDEA funding priorities
January 24, 2018	SEAP discussion of application development timeline
January – April 2018	Internal development of application and stakeholder discussions
March 9, 2018	Draft application posted
March 28, 2018	SEAP discussion of draft application
March 28 – April 28, 2018	30-day public comment period open
April 28 – May 10, 2018	Final revisions to application
May 10, 2018	Submit Louisiana’s IDEA application to OSEP
May 18, 2018	Deadline for OSEP to receive application

Special Education Advisory Panel Vacancies:

The annual membership rotation of the special education advisory panel (SEAP) is underway. Applications for the role of parent of a child with a disability, individual with a disability, administrator of a program serving students with disabilities, state agency responsible for the provision of related services, and local representative responsible for the implementation of McKinney-Vento will be accepted through May 8, 2018. Candidates should complete the application found here: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academics/seap-member-vacancy-announcement-and-application.pdf?sfvrsn=16>

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