

Louisiana Believes

Opportunities for Students with Disabilities in Louisiana's ESSA Plan

Agenda

- ESSA Plan Development
- Workforce
- Raising Expectations
- Interventions and Support
- Next Steps

ESSA in Louisiana

- On July 1, 2017, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced the No Child Left Behind as the country's federal education law. The law will be in effect when the 2017-2018 school year begins.
- ESSA provides Louisiana with an opportunity to collaborate with educators, parents, business and community leaders to create an improved K-12 education system that provides all students with equal access and opportunity to high-quality learning.
- ESSA requires that every state capture these improvements in a state plan that is submitted to the federal government.
- Louisiana intends to submit this state plan to the U.S. Department of Education during the April 2017 submission period with the goal of receiving feedback and final approval of the plan prior to the start of the 2017-2018 school year in order to provide educators and families with clarity and consistency.

Louisiana's ESSA Plan Development

- After engaging with stakeholders for months, the Department released a [draft ESSA framework](#) on September 28, to provide the general public with examples of what policies, supports, and resources could be used to provide targeted support for disadvantaged students.
- Since that release, the Department has been in continuous conversations with educators, advocacy groups, civic leaders and others to refine the proposals within the framework.
- During this time, the [Louisiana Accountability Commission](#) has also been meeting to make recommendations regarding the state's accountability system. To view the Commission's recommendations, you can view previous meeting videos and presentations in the [Accountability library](#).
- On Monday, February 6, the Department released an [updated framework](#) that included greater detail from the initial framework as well as stakeholder feedback.
- On February 20, the Department released the [draft state plan](#) for public comment.

Guiding Beliefs

Louisiana's students—all of them, no matter race, disability, or creed—are as smart and capable as any in America. They have gifts and talents no lesser than those given to any children on this earth.

Louisiana has worked hard to raise expectations for students, and as a result, students are performing at higher levels than ever before.

While Louisiana has made great strides in increasing life opportunities for its students, there remain serious challenges in Louisiana's schools. Often these challenges are experienced to the greatest extent by children of historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

As educators, we have a powerful role to play in helping all students overcome the challenges they will experience on the way to leading healthy and productive lives as adults.

Improvements to Louisiana's K-12 System

Louisiana's ESSA plan, highlights several unique improvements to Louisiana's K-12 system:

- raise fundamental expectations for students to be equal with their peers across the country;
- reduce end-of-year state testing, while simultaneously improving the quality and depth of information provided to educators and families;
- recognize growth for all students;
- allow students taking the LAA 1 the opportunity to earn diplomas in the state graduation rate;
- deliver targeted funding to students and schools who are the most in need;
- foster and fund relationships between persistently struggling schools and partners that have demonstrated success in turning around struggling schools;
- place future teachers in classrooms under a mentor educator for full-year, classroom-based residencies that prepare them for day one in their own classrooms; and
- provide every student with enriching experiences and a well rounded education that is recognized in the state's accountability system.

Students with Disabilities

In addition to unique improvements to the overall k-12 system, Louisiana's ESSA plan also highlights several important opportunities for Louisiana's students with disabilities:

1. Building a workforce of current and aspiring educators that is prepared to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities;
2. Measuring growth of all students in the accountability system;
3. Rewarding diplomas earned by students who take the alternate assessment in the cohort graduation rate;
4. Establishing structures for early identification of disabilities and appropriate interventions and support; and
5. Providing competitive funding opportunities for schools who need support improving outcomes for their students with disabilities.

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Challenge: Strengthening the Educator Profession

A strong education profession begins with **teachers who are prepared to meet the unique needs of all students the first day they enter the classroom.**

-In a 2014 survey of over 6,000 educators, 50 percent of teachers with one to five years of experience reported that they were not fully prepared for the realities of the classroom in their first year of teaching.

- In 2015-2016, **19 percent of special education classes** in Louisiana public schools were taught by out-of-field teachers.
- In 2015-2016, 14.3 percent of first-year teachers left their teaching assignment.
- From 2012 to 2015, 16 percent of teachers with six to ten years of experience—those who have a strong instructional base upon which to build—left the profession in Louisiana.

Building a strong educator workforce includes helping all teachers understand how to meet the needs of students with disabilities, not just those with special education certification.

Workforce Support for Students with Disabilities

Louisiana's ESSA plan outlines critical opportunities to build a workforce that is prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

- **Teacher Preparation Competencies**: Approved by BESE in October 2016, preparation competencies now assure that aspiring all teachers have the necessary skills to work with students with disabilities, not just those pursuing a special education certification
- **Teacher Residencies and Mentorships**: As part of their preparation program, aspiring teachers will work along side a mentor teacher for a full year prior to their first year as a classroom teacher. This will provide new teachers with hands on opportunities to learn effective classroom management and differentiation strategies to support the unique learning needs of all students from a veteran teacher.
- **Believe and Prepare Partnerships**: Local school systems partner with preparation providers to address critical staffing needs in the community, including building preparation programs to meet critical shortages in special education.
- **Teacher Leaders and Teacher Leader Advisors**: Teacher Leaders and Teacher Leader Advisors play a critical role in ensuring teachers across the state have access to high quality curricular tools and professional development.

