

Who participates in Common Core?

Most of the United States participates in Common Core: 43 states plus the District of Columbia currently participate.⁷ Of those states that do not participate, four never adopted the standards (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia) and three originally adopted the standards, but later withdrew (Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina). Additionally, Minnesota adopted only English Language Arts (ELA) standards and not math.

Most of the participating states have chosen to work with other states in developing assessments by joining one of two consortia. As of July 2015, 18 states are members of the **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)** and nine states and the District of Columbia are part of the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)**. Louisiana originally joined PARCC and implemented its tests last school year, but left the consortium in 2015.⁸

States that do not officially adopt the CCSS or participate in one of its consortia, may still align their standards with the CCSS and draw from one of the consortia's assessments.

Louisiana's Common Core Timeline

April 2009	Common Core State Standards Initiative starts as a joint effort between the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices, the Council of Chief States School officers, and Achieve, Inc. [†]
June 2009	49 states commit to participate in the development of the standards (51 states & territories by the following September). [†]
June 2010	CCSSO and NGA release final CCSS. [†]
July 2010	Louisiana BESE officially adopts CCSS in math and English. [†]
September 2010	Through Race to the Top, the federal government awarded SBAC & PARCC \$360 million to create assessments aligned to CCSS. [†]
May 2013	State Senator A.G. Crowe introduces a resolution that rejects the CCSS and the PARCC test, which was rejected and struck from Senate records. [†]
September 2013	Louisiana Rep. Cameron Henry announces that he will introduce legislation to repeal Common Core, which Gov. Jindal publicly supports. [†]
October 2013	St. Tammany Parish School Board decides to oppose the Common Core and PARCC, and urges state leaders to follow suit. BESE agrees that local districts may pick their own curricula. [†]
March 2014	The LDOE introduces a website for teachers that rates classroom materials aligned with Common Core. [†]
Spring 2014	During the spring, LA Rep. Brett Geymann authors new state standards that would replace CCSS, which are rejected by the legislature. [†]
Spring 2014	Louisiana students field test PARCC Phase 1 and Phase 2. [†]
April 2014	Gov. Jindal publicly denounces Common Core and PARCC while Superintendent White remains committed. [†]
June 2014	After failing in the legislature, Gov. Jindal issues an executive order to stop PARCC administration. [†]
August 2014	Judge Tim Kelley rules against a lawsuit that alleges that the state board improperly adopted Common Core. Judge Todd Hernandez lifts Jindal's executive action to prevent PARCC testing. Jindal sues the federal government for trying to promote a national curriculum through Common Core. [†]
June 2015	The Louisiana Legislature reaches a compromise to withdraw from PARCC and review the standards. [†]

[†]Common Core State Standards Initiative: <http://www.core-standards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>.

[†]Education Week: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multi-media/louisiana-common-core-debate.html>.

What was Louisiana's path to adoption?

As in Louisiana, the future of Common Core participation is uncertain in many states. **A recent analysis** by *Real Clear Education*, an online newspaper, **found that 24 participating states face political obstacles that put their continued participation at risk.**⁹ It is important to note, however, that the estimated risk in many of those states was low.

Similarly, the longevity of the consortia is not guaranteed—15 states are not part of a consortium. Of those 15, five had been part of SBAC and eight had been part of PARCC, but withdrew. The other three never joined a consortium.

Over the summer of 2010, Governor Bobby Jindal entered Louisiana into a contractual agreement with PARCC while the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) formally adopted the CCSS.¹⁰ The 2012-2013 school year carried on quietly as educators across the state learned about the standards and began to explore options for new curricula and teaching strategies.

In April 2012, **the Republican National Committee (RNC) sparked legislative debate through the passage of a resolution against the CCSS, citing concerns over opportunities for public feedback, student data collection, and federal overreach** into education; a move supported by several members of the Tea Party.¹¹ Some educators raised concerns about the availability of materials and the sequencing of standards, especially in regards to elementary math and Algebra.¹² Community members discussed privacy concerns over data collection and fears that a door might be opened for a future federally mandated curriculum.

