Louisiana's Context

In Louisiana our system is made up of:

- 800,000 students
- 40,000 teachers
- 2,000 schools
- 79 districts

We operate with the following realities:

- Louisiana is one of the poorest states in the country, with more than one third of the population living below the poverty line.
- The Department of Education operates a very small annual budget.
- We have historically been rated the 49th performing state on most national metrics.
- Only five years ago we implemented new standards that were dramatically higher than those we had previously.

Louisiana's Priorities

- **Unify** child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten to prepare every student for kindergarten.

- **Align** standards, curriculum, assessment, and professional development that are as challenging for students and educators as any in America.

- **Prepare** every educator under a mentor educator through a professional residency.

- **Create** opportunity for every graduate through Jump Start, Advanced Placement, and other early college pathways to a funded education after high school.

- **Focus** relentlessly on students in persistently struggling schools by transforming those schools and creating new options.

Progress to Date: Student Performance

Louisiana students have achieved record gains in recent years.

- Louisiana **fourth-grade students achieved the highest growth among all states** on the 2015 NAEP reading test and the second highest growth in math.

- Since 2014, Louisiana has shown **greater improvement on the ACT** than did any other state testing 100% of its graduates.

- Louisiana's 2015 **high school graduation rate was an all-time high** of 77.5 percent.

- Louisiana's class of 2015 **Advanced Placement® results showed greater annual improvement** than any state other than Massachusetts.

Progress to Date: Informed ELA Teachers

This spring, RAND published findings from a study on standards implementation across 5 states. On a number of indicators, Louisiana's educators showed signs of increased understanding.
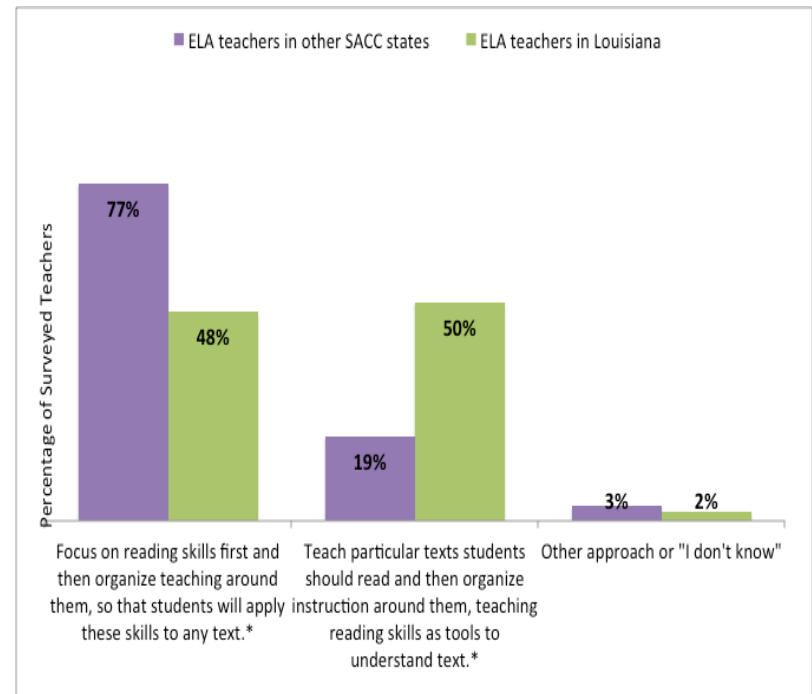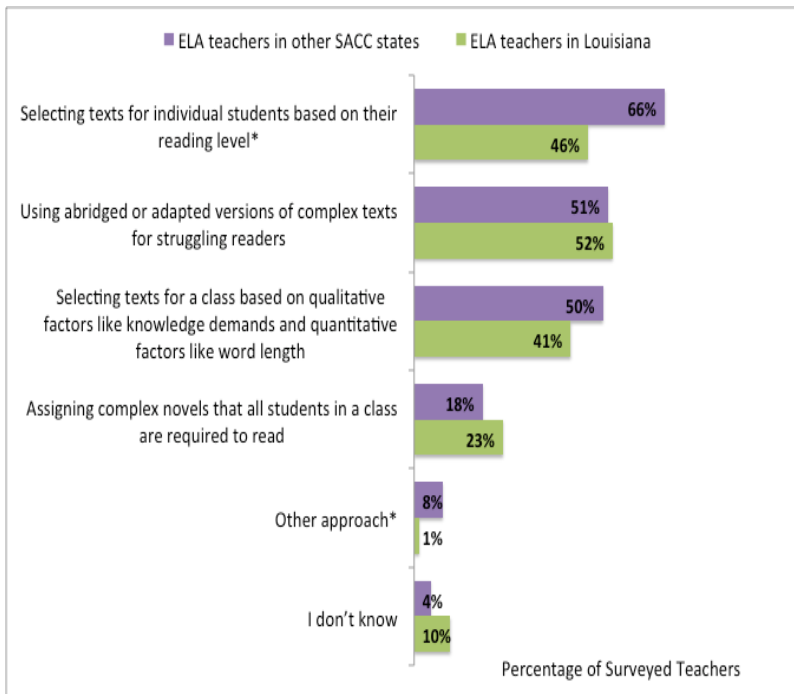
Louisiana ELA teachers at higher percentages were more accurate in their identification of practices to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and thought about their instruction in ways that were aligned with CCSS more than when compared to other teachers.

