

Louisiana Department of Education Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council - October 2021

Parent/Family Engagement

- *Share parent focus group report from DMG*

District Management Group (DMG) partnered with the Department last winter and spring and over a four month process conducted a planning and needs assessment process alongside Dr. Brumley and the Department. This process included conducting focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders including over 40 interviews and focus groups with over 100 stakeholders across the state. Stakeholders included district superintendents, directors of special education, Families Helping Families focus group, Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs, LDOE leaders, LDOE Office of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunities, Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, national experts, school psychologists, paraprofessionals, special educators, related service providers, Special Education Advisory Panel, and university deans.

Strengths identified by stakeholders include:

1. A sense of optimism and hope.
2. Important prior successes.
3. Innovation and best practices across the state.
4. A willingness and appreciation for the importance of collaboration.

Eight key opportunities identified include:

1. Teachers, school leaders, and district administrators are uncertain how best to serve diverse learners and are looking to the LDOE to provide clear, concrete direction.
2. Teachers, school leaders, and district administrators want and need actionable technical assistance in order to effectively implement recommended best practices.
3. Districts will need clear direction on the allowable uses of IDEA, Title I, and other federal dollars to implement the best practices.
4. The Office of Equity, Inclusion & Opportunities cannot be successful on its own.
5. The traditional structure of the Office of Equity, Inclusion & Opportunities is not well suited for the work ahead.
6. There is a shortage of special educators with no relief in sight.
7. The LDOE lacks the infrastructure to measure and monitor impact (Academic Return on Investment) of its key initiatives.
8. Many want to help the LDOE in its mission to improve the outcomes for diverse learners, but they wonder if their help is wanted.

- *Families Helping Families Overview*

The Department is working with the ten Families Helping Families (FHF) centers across the state to support their work assisting families of children with disabilities ages three to twenty-one. The staff at FHF centers are uniquely positioned to provide support and assistance for families

because they are staffed by individuals who have family members with disabilities. FHF center directors will be conducting meetings or web-based sessions for LEA special education supervisors and directors in their service region to provide information about services offered by their center. FHF center staff will also be available to provide presentations for LEA special education advisory councils and to meet individually with LEA supervisors and directors.

- There are many ways that parents and families can support students with disabilities during the 2021-2022 school year.
 - [Family Support Toolbox](#)
 - 2021 Parent Back-to-School Guides, [PK-2](#) and [3-12](#)
 - [2021 Back-to-School Guide for Parents of Students with Disabilities](#)
 - [Literacy landing page](#)

High Cost Services

The Department has established a High Cost Services (HCS) grant to support school systems and schools that serve students with the most challenging needs. This grant provides additional funding for high-cost special education services for students with disabilities and is funded through the state's IDEA allocation and Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula. School systems will begin submitting applications for these funds in October.

Alternate Assessment

Each year, school systems that exceed 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment must take certain actions. These actions outlined in the alternate assessment participation review incorporate requirements of Bulletin 111 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). All school systems must review participation data. Additionally, school systems exceeding 1.0 percent participation must also participate in student level file reviews, complete the alternate assessment justification document, describe how the school system will address any disproportionality in participation rates, provide evidence IEP teams followed the State's guidelines for participation, and provide assurance IEP teams received training on participation guidelines.

Under the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Louisiana must limit the number of students who are assessed statewide on alternate assessments to 1.0 percent of the total number of students who are required to participate in statewide assessments. The Department intends to seek a waiver extension for the 2021-2022 school year of this federal requirement that would limit the number of students in the state who participate in alternate assessments.