



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 28, 2017

Dr. Sara P. Ebarb, Superintendent
Sabine Parish School Board
695 Peterson Street
P.O. Box 1079
Many, LA 71449

Dear Superintendent Ebarb:

Thank you for your letter regarding the submission of Louisiana's ESSA state plan to the U.S. Department of Education for review and approval.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has been working with stakeholders to develop Louisiana's plan for well over a year and has held dozens of meetings across the state with hundreds of educators, school leaders, parents, advocates, business and industry leaders, postsecondary education representatives, policymakers, and formal advisory councils, including but not limited to meetings of the Superintendents Advisory Council, superintendent task force meetings, and the Accountability Commission. Detailed information on ESSA stakeholder consultation can be found at www.louisianabelieves.com/essa

Throughout these many conversations, the LDE has indicated its intent to submit Louisiana's state plan for federal review and approval by the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year in order to provide educators with clarity about expectations and how they will be measured.

In 2013, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education [announced](#) its intent to gradually shift to "Mastery" as the state's performance expectation for A-rated schools in Louisiana. This goal was codified in Bulletin 111 and has been discussed extensively in numerous stakeholder meetings since that time. It is thus a priority reflected in the draft ESSA state plan.

Also in 2013, through rules promulgated in Bulletin 111, Section 303, BESE provided for a gradual transition to higher standards and a "two-year baseline" by holding steady the distribution of school letter grades for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school year based on the 2012-2013 distribution. BESE then added the 2015-2016 school year to that transition period. Last spring, through Act 498 of the 2016 Regular Session, the 2016-2017 school year was added to this transition. The release of school letter grades this fall will represent the fourth consecutive year that the Department of Education has held constant the distribution of school letter grades in order to provide for what began as a two-year baseline.

Louisiana Believes.

Louisiana will continue to raise expectations for teaching and learning through 2025 in order to provide students with an education that is on par with their peers nationally. Throughout that time, it is critical that parents, educators, and the public will be provided accurate, timely information about school performance in order to support academic growth and to evaluate the extent to which our state is meeting its goals.

On [September 28, 2016](#) and again on [February 6, 2017](#), the LDE released draft frameworks that illustrate the total impact of the state's draft ESSA state plan on local school systems. The frameworks, which contain both summary information and detailed appendices, explain how Louisiana and its school systems will meet the requirements of ESSA address while addressing Louisiana's main challenges:

1. Fundamental expectations for students and graduates
2. Deep struggles for historically disadvantaged students
3. Fair access to experiences essential for success in school and beyond
4. A strong educator profession
5. Persistently struggling schools

The total impact of the proposed plan, including a complete overview of accountability implications, has also been discussed at recent regional accountability briefings for superintendents and district leadership. Refer to slides 34-44 of the [presentation](#) used in these meetings.

In your letter you cited three issues that you believe warrant further discussion:

1. Lack of clarity on calculation of the growth formula

The Accountability Commission has spent a significant portion of its recent meetings discussing the appropriate recognition of growth in the accountability system and reviewing simulations based on different weights. The commission ultimately recommended that the school performance score for elementary and middle schools be based 25 percent on growth in order to incent and reward academic growth while guarding against excessive volatility in scores from one year to the next. Materials from the Accountability Commission meetings can be found on the LDE's website [here](#).

2. The impact of the Interest and Opportunities component and the lack of specific information about this component

Page 21 of the state's draft framework and page 32 of the [draft state plan](#) presents the timeline by which the LDE will work collaboratively with practitioners, content experts, and other stakeholders to develop and implement the Interests and Opportunities component that meets the ESSA requirement for having a school quality/student success indicator in the state accountability system. This will allow for collection and review of necessary data, piloting the measurements to ensure validity, and assisting school systems in preparing for the new measurement before results become part of the school performance score.