While the initial reaction to the CCSS adoption was positive in Louisiana, the lack of instructional materials and professional development opportunities took a toll on some educators and parents increasingly felt frustrated that their children were struggling unduly with the new materials and methods.¹³ **As opposition mounted, some legislators began to seek solutions to constituent concerns.** On March 10 of 2014, Representative Brett Geymann shared House Bill (HB) 377, which would have required Louisiana to revert to previously used Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) instead of CCSS and seek approval of new standards through the state legislature.¹⁴ While the bill never left the committee, it marked the beginning of several contentious battles in the legislature and the courts.

Will Louisiana be participating in Common Core in the future?

Louisiana's continued participation in Common Core is not entirely certain after this school year. **When Louisiana originally adopted the CCSS, there was little opposition and Governor Jindal fully supported them.** Since that time, however, there has been significant pushback. **Governor Jindal reversed his position on Common Core** and has fought to overturn Louisiana's adoption, **while Superintendent White has remained committed** to moving forward with the standards.

During the 2014 legislative session, numerous bills were introduced to revoke Louisiana's participation in the CCSS.¹⁵ Local and national business leaders, educators, and representatives from non-profits and community groups united in opposition to the measures.¹⁶ Ultimately, the legislature did not pass any of the bills. The 2015 legislative session was a battleground for Common Core's supporters and opponents. Eventually, **a compromise of three bills resulted in the current situation:**

1. The first bill called for **BESE to review and redevelop Louisiana's Student Standards.**¹⁷ According to the bill, BESE must adopt revised standards by March 4, 2016, after a series of public hearings. It also states that **if the new standards are rejected, the CCSS will continue to be implemented until new standards can be agreed upon.**
2. A second bill **limits the percentage of questions on 2015-16's standardized tests that can be from PARCC** or another national consortium to 49.9 percent.¹⁸
3. A final bill adds legislative committees to the review process, **but limits their veto power**, along with the governor's, **to reviewing the standards as a package without the power to line-item veto particular items.**¹⁹

These bills have led to **Louisiana withdrawing from PARCC** and given the state more autonomy over the particular standards it sets. The state is no longer committed to implementing tests that are developed by a consortium that serves a number of other states. However, half of the assessment items can be PARCC questions and the new standards can still be aligned to Common Core.

Upcoming elections will play an important part in determining the state's future participation. A new governor will take office at the beginning of 2016 and BESE could also change complexion. BESE consists of 11 members, three of whom are appointed by the governor and eight of whom are elected. While the current board generally supports Common Core and Superintendent White, it is possible the next one may not.

A recent poll conducted by the Cowen Institute found that **while only 31 percent of New Orleanians support Common Core, 62 percent support having the same academic standards as other states.**²⁰ This compromise reflects these voter preferences by giving local policymakers the ability to align standards to other states' standards, but not requiring the assessments to be developed by a Common Core consortium. While PARCC assessments will not be implemented in Louisiana, it is likely that the assessments that are implemented will resemble PARCC's.

Common Core Lawsuit Timeline

While educators and students were preparing in the summer before the 2014-2015 school year, Governor Jindal published a letter to PARCC asking the organization to withdraw Louisiana from the partnership. On the same day, he issued an Executive Order compelling BESE to begin the process of searching for a new testing vendor. Concerns over the sudden changes to the standards and assessments landed both sides in court for a contentious legal battle involving Governor Jindal, BESE, parents, legislators, and several non-profit organizations.

Who was involved?

Legislators



Governor Jindal

Entries of the same color describe the events of a single lawsuit.