Progress to Date: Informed Math Teachers

RAND also found that more mathematics teachers in Louisiana, compared to teachers in other states, identified the CCSS-aligned mathematics standards topics at their grade level.
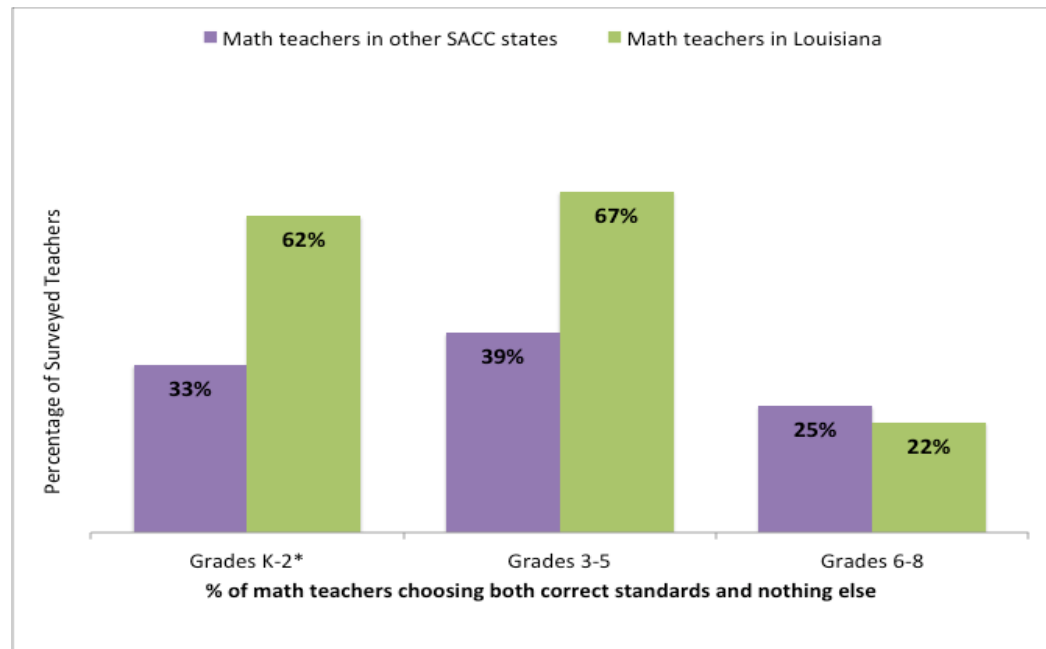

Secondary mathematics teachers in Louisiana were also more likely than those in other states to engage students in some CCSS Standards for Mathematical Practice.