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Improvements to Louisiana's Accountability System

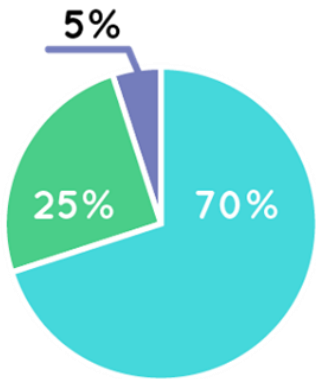
Louisiana's ESSA plan represents three critical shifts in the design of the accountability system.

- 1. Ensuring an "A" in Louisiana's letter grade system signals mastery of fundamental skills.**
This will be achieved by raising expectations for what is required in order for a school to earn A-level points based on student achievement and growth.
- 2. Adjusting school rating calculations to value more the progress of every individual child, including (a) measuring whether a student is on a path to master fundamental skills; and (b) measuring how effectively every student is advancing relative to their peers.** This growth index will replace the current progress point system.
- 3. Expanding the school performance score formula to emphasize interests and opportunities for students, in addition to traditional assessment and graduation outcomes, as five percent of school scores.**

School Performance Score Formulae

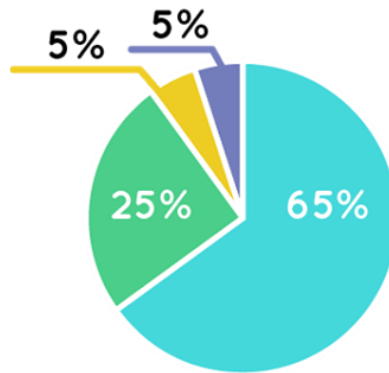
Beginning in 2017-2018, Louisiana will use the following formulae when evaluating school performance:

Elementary Schools



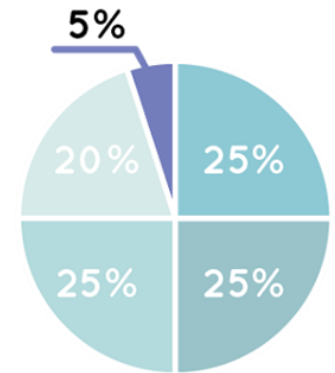
- Assessment Index
- Growth Index
- Interests & Opportunities

Elementary/Middle Schools (with Grade 8)



- Assessment Index
- Growth Index
- Interests & Opportunities
- Dropout Credit Accumulation Index

High Schools



- EOC Status & Growth
- ACT/WorkKeys
- Strength of Diploma
- Cohort Graduation Rate
- Interests & Opportunities

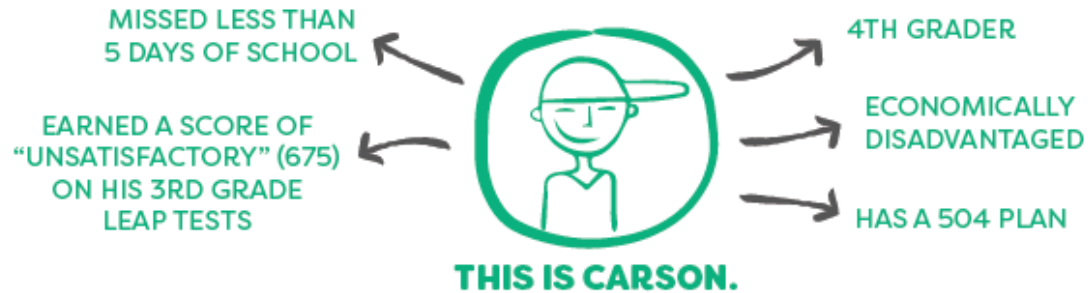
Focusing on the growth of children ensures schools are accountable to the individual progress of every child each year, including students with disabilities

K-8 School SPS: Student Growth Example

LOUISIANA'S NEW GROWTH MEASURE

In January, the Louisiana Accountability Commission recommended a two-step elementary and middle school growth model for the accountability system that asks the questions:

- ① How well are students progressing toward “Mastery” by 8th grade?
- ② How well are students growing relative to similar peers?



CARSON SCORES A 688 ON LEAP,
A GROWTH OF 13 POINTS FROM HIS 3RD GRADE YEAR.

- ① BASED ON HIS PRIOR ACHIEVEMENT, CARSON WAS EXPECTED TO GROW **15 POINTS** ON HIS 4TH GRADE LEAP TEST TO BE **ON TRACK TO “MASTERY”** IN 8TH GRADE.

DOES THE SCHOOL GET AN “A” FOR CARSON?

