

The Louisiana Legislature recently adjourned the 2017 Regular Legislative Session and the 2nd Extraordinary Session. Below are brief summaries of bills passed relative to prekindergarten through 12th grade education policy. Note that the Governor has not yet completed his review and signature of all bills. An updated list of Acts will be published in the coming weeks as all bills are signed by the Governor, vetoed, or allowed to become law without signature. To monitor the status of all bills, please visit www.legis.la.gov.

Accountability

SB 233 – Sen. LaFleur - Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, for a school that establishes, maintains, or expands a foreign language immersion program or proceeds to earn or maintain certification of foreign language immersion program or any other program deemed appropriate by BESE, the state board shall include a component in the school and district accountability system to annually award points to the school's annual performance score. The number of the points awarded shall be subject to approval by the BESE in accordance with applicable federal law.

Assessments

HB 616 – Rep. Thomas – Provides that the amount of time public school students spend taking standards-based assessments per school year shall not exceed 2% of the minimum number of instructional minutes per year. Each public school governing authority shall review all benchmarks and interim assessments on a regular basis to ensure that they are aligned with the appropriate state content standards; that the results of the assessments have an identified use related to improving instruction; the results of the assessments are made available to a parent upon their request and; the time associated with the administration of the assessments is minimized in order to maximize instructional time throughout the school year.

Charter Schools and Nonpublic Schools

HB 242 – Rep. Emerson - Requires BESE and local public school boards to send the charter applicant, either by electronic means or hand delivery, the final evaluation and recommendations, if any, of the third-party evaluator. This information shall be sent no later than five business days prior to the meeting at which the board will take action on the charter proposal.

Act 86 (HB 452) – Rep. Abramson - Makes requirements for in-service training in suicide prevention applicable to nonpublic and charter school teachers, school counselors, principals and other certain school administrators.

SB 215 – Tarver - A charter school may directly enroll the child of a faculty member if the child meets all admission requirements for the school. A charter school with a foreign immersion mission may directly enroll a child of a foreign consular officer who resides in Louisiana if the child meets all mission-related and academic admission requirements established by the school. No student admitted shall be counted to determine whether such enrollment exceeds the capacity of a program, classes, grade level, or school. Charter authorizers using One App or a common application enrollment process shall adopt uniform policies to implement these provisions.

Curricula and Courses

Act 72 (HB 111) – Rep. Bishop - Requires instruction in litter prevention and awareness in public school students in grades K-5. The instruction shall be integrated into the existing curriculum and may include instructional materials created and developed for students to assist them in making environmentally sound decisions and understanding the vital role they play in preserving the beauty of the state. Each local governing authority shall adopt rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of the instruction of litter prevention and awareness in grades K-5.

SB 190 – Thompson - Provides relative to college transition courses. Each public school governing authority shall identify each high school senior who did not meet the established college readiness standards and provide the student with information on available transition courses designed to address identified academic weaknesses; use course assessment data to determine student attainment; and provide appropriate professional development to teachers of transition courses as part of existing professional development activities.

Early Childhood Care & Education

HB 557 – Rep. Seabaugh - Provides for criminal background checks relative to early learning centers, school employees, registered family child care providers and in-home providers.

HB 584 – Rep. Leger - Creates the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund for the purpose of funding early childhood education in Louisiana.

SB 255 – Sen. Morrell - Early licensed learning centers shall provide written copies of all health-related policies established by the center, including policies regarding accidents, allergic reactions, fever, illness, immunizations, infections and injuries to the parent or guardian of each child attending or enrolled in the center.

Retirement

Act 15 (HB 4) – Rep. Miguez - Authorizes a retiree of the Teachers' Retirement System of LA (TRSL) to return to work as a school nurse and continue to collect his benefit check, subject to an earnings limitation of 25% of his benefit amount.

Act 120 (HB 31) – Rep. Hoffmann - Authorizes retirees of the Teachers' Retirement System of LA (TRSL) to return to work as a school psychologist in a critical shortage area without reduction of retirement benefits. Any person whose retirement benefit is calculated using an accrual rate less than 2 1/2% or whose benefit was actuarially reduced pursuant to R.S. 11:768(B)(2) or 761(A)(3)(b) of (4)(b) shall not be authorized to return to service unless the person has been retired for at least thirty-six months.

HB 33 – Rep. Pearson - For elections or appointments to retirement system board of trustees made on or after July 1, 2017, no person who been found in violation of the Code of Governmental Ethics for actions involving the misuse of public funds shall be eligible to serve as a trustee.

School Employees

HB 243 – Rep. Hall – Changes all instances of "School Bus Drivers" to "School Bus Operators" in state law (Title 17).

HB 556 – Rep. Pearson - Provides for sick leave granted to school bus operators, teachers and other public school employees who are disabled as a result of assault or battery or physical contact with or by a student or person.

