



Review of Academic Standards Demands Thoughtful Approach

CABL Commentary

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There has been a lot of discussion recently about accelerating the process to review Louisiana's current academic standards. Despite what some would say, that's not such an unusual thing as state policies already require BESE to review standards on a periodic basis.

Though the next review isn't required to be completed until 2017, there is nothing wrong with starting earlier and supporting a review that allows adequate time to give the public confidence that Louisiana's standards are the best they can be for all of our students.

That said, if we are going to extend our current review process, it's imperative that it be done appropriately with the goal of building on the higher-quality standards we have now and ensuring that we emerge with standards that serve our children well for the future.

With that in mind, CABL believes there are some key points to be considered in developing a meaningful review process.

- **Any standards review process should be done under the auspices of BESE.** State law is very clear that it is BESE's responsibility to approve "statewide content standards for required subjects to be taught in the public elementary and secondary schools of this state." It further stipulates that approval should come following recommendations and advice from "the educational personnel in the public schools and colleges and universities of this state."
- **The process should be sheltered from politics.** Under no circumstances should Louisiana have competing review processes because of unwarranted legislative or political meddling. That would only serve to muddy the waters and confuse teachers, students and parents.
- **Any review process should be driven by individuals with appropriate expertise and the credentials to recognize academic standards of high quality and appropriate rigor.** The development of standards is a very technical process that requires real experts, including educators, who can consider subject-matter content, grade-level appropriateness and pathways that will lead to a successful transition to postsecondary education and the workplace.
- **Standards reviews historically involve assessing current standards and then considering ways to improve upon them.** A standards review is a process that looks at each current standard, evaluates it based on a variety of content factors, and then proceeds to either adjust or add more rigor. It doesn't start with eliminating all standards, as some have suggested, and starting over.

- **Input from the general public, including business and civic leaders, is important and should be done in a way that maximizes broad public participation.** Recently, other states have done this effectively through online processes that allow substantive comment on each standard from every citizen over an extended period of time.

Let's be clear. The review of academic standards has never been a game in our state. It's been undertaken with serious intent and purpose. That trend should continue. The only goal of a real standards review should be to ensure that our students are learning to academic standards that will prepare them for the brightest future they can have. If it's anything else, we don't need it.