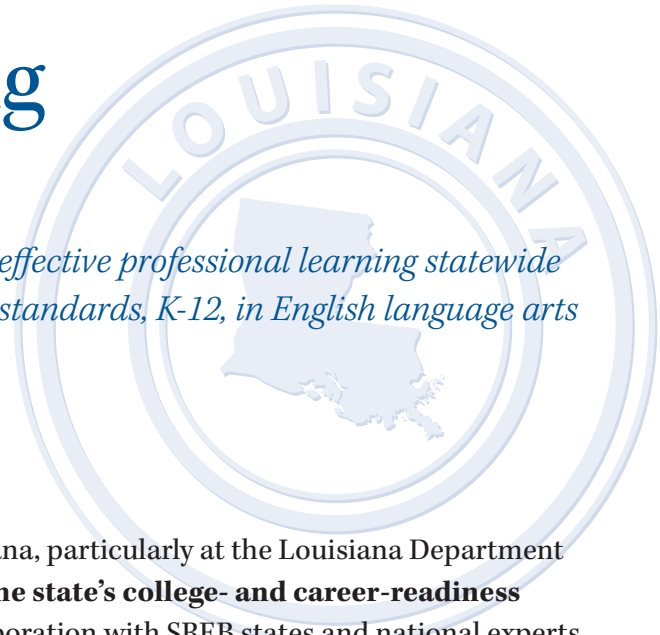


Professional Learning Louisiana

In 2014-15 and 2015-16, how has Louisiana fostered effective professional learning statewide for all educators on its college- and career-readiness standards, K-12, in English language arts (ELA) and math?



SREB researchers gathered information on efforts in Louisiana, particularly at the Louisiana Department of Education, to foster effective **professional learning on the state’s college- and career-readiness standards, the Louisiana State Standards (LSS)**. In collaboration with SREB states and national experts, SREB identified a set of expected state actions — “look-fors” — in **four areas of state leadership in professional learning**. The researchers reviewed online sources and interviewed department leaders and educators to assess the state’s efforts.

State efforts in each area fell into one of three levels of implementation:

- **Minimal**, indicating state leadership addresses some of the look-fors
- **Essential**, indicating state leadership addresses the look-fors SREB considers necessary for providing leadership and supporting local efforts
- **Strong**, indicating that in addition to the necessary look-fors, state leadership offers substantial support to foster quality and consistency statewide

The *Project Overview and Look-Fors* document and state profile reports are available on the project [Web page](#).

Highlights for Louisiana

- **Strong guidance and tools**, including the Louisiana Principals’ Teaching & Learning Guidebook, the Louisiana District Planning Guide, the District + School Support Toolbox and the Teacher Support Toolbox
- **Strong technical assistance** through District Support Networks, including quarterly meetings, webinars, newsletters, monthly district planning calls and extensive support for Teacher Leaders
- **Strong professional learning for teachers from across the state** through the Teacher Leaders initiative. Teacher leaders develop their understanding of the LSS and build their capacity to lead local professional learning. The size of the teacher leader cadre has grown from 2,000 in 2013-14 to 5,000 in 2015-16, and the department plans for 10,000 in 2016-17.

1 Establish Clear Expectations

Has the state established clear expectations for high-quality professional learning for all educators on the state college- and career-readiness standards through state professional learning standards or other policy documents?

Louisiana provides essential support.

- Louisiana adopted the National Staff Development Council's 2001 Standards for Staff Development, which require that professional development align to the state student learning standards and address educator and student needs.

2 Provide Guidance, Technical Assistance and Other Support

Does the state education agency provide information, guidance, tools, direct assistance and other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation, to support local efforts to deliver high-quality, college- and career-readiness standards-aligned professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers in service of all students?

Guidance and tools

Louisiana provides strong support.

- Tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning
 - Data reflection guides for districts and principals to support the use of local data in core decision-making and academic planning
 - The [Louisiana Principals' Teaching & Learning Guidebook](#) provides extensive guidance to school leaders as they build a team to lead implementation of the LSS and plan, implement and evaluate professional learning.
 - The [Louisiana District Planning Guide](#) provides extensive guidance to district leaders on implementing the LSS and providing professional learning for educators.
- Professional learning resources and exemplars
 - Extensive sets of resources for educators, including tools and exemplars on the [District + School Support Toolbox](#) and [Teacher Support Toolbox](#)
 - The department's 2015-16 teacher leader professional development calendar includes recommended external vendors, programs and resources for local use.
- Support for educator induction and mentoring programs
 - State law requires new teachers to participate in local induction programs. Mentor teachers must exhibit expertise in instruction on the LSS. The department does not provide resources or support for these programs.

Technical assistance

Louisiana provides strong support.

- The department provides regular, ongoing technical assistance for planning teams from all 131 districts in the state. The department's district support officers meet quarterly with teams to assist them with implementation of the LSS, and the department hosts regular webinars and shares weekly district newsletters. This assistance complements the professional learning provided through the District Support Networks.
- The department hosts monthly conference calls with district leaders (including chief academic officers, assessment coordinators and curriculum directors) to share updates, address implementation challenges and provide support.
- The department provides ongoing assistance for teacher leaders that includes a monthly newsletter, an online Edmodo collaboration site and virtual book clubs. This assistance complements the professional learning opportunities provided for teacher leaders.
- The department provides all districts with information and feedback as districts develop their funding applications and improvement plans.

“Every time I get to be with teachers from other states, I always come back feeling so lucky to be from Louisiana. We have our teacher leaders, and we have a state department of education that is making the work about the teachers' voice.”

