

You and I...  
We are



13855 River Road | Luling, LA 70070

985.785.6289

[www.stcharles.k12.la.us](http://www.stcharles.k12.la.us)



## LDOE Proposed School and District Accountability Changes Concerns

Ken Oertling, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
St. Charles Parish Public Schools  
13855 River Road  
Luling, LA 70070  
koertling@stcharles.k12.la.us  
504-621-5975

June 10, 2024

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Members  
Louisiana Department of Education  
1201 North Third Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear BESE Board Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing you as the Superintendent of St. Charles Parish Public Schools and Vice President of the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents (LASS). I want to express significant concerns regarding the proposed changes to the accountability system that you will consider tomorrow.

While I appreciate the Department's and your efforts to enhance educational outcomes in our state and the dialogue between LASS, LDOE, and some BESE members, I respectfully request you delay the adoption of the new accountability system. This delay will provide adequate time to vet all aspects of the system thoroughly. As this system will guide the work of our schools and their outcomes for the foreseeable future, it is crucial to understand the concerns brought by educational leaders and community stakeholders and ensure this system doesn't result in unintended consequences due to inadequate design.

### SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

### SUPERINTENDENT

Ellis A. Alexander  
DISTRICT 1

Scott Cody  
DISTRICT 3

John L. Smith  
DISTRICT 5

Art Aucoin  
DISTRICT 7

Ken Oertling, Ed.D.

Ray Gregson  
DISTRICT 2

Karen L. Boudreaux  
DISTRICT 4

Becky D. Weber  
DISTRICT 6

Alex L. Suffrin  
DISTRICT 8

*You and I...  
We are*



13855 River Road | Luling, LA 70070

985.785.6289

[www.stcharles.k12.la.us](http://www.stcharles.k12.la.us)



While there are many concerns, a primary concern is the disproportionate emphasis on end-of-course tests (75% weight). While these six tests, out of a possible thirty-two students can take, are valuable in assessing student achievement, an overreliance on them could lead to a narrow focus in instructional practices, potentially neglecting all the other aspects of a student's education in high school that prepare them for their future. Our accountability system must reflect a balanced approach that values comprehensive educational experiences rather than predominantly test performance on six tests, only three of which are required to graduate.

Additionally, the proposed changes significantly diminish the value of the "strength" of a high school diploma in terms of college credit or industry-based certifications earned. We will take a step backward from the valuable college and career preparation initiatives you and the state have strengthened in the last several years. By combining dual enrollment (DE), IBCs (Industry-based certifications), and ACT/WorkKeys with the graduation cohort, schools will receive far less credit and thus less incentive for such valuable examples of college and career preparation.

Using six subject-matter tests doesn't provide an indication of how prepared students are for college and careers. We believe schools should receive more credit for increasing opportunities for students to earn college credit (both general education and technical education courses) and our valued industry-based certifications. Earning college credit can reduce the overall costs for students to attain a degree, and industry-based certifications can be evidence of an individual's ability to learn and meet industry standards. The diploma index should remain a strongly weighted component of our accountability system to ensure schools are incentivized to equip students with the skills needed to thrive beyond high school.

Furthermore, the weight assigned to the English Learner (EL) index in the proposed formula is another point of contention. Under the proposal, the ELPT would disproportionately impact schools, creating distortions in school performance scores. Using ELPT in this way makes school performance scores less useful in meaningfully measuring and comparing schools. While we support the intention to ensure EL students receive the necessary support, the current weighting may not accurately reflect the progress and needs of these students.

#### SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

#### SUPERINTENDENT

Ellis A. Alexander  
DISTRICT 1

Scott Cody  
DISTRICT 3

John L. Smith  
DISTRICT 5

Art Aucoin  
DISTRICT 7

Ken Oertling, Ed.D.

Ray Gregson  
DISTRICT 2

Karen L. Boudreaux  
DISTRICT 4

Becky D. Weber  
DISTRICT 6

Alex L. Suffrin  
DISTRICT 8

You and I...  
We are



13855 River Road | Luling, LA 70070

985.785.6289

[www.stcharles.k12.la.us](http://www.stcharles.k12.la.us)



Our River Region Chamber of Commerce, industry leaders in St. Charles Parish, and fellow superintendents share the concerns outlined in this letter. While we appreciate some aspects of the proposed changes, including growth and the concept of simplicity, we need a more well-rounded accountability formula that accurately reflects the diverse goals of our educational systems. LASS provided one such example to BESE members and LDOE as a more balanced approach with the same intended results with the weight of 60% EOCs and 40% strength of diploma or “thrive.”

I respectfully request that BESE delay the adoption of the new accountability formula until the concerns outlined by educational and business leaders are addressed and a comprehensive review of intended and unintended impacts is understood and appropriately planned. This will ensure the final formula is well-informed, balanced, and conducive to our Louisiana students' overall growth and development.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your positive response and remain available for further discussions or clarifications.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ken Oertling  
Superintendent, St. Charles Parish Public Schools  
Vice President, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents

#### SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

#### SUPERINTENDENT

Ellis A. Alexander  
DISTRICT 1

Scott Cody  
DISTRICT 3

John L. Smith  
DISTRICT 5

Art Aucoin  
DISTRICT 7

Ken Oertling, Ed.D.

Ray Gregson  
DISTRICT 2

Karen L. Boudreaux  
DISTRICT 4

Becky D. Weber  
DISTRICT 6

Alex L. Suffrin  
DISTRICT 8