

DR. CADE BRUMLEY
STATE SUPERINTENDENT



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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: School System Leaders and Special Education Directors

FROM: Dr. Cade Brumley, State Superintendent of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Carl Berg".

DATE: August 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Serving Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities deserve our best efforts in meeting their individualized needs. Responsive educators provide necessary resources, support, and high expectations, which promote the success of every student. All Louisiana students benefit from access to high-quality teaching and learning aimed at creating a lifetime of opportunity.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) looks forward to the continued partnership with school systems, families, and communities in the advancement of our statewide strategy to increase academic outcomes for students with disabilities. To begin this school year, I'm sharing key LDOE resources, supports, and potential oversight consequences for systems.

Special Education Playbook for School System Leaders

LDOE recently released a [Special Education Playbook for School System Leaders](#), which is a set of best practices and a call to action to close achievement gaps for students with disabilities. This valuable resource condenses years of research into three best instructional practices to support students with disabilities. LDOE believes that students will be most successful when regular and special education teachers and school leaders prioritize the following three high-leverage practices for students:

- 1) focusing on high-quality core instruction;
- 2) providing students extra time to learn; and
- 3) ensuring content-strong educators deliver instruction and intervention.

LDOE will support implementation of and professional learning for the Playbook through a statewide tour in October. System leaders, chief academic officers, and special education directors are highly encouraged to attend. The Playbook has already [earned the praise](#) of education experts and organizations across the nation.

Our state must be intentional in our support and intervention for students with disabilities. Join us in a commitment to leading the nation in raising expectations and outcomes for Louisiana students with disabilities.

Special Education Leader Support

LDOE's Division of Diverse Learners is committed to building the capacity of leaders to implement best practices. Special education leaders are invited to join in-person special education collaborative meetings this school year, regularly scheduled monthly calls, and monthly office hours. Follow the [LDOE Weekly Newsletter](#) to learn about the dates and times for these collaborations.

Additionally, our latest cohort of the Special Education Fellow Academy will support two dozen novice special education leaders through a year-long professional learning cycle, mentorship, and an executive learning project. This is our largest cohort to date, yielding an exciting opportunity to build even stronger special education leadership for the state.

Additionally, the [Aspiring Special Education Leader Academy](#) will support our second cohort of educators, leaders, and professionals with desires to one day lead special education in their school system. The application is now open through September 15.

If you have an employee in either of these cohorts, please grant them the flexibility to fully participate and develop their skill set. As you may be aware, cultivating special education leadership for the long term has been a key lift for LDOE over the last couple of years.

Technical Support and Statewide Resources

LDOE is responsible for implementing a statewide supervision system that ensures technical assistance, appropriate monitoring, and enforcement regarding local special education programs and compliance. The intent of that system is to improve early intervention and ensure the provision of appropriate, compliant programs and services for students.

This year, we will expand technical support to school systems by providing statewide access to special education law and compliance training. Further, we are adding contracted staff to support school systems with special education compliance. Systemic and/or continued areas of noncompliance in school systems may trigger a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for the school system. An additional area of supervision could be the placement of a Special Master with direct oversight authority over special educational programming within a system. This LDOE oversight tool would be reserved for systems with extensive, repeated, and/or high-level areas of concern and would be funded using IDEA formula funds deducted from the school system.

Family Support

Parents are the child's first - and foremost - teacher, fulfilling the most important role throughout their child's educational journey. We presently utilize agency funds to support families via ten [Families Helping Families](#) regional centers and [Exceptional Lives](#). The [Louisiana Parent Training Information Center](#) also provides free support to parents and families of students with disabilities. I implore you to work alongside your local special education advisory councils to guide special education planning, budgeting, and addressing needs in your communities.

Also, please be advised that [R.S. 17:1948](#) requires that local governing authorities adopt policies relative to the installation and operation of cameras that record video and audio in a self-contained classroom upon the written request of a parent or legal guardian. Funding has been made available.

While we encourage parents and school systems to work collaboratively, parents and schools also have access to [dispute resolution](#) options through LDOE. This year, LDOE will employ a Special Education Ombudsman with authority to hold confidential conversations with parents as well as an additional complaint investigator.

Conclusion

As we begin a new school year, we start with a set of best practices for systems that will foster significant improvements, close achievement gaps, and meet compliance expectations. We look forward to working alongside you.