— Louisiana teacher

Other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation

Louisiana provides *essential* support.

- Technology
 - Repositories offering extensive online, on-demand professional learning resources: [District + School Support Toolbox](#) and [Teacher Support Toolbox](#), which house extensive professional learning resources and a video library
- Policies and opportunities to foster flexibility and innovation in professional learning
 - Charter schools may be approved to waive certain state rules or regulations to improve professional learning.

3 Offer Professional Learning

Does the state education agency offer coordinated professional learning opportunities that develop educators' understanding of the state college- and career-readiness standards and skills to implement them — and that build local capacity to lead high-quality professional learning for all educators?

“Our network teams are on the ground, in schools, in districts. They provide support, and they have a good sense of what kinds of professional development are going on and what is needed. And we can communicate through them about priorities and key resources.”

— Louisiana Department of Education staff member

Context: The department is the main provider of state-sponsored professional learning in Louisiana. In order to maximize the impact of its available funds and small staff, the department designed its flagship initiative, Teacher Leaders, to function on a very lean budget. For example, the department holds some meetings in facilities provided for use at no charge and relies on department staff and trained teacher leader advisors to lead sessions, rather than external vendors. This approach has enabled the department to support long-term capacity building for local educators — even as funding for state initiatives fluctuates, particularly as the state’s Race to the Top (RTTT) grant concluded.

Louisiana provides *strong* support.

- Professional learning for teachers
 - The department’s [Teacher Leaders](#) initiative provides teachers with coordinated, comprehensive, long-term support that equips them with knowledge and skills to implement the LSS and builds their capacity to lead high-quality professional learning in their schools and districts. All 1,407 schools in the state may select two or more teachers to participate. The department hosts an annual two-day Teacher Leader Summit, quarterly half-day Collaboration Events and a Summer Content Institute for ELA and math. The department relies on its teacher leader advisors, selected from the full cadre of teacher leaders and trained by the department, to help facilitate meetings, create tools and vet resources for their fellow teacher leaders. Since its beginning, the size of the teacher leader cadre has grown from 2,000 in 2013-14 to 5,000 in 2015-16, with 10,000 expected in 2016-17. In 2014-15, 70 teacher leaders served as teacher leader advisors, and 90 are doing so in 2015-16.
 - The department has provided districts with Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) training since 2011 and Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC) training since 2012, with more districts added each year. As of 2015-16, over 2,000 teachers and school and district leaders from 40 districts have participated. Beginning in 2015-16, the department has partnered with SREB to further its LDC and MDC work.
- Professional learning for school leaders
 - School leaders attend role-specific training at the annual Teacher Leader Summits to strengthen local support for the work of teacher leaders.
 - The department, in partnership with the National Institute for School Leadership, provides a 16-month principal fellowship for current and aspiring school leaders that focuses on instructional leadership, state leader evaluation standards and the Louisiana Principals’ Teaching & Learning Guidebook.
- Professional learning for district leaders
 - In addition to providing technical assistance through the [District Support Networks](#), the department provides planning teams from all 131 districts in the state with

professional learning to increase their knowledge of and capacity to lead professional learning on the LSS. Teams, which include all district academic, assessment and human resources supervisors, participate in quarterly half-day Supervisor Collaboration Events to learn about the standards and the department's guidebooks and toolbox resources. The department holds these meetings on the same day as teacher leader events to enable district team members to attend the sessions and deepen their support for the work of teacher leaders.

- District leaders can participate in the principal fellowship.

4 Use Data and Accountability for Continuous Improvement

Does the state education agency use data to inform its planning and leadership of statewide professional learning, and does it provide feedback to local leaders and hold districts accountable for excellence in local professional learning?

Funding for professional learning in 2014-15 and 2015-16:

Louisiana used or is using state and federal funds, grants, including Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, the State Personnel Development Grant, the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant, and funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Helmsley Foundation.

Louisiana undertakes *essential* work in this area.

- The department uses a centralized approach to data usage. Assistant superintendents from across the department meet quarterly to analyze data, identify needs and plan and monitor state professional learning initiatives. These meetings are augmented by regular follow-up calls.
- The department regularly uses various types of data to inform its work. In 2011-12 and 2012-13, it conducted program evaluations of its RTTT projects. However, the department has not recently conducted comprehensive program evaluations that include rigorous examination of the impacts of professional learning on teacher knowledge and practice or student outcomes, a crucial step in understanding the effects of state efforts.
- In providing feedback to local leaders and accountability for excellence:
 - The department provides direct, real-time feedback to local leaders on their professional learning efforts through the regular District Support Network meetings and ongoing support provided to schools in need of improvement.
 - Department leaders expect schools and districts to leverage the support and funding they receive for professional learning to make continuous improvement on school and district professional learning systems.

MOVING FORWARD: Practices for Louisiana to consider

- Continue and deepen the Louisiana Department of Education's well-coordinated **technical assistance and professional learning for district leadership teams and teacher leaders**. This would support the long-term work of building deep and broad capacity in schools and districts to implement high-quality professional learning for all educators. See work with local leadership teams noted in the Alabama, Delaware and Kentucky profiles.
- Undertake more **comprehensive program evaluations** to analyze the efficacy of professional learning initiatives — in particular, their impacts on teacher knowledge and practice as well as student outcomes — to help identify effective practices and weed out ineffective ones. See program evaluations noted in the Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee profiles.

All related state profiles and reports are on the project [Web page](#).