



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Central Community School System Superintendent, Michael Faulk, compiled the list of questions below in response to the [draft ESSA framework](#) released by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) on February 6. The responses below have been provided by the LDOE.

1. In order to ensure fair representation of school improvements 2017-2018 be considered a pilot year for testing new Louisiana science standards and the newly aligned set of learning expectation in ELA and Mathematics for students who have significant cognitive disabilities and those who are learning English. (page 3)

Science

The new Louisiana Student Standards for Science will not be required during the 2017-2018 school year as the newly aligned assessment will not be implemented. Thus, the 2017-2018 school year will be a transition year for districts to learn the new standards and will include a field test of the new assessment. The new science assessments, per the requirements of state and federal law, will be implemented in the 2018-2019 school year.

To support districts with this transition the LDE will begin training districts and teacher leaders on the new standards at the June 2017 Teacher Leader Summit and continue substantive training throughout the 2017-2018 school year. The LDE will also review curricular materials and release planning and assessment resources to support educators.

During this field test year, as was done with social studies in 2015-2016, school scores will use science results from 2015-2016 or 2016-2017, whichever is higher, as their science index. Additionally, letter grade ratings will be curved. The overall distribution of letter grades will not worsen.

ELL and Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Per federal requirements, Louisiana will implement the updated assessments for ELL and for students with significant cognitive disabilities beginning spring 2018.

However, in order to measure progress in English language proficiency, the assessment of English language proficiency will not be included in accountability until 2018-2019, as 2017-2018 will serve as a baseline year. Additionally, letter grade ratings will be curved. The overall distribution of letter grades will not worsen.

2. Although scores of 18, 19, 20 would continue to generate points the number of points would be reduced negatively impacting all high schools. Has any analysis been done comparing Louisiana to other states who test all high school students? Why not set the bar at the national average instead of a

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selected number? If ACT is setting the standard why don't we use the ACT Aspire series so that we have reliable data determining if our students are College or Career Ready. (page 4)

Accountability Index

Whereas the national average of a set of states can be a moving target, ACT is clear on the bar it expects for students to be college and career ready. According to [ACT's college readiness benchmarks](#), students who score an average of 21 or higher on the ACT are much more likely to be successful in postsecondary studies: students meeting ACT's readiness benchmarks have a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in credit-bearing first-year college courses.

Louisiana students are just as smart and capable as any in the country. When schools earn an "A" for ACT results (21+), it should signal that students are fully ready for postsecondary education. Louisiana students have proven that they are capable of achieving these expectations. Louisiana's average ACT score has improved by 0.3 points since 2014 to 19.5 in 2016. The average ACT score in A-rated schools is a 21.7.

The Department will continue to compare Louisiana results nationally and with census testing states, as we have done in past years. Of the 18 states testing 100 percent of all graduates, Louisiana's average composite score for all public and private school testers is higher than five of those states. Louisiana also finished third among seven southern states.

Assessment

Pursuant to state procurement laws and regulations, Louisiana's annual assessments, which must align to the state's academic content standards, must be awarded through a competitive bidding process. ACT, like other vendors, had the opportunity to submit a bid in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP), but did not do so.

3. Confirming end-of-year testing -- only high school reflects a reduction in testing. What about K-8? (page 5)

The Department is or has significantly reduced testing in the following ways:

- In early grades:
 - The IOWA test was discontinued in grade 2.
 - DIBELS testing requirements were also reduced. Previously, districts were required to administer the assessment and report results three times during the school year. As of

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fall 2016, districts are only required to administer and report those assessments one time per year.

- In kindergarten to 8th grade, the Department has or will reduce testing in the following ways:
 - Testing was reduced from two weeks to one week for each student;
 - Testing will never account for more than 2% of the minimal instructional minutes each year; and
 - The Department is releasing a series of non-summative assessments and providing intensive technical assistance in order to help local school districts significantly streamline their local assessment systems (see below).
- In high school, the Department has or will reduce testing in the following ways:
 - Ending duplicative testing in grades 9 and 10 ELA and math through the removal of the EXPLORE and PLAN tests, and
 - An English I exam will be offered and the English III exam will be phased out in order to allow a focus on core content in early years but also a more flexible schedule for exploring individual student interests in the later years of high school.

