

## BESE to take up EBR decision

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A plan by East Baton Rouge Parish public school leaders to reshuffle key test scores is a “horrible” idea that needs to be overturned, a member of the state’s top school board said Tuesday.

“At the end of the day we ought to spend our time on how to improve education for our kids,” said Chas Roemer of Baton Rouge.

“This does not address that at all,” Roemer said. “I think it is a horrible idea.”

Whether the local policy will stand may be decided when the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meets Oct. 14-16. Roemer is one of 11 panel members.

The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board voted 9-1 last month to change the way key tests are counted, including LEAP results that fourth- and eighth-graders have to pass for promotion.

Those and other test scores help determine whether public schools meet state performance standards, and whether academically troubled schools are subject to state takeovers.

Earlier this year the state took over four EBR public schools. More face the same fate.

Under the EBR plan, scores for students who attend magnet schools in the parish would return to neighborhood schools they otherwise would have attended.

Magnet schools often attract top-flight students.

Charlotte Placide, superintendent for public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish, has said the change will help bring equity and balance to Louisiana’s school accountability system.

But Roemer charged that the effort is a bid to mask academic problems in East Baton Rouge Parish.

“There is a reason that we do test scores and school performance scores, so that parents can evaluate the quality of those schools,” Roemer said.

“This does not do that,” he said of the local policy. “This takes away from a parent’s ability to evaluate the quality of a school.”

Officials of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, which represents business groups, and

the Public Affairs Research Council, which studies state government issues, also criticized the EBR plan.

Brigitte Nieland, director of education and work-force development for LABI, said reshuffling test scores is a bid to make local public school scores look better than they really are.

“Rerouting the scores is just an organized deception,” Nieland said.

Jim Brandt, president of PAR, also labeled the test score change deceptive.

Roemer said he has asked state Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek to spell out options that the board has on the issue of local test scores.

Pastorek did not return two messages Tuesday asking for a comment.

Tammie McDaniel of Oak Ridge, another member of the state board, said she wants to hear more about the issue before making a decision.

But she added, “We can’t cherry-pick our accountability system. We have to apply it equally to everyone.”

The state has 70 school districts. Only the Jefferson and Iberville parish school districts have policies similar to the plan proposed for East Baton Rouge Parish.