Community Groups



Federal Government

June 18, 2014	Governor Jindal sends letter to PARCC requesting Louisiana's withdrawal from the consortium and expresses desire to cease using Common Core Standards. ¹	
July 21, 2014	17 lawmakers file suit with the 19th Judicial District Court stating that proper procedures were not followed in the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. ²	
July 22, 2014	A group of parents, teachers, and the Choice Foundation file suit against Jindal claiming that his attempt to withdraw from PARCC and Common Core sidestepped the authority of BESE. ³	
July 29, 2014	BESE joins suit against Jindal. ⁴	
July 29, 2014	Jindal files countersuit against BESE over PARCC testing agreement. ⁵	
Aug. 15, 2014	Judge denies injunction; suit moves forward. ⁶	
Aug. 19, 2014	Judge Todd Hernandez rules in favor of plaintiffs citing improper use of Executive Order. Jindal appeals. ⁷	
Aug. 27, 2014	Jindal files suit against Obama administration citing federal overreach. ⁸	
Nov. 6, 2014	Jindal joins lawsuit. ⁹	
Mar. 30, 2015	19th Judicial District Court dismisses case due to time between adoption and complaint filings. ¹⁰	
June 15, 2015	US District Judge Shelly Dick begins hearing on Jindal's case against Obama administration including testimonies from former Education Department Officials. ¹¹	
June 17, 2015	Louisiana's First Circuit Court of Appeals denies appeal citing executive order as "unconstitutional interference." ¹²	

Citations are on final page.

How does New Orleans compare nationally and internationally and why might higher standards be a good thing?

PISA 2012, Math

Rank	Testing Area	Mean Score
1	Shanghai-China	613
2	Singapore	573
3	Hong Kong-China	561
4	Taiwan	560
5	Korea	554
6	Macao-China	538
7	Japan	536
8	Liechtenstein	535
9	Switzerland	531
10	Netherlands	523
11	Estonia	521
12	Finland	519
14	Poland	518
13	Canada	518
15	Belgium	515
16	Germany	514
17	Vietnam	511
18	Austria	506
19	Australia	504
20	Ireland	501
21	Slovenia	501
23	New Zealand	500
22	Denmark	500
24	Czech Republic	499
25	France	495
26	United Kingdom	494
---	OECD average	494
27	Iceland	493
28	Latvia	491
29	Luxembourg	490
30	Norway	489
31	Portugal	487
32	Italy	485
33	Spain	484
34	Russian Federation	482
35	Slovak Republic	482
36	United States	481
37	Lithuania	479
38	Sweden	478
39	Hungary	477
40	Croatia	471
41	Israel	466
42	Greece	453
43	Serbia	449
44	Turkey	448
45	Romania	445
46	Cyprus	440
47	Bulgaria	439
48	United Arab Emirates	434
49	Kazakhstan	432
50	Thailand	427
51	Chile	423
52	Malaysia	421
53	Mexico	413
54	Montenegro	410
55	Uruguay	409
56	Costa Rica	407
57	Albania	394
58	Brazil	391
59	Argentina	388
60	Tunisia	388
61	Jordan	386
62	Colombia	376

NAEP 2013, 8th Math

Rank	Testing Area	Mean Score
1	Massachusetts	301
2	New Jersey	296
3	New Hampshire	296
4	Vermont	295
5	Minnesota	295
6	North Dakota	291
7	Washington	290
8	Colorado	290
9	Pennsylvania	290
10	Ohio	290
11	Kansas	290
12	Montana	289
13	Wisconsin	289
14	Maine	289
15	Texas	288
16	Virginia	288
17	Wyoming	288
18	Indiana	288
19	South Dakota	287
20	Maryland	287
21	Idaho	286
22	North Carolina	286
23	Connecticut	285
24	Iowa	285
25	Nebraska	285
26	Illinois	285
27	Utah	284
28	Rhode Island	284
29	Oregon	284
30	Missouri	283
31	Delaware	282
32	New York	282
33	Alaska	282
34	Hawaii	281
35	Florida	281
36	Kentucky	281
37	Michigan	280
38	South Carolina	280
39	Arizona	280
40	Georgia	279
41	Nevada	278
42	Arkansas	278
43	Tennessee	278
44	California	276
45	Oklahoma	276
46	West Virginia	274
47	New Mexico	273
48	Louisiana	273
49	Mississippi	271
50	Alabama	269
51	District of Columbia	265

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. To date, over 70 economies have participated.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas.

