

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Louisiana State Capitol building in New Orleans. The building is a tall, classical-style structure with a prominent central tower topped by a dome and a flag. The sky is a clear, bright blue with some light, wispy clouds. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Legislative Update 2015

**LAPCS**

**LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION  
OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS**

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This session was, as it always is, a doozy. With elections around the corner, there was a lot of showboating and political nonsense thrown around. Thankfully, for the most part, nothing was passed that threatens the existence of high state standards, ends the charter movement, or eliminates school choice for families.

LAPCS is proud to say that we helped defend charter autonomy, stood up for accountability, and pressed for equity throughout the session. In combination with your hard work and engagement, we prevented a mandatory return of Recovery School District schools back to districts before those districts have proven they are ready to manage those schools. Additionally, we prevented an attempt to limit choice by restricting charter schools to C, D, and F districts. We defended fiscal transparency and agreed that money should follow students with special needs, but kept opponents from punishing charters when parents make choices politicians don't agree with. Truth, liberty, and justice for all!

In the end, Governor Jindal signed 366 bills into law. There are several others that have not been signed but will go into effect without his signature as of August 1.

**Please read over this update to see which ones are most relevant to charter schools and how they will impact you.**

As always, if you have questions, we are happy to help. Don't hesitate to contact us.

Best,

Veronica Brooks  
Policy Director, LAPCS

# COMMON CORE

There were **three major bills** that addressed Common Core and led to the “compromise” you’ve surely heard so much about. In addition to the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education (BESE)’s four panels (101 educators, parents, other stakeholders) that will review the standards, the following bills were signed by the Governor:

- HB 373 – will require public hearings to be held in the six congressional districts and requires BESE to make any revisions to the standards by March 4, 2016
- SB 43 – requires a legislative committee to review the standards but can only accept or reject the BESE review teams’ changes as a package (similar to how the MFP works)
- HB 542 – requires that the 2015-16 Common Core assessments consist of less than half of questions from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium

## What This Means to Charters

Common Core isn’t dead. Keep preparing your students for the current Common Core State Standards, but know that there’s a possibility that the tests may be slightly different next year – though probably not enough to make a huge difference.

And, if you feel strongly about the standards and what they should be (whether it’s that they should remain the same or change drastically), please make your voice heard during the online public comment period BESE is hosting and during the congressional district public hearings.

# BUDGET & MFP

- HB 1 – There was a modest increase to the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) of \$36 million. That isn't as much as the MFP Taskforce had requested (\$75 million), but considering the major cuts that were made this session due to the fiscal crisis, it's a pretty amazing bump.
- SB 267 – This law will do a few things. First, it requires a quota for special education (SPED) students in charters, similar to the at-risk quota that already exists in law.

It will also impact charter school funding. Instead of receiving an average of the MFP, schools will now receive the weighted per-pupil amount based on individual student needs. Depending on the number of special needs students served, charters could see a decrease or an increase in their overall funding.

Furthermore, SB 267 requires the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) to facilitate a process to move all Orleans Parish schools, including Type 1, Type 3, and Type 3B charters, to the same funding formula. LAPCS, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), and Recovery School District (RSD) will be working over the next year to create a single formula.

## What This Means to Charters

As for the MFP, you will probably see a small increase.

SB 267 will impact charter school funding. Instead of receiving an average of the MFP, schools will now receive the weighted per-pupil amount based on individual student needs.

In addition, your special education population should be about 80% of the district's average. For example, if the district's SPED population is 11%, then you would be shooting to have an 8.8% SPED population. If that target number isn't reached, then the authorizer can conduct a review process to make sure your school isn't purposefully turning students away or kicking them out. If they don't find any "bad behavior," then you're pretty much off the hook (since charters are schools of choice and you can't force any certain kind of student to go...).

Your at-risk and SPED targets should be calculated separately, but of course, some kids may count in both calculations since they could be both at-risk and have special needs.

# NEW ORLEANS-SPECIFIC

Present law requires local school boards to make facilities that are vacant or slated to be vacant available to charter schools for lease or purchase, up to fair market value. The new law also adds that in New Orleans, Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) will make any immovable property that it owns and that is vacant or slated to be vacant available to charters as well.

If the charter decides to sell the property, it shall offer right of first refusal to the school board to buy back the property. The property has to be sold back to the school board for an amount up to the previously paid purchase price, plus an amount up to the fair market value of any improvements made by the charter with nonpublic funds.

## **What This Means to Charters**

For charters in New Orleans, this means that now you will have access to OPSB facilities and property for buying and leasing.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD

Currently, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has created a network through which early childhood programs will be managed and overseen. The law also says that BESE will create a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly funded early childhood programs that includes a letter grade indicative of student performance.

The new law also requires BESE to designate the 2015-16 school year as an academic learning year in which a three-level rating system (not letter grades) will be used to create “performance profiles” for early childhood centers and their networks.

## **What This Means to Charters**

If your charter also provides an early childhood program that uses public funds, then this next year, instead of a letter grade, your early childhood program will receive a “practice” rating.

# MISCELLANEOUS

There are always some random bills that make it through the legislative process as well. C'est la vie.

- SB 54 – Originally, this bill would have banned suspensions for elementary school students. However, after talking to education groups, the bill was amended and only bans suspensions for uniform violations in grades PK-5.
- SB 28 – This new law requires each public school, including charters, to promote and provide information to students and parents on how to access the after-school online homework assistance services offered by the State Library of Louisiana. This information will need to be included in school handbooks, as well as on school websites. (<http://homeworkla.org/>)
- HB 718 – Cleans up the privacy bills from last year in a number of ways.

## What This Means to Charters

- (1) Don't suspend kids in grades PK-5 for uniform violations.
- (2) Add a link on your school website and in your student handbooks about the homework services the State Library offers.
- (3) Read HB 718, which makes the following changes to your data privacy policies:
  - Changes date for requiring student ID numbers not based on social security numbers from May 2015 to August 2015.
  - Clarifies that parental consent forms do not need to be collected every year if a parent has already signed one unless that parent withdraws consent in writing.
  - No longer requires governing authorities for schools to destroy data.
  - Allows schools to contract with public entities without all the student data protection requirements.
  - Excludes certain initial contracts for goods, equipment, or instructional materials acquired pursuant to present procurement law from student data protection requirements.
  - Clarifies that it isn't necessary for school employees to have it literally expressed in their present duties for them to access computers with student records as long as they follow the other rules regarding access.
  - No longer requires schools to post all their contracts that involve personal student data to their website and can instead make that information available at the main office.