

Regular Session, 2012

SENATE BILL NO. 581

BY SENATORS APPEL AND ALARIO AND REPRESENTATIVES CARTER AND  
KLECKLEY

EARLY CHILDHOOD ED. Provides for the La. Early Childhood Education Act. (gov sig)

1 AN ACT  
2 To enact Part X-A of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be  
3 comprised of R.S. 17:407.21 through 407.24, relative to early childhood education;  
4 to provide for the creation of an early childhood care and education network; to  
5 provide for the purposes of such network and the duties and responsibilities of  
6 certain state agencies related thereto; to provide relative to early childhood education  
7 programs and standards; to provide for an accountability system for early childhood  
8 education programs; to provide relative to a quality rating system for certain day care  
9 centers; to provide for legislative findings and intent; and to provide for related  
10 matters.

11 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

12 Section 1. Part X-A of Chapter 1 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of  
13 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:407.21 through 407.24 is hereby enacted to read as  
14 follows:

15 **§407.21. Short title**  
16 **This Part shall be known and may be cited as the "Louisiana Early**  
17 **Childhood Education Act"**.

1           **§407.22. Legislative findings and intent**

2                   **A. The legislature finds and declares that:**

3                   **(1) In order to significantly improve outcomes at all levels of the state's**  
4                   **educational system, it is imperative that standards for, and expectations of, our**  
5                   **early childhood programs be raised to levels that will promote kindergarten**  
6                   **readiness and sustain lifelong learning and achievement.**

7                   **(2) Publicly funded early childhood programs should prioritize**  
8                   **kindergarten readiness and public dollars should fund programs that excel at**  
9                   **achieving high levels of kindergarten readiness, or progression towards**  
10                   **kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of children served.**

11                   **(3) Parents who choose to send their children to publicly funded early**  
12                   **childhood programs should have clear and actionable information on the quality**  
13                   **of the programs available.**

14                   **(4) Providers of publicly funded early childhood programs should be**  
15                   **held accountable for the public dollars they receive, but given the autonomy to**  
16                   **implement an educational program that promotes and achieves kindergarten**  
17                   **readiness without undue regulation.**

18                   **(5) State entities involved in the oversight or provision of early childhood**  
19                   **programs should collaborate, set standards of educational achievement for**  
20                   **young children that align with standards established for children enrolled in**  
21                   **grades kindergarten through twelve, and hold providers of publicly funded**  
22                   **early childhood programs accountable without imposing undue regulation on**  
23                   **said programs.**

24                   **(6) There are high quality early childhood programs in this state that can**  
25                   **serve as a model for increasing standards of achievement and financial**  
26                   **efficiency in publicly funded early childhood programs.**

27                   **(7) Publicly funded early childhood programs receive a significant**  
28                   **amount of public dollars that can and should be maximized in pursuit of high**  
29                   **quality early childhood programs that achieve high levels of kindergarten**

1 readiness or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the  
2 ages of children served.

3 (8) Tax incentives created for the purpose of promoting high quality  
4 early childhood programs should be awarded based on kindergarten readiness,  
5 or progression towards kindergarten readiness, as applicable for the ages of  
6 children served.

7 (9) A fragmented system of standards, funding, and oversight of the  
8 state's publicly funded early childhood programs serves as a barrier to  
9 providing every child with the high quality services and programs which he  
10 deserves and to providing parents with the information needed to make an  
11 informed choice when selecting the programs that best fit the needs of their  
12 children.

13 B. It is the intent of the legislature that a comprehensive and integrated  
14 delivery system for early childhood care and education be created to ensure that  
15 every child enters kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

16 §407.23. Early Childhood Care and Education Network; creation;  
17 components; duties and responsibilities

18 A. Not later than July 1, 2013, the State Board of Elementary and  
19 Secondary Education, hereinafter called the state board, shall create a  
20 comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee  
21 all programs funded through state or federal resources that provide early  
22 childhood care or educational services.

23 B. To facilitate the creation of this network, the state board shall:

24 (1) Establish a definition of kindergarten readiness aligned with state  
25 content standards for elementary and secondary schools.

26 (2) Establish performance targets for children under the age of three and  
27 academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three and four-year old  
28 children to be used in publicly funded early childhood education programs.

29 (3) Create a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly

1 funded early childhood education programs that includes a letter grade  
2 indicative of student performance.

3 (4) Coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services  
4 and the Department of Health and Hospitals to align the standards for the  
5 licensing of day care centers, including the requirements for participation in the  
6 Louisiana Quality Start Child Care Rating System, with the standards  
7 established for early childhood education programs.

8 (5) Establish a timeline for the creation and implementation of the early  
9 childhood care and education network that shall be fully implemented by the  
10 beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.

11 C.(1) In creating this network, the state board, through the state  
12 Department of Education, shall work cooperatively and collaboratively with the  
13 Department of Children and Family Services, and the Department of Health  
14 and Hospitals to establish a seamless early childhood educational system that  
15 is coordinated and integrated across all programs and related state agencies,  
16 regardless of funding source.

17 (2) The state board shall submit the plans and recommendations  
18 formulated by the impacted agencies to Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory  
19 Council for review and comment.

20 (3) The advisory council's executive committee shall report its  
21 recommendations and comments to the state board for its consideration, not  
22 later than January 1, 2013.

23 (4) The state board shall submit recommendations for any legislative  
24 changes needed to implement the provisions of this Part prior to the beginning  
25 of the 2013 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.

26 §407.24. Rules

27 The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall  
28 promulgate rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative  
29 Procedure Act to implement the provisions of this Part.

1           Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
2 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
3 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
4 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
5 effective on the day following such approval.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Jeanne C. Johnston.

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#### DIGEST

Present law provides for an Early Childhood Care and Education Network and requires BESE to:

1. By July 1, 2013, create a comprehensive and integrated network through which to manage and oversee publicly funded programs that provide early childhood educational services.
2. Establish performance targets for children under the age of three and academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three and four-year old children to be used in publicly funded early childhood education programs.
3. Create a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly funded early childhood education programs that includes a letter grade indicative of student performance.
4. Coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) to align the standards for the licensing of day care centers, including the requirements for participation in the La. Quality Start Child Care Rating System, with the standards established for early childhood education programs.
5. Establish a timeline for the creation and implementation of the early childhood care and education network that shall be fully implemented by the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.
6. Work cooperatively and collaboratively with DCFS and DHH, to establish a seamless early childhood educational system that is coordinated and integrated across all programs and related state agencies, regardless of funding source.
7. Submit the plans and recommendations formulated by the impacted agencies to Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council for review and comment. The advisory council's executive committee shall report its recommendations and comments to the state board for its consideration not later than January 1, 2013.
8. Submit recommendations for any legislative changes needed to implement proposed law prior to the beginning of the 2013 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.
9. Promulgate rules and regulations in accordance with the APA to implement proposed law.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:407.21 through 407.24 )