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State of Louisiana

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Initial Report  
of the  
Governor's Advisory Council on the  
Every Student Succeeds Act  
December 22, 2016

**MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Thomas E. Spencer, Chair  
Leslie A. Birdon  
Walter E. Brown  
Larry Carter  
Scott A. Champagne  
Michael W. Faulk  
Cynthia A. Lindsly-Ourso  
Tammie A. McDaniel  
Deborah J. Meaux  
James B. Melohn  
Lee A. Meyer Sr.  
Scott M. Richard  
Debra H. Schum  
Jordan R. Thomas

## OVERVIEW

**The Council.** The Governor's Advisory Council on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was created by Executive Order Number JBE 2016-17 on May 26, 2016. The duties of the Council included, but were not limited to, the following:

- A. Conduct an extensive review of the ESSA; and
- B. Make recommendations on specific actions necessary for implementation of the ESSA in Louisiana.

The Council is required to submit to the Governor an initial report on or before December 31, 2016, and a final report on or before March 1, 2017, outlining the requirements and recommendations for implementation of the ESSA in Louisiana.

Thomas Spencer, Director of Accountability in the Lafayette Parish Public School System, was selected by the Governor to chair the Council.

The Council has met on three occasions: October 20, 2016; November 4, 2016; and December 8, 2016. Work groups were established to focus on specific areas of the ESSA, chaired by Council members. These work groups are:

- STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT (to include school and district performance scores)
  - Michael Faulk, Lead Member
  - Thomas Spencer
  - Scott Richard
  - Tammie McDaniel
- EDUCATOR PREPARATION, EVALUATION, AND SUPPORT (to include teachers, principals, and other teacher leaders)
  - Debra Schum, Lead Member
  - Larry Carter
  - Walter Brown
  - Deborah Meaux
- SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING SCHOOLS (to include after-school programs, health centers, discipline and truancy concerns, and other programs)
  - Shawn Fleming, Lead Member
  - Leslie Birdon
  - Lee Meyer
  - Cynthia Ourso

- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
  - Jordan Thomas, Lead Member
  - Leslie Birdon
  - Tammie McDaniel
- FUNDING
  - Scott Richard, Lead Member
  - Scott Champagne
  - James Melohn

### **The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

ESSA was signed into law on December 10, 2015. It replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which had been in effect for 14 years. ESSA removed many federal mandates concerning education and gave states more flexibility and authority in administering federal education funds and in establishing and managing accountability systems. It allows a change in focus from “Shame and Blame” (NCLB) to “Identify, Support, and Celebrate” (ESSA).

The state plan is to be developed by the State Department of Education, subject to approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). It is to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) in either April or July. Thirty days prior to submission to the USDOE, the final plan is to be submitted to the Governor for review. The Governor is encouraged to actively consult with the State Department of Education in this review. The Governor has the option of signing off on the plan, signing with reservations (objections to specific parts of the plan), or objecting to the plan.

The Louisiana Department of Education intends to submit its plan to the USDOE in April, and to submit the plan to the Governor for review in mid-February.

## INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL

- I. Accountability (General)
  - A. The Governor should only agree with a Louisiana ESSA plan developed and endorsed by critical stakeholders as required under ESSA.
  - B. The Governor should consider issuing executive orders to rescind any commitments of Louisiana's scarce resources to implement any components of proposed ESSA plans not fully vetted and agreed upon by stakeholders.
  - C. Eliminate policies tying standardized test performance to student-level decisions related to grade promotion and graduation, and to decisions related to educator evaluations.
  - D. Require any accountability-related standards, data, cut scores, and calculations to be absolutely transparent, endorsed by stakeholders, and readily accessible on the LDOE website.
  - E. The district and school accountability indices must ensure that any student has the possibility and probability of earning his/her school or district the same number of points as any other student in any other school in Louisiana.
  - F. Ensure that the accountability system is free from bias based on demographics of enrolled students.
  - G. Ensure the indices within the school accountability system are valid and reliable over time and across students.
  - H. Ensure maximum flexibility allowed in considering the indicators of school quality or student success. Include measures of:
    - School climate and safety as measured by student perception of safety and practices aligned with proactive, positive approaches to discipline.
    - Student engagement as measured by quality of instruction and time engaged in instruction.
  - I. The Governor should not agree with the movement toward exclusive use of Mastery as the criterion for an "A" school. Growth scores should be utilized as well.
- II. Standards and Assessment
  - A. Require statewide standardized tests of ELA and Math only in grades 3-8.
  - B. Require science tests in grades 5 and 8. Grade level specific testing. Use of the ACT science scores for the high school science component per ESSA requirements.
  - C. Test high school EOC exams ONLY in Algebra I and English II.
  - D. Change Progress Points to a true student growth model with ALL STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO contribute to the growth portion of a school or district score. Prepare simulations for discussion with superintendents and other stakeholders in determining the percentage the growth factor should represent in the accountability formula. Growth factors should also be included in subgroups.
  - E. Prior to determining goals as new benchmarks in the state's system in rating schools and districts, simulations for each proposed component of the accountability formula should be provided to superintendents and other stakeholders to be utilized in establishing realistic goals.

- F. Move testing forward enough to get test results back by the second week in May so the School Improvement Planning Process and the Evaluation Process can be completed prior to the end of the school year.

