

Louisiana's Higher Academic Standards...Several years ago, 48 states joined together to raise expectations and learning in their public schools by developing a common set of strong academic standards in Math and English/Language Arts. It was agreed that *our students needed deeper knowledge and more skills in core subjects if they were to succeed in careers, job training or college in today's ever-changing and challenging economy.* Subsequently, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed and consistently judged to be of high quality and rigor. Louisiana's periodic review, upgrade, and implementation of these and other standards represent part of a much broader, ongoing plan to improve schools and student learning in our state.

- In 2008-09, the National Governors Association and Chief State School Officers (Superintendents) invited states to join an initiative to develop a set of **mutually agreed upon standards** in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Forty-eight states participated. The effort brought together educators, instructional specialists and subject matter experts resulting in a **set of core content standards that define what students should know and be able to do in each grade.** Draft standards were widely shared and vetted, receiving over 10,000 critiques. After revisions, the new CCSS were shared with all states for voluntary use.
- **In 2010, as part of Louisiana's ongoing plan to upgrade content standards, it voted to incorporate the CCSS after an education review process and public hearings.** Louisiana requires a periodic review of all standards. The CCSS updated those for Math and ELA which had previously been in place for several years. A wide spectrum of citizens, educators and policymakers embraced this major upgrade as a critical need for our students. **Periodic reviews allow the state to build on quality and upgrade or adjust any standards as needed.**
- **The federal government had no role in developing CCSS,** having been developed by the states voluntarily. The U.S.D.O.E. encouraged states to adopt higher standards through grants in the Race-to-the-Top program, but the grants were voluntary. States were not required to adopt CCSS to get the funds.
- **Our current higher standards are better for our students.** Previously, Louisiana's basic expectations for students in math and reading were *below* those in most other states. Now our standards require more critical thinking and in-depth content knowledge. They encourage reading more information and literature, and require students be able to analyze and compare texts. In math, the standards focus on a narrower range of topics in each grade level, allowing teachers and students to work deeply on fluency and conceptual understanding.

*The **Congressional Research Service**, the policy research arm of the U.S. Congress, studied the CCSS process and issued findings that refute claims of federal takeover of local curriculum, federal development of the new standards, or federal coercion of states to adopt the more rigorous standards.*

News article:

http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2014/09/congressional_report_contradict.html

The CRS report:

http://media.nola.com/education_impact/other/Congressional%20Research%20Service%20Common%20Core%20report%20sept14.pdf.

*The **Louisiana Legislative Auditor's** office also produced an analysis and report for House and Senate members that detail the history and facts of the CCSS: <http://app.la.state.la.us>*

- **Louisiana has and continues to have many educators and content experts involved in creating or updating ALL standards in required courses and in selecting appropriate state tests.** CCSS and new testing items specifically have had much Louisiana involvement. The difference being CCSS combined the best research, experiences and subject matter knowledge of educators and experts from dozens of other states as well. Our students should be given the same higher learning opportunities as the rest of the nation. Even many private and parochial schools have adapted the CCSS and military accession services have endorsed their use.
- **The state’s current course standards are *foundational benchmarks* for students, but schools and students can go further.** Local districts or schools such as academic magnets, are not prohibited from having even more rigorous course content standards or from using more advanced curricula to help students achieve them. Under LEAP (late 1990’s) and any previous standards, this has always been the case in Louisiana.
- **Content standards are not curriculum.** As in the past, **the responsibility for *curriculum* in classrooms rests with local districts and teachers. A curriculum is the set of methodologies, books, materials, technologies, etc. that teachers use to help students meet the standards.** With some districts asking for guidance on curriculum development, the Department of Education has conducted expert reviews and provided options for voluntary use. The 2014 Legislature passed a law reinforcing the authority of local educators and officials to make curriculum choices. **There is NO federal or national curriculum.**
- **There are no CCSS in pre-K, health/PE, history, civics, social studies or science.** A few claims of inappropriate texts in these subject areas have been shown not to be from books for Louisiana classrooms or part of CCSS. Parents have the right to, and should, bring concerns about books and materials to their local school officials.