3. The proposed 3% set aside of Title 1 and the negative impact that will have on schools

Information about the Direct Student Services option to provide courses and supports to students where they are currently unavailable can be found on page 12 and Appendix C of the second

draft framework and page 69 of the draft state plan. The total amount of Title I funds allocated to local school systems remains largely the same from No Child Left Behind to ESSA. As required in ESSA, 100 percent of funds used for Direct Student Services will be awarded to geographically diverse local school systems, many of which are in rural communities, with priority given to districts with schools identified as needing comprehensive support.

My staff and I will continue to work diligently with superintendents and other stakeholders to implement a strong plan for the benefit of Louisiana's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

John White
State Superintendent of Education

cc: Mr. Tony Davis, BESE Member, District 4

ESSA Stakeholder Meetings*

2016 Regional ESSA Meetings:

- June 14, 2016 (Statewide School System Leaders and Educator Associations, Baton Rouge)
- July 26, 2016 (Lafayette)
- July 26, 2016 (Lafayette)
- July 27, 2016 (Pineville)
- July 27, 2016 (Shreveport)
- July 28, 2016 (Monroe)
- July 29, 2016 (Baton Rouge)
- August 1, 2016 (Houma)
- August 2, 2016 (Mandeville)
- August 2, 2016 (New Orleans)
- November 1, 2016 (Bossier)
- November 4, 2016 (New Orleans)
- November 7, 2016 (Opelousas)

Accountability Commission Meetings:

- January 29, 2016
- June 27, 2016
- September 12, 2016
- October 17, 2016
- November 1, 2016
- December 5, 2016
- January 9, 2017
- February 8, 2017
- February 17, 2017

Superintendents' Advisory Council:

- February 18, 2016
- May 26, 2016
- July 21, 2016
- September 21, 2016
- November 2, 2016
- February 16, 2017

Superintendents' Task Force:

- February 18, 2016

- September 21, 2016
- November 2, 2016

Regional ESSA Accountability Briefings with Superintendents and Principals:

- March 6, 2017 (Hammond)
- March 8, 2017 (Crowley)
- March 13, 2017 (Bossier City)
- March 20, 2017 (Monroe)
- March 21, 2017 (Gonzales)

School System Supervisor Collaboration Meetings:

- January 31, 2017 (Harvey)
- February 2, 2017 (Baton Rouge)
- February 7, 2017 (Ruston)
- February 9, 2017 (Lafayette)

*This above listing is not an exhaustive list of stakeholder meetings regarding the development of Louisiana's draft ESSA state plan. Additional meetings are listed at www.louisianabelieves.com/essa, and the LDE has held numerous individual meetings with school system leaders and other stakeholders as this plan has been developed.

Sabine Parish School Board

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March 20, 2017

Superintendent John White
Louisiana Department of Education
P.O. Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-9064

Dear Superintendent White:

I am writing to ask you to consider delaying submission of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan until September. It is clear that the large majority of the Louisiana Superintendents have reservations, concerns and questions about the total impact of the plan on each school and district. Considering the paramount importance of this plan, it seems a careful and thorough approach to implementing the plan is certainly better for our students and teachers. As a state, we rushed into implementation of Compass, Common Core and the Value Added Model, instead of taking our time, doing a good job preparing and training teachers, and educating the public. This caused ongoing issues and troubles to surround each implementation.

While I do appreciate the change in the formula regarding Progress Points, the change regarding the End of Course Tests, and the possibility of available benchmark assessments that are aligned to the standards, I still have concerns about the plan. Please consider the following as you deliberate submission of Louisiana's ESSA plan; 1) lack of clarity on calculation of the growth and ensuring appropriate calculation methodology for developmental appropriateness of the growth formula; 2) the impact of the Interest and Opportunities component and the lack of specific information about this component; 3) the proposed 3% set aside of Title 1 and the negative impact that will have on our schools.

Superintendent White, I respectfully ask that you delay submission of the ESSA Plan until September.

Sincerely,



Sara P. Ebarb, EdD
Superintendent

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer."