



## Action Alert #3

# BESE Considering Special Education Support Structure for Schools and School Funding

March 8, 2019

**Do you agree with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) using the state's most restrictive settings as the model system for students with low incidence-disabilities across the state?**

**Do you think Louisiana should determine the true cost of educating students well in Louisiana, or should we just keep guessing how much money is needed to support education?**

If these issues matter to you:

- Contact Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) members before Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup> or
- Join LaCAN members in your Yellow Shirt on Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>:

**TIME** 9:00 A.M. Administration and Finance Committee  
10:00 A.M. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee

**LOCATION** Claiborne Building, Louisiana Purchase Room 1-100  
1201 North Third St.  
Baton Rouge, La 70802

If you plan to attend, need a yellow shirt, or want to find out about carpooling options, contact your [LaCAN Leader](#).

## Additional Information

### LDOE Special School District (SSD) Strategic Plan

10:00 A.M. Academic Goals and Instructional Improvement Committee

3.1. Consideration of an update report regarding the Special School District (SSD)

In March 2018, LDOE released two documents related to the SSD Strategic Plan:

- 1) [a report of findings and recommendations for the SSD](#); and,
- 2) [a press release proposing to redesign the SSD to be a model of excellence and serve as the support structure for schools across the state in serving students with low-incidence disabilities.](#)

This approach combines two requirements in Federal law at different ends of the spectrum of inclusive education:

- Federal law requires students be provided instruction in the least restrictive placement possible ([IDEA Sec. 300.114](#)). [Research](#) has demonstrated over and over again inclusive education is best practice and produces the best results.
- Federal law also requires states ensure a continuum of alternative placements are available for students with disabilities, including instruction in institutions like those run by the SSD if necessary (see [IDEA Sec. 300.115](#)).

LDOE's strategic plan is to address long standing issues with the state's most restrictive placement option, the Special School District, by next school year (2019-2020). In the following school year, the plan is to begin using the Special School District as the state's support system for all schools in serving students with low-incidence disabilities. It is not clear how the state intends to promote and ensure schools serve students in the least restrictive environment by presenting a model using the most restrictive setting possible.

The SSD Strategic Plan for Improvement implemented over a three-year timeframe:

1. 2019-2020 Academic Year - The SSD will develop a structure and support system that helps all SSD school and program staff grow and perfect their unique crafts and deliver high quality services to students.
2. 2020-2021 Academic Year – The SSD will implement the support system in SSD schools and programs and begin building capacity to expand services across the state.
3. 2021-2022 Academic Year – The SSD will expand support services to students and educators of students with low-incidence disabilities across the state.

Click [here](#) for the SSD Strategic Plan and [here](#) for the presentation of the SSD Strategic Plan.

BESE requested updates on this plan for the SSD at each BESE meeting. LaCAN members are encouraged to share their thoughts with BESE members about the LDOE plan for supporting schools in serving students with low-incidence disabilities.

## **FUNDING – Minimum Foundation Program (MFP)**

9:00 A.M. Administration and Finance Committee

5.1. Consideration of Legislative Reports

6.1. Consideration of an update report regarding the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) Task Force

7.1. Consideration of the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula for 2019-2020

In each of the last two years the Legislature has requested for LDOE/BESE to determine the cost of educating students. LDOE/BESE stated in order to determine the cost of education in Louisiana it would take about two years and one million dollars. Louisiana tax payers are providing over six billion dollars in state and local funds to support educating about 680,000 students each year. An investment of one million dollars (less than \$1.50 per student) seems to be a reasonable amount to determine how much it costs to educate students considering it has been over twenty years since the last estimate.

## **SR 249 (2018)**

SR 249 (2018) requests the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to reconvene the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) task force to determine the actual cost of providing public education in Louisiana and identify all potential funding mechanisms to enable school systems to meet this cost and to submit a written report of findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education not later than February 1, 2019.

[https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/B9T9937EE308/\\$file/AF\\_5.1\\_HR31\\_SR249.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/B9T9937EE308/$file/AF_5.1_HR31_SR249.pdf)

One cost factor recognized by BESE and the Legislature is the higher cost to educate students with disabilities than students without disabilities. This makes it unclear as to why the LDOE distributes the same amount of the local share of funding to charter schools for every student, regardless if the student has a disability or not, while expecting traditional public schools to continue contributing more local funding for each student with a disability. In January 2019, the Council submitted a [request to the Attorney General for an opinion on whether LDOE's distribution of the local share of funding to charter schools is legal](#).

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<https://www.votervoice.net/BroadcastLinks/FX23Uzz9mtmvZ779UbyGJQ>

## **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](mailto:info@laddc.org)

website: [www.lacanadvocates.org](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)

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