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**EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY PROVIDES FEEDBACK  
ON ACT 3 IMPLEMENTATION**

BATON ROUGE, La. – The Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Health and Hospitals and Education’s Next Horizon, today released initial feedback from a series of forums, meetings and surveys on the implementation of [Act 3](#) of the 2012 Regular Legislative Session. Act 3, known as the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Act, calls for uniform developmental and academic standards for all publicly-funded programs that are designed to ensure students are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

Louisiana spends \$1.4 billion on early childhood programs, including more than \$300 million on education programs. Yet, just 52 percent of students entering kindergarten today are ready to learn. Implementation of Act 3 will align our significant investment in early learning with the better outcomes for young children, clearer information for parents and less bureaucracy for providers.

Act 3 has three key principles:

- Reduce red tape, align conflicting standards, and streamline data to reduce the administrative burden for early childhood providers and better leverage dollars;
- Create an accountability system for early childhood programs focused on outcomes and based on Kindergarten Readiness that gives parents clear actionable information in a letter grade on which to base their decisions about where to send their child; and
- Protect taxpayers by cutting off public funding to low performing early childhood programs, even pulling licensing from low-performing programs, and align our incentive structure through the School Readiness Tax Credits to reward Kindergarten Readiness.

“Louisiana is leading the nation in developing a system of early childhood education that ensures our youngest children are starting school on the path to success,” said State Superintendent of Education John White. “We cannot wait any longer to improve outcomes for the children of Louisiana. The framework will provide a better return-on-investment for taxpayers, reduce the bureaucratic red-tape for providers and empower parents with actionable information to make informed decisions.”

Sixty-three percent of survey respondents agreed that the early care and education professionals in their region were well prepared to use performance targets and academic standards to inform the early care and education they provide to young children.

“The new law is part of a long-term strategy to strengthen early childhood education across the state,” said Department of Child and Family Services Secretary Suzy Sonnier. “Feedback from the early childhood community is crucial to helping us move forward as we develop a provider network that

focuses on preparing them for kindergarten and beyond. We must work aggressively to improve outcomes for children, including kindergarten readiness, if we are to train a workforce for the 21st Century.”

The public meetings and surveys were designed to raise awareness and engage stakeholders in developing the strategy to implement the requirements of the law over the next several years. Early childhood providers and administrators took part in nine regional community forums and numerous meetings around the state. Likewise, more than 500 early childhood administrators and caregivers responded to a survey gauging their feedback on the implementation of the new legislation.

“There has never before been a greater level of collaboration and cooperation between Louisiana’s child-serving state agencies and our stakeholders,” said Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce Greenstein. “These partnerships are evident through the successes of the Coordinated System of Care for our most vulnerable children and the recent launch of the Louisiana Kid’s Dashboard to better track our progress in improving child welfare. Our continued commitment to strengthening these relationships, seeking ongoing feedback and measuring our progress are the tools that will enable us to build a healthier and stronger generation of Louisianans.”

“We intend to use these survey results to guide our development of the Act 3 implementation framework. As suggested in the survey, we agree that the implementation framework must include a phased-in approach that includes a thoughtful workforce development plan, burden reductions across agencies, and further engagement of parents through a common application and clear information,” said State Superintendent of Education John White.

“These findings clearly underscore the need for strong support in the implementation process—for children and families, and for early learning teachers and providers. The business community has a prime opportunity to get involved in supporting early childhood education – now is the time to act. An investment in early childhood education today will have large impacts on a highly-skilled workforce tomorrow,” said Steven Scheurich, President of Education’s Next Horizon and Vice-President of Customer Service and External Affairs for Entergy.

Common themes from the forums included:

1. **Equalize and stabilize funding for early care and education programs to meet higher standards for child outcomes.** Act 3 requires funding to be aligned to quality, which ensures programs are meeting higher standards and producing Kindergarten ready, or on track to Kindergarten ready, students.
2. **Provide sufficient funding to recruit and retain qualified professionals.** Act 3 will make the system more efficient overall, lowering costs by eliminating burdensome regulations and empowering providers to hire the staff that will meet the new higher standards.
3. **Develop an accountability system that measures and rewards student progress.** Act 3 envisions an accountability system based on ensuring students are ready for Kindergarten.
4. **Design a system that includes children with special needs and disabilities and funds programs to meet their needs.** Act 3 recognizes children with special needs need support in their earliest years to ensure their long-term success.
5. **Accord for a child’s socio-economic status and home and community environments.** Act 3 funds quality programs by having dollars follow the children that have the greatest need for these services.

6. **Create an accountability system that addresses quality practices.** Act 3 incentivizes quality practices, including age-appropriate assessments, to ensure students are ready for kindergarten.
7. **Use a definition of Kindergarten readiness that includes the whole child—across areas of development.** BESE adopted a definition of kindergarten readiness that is multidisciplinary.
8. **Engage, educate, and support parents and families.** Act 3 empowers families with clear, actionable information in the form of letter grades to make informed decisions about what is the best early childhood program for their child.
9. **Hold parents accountable for their involvement.** Act 3 gives parents the tools to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs.
10. **Streamline rules and regulations across programs and funding sources.** Act 3 streamlines the regulatory process for providers by reducing the overall burden and aligning conflicting regulations.
11. **Develop and implement a high quality professional development system and provide resources for programs to attain high standards.** Act 3 requires information on providers' success at preparing students to be kindergarten ready.
12. **Phase-in accountability system through pilots and/or spread out over several years.** Act 3 calls for full implementation by 2015-16.
13. **Identify and adopt recommended practices with a strong research or evidence base.** Act 3 will allow the state to better understand which programs and practices actually do produce Kindergarten ready students, leading the way for other programs to improve.
14. **Include early childhood representatives and providers in the planning and implementation process.** Act 3 contemplated a collaborative, interagency effort with feedback and input from multiple stakeholders.
15. **Develop a system that applies to all children across all settings.** Act 3 creates a system that takes into account the unique needs children and providers, while creating one set of rules to allows parents to more easily compare the quality of programs.

The Department of Education will present the Act 3 implementation plan to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in December. The plan will then be submitted to the Legislature by March 1, 2013, along with policy recommendations needed for implementation. A link to the presentation highlighting survey results can be found [here](#). Also, an addendum containing additional narrative feedback from the nine regional forums can be found [here](#).

### **About Act 3**

Act 3 calls for the creation of an early childhood education network. To facilitate the creation of this network, BESE is charged with establishing a definition of kindergarten readiness that is aligned with state content standards for elementary and secondary schools. The legislation also calls for the state to establish performance targets for children under three; academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three- and four-year old children to be used in publicly funded early childhood education programs; and a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly funded early childhood education programs.

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