Louisiana's Academic Approach

Pie chart with three segments: Training, Curriculum, Assessments
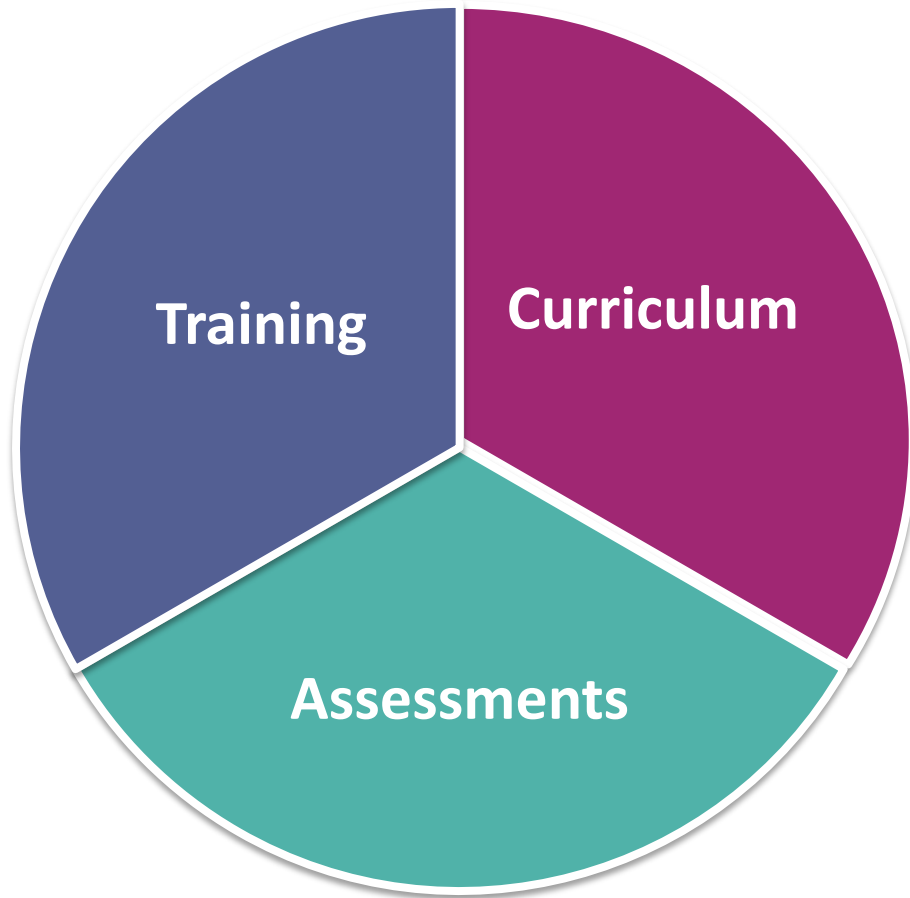
- **Coherence and Quality**: Components are the highest quality and connect

- **Communications and Investment**: Build trust through high quality support, build communication structures for districts, principals, and teachers

- **Put the private sector to work**: Leverage size as a state to help publishers and training vendors focus and connect their products

Why did we start with curriculum?

Training | Curriculum | Assessments
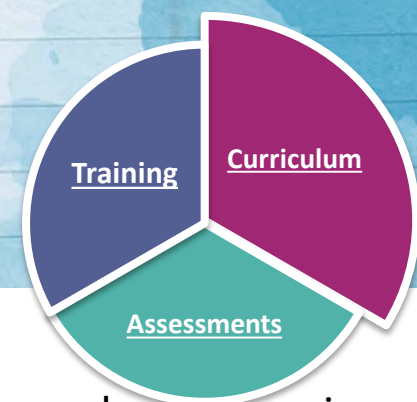
Scale

- An equitable baseline of rigor presented to students (strong books, tasks, and questions in front of students regularly)

- Teachers said they use materials easiest to find, those tended to be poor quality

Guidance from others and our teachers

- Research suggests training alone has very little impact

- High performing international systems have standards, curriculum, and assessments