X NO

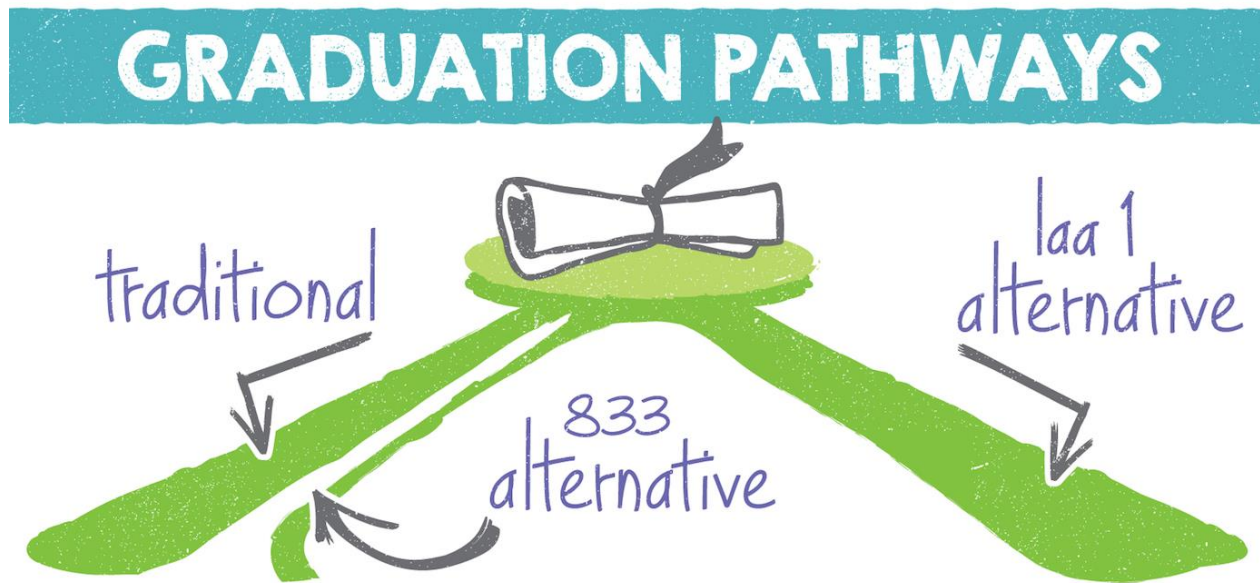
- ② CARSON ONLY GREW **13 POINTS, BUT OUT-PERFORMED HIS PEERS** ACROSS THE STATE WHO HAVE THE SAME DEMOGRAPHICS.

DOES THE SCHOOL GET AN “A” FOR CARSON?

✓ YES

ESSA and Diploma Pathways

The regulations do not impact the diploma pathways available to students with disabilities in Louisiana or how the culminating credential is presented to the student. The ESSA regulations differentiate between a “regular high school diploma” and a “state-defined alternate diploma” for purposes of school and district accountability.



Louisiana's Plan

ESSA provides states the opportunity to include a “state-defined alternate diploma” for students who take the alternate assessment in the cohort graduation rate. Under the old law, these diplomas could not be included in the calculation.

Diploma Requirements

Students who take the alternate assessment and meet the academic, assessment, workforce readiness, and high school transition components of the [diploma pathway](#) are eligible to obtain a Louisiana high school diploma at the point in which they are ready to exit high school (and in accordance with the provision of a free and appropriate education)

Accountability

Beginning with graduates in 2018, students will be included in the cohort graduation rate and strength of diploma index for the year in which they graduated, or the year in which they exited, after at least four years in high school with no subsequent re-enrollment by October 1 of the following academic year.

Recognizing all diplomas, including diplomas for students with significant disabilities, in the graduation rate equitably values outcomes

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Academic Progress for Students with Disabilities

Louisiana's ESSA plan includes a focus on helping schools have a systemic approach to **early grade screening, diagnosis, and intervention**, starting with the connection of Early Steps and prekindergarten, and continuing through high school. This includes a deep focus and set of guidance and support around:

- High quality and early screening and continued monitoring until the student is exited effectively from additional support services such as academic interventions or special education;
- Interventions and instructional practices that help students access grade-level learning along with their peers rather than maintaining a below-level learning gap; and
- School structures for learning that are the least disruptive and most integrated for a student's needs.

Research indicates that early and accurate identification of disabilities and other learning needs leads to more successful intervention than is the case when the condition is left unattended and is thus an essential first step in supporting students with disabilities

Funding for Schools Struggling to Serve All Students

- Louisiana's ESSA plan outlines that a school performance score will be calculated for each major subgroup in the same manner as the overall school performance score for each school and subgroup for which the subgroup meets the minimum "n" size.
- This means that any school that has been in the bottom 30 percent of all schools for students with disabilities performance for multiple consecutive years, but is not already identified for comprehensive support, qualifies for targeted support.

Schools will be eligible to apply for additional funds to support improving early identification of disabilities, providing higher-quality instructional experiences, and/or providing individualized and inclusive school structures.

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Next Steps

BESE will meet on March 29 at 1:00 PM in the Claiborne State Office Building, Louisiana Purchase Room, to consider Louisiana's ESSA state plan.

Please continue to provide public comment via essalouisiana@la.gov.

You can download a copy of this presentation at:

[https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/about-us/every-student-succeeds-act-\(essa\)](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/about-us/every-student-succeeds-act-(essa))

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