While New Orleans has seen significant academic growth recently, **only one in three students attended a school that is above the state average in 2014.**

Louisiana is one of the lowest-performing states, across all subjects, in a country that ranks below average when compared to other industrialized nations.

The data are clear, but how can standards play a role?

Research published by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) described U.S. curriculum as being "a mile wide, an inch deep."²² The report found that **compared to international standards, most US standards are too broad, highly repetitive, and insufficiently demanding.**

Research shows strong similarities among the math and science standards in top-performing nations, along with significant differences between those world-class expectations and standards adopted by most states.²³

The highest achieving countries cover a smaller number of topics in greater depth at each grade-level, which enables teachers to spend more time on each topic so that all students learn it well before they advance to more challenging content.

See page 7 for more details on how the CCSS seek to address this issue with the approach of *Fewer, Clearer, Higher.*

What is Race to the Top & what role did it play?

Launched with \$4.35 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), **Race to the Top (RTT) was created to spur competition among states and improve education quality and results.**²³ Funding awards were based on the assessment of accomplishments and plans that states submitted and were evaluated on a points-based system. Four percent of the available points could only be earned by adopting a common set of standards.²⁴ Louisiana and most states participated in Common Core consortia and adopted the resulting standards, but a handful of others like Virginia participated in the development and review of CCSS, but declined to adopt the standards.²⁵

Eleven states and the District of Columbia received funding awards through Phase 1 and Phase 2 of RTT, and Louisiana was one of seven to receive an award in the final phase on December 22, 2011. Of the \$17,442,972 awarded to Louisiana, \$1,000,972 was budgeted for the development, implementation, and delivery of professional development models aligned to the CCSS in ELA, Math, and Next Generation Science Standards.²⁶ The 20 school districts and 28 charter schools signed on as Participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs) received 57 percent of the grant awarded to Louisiana.²⁷

Why PARCC and SBAC?

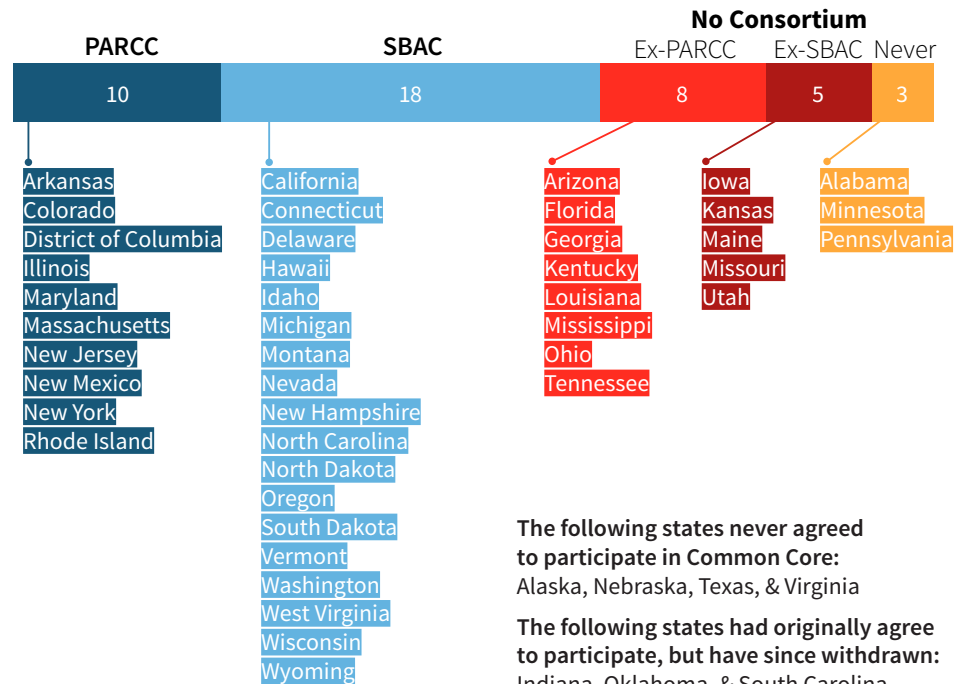
In 2010, PARCC and SBAC were awarded a combined \$330 million by the U.S. Department of Education to develop assessments based on the new CCSS through RTT competitive grants.²⁸ **States were, therefore, incentivized to join one of the two consortia since they would save a significant amount of money compared to developing and implementing new assessments independently.** A 2012 Brookings report also found that the average per-pupil cost of test administration is lower when states collaborate.²⁹

