

## Background

Louisiana has administered statewide assessments since 1999. Each year, students do not participate in the tests for a variety of reasons – some excused, some unexcused nonparticipants.

Excused nonparticipants are documented using coding on the test booklets. Examples include students who:

- Are no longer enrolled in the school (e.g., transferred out of state or out of country) or
- Are enrolled but cannot test for verifiable reasons (e.g., out with doctor-verified illness for all days of testing).

Other nonparticipants (e.g., parent opts not to participate) are identified through a data verification process where the LDOE:

1. Identifies all students who are expected to test (i.e. enrolled on testing);
2. Of those students, identifies which students did not test; and
3. Of those students, identifies which students do not have a documented, verifiable accountability code.

## Policy and Rationale

Per Bulletin 111, and in line with state and federal law, a zero is registered toward schools' scores when students do not participate in the required state assessments.

This policy exists because (a) federal law requires that the state assess all students and that the state hold districts and schools accountable for the performance of all students, and (b) Louisiana law requires that all students are assessed. This is to ensure that schools are responsible for serving all students and that no child is disregarded academically. Absent some incentive to measure all students' learning, there exists the possibility that vulnerable students will not be protected.

## Timeline

- Today, the LDOE is providing self-reported nonparticipant numbers, as reported by district staff to the LDOE.
  - NOTE: This preliminary number will likely change and may not line up with later verified numbers.
- During summer 2015, the LDOE will provide verified numbers of nonparticipants.
- After verified nonparticipants are identified, the LDOE will report publicly on the number and prior achievement of such students. Any policy tweaks will be considered at this time – prior to the release of school performance scores.