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Subject: September 2009, BESE BRIEF, Education's Next Horizon Newsletter

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September 2009

BESE BRIEF

A Summary of Several Key Actions Taken by the **State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education** on August 20, 2009

In this issue:

- [Career Diploma](#)
- [Board Approved Action](#)

Career Diploma

The **Career Diploma** was established by Acts 298 and 246 of the 2009 Regular Legislative Session. The legislation creates and establishes entrance requirements for the Career Diploma as a second standard high school diploma option. Students may qualify for the Career Diploma Pathway in two ways: (1) meet all requirements for promotion to the ninth grade established by BESE and the school district, and (2) be 15 or older during the school year and score Approaching Basic on either the Math or English Language Arts component of LEAP.

Students who qualify for the Career Diploma Pathway in 2009-2010 by meeting the second criteria must satisfy the following additional requirements:

1. Attend summer school and take the retest
2. Achieve a GPA of 1.5 or higher during the eighth grade
3. Meet the attendance and behavior requirements specified in the district Pupil Progression Plan (PPP) for these students
4. Participate in a **dropout prevention and mentoring program** during the ninth grade

Board Approved Action

- The Board referred the following recommendations of the Parish Superintendents' Advisory Council related to the Career Diploma Pathway to the High School Redesign Commission for response by December 8, 2009:
 - Allow students, after their initial entry into the Career Diploma Pathway, to opt out and to opt in annually thereafter at the end of each school year.
 - Allow the local school districts, through their Pupil Progression Plans, to set the behavior and attendance requirements for entry into the Career Diploma Pathway or other programs, if those requirements differ from the requirements of students enrolled in other pathways/programs.
 - Allow students the option of entering the Career Diploma Pathway from the Core 4 or from the regular Core curriculum.
- The Board approved the following four **dropout prevention/mentoring** components as Notice of Intent for inclusion in the Pupil Progression Policies and Procedures:
 - An academic catch up component to address all area(s) of student deficiency
 - An adult mentoring component with an emphasis on workforce awareness and readiness
 - A work awareness and work readiness skills component
 - A work-based learning component such as job shadowing/job exploration/paid internships.
- The Board also approved the following policy regarding the Career Diploma Pathway as recommended by the Louisiana Department of Education:

"Every student who seeks to pursue a career diploma shall have the written permission of his/her parent or other legal guardian on the Career Diploma Participation Form after a consultation with the school guidance counselor or other school administrator. The student and parent must be informed of the advantages and disadvantages of the different diploma pathways. The signature of the student and parent or guardian indicates that a determination has been made that the pursuit of a career diploma is appropriate and in the best interest of the student. The school principal shall also sign the form acknowledging that appropriate counseling has taken place."
- The Board approved requests from school districts for waiver of the requirements to provide a Career Diploma Pathway for the 2009-2010 school year. Thirteen (13) school districts have not requested waivers. It was noted that 8 of the 13 districts have **Jobs for America's Graduates** programs, which will help satisfy the dropout prevention and mentoring requirement for students participating in the Career Diploma Pathway.

Members of BESE strongly urged the business community to work with school districts in providing mentoring and work-based learning opportunities for Career Diploma students.

The next meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be held Thursday, September 17, 2009, 9:00 A.M., in the Claiborne Building located at 1201 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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