



LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA

August 20, 2014

Dr. Bernard Taylor, Superintendent,
East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System
1050 South Foster Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

Dear Superintendent Taylor:

As you are aware, my office performed a limited examination into issues disclosed in the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) report released March 14, 2014, concerning East Baton Rouge Parish School System's (EBRPSS) high school student academic records. This letter summarizes the results of our work.

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education established the primary regulations regarding student records in section 703 of the Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators (bulletin 741). Bulletin 741 states, in part, that "Each school shall keep records for the registration and attendance of students and shall maintain an up-to-date permanent cumulative record of individual students showing personal data and progress through school." To aid in compliance with these regulations, EBRPSS establishes policies and procedures, provides training, and conducts audits of student academic records. During our examination, we found that academic records' policies and procedures could be improved in the following areas:

Paper Records

Student registration, grade change, withdrawal, and other paper records are maintained by each school's guidance department. We found that the maintenance procedures for these paper records varied greatly from school to school. For example, some schools filed grade change, withdrawal, and other grade records in the student's paper cumulative folder, while others did not maintain these records in paper form or maintained them in binders or folders in the counselors' offices. This inconsistency in paper record maintenance causes difficulties for school administration and/or third parties (auditors and regulatory bodies) to locate records. We recommend EBRPSS (1) establish detailed policies and procedures requiring all schools to maintain student academic records in a consistent manner, (2) require periodic training for employees involved with student record maintenance, and (3) conduct regular compliance reviews to verify that all schools are following policies and procedures.

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Online Course Grade Records

EBRPSS offers online courses to students through a third-party web-based provider. This provider maintains progress and grade records for all online courses taken by EBRPSS students. Currently, grades earned via online courses are manually entered into the EBRPSS electronic grade system by the students' assigned guidance counselor. During our examination, we found instances where grades and/or credits were entered incorrectly. This was due, in part, to counselors misunderstanding the credits associated with online courses and occasional input errors. To reduce errors of this nature, we recommend (1) an automated process of entering student online course grades into the electronic grade system, which would require the third-party provider to maintain student records denoted by student and course unique identifying values that are consistent with EBRPSS's; (2) all online course grades should be reviewed and approved by appropriate staff members prior to being entered into the electronic grade system; and (3) all teachers/counselors involved with online courses should be trained and have written guidance relating to course grades and credits from the third-party system to the EBRPSS system.

Although we found EBRPSS's paper academic records to be, in some cases, inconsistent, incomplete, and/or inaccurate, it should be noted that EBRPSS's current policies and procedures require teachers to enter student grades directly into the electronic system at the time they are earned. We further found the electronic records, which are maintained as part of each student's cumulative record, to be much more complete and reliable than the paper records. As such, the electronic records -- not the paper records -- should be the primary source used to validate the accuracy of grades reported to LDOE or other entities.

We encourage EBRPSS officials to consider our recommendations and those made by the CPA firm contracted to audit student academic records and work together to resolve the concerns presented. If you have any questions about this letter report, please call Dan Daigle at 225-339-3800.

This is a public report. Copies of this report will be distributed in accordance with state law.

Sincerely,



Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Legislative Auditor

DGP/ch
EBRPSB 2014

cc: EBR School Board Members

APPENDIX A

Management's Response



Office of the Superintendent
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Phone (225) 922-5618, Fax (225) 922-5499

Dr. Bernard Taylor Jr., Superintendent

July 28, 2014

Mr. Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE
Louisiana Legislative Auditor
Post Office Box 94397
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9397

Dear Mr. Purpera:

Please accept this letter as East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS)'s, response to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA)'s draft of their investigative audit report dated July 24, 2014. LLA's report contained six recommendations. EBRPSS is aware of the concerns and has taken steps, and continues to research processes to eliminate all potential errors in managing student data. Please see the responses to LLA's recommendations below.

Paper Records:

Response to Recommendation 1:

This recommendation was addressed in the Graduate Verification, Transcript Data Verification, Withdrawal/Drop Procedures, and Grade Correction Procedures sections of the EBRPSS Corrective Action Plan submitted to the Louisiana State Department of Education (LDOE) on May 2, 2014. Policy addressing this recommendation can be found in the Pupil Progression Plan for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System.

Response to Recommendation 2:

This recommendation was addressed in the Professional Development section of the EBRPSS Corrective Action Plan submitted to the LDOE on May 2, 2014.

Response to Recommendation 3:

This recommendation was addressed in the Withdrawal/Drop Procedures, Grade Correction Procedures, and Internal Audit sections of the EBRPSS Corrective Action Plan submitted to the LDOE on May 2, 2014.

Mr. Daryl G. Purpera

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Online Course Grade Records:

Response to Recommendation 1:

EBRPSS will research the feasibility of this recommendation. There may be limitations on the district's ability to directly import student grade data from a third party provider into the district's student data base. Currently, the third party provider has a system in place to maintain the participating students' records.

Response to Recommendation 2:

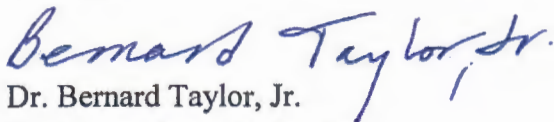
This recommendation was addressed in the Online Grade Procedures section of the EBRPSS Corrective Action Plan submitted to the LDOE on May 2, 2014.

Response to Recommendation 3:

This recommendation was addressed in the Online Grade Procedures and Professional Development sections of the EBRPSS Corrective Action Plan submitted to the LDOE on May 2, 2014. Policy addressing this recommendation can be found in the Pupil Progression Plan for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System.

We appreciate the effort of the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's office and staff to support East Baton Rouge Parish School System's operations, and we assure you, that we will make every effort to continually evaluate programs and improve system processes, quality, and integrity whenever possible.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bernard Taylor, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

BT:jem

cc: School Board President David Tatman
School Board Vice-President Tarvald Smith
General Counsel Domoine Rutledge