- Teachers called on us for more support implementing new content and strategies

What curriculum work is not to us

- An obsession with a scripted, identically implemented initiative

- One required program for every school and every teacher

- Taking away from teacher creativity and choice (strong programs promote teacher choice and adaptation, giving them guidance on how to maximize both)

Curriculum Approach
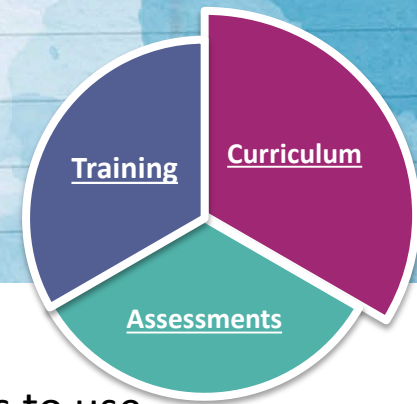
What we do: make the best tools the easiest to access

- [Rigorously review instructional materials](), make reviews easy for districts to use
- Help districts access quality through (1) state contracts only for top tier programs and (2) Train districts on the importance of alignment
- Build materials only when absolutely necessary ([Louisiana's 3-12 ELA curriculum]())
- Partner with organizations to build new tools (e.g. math remediation tools)

Who does the work: Put vendors to work with materials grounded in Louisiana

- Partner with any vendor willing to improve quality
- Build strategic partnerships with vendors who fill needed holes in the system
- Leverage teacher leader advisors: (1) select a diverse group of the best teachers in the state, (2) have them guide and test everything, (3) have them lead all communication

Current State

- Today over 80% of districts are using a fully aligned curricula (<20% four years ago)

Curriculum: Instructional Materials Review

In Louisiana, all districts are able to purchase instructional materials that are best for their local communities. To support districts with these decisions, the Louisiana Department of Education leads an [online state review of instructional materials](#) to determine the degree of alignment with state content standards to support districts with these decisions.

Each set of materials reviewed is rated on the following scale:

- **Tier 1 - Exemplifies Quality:** Meets all non-negotiable criteria and scored the best possible on all indicators of superior quality.

- **Tier 2 - Approaching Quality:** Meets all non-negotiable criteria and some indicators of superior quality.

- **Tier 3 - Not representing Quality:** Does not meet non-negotiable criteria.

The Department [posts all reviewed materials](#) on its website, and releases a [weekly report](#) providing a status update on ongoing reviews.

Curriculum: ELA Guidebooks 2.0

Louisiana identified a need in 2015 for an ELA curriculum that was aligned to its standards, and fully supported student learning. Therefore, it created ELA Guidebooks 2.0 in 2016, as an expansion of its ELA Guidebooks first created in 2014.

ELA Guidebooks 2.0 is an English language arts curriculum for whole-class instruction. The guidebook units ensure all students can read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts

The content is free and openly licensed under a CC-BY 4.0 license. This means the units can be used, printed, shared, and adapted without any permission needed.

What makes ELA Guidebooks 2.0 different from other curricula?

o Real learning grounded in text

o Plan for students, not programs

o Support is central to the design

Training
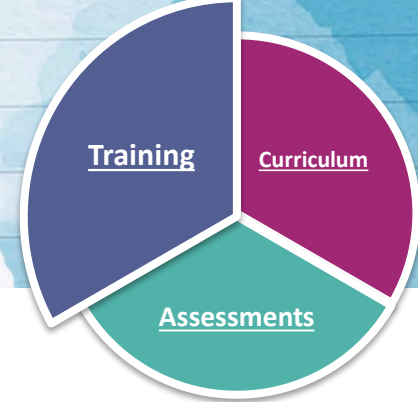
Connect training curriculum

- Work to find at least five, high quality vendors for each commonly used curriculum
- Ensure vendors offer diverse approaches to training to ensure districts have options based on their needs, capacity and approach
- Continue to work with new and innovative vendors to build more choices

Help districts access the best training

- Bring all vendors in to [Louisiana's professional development vendor guide](#)
- Make vendors accessible to every district for free at the [Teacher Leader Summit and quarterly collaborations](#) so that districts can test out vendors and get a cohort of teachers trained

Current State

- 95% of districts participate in the Teacher Leader Summit and quarterly collaborations
- Teachers who attend report the training is more aligned to their day to day experience given alignment to curriculum (85% approval ratings of trainings)

Training:
Professional Development Vendor Guide

The PD vendor guide, released each spring, supports local school systems in making informed decisions regarding professional development that are aligned to top-tiered curriculums.