Four other consortia were created to develop alternative assessments for special education students and English language learners (ELLs): Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), Assessment Services Supporting ELs through Technology Systems (ASSETS), English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century Consortium (ELPA21).³⁰ Louisiana is a member of NCSC.

Many are concerned about the diversity of assessments that participating states are implementing. As states have withdrawn from PARCC and SBAC, they have typically sought to develop their own statewide assessments. There are fears that without large testing consortia, Common Core will not be able to make student performance easily comparable across states.³¹

PARCC and SBAC share many characteristics. Both assessments are computer-based, have optional formative assessments that can be implemented throughout the year, and each have a summative assessment at the end of the school year.³² One of the biggest differences, though, is that while **PARCC is a standard, fixed-form test, SBAC is computer adaptive.** This means that SBAC will respond to how well the student is performing and give more difficult questions when a student gets a question right and easier questions when a student misses an answer in order to more accurately measure student understanding.

Common Core Participants, by Consortia (updated as of August 2015)



The following states never agreed to participate in Common Core:
Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, & Virginia

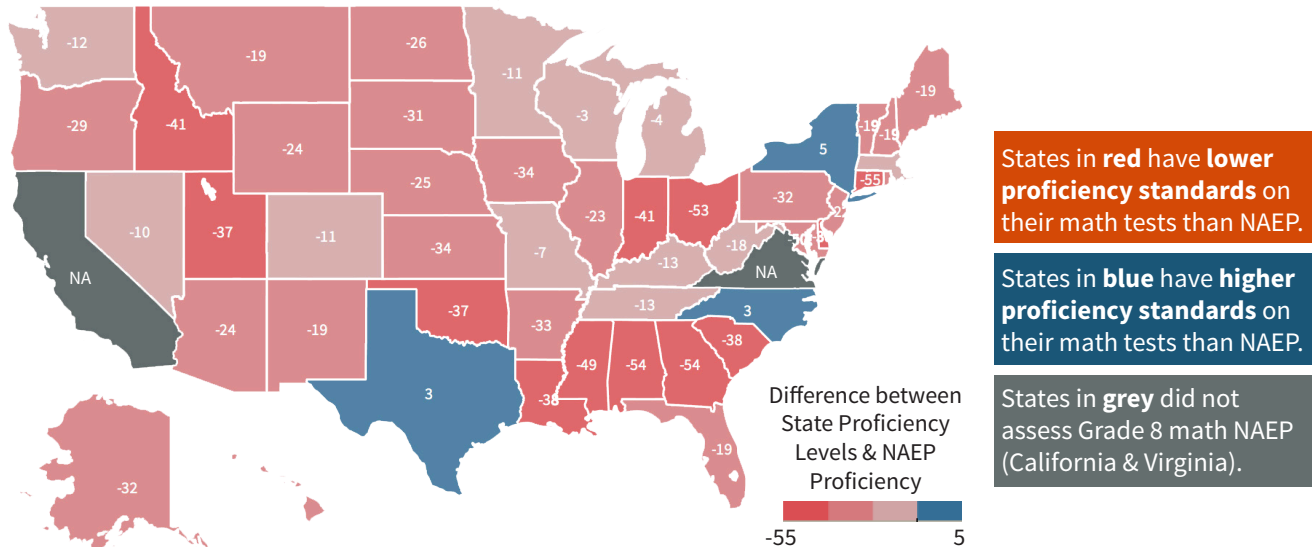
The following states had originally agree to participate, but have since withdrawn:
Indiana, Oklahoma, & South Carolina

