

POLICYALERT



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Forethought Consulting, Inc.

POLICY UPDATE: 2011

A BIT OF THIS AND THAT

This newsletter and associated policies will serve as a warm-up for the *Legislative Update* series that always follows the closing of the Louisiana Legislative session each year. Included in this issue are: a couple of policies from last fall which needed tweaking; two policies to cover the changes in attendance regulations as revised and finalized by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) in April; a policy change to update requirements for tax and bond election and sales; and a policy, new for many systems, that addresses conduct of the public on Board property. Boards who address tobacco use in their *Use of Facilities* policies are getting the language updated, and a few Boards will receive additional policies, which have been revised because of changes to their population numbers as recorded in the 2010 census.

● BOARD MINUTES

When revising this policy last fall to comply with legislative changes dictating publishing of minutes within twenty (20) days, language was included that the publishing should occur *after the meeting at which the minutes were approved*. However, we discovered a recent AG Opinion, #09-0300, that reinforces a previous opinion that the publishing of minutes should occur twenty days *after the actual meeting*. Any corrections to the minutes made at a later meeting would appear in the minutes of that later meeting. The incorrect phrase has been removed from the policy *Board Minutes*.

Policies In This Issue:

- Board Minutes
- Attendance
- Public Conduct on School Property
- Tax and Bond Elections
- Absences and Excuses
- Buildings and Grounds Security
- Use of Facilities

● TAX AND BOND ELECTIONS AND SALES

Provisions prompting revision to this policy stems from the ever-changing dates for holding tax elections. Information has been included in the *Tax and Bond Elections and Sales* policy to use the dates outlined in the statutes instead of listing the actual dates in policy, which were included in some systems' policies. Other provisions have been revised to update necessary information involving tax and bond elections.

● BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SECURITY

After this policy was sent last year, it was suggested that certain information regarding security measures be deleted from the policy which might not be appropriate for all systems. That information has been removed from the policy *Buildings and Grounds Security*, as it may have implied that specific security measures were required in each school.

● ATTENDANCE

The minimum time that students must be present to receive course credit has been revised to reflect new minutes requirements as included in revisions to §1103 of Bulletin 741, *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators* and finalized this spring. BESE spent time looking at the provisions of Bulletin 741 and in discussions with school administrators to refine some inconsistencies in previous attendance provisions. The new requirements are reflected in revised policy *Attendance*.

● ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Also addressed in revisions to Bulletin 741 were the provisions which guide how absences are treated and recorded in respect to meeting attendance requirements. One major change is the way absences are now classified: *non-exempted*, *exempted*, *exempted excused*, *unexcused*, and *suspensions*. Whereas in the past we found Boards were interpreting the minimum attendance requirements differently, the new language seems fairly clear cut and hopefully will not be subject to different interpretations.

One area which will need to be addressed, is that an absence for a death in the family is now qualified to include *immediate* family only. As neither Bulletin 741 nor statutes define *immediate family* in regard to student absences, each Board will need to decide which family members will be included. Also removed from policy *Absences and Excuses* were provisions under extenuating circumstances that BESE added last year establishing a minimum number of days of absences which must be verified.

● USE OF FACILITIES

The policy *Use of Facilities* has been reviewed, and for those systems' policies which addressed tobacco use, revisions have been made to reflect current statutory requirements, and/or to match provisions in other Board policies.

● PUBLIC CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

This suggested policy is being sent for your review and consideration. The intent is to establish in policy and thereby notify the public, that inappropriate conduct on school property by anyone, including parents or patrons, will not be permitted. Several systems have adopted the policy due to situations arising in recent years, not just at sporting events, but also during meetings/functions held on school campuses.

UPCOMING:

With the 2011 Legislative Session passing the halfway mark, numerous education bills are making slow progress. As the end of the session nears, we will assess those bills that may impact School Board operations and send you the first set of policy revisions as part of the August, 2011 issue of **POLICYALERT**.