The guide provides a list of vendors who offer a range of high-quality PD packages that help teachers in the following ways:

- Implementing a high-quality curriculum
- Building content knowledge, especially around the key instructional priorities
- Analyzing quality student work
- Managing a classroom environment
- Providing teacher practice and feedback
- Offering ongoing support through mentoring, coaching, or PLCs

Assessments
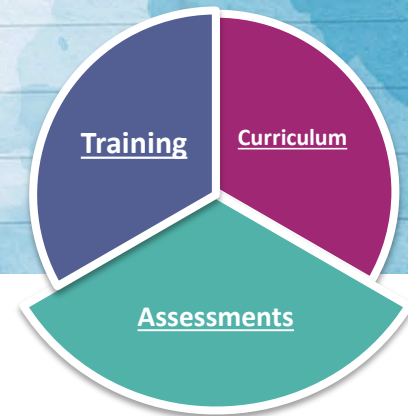
Rigorously review for quality

- [Rigorously review benchmark assessments](#)

Audit and support local assessment building

- 90% of districts audited their local assessment systems
- Pilot assessment coaching with districts, leveraging vendors who connect to curriculum

Build an integrated state assessment system

- Procure an assessment system for optional use (diagnostics, interims, formatives)
- Louisiana's [formative assessment tool](#) allows teachers to build connect assessments to their curriculum

Current State

- 80% of districts currently use Louisiana's [high quality formative tool](#)
- The majority of districts have held from purchasing new systems and are waiting for Louisiana's state-wide diagnostic and interims (available fall 2017)

Communications and Investment

Annually, the Department provides support and communication directly to teachers, principals, and districts. These details are released each spring in Louisiana's [District Support Calendar](#).

AUDIENCE	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNICATION STREAMS	KEY RESOURCES
District & Charter Leaders	• Quarterly Supervisor Collaboration Events	• Newsletters • Monthly Calls	• District + School Support Toolbox • 2016-2017 Professional Development Vendor Guide
School Leaders	• Principal Collaborations • Compass/TAP Trainings • Jump Start Convention • Principal Fellowship	• Ed Connect Newsletter	• Guidebooks • 2016-2017 Professional Development Vendor Guide • Principal Support page
Teacher Leaders	• Teacher Leader Collaboration/Summit • Counselor Collaborations	• Monthly Teacher Leader Newsletter • Ed Connect Newsletter • Monthly Counselor Newsletter	• Teacher Support Toolbox

Communications and Investment

Annually, the Department hosts quarterly collaboration events to provide tools, resources, and professional development to educators to support curriculum and instruction, assessments, and other statewide initiatives.

- [Supervisor Collaboration Events](#) provide supervisors across Louisiana with access to high-quality tools, resources, and professional development designed to help them plan throughout the school year
- [Principal Collaboration Events:](#) provide principals with access to high-quality tools, resources, and professional development designed to support them as instructional leaders in their schools
- [Teacher Leader Collaboration Events](#) provide the most up-to-date information regarding ELA, math, social studies, science, and birth-to-five instruction in Louisiana, as well as support the use of various tools from the Teacher Support Toolbox

Tier 1 curriculum vendors are offered the opportunity to host sessions at these events to provide school systems with curriculum updates, instructional strategies and general PD on their curriculum.