Why could the consortia be advantageous?

The critical role that standardized testing plays in the United States is the result of No Child Left Behind, which required states to develop their own standards and test their students annually. Since states were responsible for setting their own standards, proficiency levels varied greatly from state to state.

Researchers from the U.S. Department of Education compared what was considered proficient on state assessments to what NAEP identified as proficient.³³ The analysis found that **most states, including Louisiana, set their proficiency standards below what the national assessment considers proficient.** The map below illustrates the differences between the definition of proficiency on each state's 8th grade mathematics assessment and NAEP (except for California and Virginia, which did not participate in NAEP's 8th grade math assessment).

Comparison of State & NAEP Proficiency Levels, 8th Grade Math



In many states, **Common Core assessments will be more difficult than the assessments students are currently taking.**³⁴ The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has stated that the new standards will be higher and Kentucky's student proficiency rates have gone down since moving to Common Core.³⁵ However, Louisiana's current definition of proficiency only indicates that students have a fundamental understanding of the subject. **While 69 percent of students in Louisiana performed at basic proficiency in the 2013-14 school year, only a quarter of them were considered well-prepared for the next grade level.**

Common Core seeks to standardize these proficiency levels, which will mean that students across all 43 participating states, and Washington, D.C., will be learning similar things so that we can better compare student achievement across states.

How did we get here?

Standards in classrooms are not a new concept; they became prominent in classrooms across the nation during the 1990s. The CCSS mark only the latest chapter in the movement toward increased cooperation and formalization of what content is taught in classrooms; a race that began in the early 1980s.

In 1981, U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, who was appointed by President Reagan, launched a cabinet-level panel known as the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) to examine the current state of education across the nation.³⁶ Their 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, provided research that left a lasting impression on educators and policymakers. **Recommendations included strengthened course requirements for high school graduation alongside the adoption of more rigorous and measurable standards – the objective measures of what students should be able to perform.**

In 1994, the Clinton administration passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which required State Education Agencies (SEAs) to develop and implement state standards.³⁷ From July 1994, SEAs applied to the U.S. Department of Education for Title III funds to develop and implement comprehensive education improvement plans, which included establishing challenging state standards.³⁸ The Improving America's School Act of October 1994 required each state to develop content and performance standards for mathematics and reading by the 1997-1998 school year.³⁹ The second National Education Summit of 1996 produced the Achieve Resource Centre on Standards, Assessment, Accountability and

Technology for Governors (Achieve, Inc.) to coordinate the collection, exchange, and review of standards being developed by states, and would later join the NGA and CCSSO in the development of the CCSS.⁴⁰ Louisiana's current standards and benchmarks were developed in 1997-1998 and amended by adding Grade-Level Expectations in 2004.

