

# Fixing what's broken:

## The LFT legislative agenda

These are bills supported by the Louisiana Federation of Teachers to help repair the damage caused to public education in the 2012 legislative session.

**HB 115 by Rep. Ted James (D-Baton Rouge):** A number of schools that have been taken over by the state continue to fail their students. Some have been handed over to for-profit charter providers. This law would allow parents of children whose schools have been seized by the State Recovery School District to ask that their schools be returned to their local school system if they have not performed better than a D or F for three consecutive years.

**HB 129 by Rep. Vincent Pierre (D-Lafayette):** Educators were outraged when Superintendent of Education John White announced that teachers who take retirement because of so-called "reforms" are "more likely to be ineffective," even though the evaluation process was not complete and no teachers had received their evaluations. This bill prohibits giving a teacher or administrator a performance rating until completion of the full evaluation.

**HB 160 by Rep. Gene Reynolds (D-Minden):** The state's controversial Value Added Model for teacher evaluation is an untested, baffling formula with an estimated 30% error rate. This bill suspends implementation of the VAM until it can be tested and approved by the House and Senate Education Committees.

**HB 343 by Rep. John Bel Edwards (D-Amite):** Of all the unfairness in the governor's agenda, perhaps none is more cruel than the rule that students who are not pursuing a high school diploma must take high-stakes tests, including the ACT, and that their scores will count against their school. This bill prohibits administering those tests unless the student's IEP provides for it or the parents request it.

**HB 466 by Rep. Kenny Havard (R-Jackson) and Sen. Fred Mills (R-New Iberia):** The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, firmly controlled by a faction that seems hostile to public schools, has the authority to alter School Performance Scores in ways that are detrimental to public schools. This bill reins in BESE, and prohibits the board from making any changes in the school grading policy without the approval of the House and Senate Education Committees.

**HB 467 by Rep. John Bel Edwards (D-Amite):** One of the most egregious offenses in last year's Act 2 was the removal of certification requirements for teachers in charter schools. This bill requires charter schools to employ teachers who meet all of the eligibility requirements of teachers in traditional; public schools.

**HB 523 by Rep. Randal Gaines (D-LaPlace):** Last summer, a judge said that he could not temporarily suspend the payment of vouchers with MFP funds because Superintendent of Education John white and Commissioner of Administration Paul Rainwater signed affidavits saying that the injunction would cause a state budget deficit.

The statements were false, but the law did not allow the truth of those affidavits to be questioned in court. This bill requires government agencies to prove that such statements are true, and allows the statements to be challenged in court.

**HB 540 by Rep. Sam Jones (D-Franklin):** Current law calls for teachers, counselors and school psychologists who earn national certification to be paid a \$5,000 annual stipend for their achievement.

But the law's sunset clause says that those who become certified after July 1 of this year will not receive the stipend. This bill repeals the current provision and ensures that educators who earn national certification will continue to receive the stipend.

**HB 584 by Rep. Patricia Smith (D-Baton Rouge):** Act 2 of 2012 created what are called virtual schools, which would allow individuals, schools, businesses or just about anyone else to offer courses online, and get paid through the MFP. The law has very little accountability for the schools and almost no way for the public to know whether or not they provide an appropriate academic experience.

This bill requires BESE to adopt standards for virtual schools, establishes reporting requirements for the schools, demands independent audits of their books, requires certified teachers and holds the schools accountable to the public in other ways.

**HB 598 by Rep. Regina Barrow (D-Baton Rouge):** Current law and policies establishing performance scores for public schools are confusing and frustrating. Mandated to provide "clear and appropriate standards" for schools and districts, the current system instead imposes ever-increasing demands and bases scores on a weirdly fluctuating numerical scale.

This bill requires BESE to base performance score ranges on a 100 point scale and prohibits changes to the calculation of performance scores prior to the 2016-17 school year.

**HB 618 by Rep. Chris Leopold (R-Belle Chasse):** This bill provides a \$5,000 stipend to educational diagnosticians who hold a valid Louisiana teaching certificate, is certified as an educational diagnostician by the State Department of Education, and holds a Nationally Certified Educational Diagnostician credential issued by the National Certification for Educational Diagnosticians' Board.

**HB 624 by Rep. Patrick Jefferson (D-Homer):** This family-friendly bill is intended to help new parents who are employed by school systems by allowing them seven days of additional leave time for doctor visits related to maternal or infant health in the year following a child's birth. The leave is in addition to any other accrued leave the parent may have.

**HB 625 by Rep. Randal Gaines (D-LaPlace):** Gov. Jindal's Act 1 and subsequent policies from BESE gutted teacher protections known as tenure. A tenured teacher ruled ineffective even once becomes an at-will employee who can easily be fired. A new teacher has little hope of ever becoming a "permanent teacher."

This bill declares that a teacher who has served satisfactorily for more than three years has certain rights and a guarantee of due process before termination. It restores the authority of school boards to make decisions about teacher termination, and provides an appeal process with binding arbitration.

**HB 635 by Rep. Patrick Williams (D-Shreveport):** Many teachers are young women with infants who choose to breast feed their babies. They need a secure, private location to express breast milk without embarrassment or interruption.

This bill requires schools to provide a location other than a rest room for the purpose, and to give teachers a reasonable amount of time to express breast milk for up to a year after the birth of the child.

**HB 661 by Rep. Wesley Bishop (D-New Orleans):** Under current law, the Orleans Parish School Board has the responsibility to manage certain charter schools, but funding for those schools is diverted to a separate management entity. This bill directs the funding directly to the schools that are managed by the OPSB.

**SB 41 by Sen. Bob Kostelka (R-Monroe):** The education community and some members of the legislature are very dissatisfied with the leadership of State Superintendent of Education John White.

Many believe that his credentials are lacking, and that he is using the office to impose a radical, corporate agenda. He was the choice of Gov. Bobby Jindal, but his appointment was blocked until a more compliant Board of Elementary and Secondary Education was elected in 2011, with a boost from millions of dollars in special interest contributions.

This bill is a proposed constitutional amendment that would make the office of State Superintendent of education elective rather than appointed. It gives the public a chance to weigh the candidates' qualifications and select the best person to lead the department of education.

**SB 67 by Sen. Karen Carter Peterson (D-New Orleans):** Louisiana's educational infrastructure is crumbling. The buildings in which we expect children to learn and teachers to teach are a shameful reminder of the low regard we have for public education. Local school systems are strapped for cash, and many cannot afford the expense of meeting even minimal improvements.

This is a reprise of a bill that was passed by the legislature in 2009 but vetoed by Gov. Jindal. In creating the Statewide Education Facilities Authority, a step is taken toward expanding the responsibility for school buildings to the state level.

**SB 127 by Sen. Gary Smith (D-Norco):** This bill is similar to HB 343. It is a travesty that students with disabilities who are not pursuing a regular diploma must take the ACT test, and the scores will count against the student and the school.