



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

October 11, 2018

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meets next Tuesday and Wednesday (October 16th and 17th).

Do you think BESE should make changes to the school accountability system and introduce new alternative school accountability measures without meaningful stakeholder input?

If your answer to this question is "NO" take action today!

How to Take Action

If you are concerned about this issue:

- Contact your [BESE Member and the At-Large BESE Members](#).
- Put on your Yellow Shirt and attend the BESE Academic Goals and Instructional Committee meeting at 10:30 a.m. on October 16th.

More Information

On Tuesday, October 16th, 2018, BESE will consider some significant changes to the school accountability system and alternative schools and programs:

1. An increase to the number of tests taken in a school for the school to be included in the school accountability system (from 40 tests to 120 tests).
2. Alternative schools would have different indicators for accountability (i.e., school performance scores) than are used for traditional schools.

this increase would apply to all schools but only alternative schools currently fall below this threshold.

Go to the end of this section for links to proposed language changes and presentations related to these changes.

Stakeholder Input

Two stakeholder groups were presented information about these changes (the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) and the Accountability Commission). However, members of both groups reported the presentation did not clearly explain that the proposed changes to increase the number of tests taken necessary for a school to receive a school performance score would apply to ALL schools.

In addition, federal law (ESSA) requires stakeholders to have input into changes that affect them. Students with disabilities are sent to alternative schools at higher rates than their peers. One would expect a request be made of the SEAP to either endorse, reject or perhaps make specific recommendations related to the proposed changes. SEAP members were asked to vote on a motion to 'receive the report' related to these changes, which resulted in no real input from SEAP.

Proposed different accountability indicators to be used for alternative schools than for traditional schools

The basic reason presented for using different accountability measures for alternative schools is because the current accountability indicators do not measure the success or outcomes of all students well. If the accountability indicators presented are better indicators of school performance it is not clear why these measures are not being proposed for all schools. One concern is the perception that some students are better served in segregated, alternative schools. Students with disabilities, students who are African American and students who live in lower income homes are sent to alternative schools at higher rates than their peers. Simulation data of using the new accountability measure (see slide 15 of the PPT to BESE see below) indicates the current student populations of alternative schools would result in higher School Performance Scores for those schools. It seems the message to school administrators will be alternative schools are the right places to send students with the demographic profiles (i.e., racial, economic, & disability characteristics) currently found in alternative schools.

According to the [LDOE Alternative Education Study Workgroup report](#) from October 2017:

- Students are often suspended/expelled from a sending school for minor to moderate infractions;
- Students at many alternative schools do not receive needed academic, behavioral, social and emotional services; and
- Alternative Education **sites** should be evaluated based on their ability to address unique needs of students.

This same Alternative Education Workgroup developed seven principles, only one of which was related to accountability. Guiding Principle #6 of the LDOE Alternative Education Study Workgroup does NOT support a different accountability system for alternative schools. Below is the actual language from the Alternative Education Study Workgroup report:

"GUIDING PRINCIPLE 6: The school system should maintain and report to LDOE consistent data collection, necessary to effectively measure student growth - both academically and behaviorally, and to monitor school systems' provision of high-quality education.

The LDOE should establish a model of accountability, including data and indicators, that are specific to the unique population and needs of students' receiving alternative education services. Performance standards and expectations for alternative services should be clearly communicated and monitored on an annual basis."

The LDOE Alternative Education Workgroup principles were related to both alternative schools and alternative programs. There are many more alternative programs than alternative schools. Addressing Principle #6 with changes to the alternative schools may result in administrators of schools with alternative programs considering converting their program to a school.

Separate is never equal. It is not clear how having a different measure of success for segregated, separate school sites would improve outcomes for students.

Proposed increase in number of tests for school accountability

On August 8, 2017, Louisiana submitted a plan to the U.S. Department of Education related to the new federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Louisiana's ESSA plan (p. 48) is the following statement:

"In Louisiana, a school performance score is calculated for every school with 40 units, which is approximately 10 total students taking four tests each."

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) is proposing changing the

requirement above to only calculate school performance scores for every school with 120 units - which would require 120 tests taken by students for a school to receive a school performance score.

There is a concern a school could avoid having a school performance score calculated by not offering enough students access to courses with state testing requirements or, particularly for alternative schools, having just under the threshold of students required to be included in school accountability.

Links:

- [Power Point Presentation to BESE: Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee meeting October 16th, 2018](#)

Actual proposed changes related to school accountability:

- Bulletin 111 - The La. School, District and State Accountability System
 - [Increase to the minimum number of tests \(from 40 to 120\) taken for a school to receive a school accountability score](#)
 - [Alternative School accountability measures](#)
- [Bulletin 131 Alternative Education Schools/Programs Standards](#)
- [Bulletin 741 - Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators](#)

Information provided to Stakeholders related to proposed changes to Alternative School Accountability:

- [Accountability Commission Presentation - September 2018](#)
- [Special Education Advisory Panel Presentation - September 2018](#)

Other relevant links:

- [Report on Alternative Education Schools and Programs; School Year 2017-2018](#)

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

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