4. Making available efficient “check-up” tests -- when will these be available? (page 5)

For the 2017-2018 school year, districts will have access to a diagnostic assessment, at least two interim assessments, a practice assessment, and a more enhanced test-building item bank for math and ELA grades three through high school. Over time, the Department will continue to release more items in the build district test banks and release additional interim assessments.

5. Providing guidance for education and principals -- what guidance and when will it be provided? (page 5)

The Department will begin providing more specific guidance on assessment and identification procedures and provide instructional resources for struggling, ELL, and special education students. These resources will begin releasing the summer of 2017 with the specialized instructional resources released as a part of the ELA guidebooks. Throughout the 2017-2018 school year the Department will continue to release assessment and instructional resources related to unique sub-groups of students.

6. Title I, Title II and Title III investments will districts have to redirect Title funds currently being used? (page 7)

As key components of ESSA, and continuing from NCLB, school systems should be using federal funds to provide screening to identify students in need of academic interventions, special education,

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or English language services, instructional practices that help students access grade-level learning along with their peers, and school structures for learning that are the least disruptive and best integrated for a student's needs. As required in ESSA, districts will continue to fund these needs. In addition to federal funds, districts can also use MFP funds (particularly weighted MFP funds specifically for at-risk and special education) and local funds to support these activities.

7. Performance score of subgroups - How will this impact SPS and DPS scores? Each subgroup will receive a score. If not classified as an A does SPS drop below an A? (page 7)

Rather than the complicated annual yearly progress (AYP) calculation of the past, the state will provide districts and schools with a clear indication of their performance with each subgroup through a performance score that mirrors the formula used to measure the entire school. Schools excelling with historically disadvantaged students will be rewarded. Schools struggling with historically disadvantaged students may be eligible for funding to support targeted supports and interventions.

The subgroup result does not reduce the overall letter grade result of a school. However, schools identified as targeted support for three or more years will be identified for comprehensive support.

8. There is no information provided as to items being considered as indicators, Will all schools in a district be required to use the same indicator? Who will determine which indicators are approved? Will districts who lack resources be penalized because of inequities. (page 11)

The Interests and Opportunities index is designed to promote the expansion of experiences through which students develop well-rounded and enduring interests and habits. This indicator will measure, for example, the extent to which elementary and middle schools are exposing students to high quality arts and foreign language experiences. Similarly, it will measure high school efforts to expand access to advanced courses in both applied and academic fields. In all schools, the Interests and Opportunities index will measure not only the expansion of such experiences for students but also the extent to which students of all backgrounds experience the offerings fairly. Additional information can be found throughout Challenge 3 of the framework.

The Interests and Opportunities Index will be developed over a period of three years. The Department will work with key stakeholders to outline a pilot index by summer 2017 for a learning year in 2018-2019. In building the index, the Department will explore opportunities to retain the flexibility originally contemplated as part of this measure while also ensuring fairness. Similarly, the Department remains committed to ensuring success on the measure is achievable by all.

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9. Where will the money come from for these grants? (page 12)

ESSA authorized a new Title IV program called “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants,” which will provide additional resources and not redirect funds from any other title program. The program will be funded by a new Congressional appropriation in the next federal budget.

10. LEAS will be required to specify the spending of Title II funds to what the department wants instead of what individual school systems and school have need for in order to make meaningful professional development. (page 14)

School systems will continue to have the ability to budget their unrestricted Title II flow-through as they determine most beneficial within the parameters included in the Title II statutory and regulatory guidance. The implementation of the teacher residency program does not require school systems to budget any of their Title II funds.

11. How will the state financially support the growth and sustainability of teacher readiness? (page 14)

Louisiana has dedicated \$7.3 million of state-level funding over the next two years and \$2.1 million of state-level funding in 2019 and beyond to support yearlong teacher residencies. This is funding used for state activities and will not redirect any school system’s unrestricted flow-through dollars.

12. When do new certification requirements take effect? (page 14)

By July 1, 2018, current approved preparation providers must demonstrate alignment of approved undergraduate and post-baccalaureate programs to the policies approved by BESE in October 2016.

After July 1, 2018, teacher candidates must be admitted only to undergraduate and post-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs that meet requirements approved by BESE in October 2016.