SB 189 – Sen. Colomb – Provides that any award or stipend provided to any public school teacher or administrator for participation in the National Math and Science Initiatives shall be deemed as compensation from his governmental entity to which he is duly entitled. Such an award or stipend shall not be considered regular compensation from his governmental entity nor shall it form any basis for governmentally supported benefits. The services for which the award or stipend is received shall be deemed to be performed for the benefit of the public school teacher's or administrators governmental entity.

Schools

HB 20 – Rep. Price - Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year and thereafter, instructional time requirements shall not be applicable to any public school that cannot meet such requirements because the school temporarily shared facilities with another school due to damages caused by a natural catastrophe or disaster that was declared by the governor and that was certified by the state superintendent and BESE. Authorizes BESE to provide a minimum number of daily instructional minutes less than present law requires and requires that any school not able to meet the instructional minute requirements submit documentation to the state superintendent explaining why the school cannot meet the requirements and any efforts made by the school toward meeting the requirements, and a revised school calendar, for the affected school year.

HB 242 – Rep. Emerson - Requires BESE and local public school boards to send charter school applicants, either by electronic means or hand delivery, the final evaluation and recommendations, if any, of the third-party evaluator. This information shall be sent no later than five business days prior to the meeting at which the board will take action on the charter proposal.

HB 452 – Rep. Abramson - Makes requirements for in-service training in suicide prevention applicable to nonpublic and charter school teachers, school counselors, principals and other certain school administrators.

HB 531 – Hoffmann – Updates state laws prohibiting the use of tobacco products on school property.

HB 660 – Rep. G. Carter - Requires each school bus used to transport students to public schools in Orleans Parish to contain lettering identifying the name of the school or schools. Requires black, block form lettering and requires the school names to be as high as possible on both sides of the bus to provide maximum visibility.

SB 170 – Sen. Barrow - For the 2016-2017 school year, BESE shall examine the results of student assessments and school-level test data and make allowances in calculating school and district performance scores and letter grades as the board deems necessary and appropriate in a parish located in a gubernatorially or presidentially declared disaster area.

SB 199 – Sen. Erdey - Permits public entities to share equipment without having to expend funds for such use, provided that both entities have executed a cooperative endeavor agreement for the use of the equipment. The cooperative endeavor agreement shall detail the obligations of the parties and shall identify the equipment shared; explain the use of the equipment and approximate length of time for use of the equipment; address the responsibility for repairing or replacing the equipment if it becomes inoperable for its intended use due to mechanical or other breakdown while in possession of the requesting public entity; include a hold harmless provision releasing the lending public entity from expenses, damages, or losses arising from use of the equipment.

Students

HB 79 – Rep. Foil - Prohibits the use of corporal punishment in all public elementary and secondary school for students with exceptionalities, except gifted and talented students, as well as students determined to be eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1983 having an Individual Accommodation Plan. The law also provides for a definition of corporal punishment to mean using physical force to discipline a student, with or without an object. Corporal punishment includes hitting, paddling, striking, spanking, slapping, or any other physical force that causes pain or physical discomfort. It does not include the use of reasonable and necessary physical restraint of a student to protect the student, or others, from bodily harm or to obtain possession of a weapon or other dangerous object from a student.

Act 136 (HB 130) – Rep. DeVillier – Provides for a definition of economically advantaged (previously “at-risk”) students for purposes of calculating value-added data for educator evaluations and for charter school enrollment and reporting.

Note: The LDE will recommend that BESE adopt the same definition for purposes of identifying at-risk students for MFP and other purposes going forward, given increasing LEA participation in the USDA Community Eligibility Provision program, which no longer provides individual student free and reduced meal eligibility information for such identification purposes.

HB 412 – Rep. LeBas - Authorizes the possession and application of sunscreen at school, on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function or activity without parental consent or the authorization of a physician. The law also provides that if a student is unable to apply the sunscreen, a school employee may volunteer to apply the sunscreen to the student if his parent or legal guardian has provided written consent for the application.

Resolutions

HCR 7 – Rep. N. Landry - Provides for legislative approval of the MFP formula for FY 2017-18. Authorizes an increase of \$10 million for supplemental courses, \$8 million for high cost special education services, and \$7.5 million to assist specified LEAs impacted by a natural disaster during the 2016-2017 school year. Also provides for normal student growth.

HR 158 – Rep. Hoffman - Requests the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to examine and report information relative to the validity of value-added data.

HR 166 – Rep. LeBas - Establishes the Commission on Assessment Review and Use in Public Schools.

HR 183 – Rep. Smith - Requests governing authorities of public schools and all nonpublic schools that participate in the voucher program to adopt policies with regard to student fees.