
The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jeanne C. Johnston.

DIGEST

Appel (SB 130)

Present law requires the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to create an early childhood care and education network, by July 1, 2013, through which to manage and oversee publicly-funded programs that provide early childhood educational services, and to:

- (1) Establish performance targets for children under the age of three and academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three- and four-year old children.
- (2) Create a uniform assessment and accountability system that includes a letter grade indicative of student performance.
- (3) Coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) to align the standards for the licensing of child care facilities, including the requirements for participation in the La. Quality Start Child Care Rating System, with the standards established for early childhood education programs.
- (4) Establish a time line for the creation and implementation of the early childhood care and education network that shall be fully implemented by the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.
- (5) Work cooperatively and collaboratively with DCFS and DHH, to establish a seamless early childhood educational system coordinated and integrated across all programs and related state agencies, regardless of public funding source.

Proposed law essentially retains present law and provides as follows:

- (1) Establishes the Early Childhood Care and Education Network to manage and oversee all publicly-funded programs that provide early childhood care or educational programs to children from birth to age five. Specifies that the network will be administered by BESE through the state Department of Education.
- (2) Requires BESE, by the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, to establish and implement the Tiered Kindergarten Readiness Improvement System to establish common standards of kindergarten readiness, assess and provide information regarding the quality of early child care and education programs, and provide resources to support improvements in such programs. Provides that the system shall include:
 - (a) A definition of kindergarten readiness.

- (b) Performance targets for children under the age of three and academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three- and four-year old children.
 - (c) A uniform assessment and accountability system that includes a letter grade indicative of a child's performance.
 - (d) Criteria for membership and continued participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education Network.
- (3) Requires BESE to submit all plans and recommendations to implement the Early Childhood Care and Education Network to Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Childcare Association of Louisiana, and the board's nonpublic school commission for review and comment.
 - (4) Requires all public schools and school districts, state-approved nonpublic schools, child care centers and facilities licensed by the state, and other qualified entities that receive public funding and provide child care and educational programs to children from birth until age five to be members of the network and participate in the Tiered Kindergarten Readiness Improvement System.
 - (5) Requires BESE to establish a process by which schools and child care centers or facilities that are not required to participate in the network and kindergarten readiness system may join and participate.
 - (6) Exempts early childhood programs and child care centers and facilities that receive public funds solely for food and nutrition assistance, those that are licensed by the state but do not receive public funding, and child day care centers or facilities that serve fewer than seven children.
 - (7) Requires BESE to coordinate with DCFS and DHH to align the standards for the licensing of child day care centers and facilities with the standards established for early childhood education programs in the Tiered Kindergarten Readiness Improvement System. Present law required for alignment with the requirements to participate in the La. Quality Start Child Care Rating System.
 - (8) Requires BESE, to the extent allowed by state and federal law, to align and allocate funding to members of the network with the performance standards established for the kindergarten readiness system. Further requires BESE, as allowed by state and federal law, to align all program funding requirements to maximize the braiding of funding streams across early child care and education programs, thereby maximizing access of at-risk children to high quality programs.
 - (9) Network members that fail to meet prescribed performance standards for four consecutive years lose eligibility to participate in the network but may be reinstated upon meeting BESE criteria.

- (10) Requires BESE to establish a transition process whereby the parent or legal guardian of a child registered or enrolled in a program or class offered by any network member that withdraws or loses eligibility to participate in the network has sufficient time to place their child with a participating network member.
- (11) Requires a publicly funded provider of early childhood care or educational programs, services, or classes that does not wish to be a member of the network and participate in the kindergarten readiness system to notify DOE and the state agency through which they are licensed, in writing, that they will withdraw from the network and acknowledge that by doing so may no longer be eligible to receive public funding. Further provides that such notification must be provided not later than December first of each year.
- (12) Requires DCFS, DHH, and any other state agency that licenses child day care centers or facilities to notify DOE at least every six months if the license of a child day care center or facility under their jurisdiction has lapsed or has been revoked.
- (13) A child day care center or facility that fails to maintain a current, valid license to operate shall not be eligible to be a member of the network, but may be reinstated at such time as the center or facility regains state licensure and meets any other requirements as established by BESE.
- (14) Requires BESE to develop and implement a unified registration and enrollment system to facilitate family access to early childhood care and educational programs, services, and classes offered by members of the network based upon program performance, supply and demand, and local need.
- (15) Requires network members and public agencies that provide child care or education programs to cooperate fully with BESE and DOE and provide necessary information and assistance.

Present law establishes the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program to provide early childhood development and enrichment activity classes (LA 4 classes) to every child within the jurisdiction of a participating school system or charter school who would be eligible to enter public school kindergarten the following year and meets program criteria.

Proposed law retains present law but provides that the LA 4 program shall be administered through the Early Childhood Care and Education Network and all LA 4 classes shall comply with the rules and regulations promulgated by BESE for participation in the network and the Tiered Kindergarten Readiness Improvement System. Present law also deletes provisions relative to the provision of enrichment activity classes.

Present law provides that LA 4 classes are to be provided at no cost, except for applicable lunch costs, to at-risk children. Further provides that other eligible children may be charged tuition for all or part of the LA 4 class in an amount not to exceed that necessary for the network member to provide the LA 4 class to the child.

Proposed law retains present law but removes the cap on the amount of tuition that can be charged to a student enrolled in a LA 4 class and removes the requirement that such tuition be imposed on a sliding scale based upon family income.

Proposed law provides that an otherwise eligible child who is considered "at-risk", as defined for the kindergarten readiness system shall be given preference in the unified registration and enrollment system.

Present law provides for a phased-in implementation of a plan to provide for universal access to LA 4 classes at no cost other than applicable lunch costs by the 2013-2014 school year.

Proposed law deletes present law.

Present law specifies the criteria for LA 4 educational programs and enrichment activities, the criteria for teachers, classroom space and facilities, classroom and instructional materials, meals and snacks, and provision of family support services.

Proposed law deletes present law.

Proposed law requires BESE to minimize the financial and administrative impact on members of the network to the greatest extent possible when promulgating rules and regulations to implement proposed law.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends R.S. 17:407.23, 407.24, and 407.25; adds R.S. 17:407.26 and R.S. 36:651(K); repeals R.S. 17:24.10)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

1. Makes technical corrections.
2. Requires BESE to submit implementation plans and recommendations to Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Childcare Association of Louisiana, and the board's nonpublic school commission for review and comment.
3. Requires BESE, as allowed by law, to align all program funding requirements to facilitate the braiding of funding streams.
5. Deletes requirement that BESE notify network members of network membership and kindergarten readiness system requirements and network withdrawal procedures by Nov. 1, 2013.

6. Requires network members wishing to withdraw from the network to notify the specified state agencies by Dec. first of each year.
7. Removes the cap on the amount of tuition that can be charged to a student enrolled in a LA 4 class and removes the requirement that such tuition be imposed on a sliding scale based upon family income.