
The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Alan Miller.

DIGEST

LaFleur (SB 385)

Proposed law provides for the "Empowered Community Schools Act".

Provides the following legislative findings:

- (1) Public elementary and secondary schools throughout the state have diverse needs according to student population, geography, human and financial resources, and local economic conditions, that require local strategies to meet the needs of students.
- (2) In order to prepare all Louisiana students for college or a sustainable career, those closest to students, especially parents and educators who know and serve their needs firsthand, must be afforded the ability to make decisions to support their academic and developmental growth.
- (3) Capable school leaders, when empowered to make decisions to effectively lead their schools, can cause significant growth in student achievement through the thoughtful management of human and financial resources.
- (4) Superintendents annually evaluate effectiveness of principals based on a rigorous combination of on-the-job observation and progress in student achievement.

Provides that beginning with the 2014-2015 fiscal year, any public elementary or secondary school principal who is rated "highly effective" pursuant to the performance evaluation program established by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), may declare his school an empowered community school for the following school year, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, and receive school-level decision-making authority to meet the unique needs of the school and its students. Designation as an empowered community school shall confer upon the school principal the authority to manage instructional, personnel, and financial decisions as provided for in proposed law.

Provides that designation as an empowered community school shall remain in effect as long as the principal retains a rating of "highly effective" pursuant to BESE standards or until the principal voluntarily reverses the empowered community school designation.

Provides that designation as an empowered community school shall remain in effect if the school's principal is replaced by another principal whose most recent evaluation rating is "highly effective" and who retains a rating of "highly effective" pursuant to BESE standards.

Provides that beginning with the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the superintendent of a city, parish, or

local public school system may designate an elementary or secondary school in the system an empowered community school. Designation as an empowered community school shall remain in effect for a period of time determined by the superintendent.

Provides that the principal of an empowered community school shall be given the sole authority to:

- (1) Design and implement an instructional plan tailored to the needs of the school, its students, and its faculty, including professional development, curriculum, textbooks and other instructional resources. The principal of an empowered community school shall have the authority to manage the school's daily schedule and instructional time. However, any changes to the daily schedules, instructional time, or school calendars requiring the coordination of district school bus schedules shall be subject to the superintendent's approval. The superintendent may require the principal of an empowered community school to participate in district professional learning communities or participate in any required professional development activities in which effective instructional strategies may be shared with other principals in the district.
- (2) Hire and evaluate personnel, assign personnel within the school, and dismiss personnel from the school, per applicable state laws.
- (3) Establish a budget for school-based expenditures using the following funds:
 - (a) A percentage of the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula per pupil amount, including any weighted amounts generated by the student population attending the empowered community school, as determined by BESE.
 - (b) All federal and other state funds received at a rate or formula equivalent to the rate or formula by which the district distributes such funds to all schools, pursuant to applicable regulations.
- (4) Plan all expenditures associated with the daily operations of the school, other than costs associated with personnel, retirement, capital infrastructure, employee benefits, and district debt service.
- (5) Coordinate with the city, parish, or other local public school board for the provisions of support services, including student transportation and school food service, provided that the school board is reimbursed for the actual cost of providing such services.
- (6) Enter into any contracts to support the school's operating needs.
- (7) Participate in any program or pilot program offered through BESE or the Department of Education.
- (8) Apply for publicly or privately sponsored grants on behalf of the school.

(9) Offer specialized instructional programs to meet local needs.

(10) Receive other flexibilities and waivers from BESE regulations as determined by BESE.

Requires that any action taken by the principal of an empowered community school be in accordance with any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect which applies to the school.

Requires that empowered community schools abide by city, parish, or local public school board policies with regard to grade configuration and services to students with exceptionalities.

Requires that city, parish, and other local public school systems with empowered community schools retain a percentage of the MFP formula, federal, and other state funds attributable to each empowered community school in order to address the capital needs of the empowered community school, retirement and other legacy costs associated with the empowered community school, and administrative overhead expenses associated with the empowered community school as determined by BESE.

Provides that no person shall have a cause of action against any school district or school board arising from a contract entered into with the principal of an empowered community school.

Provides that the superintendent of a district with empowered community schools may request and shall be provided progress reports by the principal of each empowered community school related to academic progress and school finances at intervals determined by the superintendent.

Provides that the financial practices of the empowered community school must be specifically included in the independent audit of the city, parish, or other local public school system.

Effective July 1, 2014.

(Adds R.S. 17:4051- 4057)