13. Is the teacher residency program the only way to become certified? (page 14)

Beginning July 1, 2018, all teacher candidates must be admitted to programs that include a yearlong teaching residency. For undergraduate candidates, this residency will take place in a co-teaching setting, under the mentorship of an expert, certified teacher. Post-baccalaureate candidates participating in a practitioner teacher program complete the residency as a teacher of record.

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Master's degree and certification-only candidates may complete the residency as a teacher of record or in a co-teaching setting.

14. Will a teacher mentor be taken away from meeting their classroom duties? (page 14)

Mentors of undergraduate residents or post-baccalaureate residents who are not serving as the teacher of record will continue their classroom duties, co-teaching with their assigned resident. This relationship is akin to supervising a student teacher, which Louisiana teachers have done for many years, although for a full year instead of six to eight weeks.

Mentors of post-baccalaureate residents serving as the teacher of record may conduct mentoring activities during planning time or outside of school hours. The district may elect to offer release time to that mentor teacher in order to mentor the post-baccalaureate resident. Ultimately, this is the district's decision.

15. The percentage of students demonstrating mastery levels of proficiency will decrease significantly. (page 15)

Over time, Louisiana students have continually improved their performance. All evidence would indicate that an increasing number of students will attain Mastery over time.

16. Will Louisiana change the criteria to classify comprehensive support schools? (page 15)

The criteria for identifying schools for comprehensive support and improvement are outlined in the draft state plan. The plan is subject to the review approval by the U.S. Department of Education. As required by ESSA, the Department will continually review the state's plan as it is implemented, along with key stakeholders and BESE, to determine if adjustments are needed in the future to support student achievement.

17. Who will choose the external partners that schools will use? (page 15)

Districts with schools identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement will submit plans as part of a competitive grant process. Districts can choose any partner it deems appropriate given the needs of its schools and students.

18. Will the department be directing more schools into the RSD and the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone? (page 15)

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The intent of the school improvement grant program is to improve struggling schools by supporting carefully developed plans that are executed by local school systems and proven providers. In successfully implementing these plans and increasing student achievement, schools can avoid being eligible for transfer to the RSD.

19. If so will districts be losing MFP and local funds? (page 15)

Nothing in Louisiana's draft ESSA plan will result in districts losing MFP and local funds. Districts will continue receiving MFP and local funds as per current state laws and regulations.

20. Until 2019-2020 how much of the assessment index will compose elementary schools SPS? (page 18)

Prior to implementing the Interests and Opportunities Index, the Assessment Index will comprise 75 percent of an elementary school SPS and 70 percent of an elementary/middle school (with grade 8) School Performance Score.

21. If 75% of grade is made up of Assessment Index you must either obtain mastery or drop significantly. (page 18)

As Louisiana transitions to nationally competitive expectations for its students and as Louisiana introduces an expanded growth index, letter grade ratings will be curved through 2018-2019. The overall distribution of letter grades will not worsen.

22. Until 2019-2020 how much of the assessment index will comprise the middle school SPS? (page 18)

Prior to implementing the Interests and Opportunities Index, the Assessment Index will comprise 75 percent of an elementary school SPS and 70 percent of an elementary/middle school (with grade 8) School Performance Score.

23. How will the interests and opportunities measure be used to calculate DPS? (page 18)

BESE and the Accountability Commission will begin discussions on district accountability in the coming months.

24. Will Revised Statutes relative to accountability have to be changed? (page 18)

No components of the draft ESSA framework or the state plan require changes to any state laws.

25. What process will BESE use to implement these changes? (page 18)

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Following receipt of further feedback from the public and from Governor Edwards, the Department will present the state plan to BESE at a special-called meeting on March 29, 2017, and will submit it to the federal government on or prior to April 3, 2017. This timeline will commence the federal review, dialogue, and approval process and will enable BESE to act upon any necessary policy revisions in advance of the start of the school year. BESE will follow the Administrative Procedures Act in revising or enacting any regulations, in accordance with state law.

