



Time to Move On with Academic Standards

CABL Commentary

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In 2010 when Louisiana adopted a set of academic standards in English and math no one even noticed. At the time they were called Common Core and developed by a consortium of states, including Louisiana, and no one seemed to care.

But at some point conspiracy theories began to crop up around these new expectations for student learning and within a relatively short time they took on a life of their own. It's a federal takeover of education. It's a communist plot. It's about putting sensors on kids to measure their moods and emotions. That's what they were saying.

Of course, it was about none of that. But as some of the more outlandish comments about Common Core began to circulate widely and some students faced challenges with the transition to new standards, many mainstream, thoughtful citizens weren't sure what to make of it all and a genuine controversy developed. But now, six years after Louisiana first adopted the standards and more than three years since teachers began teaching to them the issue might finally be put to rest.

The House and Senate Education Committees and the governor have all given their blessings to a set of Louisiana standards that maintain the quality and rigor of the Common Core. They were adopted by BESE following a lengthy process in which more than 100 Louisiana educators and content experts reviewed the Common Core standards and suggested changes.

And they did make changes. Adjustments were made to roughly 20-percent of the standards and that's good news on two fronts. First, the vast majority of the changes were either to give teachers more clarity about what the standard requires or to provide more flexibility in the way they teach. And just as importantly, they didn't lower the standards or diminish student expectations. They maintained their rigor but did so in a way that speaks more clearly and directly to teachers in Louisiana.

What this tells us is that Louisiana has really good standards that have been validated and approved by a group of really good teachers. They reviewed every single standard, they debated how they should be worded and they considered their appropriateness for each grade. In doing so they told us that those standards we adopted back in 2010 were good standards and rather than changing them all or getting rid of them, what we needed to do was make some of them more teacher-friendly.

Now some are asking if the new standards are really "Louisiana" standards. The answer is that of course they are. They were reviewed by Louisiana teachers, revised by Louisiana's education board, approved

by Louisiana's Legislature and blessed by Louisiana's governor. They're Louisiana standards through and through.

That didn't satisfy the handful of critics who showed up at the Legislature the other day to complain about the standards yet again. But for the rest of us, we should be pleased with the work of our teachers, confident in the product they put forward and ready to tell the politicians it's time to move on.