



Summary of Act 3 of the 2012 Louisiana Legislative Session The Louisiana Early Childhood Education Act

Act 3 declares that it “is the intent of the legislature that a comprehensive and integrated delivery system for early childhood care and education be created to ensure that every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.”

The Act mandates that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) create “a comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee all programs funded through state or federal resources that provide early childhood care and educational services.” However, early childhood programs that receive public funds solely for food and nutrition assistance are exempted.

To facilitate the creation of this network, BESE shall:

- (1) Establish a definition of kindergarten readiness aligned with state content standards for elementary and secondary schools.
- (2) Establish performance targets for children under the age of three and academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three - and four-year old children to be used in publicly-funded early childhood education programs.
- (3) Create a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly funded early childhood education programs that includes a letter grade indicative of student performance.
- (4) Coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Health and Hospitals to align the standards for the licensing of child care facilities, including the requirements for participation in the Louisiana Quality Start Child Care Rating System, with the standards established for early childhood education programs.
- (5) Establish a timeline 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.

The statute further provides that in creating this network, the state board, through the state Department of Education, shall work cooperatively and collaboratively with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Department of Health and Hospitals to establish a seamless early childhood educational system that is coordinated and integrated across all programs and related state agencies, regardless of public funding source.

Not later than January 1, 2013:

- Department of Education shall submit the plans and recommendations formulated by the impacted agencies to Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Child Care Association of Louisiana, and the nonpublic school commission appointed by the state board
- Each reviewing entity shall submit its comments and recommendations to the state Department of Education, which shall prepare a summary report to be submitted to BESE.

Not later than March 1, 2013:

- BESE shall submit a written report to each member of the legislature, the Senate Committee on Education secretary, and the House Committee on Education secretary on the status of development of the early childhood care and education network.
- Such report shall include but not be limited to any recommendations relative to changes in law or administrative policy needed to properly implement the network.