



## IN THE WORKS...

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As you all are aware, the Louisiana Legislature wrapped up its regular session in June leaving quite a few directives for School Board, many in effect already or which take effect around the start of the 2008-2009 school year. Unfortunately, the legislators do not have a clear concept of what it takes for Boards to effectively research, revise, and adopt policies that they have affected. While we are currently working as fast as we can on revisions of the policies with immediate impact, we do not want to rush the process and possibly overlook important implications.

We appreciate your patience as we thoroughly review **all** Acts of the Legislature, and revise applicable policies, but we want to make you aware of provisions impacting Board operations for the start of this school year, even though the revised policies have yet to be adopted. Please review the brief summary of the Acts below, notifying personnel as necessary. We will get the revised policies based on some of these Acts to you as soon as we can.

### **Act 131**

This act changes the required vote for approval of additions to the agenda from a *two-thirds* vote to a *unanimous* vote of the members present. The effective date of Act 131 is August 15, 2008.

### **Act 142**

A Board is now required to grant up to 5 days of excused absences to children whose parents are members of the Armed Forces or National Guard, to visit with the parent prior to deployment or during the parent's leave. *Parent* is defined for this purpose as the person responsible by law for the child's school attendance. Act 142 became effective on June 12, 2008.

### **Act 145**

Act 145 changes provisions regarding expelled students return to school. Previously participation was required of expelled students in appropriate rehabilitation or counseling programs related to the reason for expulsion. The statutes now require that the student's parent or legal guardian also participate. The effective date of Act 145 is August 15, 2008.

**Act 219**

Effective June 16, 2008, School Boards are required to provide training in suicide prevention as developed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). All teachers, counselors, principals, and other administrators identified by the Board shall be required to participate in at least 2 hours of in-service on the subject beginning with the 2008-2009 school year.

**Act 359**

BESE is required by Act 359 to adopt rules by the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year which will provide guidelines for Boards to follow to prevent “interaction between a student and school employee in any classroom, meeting room, or other similarly enclosed area on school property unless during the full time of such interaction another school employee, the student’s parent, or other authorized adult is present, or the student and employee are clearly viewable,” with certain exceptions for testing or health procedures. The guidelines, however, may not be official until January 2009. Act 359 became effective June 16, 2008.

**Act 365**

The provisions of Act 365 seems to partially duplicate a requirement already in statutes, and included in policy *JCD, Student Conduct*, that students be provided orientation about disciplinary rules and codes of conduct within the first 5 days of school. It does add that for a student entering late, orientation shall be provided within the first 5 days of a student’s attendance, and requires inclusion of the rights of teachers pursuant to La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §17:416.18. The Act became effective June 21, 2008, and is required for the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

**Act 457**

Although many Boards already offered extended sick leave to support employees, Act 457 now statutorily requires the benefit be granted all employees. Most of the provisions are the same as currently written for teachers and bus drivers, except that the initial 6 year period for school employees (not teachers or bus drivers) begins with the effective date of the Act, which is August 15, 2008, or the

date of hire if employed after August 15, 2008.

**Act 507**

Parents of children who are twins, triplets or other multiples born at the same time for grades 2 and below, may request of the Superintendent or designee, that the children be assigned to the same classroom or different classrooms. The request must be made no later than 14 days after the first day of attendance, and the placement may be modified after the first grading period if found to be disruptive. Act 507 went into effect June 25, 2008, and begins with the 2008-2009 school year.

**Act 649**

The criminal history provisions found in La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §17:15 have been expanded by Act 649 to include information on *arrests* for *any* criminal offenses, as well as convictions. It also removes the ten year limitation. The effective date of Act 649 is August 15, 2008.

**Act 745**

Act 745 now defines *Habitual absence or tardiness* as the fifth occurrence of unexcused absence or tardiness in a *school semester*, instead of in a month. Notification must be made *in writing* after the third unexcused absence or tardiness. Parents are now subject to fines or community service. Act 745 takes effect on August 15, 2008.

**Act 907**

This Act is two-fold. First, it requires BESE to establish procedures for granting waivers for promotion rules for students with exceptionalities. Second, it requires each School Board to adopt rules for requiring schools to notify parents or guardians of the procedure to formally make complaints or request information from the school or School Board. The procedures **must include** the name, address, phone number and e-mail address of the appropriate person to contact at each step of the process. Notification of parents of the procedures must *in writing*, with the information incorporated into policies, codes of conduct, or student handbooks. This Act became effective July 11, 2008 and goes into effect with the start of the 2008-2009 school year.