26. Dropout Credit Accumulation Index - will cut in half the points students are able to learn. (page 19)

Currently, an “A” is defined as achieving five or more credits. By 2025, an “A” will require six or more credits because students are required to earn at least 23 credits for a Jump Start diploma and at least 24 credits for a TOPS University diploma. Last year, 85 percent of students earned six or more credits, and the average DCAI of schools would only change by 3.6 points in 2018.

27. ACT and Work Keys - points awarded over the years drop for average students. This will have a negative impact on all high schools. (page 19)

The ACT/WorkKeys index is an important equity measure to ensure postsecondary readiness and access for all of Louisiana’s students. However, Louisiana currently awards an “A” for an 18 or Silver on the assessments when ACT’s own research is clear -- a 21 is needed to ensure postsecondary success. Therefore, as with its other indices, Louisiana will raise its expectations for all students over the next eight years. And, for at least the next two years, a continued curving of results will ensure that the overall distribution of schools does not worsen as schools adjust to higher expectations for teaching and learning.

28. On Track to Mastery? - who will determine cut scores? Will cut scores be manipulated annually? (page 19)

The achievement level cut scores of Louisiana’s assessments are defined and will not be changing.

29. What criteria will be used to determine peer groups? (page 20)

Louisiana’s value-added model uses a number of student characteristics, including prior achievement (up to three years), special education status, economically disadvantaged status, limited English proficiency status, gifted status, section 504 status, suspensions, and absences. Each factor influences a student’s expected score.

30. 60% of students will receive less than an A (mastery). (page 20)

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Louisiana students are just as smart and capable as any in the country. When schools earn an “A” for their academic support of students, it should signal students are truly mastering content so that our students may continue to compete with their peers nationally.

Students not yet performing at Mastery will earn fewer points as they are not fully ready for the next grade level. However, if such students are growing academically, the school may also earn points for academic growth.

31. Only way to earn 150 points is to fall into 80th to 99th percentile? (page 20)

Students have three ways to earn 150 points within the growth index of the school performance score formula.

First, any student earning “Advanced” automatically earns 150 points on both achievement and growth indices.

Second, every student scoring below Mastery will receive a simple, clear growth target for the following year that illustrates the growth required to be on track to Mastery in ELA and math by 8th grade (elementary/middle schools) or 10th grade (high schools). If a student achieves this target, the school earns 150 points.¹

However, third, using Louisiana’s value-added measurement, it is possible to compare students’ individual performance to that of similar peers. Schools will earn points based on students’ growth percentile as compared to peers. If a student falls above the 80th percentile, the school earns 150 points.

32. Averaging progress of individual students = when will base be established? (page 20)

In 2017-2018, the growth indices for elementary and middle schools will be calculated based on two years of student growth data from 2015-2016 to 2016-2017 and from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018.

In 2017-2018, the high school growth index will be based on one year of data, as the five-level tests will be introduced to high school courses in 2017-2018. However, beginning in 2018-2019, the high school exam will include two years of growth as does elementary and middle school growth indices.

¹ Students at Mastery will also receive Continued Growth targets through which they may earn 150 points.

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33. If the LDOE reserves an additional 3% for subgrants will any of these monies come from Title allocations that are intended to go to districts. (page 23)

If the LDOE reserves three percent of the state's Title I award for targeted Direct Student Services grants, those funds that would otherwise be included in Title I unrestricted flow-through allocations would still be allocated directly to local school systems. However, in accordance with ESSA, they would be targeted to schools with the greatest needs and be used to support courses and supports not currently available to students attending those schools.

34. In addition to the 5% set aside for school leadership activities would be an additional 3% for subgrants from Title allocations that are intended to go to districts. (page 23)

ESSA authorizes state education agencies to use five percent of Title funds to support state activities. In addition, the law allows a state education agency to reserve an extra three percent of the state's Title II award to support school leaders. This additional set-aside, if taken, would be distributed to school systems in need of such supports. The LDOE is evaluating the level of need that exists to determine whether to reserve this targeted funding.

35. Is there any anticipated increase in federal funds through the Title programs? If yes, will districts realize additional dollars in their allocations? (page 23)

Each year Congress approves federal funding that ultimately determines the amount of state allocations. However, the percentage of funds used to support state administrative activities, targeted set-asides, and unrestricted flow-through are all set within the ESSA law. If the state award is increased, all three streams of funding will benefit

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