The development process resulted in three key challenges:

1. **The number of adopted standards often outpaced available instructional time**, which forced teachers to prioritize which standards were taught resulting in gaps in content knowledge that varied across schools and districts.
2. **Content varied in depth and focus across grade levels.** Students moving across state lines could find themselves under-prepared or unprepared for what was being taught in their new classroom.
3. **The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act** of 2001 by President George W. Bush required states to begin measuring students' progress in reading and mathematics in grades three to eight, and at least once during grades ten to twelve by the 2005-2006 school year; science testing requirements were added in 2007-2008. States developed their own tests and achievement levels, **which resulted in varied measures of proficiency.**⁴¹

In response to these challenges, the Carnegie Corporation funded a 2007 report entitled *Math and Science Standards That Are Fewer, Clearer, Higher to Raise Achievement at All Levels.*⁴² **Fewer, Clearer, Higher became the clarion call for the movement towards shared standards with a narrowed focus and higher bar for success.**

The CCSS were designed to be common across states in order to eliminate the variations in standards among states and provide consistent expectations regardless of where students lived or to which state they moved. These common standards were created with college- and career-readiness in mind.⁴³ While some state standards were aggressively focused on preparing students for success, students elsewhere could meet their states' standards, yet find themselves, after high school, unprepared for higher education or the workplace.

Where do we go from here?

Louisianans are engaged in Common Core and its future: Google reports that the state had the fourth highest rate of common core-related search terms in the country between 2010 and 2015.⁴⁴ Fears that parents would have their children skip Common Core tests in the spring seem to be unfounded since **99 percent of students participated in the assessments.**⁴⁵ The LDOE has not announced what impact there will be on the handful of schools with high rates of students not taking the tests. Over the next six months, the following variables will help shape the future of Louisiana's academic standards:

- **Public Comments:** The LDOE allowed the public to provide feedback on the Louisiana State Standards and received nearly 30,000 comments from 723 people. Of those respondents, 60 percent were educators, 23 percent were parents, and seven percent were education administrators.⁴⁶
- **Public Meetings:** BESE will be conducting the review process with a series of public meetings that will be held throughout the state. The table to the right provides a list of those upcoming meetings.⁴⁷
- **Elections:** The outcomes of upcoming elections for governor and BESE will be critical. Three of the 11 BESE members are appointed by the governor and the other eight will be up for election. While the current BESE generally supports Common Core and Superintendent White, it is possible that the future board may not.
- **Review of Proposed Standards:** Once BESE identifies and posts new standards (BESE faces a March 4, 2016 deadline to do so), legislators and the governor will review the standards. These lawmakers may not suggest line-item vetoes and can only accept or reject the standards in their entirety. If no consensus is reached, the LDOE will proceed with the current standards and assessments until a consensus can be reached.
- **Spring Assessments:** Students in grades 3-8 in Louisiana will participate in statewide ELA and math assessments in the spring of 2016 that are aligned to the current academic standards and the tests will resemble the 2014-15 tests.

The Cowen Institute will publish a second brief in the spring as progress is made in determining the long-term future of Common Core in Louisiana.

Upcoming Public Meetings

<p>Subcommittees begin review process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wednesday, 8/19, 9am – 3pm in Baton Rouge. » Public comment taken at mid-day and end of day. » Summary of public feedback available by 9/25 	August
<p>Subcommittees examine grade level standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » K-2: Monday, 10/12 in Shreveport » ELA: Wednesday, 10/14 in Alexandria » Math: Thursday, 10/15 in Crowley » All meetings take place from 9am – 3pm. » Recommended updates posted online by 10/21 » Finalized updates by 10/28 	October
<p>Standards committee reviews and reconciles grade levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Thursday, 11/12, 9am – 1pm in Covington. » Minutes will be posted for the public by 11/16 » Subcommittees will be notified by 11/13 if they must reconvene 	November
<p>Subcommittees examine standards as needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » ELA: Thursday, 12/3 in Alexandria » K-2: Thursday, 12/3 in Shreveport » Math: Thursday, 12/3 in Crowley » Minutes will be posted for the public by 12/7 » Final updates by 12/16 	December
<p>Committee to vote on final standards for submission to BESE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tuesday, 2/2, 9am-1pm in New Orleans. » Minutes will be posted for the public by 2/5 	February

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