Timeline

Year	Primary Work	Challenges
Year 1 (12-13)	• Implement new standards • Overhaul curriculum review process, first reviews released • Release curriculum frameworks and sample tasks	• Frustration from educators that not enough tools were available • Vendors angry about reviews
Year 2 (13-14)	• Full ELA and math curriculum reviews • ELA Guidebook Text Sets Released • Eureka pilots (7 districts)	• Politics with standards and assessments • Political outreach regarding reviews
Year 3 (14-15)	• Add benchmark assessments to review • ELA Units Released • Eureka math at scale	• School board concerns of Eureka • Finding training vendors • ELA not getting traction
Year 4 (15-16)	• Add social studies to reviews • Complete ELA Curriculum Released • Full vendor guide	• Not seeing consistent use of the program • Teachers not accessing training
Current (16-17)	• Assess a more complete vision of implementation • Ensure every teacher in the system receives direct professional development • Deepen the connection to principal training and teacher prep • Science work begins	• Consistency of implementation • Alignment of assessments

Louisiana Believes

Current Academic Priorities

- Survey strengths and challenges in implementation (curriculum implementation criteria)
- Deepen variety and use of professional development vendors
- Rebuild our instructional and talent roles in the system (talent/TIF grant)
- Take on the work of school-based professional learning and teacher evaluation connected to curriculum

Louisiana's Academic Approach
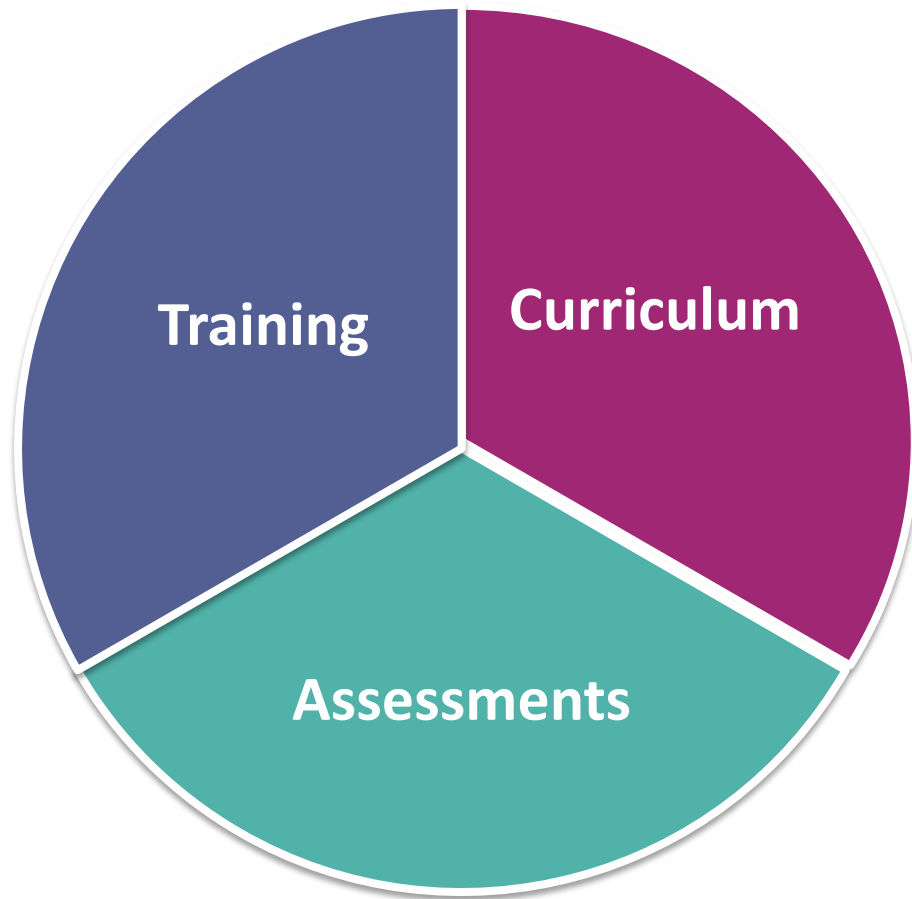
This work comes with significant challenges:

- The tradition of local control
- Vendors who are not used to being held to rigorous standards
- Politicians
- Districts and the state building a new type of partnership

Yet, we know that this work is fundamental to improving teaching and learning. Large systems must take on building a cohesive academic structure in their systems, with curriculum as a central component of that approach.