

Louisiana business leaders continue to identify education as a top priority and the lack of basic knowledge and skills as a top impediment to sustainability and growth. In order for our state's education leaders to better meet this need, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) must align Louisiana's public K-12 school accountability system with outcome goals, dramatically grow student achievement, particularly in grades K-8, and improve students' readiness for life beyond high school.

ALIGNMENT. If approved by BESE, the Louisiana Department of Education's accountability proposal will better align the policy with BESE's goals of having students graduate proficient in core academic subjects (English and reading, math, science, and social studies), equipping all graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to enter college without the need for remediation and/or prepared to enter the workplace in an upwardly mobile career.

GROWTH. Louisiana aims for all students to be proficient in core academic subjects, yet roughly 2/3 of public school students are not performing at that level. We must prioritize growth toward the proficiency goal. Currently, the accountability system does not adequately motivate nor reward schools for growth in student achievement throughout students' educational journey.

- The proposal raises expectations to earn growth points in the formula, requiring students to make notable progress toward proficiency and outperform the majority of peers having similar characteristics. This indicator would be worth 20% of a K-8 school's rating.
- The proposal additionally awards schools points for achieving growth with the lowest performing 25% of students in every school. This component would also be worth 20% of a school's rating.
- By greatly strengthening the quality of the growth component and increasing its total weight (40% versus the current 25%), schools will be motivated and rewarded to get more students to the proficiency goal.

READINESS. The proposed high school formula increases the emphasis placed on core proficiency (currently, just over 1/3 of students are proficient), introduces incentives for engaging students in work-based learning, and focuses schools on career training that prepares students for high-demand, high-wage jobs.

- The proposal weights proficiency on the state LEAP test at 15% of a high school's rating, compared to the 12.5% in the current policy.
- It introduces a new incentive for high schools to earn points for students (those on university-prep *and* career-focused pathways) who complete an approved work-based learning experience in which students learn and practice essential work skills.
- The proposal removes points for attainment of regional credentials (those tiered at the lowest level) and pushes schools to help students earn basic and advanced credentials. The current very large "advanced" category of credentials will be split into "intermediate" and "advanced" tiers. Apprenticeships will be included in the "advanced" tier.
- High school ratings will become more aligned with K-8 schools and less inflated, correcting the current problem of 70% of high schools being rated "A" or B," compared to just 41% of K-8 schools rated "A" or B" with roughly the same percentage of students performing on grade level. This is a matter of alignment and transparency to the public, to parents, and to educators who deserve to know whether kids are being adequately prepared for the challenging expectations of college and the workplace.

Our students and our communities need increased opportunity now, not later. BESE has studied this issue for two years, following dozens of public meetings and hundreds of hours of stakeholder engagement. The time is now to act on behalf of our kids and communities.

We urge BESE to approve the proposed changes at its November 10th meeting.