



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 28, 2017

Mr. William Kennedy, Superintendent
Claiborne Parish School Board
P.O. Box 600
415 East Main
Homer, LA 71040

Dear Superintendent Kennedy:

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.

In recent years, the LDE has taken steps to reduce the burden of testing for teachers and students in Louisiana. For example, in 2016-2017, Louisiana reduced high school testing by ending use of the PLAN (10th grade) and EXPLORE (8th and 9th grade) tests. Beginning in 2017-2018, students will take end-of-course exams in English I and II, rather than the junior year (e.g. English III), reducing the testing burden on juniors, who often pursue AP, WorkKeys, CLEP, and other assessments. The LDE also plans to make available a series of optional, efficient check-up tests that align with state standards in grades pre-K to high school so that districts can eliminate time-consuming, antiquated, costly, and unhelpful tests administered throughout the year.

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.

With regard to growth, proposed model uses a two-step approach, giving students two opportunities to demonstrate growth. For middle and elementary schools, Step 1 of this model measures whether a student is on track to achieving Mastery by eighth grade. Step 2 measures a student's growth relative to his similar peers. This two-step model allows for the recognition of growth for all students. For more information on this model, see the Accountability Commission slides from the February 8, 2017 meeting [here](#).

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".

John White
State Superintendent of Education

cc: Dr. Gary Jones, BESE Member, District 5

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.

CLAIBORNE PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Post Office Box 600

415 East Main

Homer, LA 71040-0600

Phone: (318)927-3502 Fax: (318)927-9184

Dear

I respectfully submit this letter as a formal request to postpone the submission of the Every Student Succeeds Act Plan for the State of Louisiana until the September date in lieu of the April date. I feel very strongly that there are several components of this plan that need more consideration. The educational system has changed greatly over the past 25 years of my career that I feel that the ability to truly teach and shape well-rounded students has been neglected. I am afraid that teachers now spend more and more time preparing students for state tests. This is due solely to the fact that teachers, schools, and districts are judged by the results of these tests. The new plan, as proposed, will certainly add to the pressure to continue to prepare for the state tests.

Without going into detail, I am concerned about several aspects of this plan and feel that more consideration should be given before submitting it for approval to the Department of Education. As a small, rural district the 5% index for Interest and Opportunities concerns me because of our limited finances. I welcome the effort put forth to incorporate a growth model for every student as opposed to the "progress point" model that has been very volatile. The current structure of this model appears to give the lower grades an advantage toward achieving their growth target when compared to the higher middle school grades.

I have never been against challenging students to make them better and will support efforts that challenge our students. However, I strongly feel this current proposed plan will only steer teachers further away from truly providing the comprehensive education that our students deserve because of the burden to perform at the mastery level on state tests. ESSA allows for assessment flexibility and accumulation of 2 years of data until implementation, therefore, allowing more time to truly put a plan in place that is beneficial for the children throughout the state.

Respectfully,

William Kennedy