Last Wednesday, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved a number of policy revisions and Department recommendations. A summary of board actions that directly impact the activities of local education agencies are listed below.

Any policy bulletins, with the exception of emergency rules, must run in the Louisiana Register as a Notice of Intent for 90 days and complete the rulemaking process before becoming rule and appearing in the bulletins on the BESE website. For more information or questions on any of these policy changes, please contact Bridget Devlin.

**2015 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program Nomination Criteria**

Each year, the United States Department of Education National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes those elementary, middle, and high schools that have achieved at extremely high levels – “high performance schools” – and significantly closed achievement gaps among different groups of student – “achievement gap closing schools.” For public schools, the USDOE invites Chief State School Officers (state superintendents of education) to nominate schools for National Blue Ribbon distinction.

At the meeting, the Board received the Department’s recommended [nomination criteria](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PPJU24DA282/%24file/AGII_3.2_Blue%20Ribbon_School_Program.pdf) for the selection of 2015 Blue Ribbon Schools.

**Jump Start Graduation Pathways**

At the meeting, the Board approved 33 [Jump Start graduation pathways](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PJTHM6C7EC9/%24file/AGII%204-1_Jump%20Start%20Graduation%20Pathways%20Oct%20BESE.pdf), which indicate how students can graduate with a Jump Start Career Diploma by taking courses and attaining industry credentials relevant to an industry sector. All graduation pathways approved by BESE may be used by other Jump Start regional teams throughout the state.

**Act 581 (2014) Smoking Prohibition**

[Act 581 of the 2014 Legislative Session](http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=913776) prohibits any person from smoking within two hundred feet of the entrances, exits, or outdoor areas of any public or private elementary or secondary school. Individuals who violate these laws may face citations issued by local law enforcement and fines up to $100. Schools are required to post signs notifying the public of this prohibition.

At the meeting, the Board approved signage that may be used by schools to mark smoke-free areas, although schools may design their own signage. The signage templates made available by the LDE can be found [here](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PNTAJ766E7A/%24file/AGII_4-2_NonsmokingSign.pdf). The Department is available to assist LEAs with any needed collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development in the event that signs must be posted on a state highway right-of-way.

**Appointment Procedure for Disciplinary Hearing Officers (DHOs)**

[Act 570 of the 2014 Legislative Session](http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=913737) requires the Board to establish a Disciplinary Hearing Officer (DHO) list to conduct review hearings of tenured teachers who appeal a district superintendent’s disciplinary actions. District superintendents may randomly select a DHO from the BESE approved list in the event that the local school board does not maintain a list of approved hearing officers in accordance with the requirements of the law.

At the meeting, the Board approved the Department’s recommended appointment procedure for Disciplinary Hearing Officers. [Click here](http://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=9PFTHJ739E0F) to learn more about the DHO appointment process and [here](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PJTSV6DC985/%24file/AGII_4-3_DHO%20Call%20for%20Applications.pdf) for the DHO application.

**Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council Appointments**

[Act 868 of the 2014 Legislative Session](http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=916144) requires the Board to establish an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Advisory Council comprised of representatives and stakeholders within the field of early childhood care and education. The ECCE Advisory Council, which is comprised of seventeen voting members and thirteen nonvoting ex-officio members, will advise the Board and the Department as they implement policies to unify the State’s early childhood systems.

[Click here](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/newsroom/news-releases/2014/10/15/bese-and-department-announce-selection-of-members-for-the-early-childhood-care-and-education-advisory-committee) for a listing of members selected to serve on the ECCE Advisory Council.

**Revisions to Bulletin 131, *Alternative Education Schools/Programs Standards***

As required by [Act 530 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session](http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=913643), the Board approved revisions to Bulletin 131, *Alternative Education Schools/Programs Standards*, to allow districts to enter into agreements with educational management organizations to provide dropout recovery programs, as well as the requirements for such programs.

[Click here](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PJU8U6EE321/%24file/AGII_7-1_Bulletin_131.Dropout%20Recovery.Final.pdf) to view the complete set of revisions to Bulletin 131, *Alternative Education Schools/Programs Standards*.

**Allocations to LEAs, Type 2 Charters, Type 5 Charters, Approved Nonpublic Schools, and Community-Based Organizations**

At the meeting, the Board approved eight (8) allocations, including an allocation for High Cost Services, which provide state and federal funds to assist LEAs in serving disabled students with high cost needs.

[Click here](https://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PK26F765EDF/%24file/AF_5.2_October_2014_BESE_Allocations.pdf) for a summary of all allocations approved by the Board at its October 2014 meeting.

**Revisions to Bulletin 741, *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators,* and Bulletin 135, *Health and Safety,* to address planning and response to public health emergencies, student attendance, and continued educational services**

The Board approved as emergency rule and Notice of Intent policies related to the ability of local superintendents and charter school leaders to close school in the event of an emergency situation, including a public health emergency. The policy also provides for the exclusion of students and employees who have communicable diseases for a period of time determined by state or local public health officials, as well as the continued educational services of students quarantined due to exposure to or direct contact with an individual having a contagious, deadly disease. Click [here](http://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PVU2N79F2F1/%24file/EA_8.1_B741.pdf) for a copy of the new policies in Bulletin 741 and [here](http://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/9PVU2K79F0E6/%24file/EA_8.1_B135.pdf) for new policies in Bulletin 135. **Please also review important information related to the Ebola virus in the Department’s district email newsletter.**