III. Educator Preparation, Evaluation, and Support

- A. The Department should promote and increase opportunities to recruit, retain, and ensure a diverse, talented, and **supported** educator workforce.
- Promote and market teaching as a valued and respected profession.
  - Improve recruitment efforts through the use of financial incentives and by targeting diverse populations.
  - Strengthen educator support across the career continuum. (Not just pre-service programs, but ongoing throughout their careers).
  - Teacher certification programs (**University and Alternative Certification programs**) should at a minimum provide courses/modules that cover the following: Education Psychology, Child and Adolescent Development, Classroom Organization and Management, Behavior Management, Cultural Diversity / Multicultural Education, Learners with Special Needs, and Assessment of Young Children.
  - Alternative Certification programs should be held to high rigorous standards comparable to university-based programs.
- B. The Department will define effective teachers as those who strive to engage all students in learning, demonstrate instructional and subject matter competence, and continuously grow and improve.
- Define components of an effective educator. (Currently the components of Compass contain only 5 of the 22 components of Charlotte Danielson's Rubric for an Effective Teacher.)
  - Identify metrics and strategies to promote equitable access to effective educators.
- C. The Department should promote and support collaborative in-field, practical experiences as a crucial component of educator preparation.
- Permanent funding sources for year-long residencies should be identified to provide for continuation of programs.
- D. The Department should promote and increase opportunities to recruit, retain, and support diverse and talented school leaders (principals).
- Create a statewide marketing campaign to target audiences; consider incentives.
  - Create robust mentoring and coaching programs pre- and post-hire and allow districts the opportunity to use state funds to provide mentoring/training from a variety of providers for principals and assistant principals based on their specific needs.
  - Provide more pathways within districts for teacher leaders and other educators to develop as school leaders.

- E. Revise the overall components of the professional evaluation systems. The primary objective should be to drive student growth. Systems should reflect the following provisions that support teacher quality and student achievement: 80% professional practice (observation) and 20% student measures.
    - Review laws (Act 1) and make appropriate revisions to educator evaluations. Include multiple observers and announced observations.
    - Review and revise current growth targets set for principals.
  - F. Ensure that LEAs implement an educator evaluation system using a differentiated and collaborative process which promotes educator growth.
- IV. Supports for Struggling Schools
- A. Schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement should receive comprehensive support strategies from well-qualified individuals within the LDOE.
  - B. LDOE should directly approve, monitor implementation of and periodically review comprehensive and targeted support and improvement plans developed and implemented by local education agencies for any school identified for comprehensive and/or targeted support and improvement.
  - C. An oversight committee consisting of local superintendents and/or their designees should have authority to serve as a mediator between LDOE and any local education agency required to develop and implement comprehensive and/or targeted support and improvement plans.
  - D. Evaluation of schools implementing targeted support and improvement plans for performance issues related to any subgroup of students should be based on implementation integrity of the developed evidence-based interventions rather than merely student performance criteria.
  - E. LDOE should build and maintain a specialized cadre of educators from LEAs across the state to provide on-site monitoring of implementation and technical assistance for schools identified for targeted support and improvement plans.
  - F. The governor should support the inclusion of evidence-based models such as “Community Schools” in Louisiana’s ESSA plan, and that these models be used prior to dramatic turnaround models that destroy schools and remove them from local and community control.
  - G. Rebuild capacity within LDOE regarding the full range of supports and services students need from schools to meet their needs.
  - H. Revise state laws relative to teacher requirements to ensure Local Education Agencies, including charter schools, are not serving children from low-income homes or identified as minorities or students with disabilities at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.
  - I. Establish a Governor-led oversight committee to review allocations to Local Education Agencies related to schools identified for Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement to ensure compliance with ESSA.
  - J. Require Louisiana’s ESSA state plan to clearly describe how LDOE will support LEAs to improve school conditions by reducing bullying and harassment; reducing the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and reduce

the use of aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety.

V. Early Childhood Education

- A. FUNDING – Utilize and expand preschool offerings through PERMANENT Preschool Development Grants
- B. DATA REPORTING – State and LEAs include number and percentage of children enrolled in preschool education
- C. INSTRUCTION – Instructional standards should be developmentally appropriate but include benchmarks that challenge advanced students
- D. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT -- Embedded and frequent professional learning for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents in early childhood learning, teaching strategies, TS Gold Assessment, CLASSroom Assessment Scoring System, English learners, and students with exceptionalities
- E. ALIGNMENT – All programs should be aligned with K-12 standards; early childhood program aligned to our 8g funded programs
- F. ASSESSMENTS – Should be aligned with K-3 (Pilot of TS Gold as an assessment of Kindergarten readiness)
- G. CERTIFICATION – All teachers and paraprofessionals should be certified in all preschool settings.

VI. Funding

- A. ESSA increases the percentage of Title I and Title II funds that the State Department of Education is required to “reserve” (and use for statewide initiatives) from 4% to 7%. In addition, states are allowed to reserve an additional 3%. We recommend that LDOE NOT exercise the option in ESSA to “reserve” additional federal funding – and, allow these dollars to flow instead to the local districts in order to ensure the most local flexibility and local decision-making possible. *(Areas where option exists are in Title I, Part A and Title II, Part A.)*
- B. We recommend that Louisiana utilize the new extended timelines in order to formulate a comprehensive ESSA-Louisiana State Plan that reflects meaningful stakeholder input and ensures that all variables associated with the yet-to-be determined direction of the USDOE are taken into consideration given the transition at the federal level in the executive branch. *(Original timelines required state plans to be submitted by March 2017 or by Summer 2017 – new timelines are April 3, 2017 or September 18, 2017).*