

March 7, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Dr. Cade Brumley, Superintendent of Education  
Mr. James Garvey, President  
Ms. Kira Orange-Jones, Vice President  
Ms. Sandy Holloway, Secretary  
Mr. Michael Melerine  
Ms. Ashley Ellis  
Mr. Ronnie Morris  
Dr. Holly Boffy  
Mr. Preston Castille  
Dr. Belinda Davis  
Mr. Thomas Roque  
Mr. Doris Voitier

Dear Dr. Brumley and members of BESE,

We are writing this letter as members of the Social Studies Standards Steering Committee to bring to your attention concerns that we have regarding the “refined” Social Studies standards that are scheduled to be presented to BESE on March 8, 2022.

In the first Steering Committee meeting in March of 2021, BESE charged the committee with the following goals:

1. Shift to an inquiry-based approach with a balanced focus between the acquisition of knowledge and disciplinary skills.
2. Create a more coherent sequence of content, so students are better able to build and retain knowledge over time.
3. Strengthen instruction at the elementary level to ensure students are prepared for secondary and post-secondary coursework.
4. Better integrate the historical perspectives of people from all different backgrounds.
5. Provide students with opportunities to utilize strong critical thinking skills to evaluate and synthesize information.

With these instructions in mind, we collectively agreed to a more coherent sequence of content that shifted the location of some grade-level standards to address charges two (2) and three (3) by BESE. In addition, the Steering Committee worked together to create Inquiry Standards in order to provide students with more opportunities to build and utilize strong critical thinking skills

that would allow them to evaluate and synthesize historical documents. Finally, we began working in the workgroups to write new Content Standards.

The Steering Committee and workgroups spent hundreds of hours reviewing, revising, and refining Louisiana's K-12 Academic Learning Standards for Social Studies based on the feedback and direction given to us by the LDOE staff. We are not aware of any time throughout this process that we did not work collaboratively with LDOE staff to address public comments and concerns relative to the draft standards nor intentionally omit the five (5) charges given to us by BESE. This work represents hundreds of volunteered hours by individuals who, through the LDOE vetting process, are considered experts in Social Studies education. Nonetheless, the expertise of those members was not acknowledged when the process opened up to the public.

For example, during the Steering Committee meeting in June of 2021, the public comments portion of the meeting became very heated and focused on allegations that the Steering Committee included Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the proposed standards. As a Steering Committee, we unequivocally deny the assertion that CRT was ever considered in the writing of the Inquiry Standards or Content Standards. However, a decision was made to push back the next public hearing from July 31st to September 25th because as Dr. Brumley noted, the adoption of the new standards "is politically combustible" (Brumley, 7/23/21, The Advocate). In the September 25th meeting, the Steering Committee overwhelmingly voted to accept the new standards and recommend them to BESE. A new round of public comments continued to assert that the Steering Committee approved standards that were embedded with CRT in an attempt to indoctrinate Louisiana public-school students. Again, this assertion was without merit. However, instead of consulting with the Steering Committee and workgroups, multiple teams across the LDOE refined the standards, making substantial changes to the standards that were previously approved by the Steering Committee in the September 25th meeting.

The refined K-12 Social Studies standards that were proposed on February 8, 2022, do not reflect the desired teaching and learning that the workgroups or Steering Committee believes Louisiana students must learn to achieve the "charges" given to us by BESE. At the beginning of this process, we were advised that the Steering Committee "guides the process and updates and makes the final recommendation to BESE" (March 27, 2021, PowerPoint slide 12). This process has not been followed. The Steering Committee has not had an opportunity to vote on these refined standards, nor do they represent what the Committee previously approved.

We understand that revising social studies standards during this highly divisive political moment in our history is complicated. However, it is during such times that following a predetermined procedure designed by the LDOE becomes all the more important. Our job as educators is to educate the public, listen to their concerns, and, hopefully, come to a consensus that includes best practices and educators' expertise, while addressing parental concerns. We respectfully request that the collective expertise of the Steering Committee and workgroups be honored by returning the proposed standards with the latest round of public comments to the workgroups for revisions and final approval by the Steering Committee. Alternatively, if BESE's decision is to approve the refined standards without the final approval of the workgroups or steering

committee, we request that the record show that the predetermined steps for adoption of new standards were not followed and that the Steering Committee did not approve of the refined standards.

Sincerely,

Hope Bridger  
Nikki Patterson  
Chrystal Stone

Aaron Jura  
Emily Provencher  
Justin Winder

Nicole Means  
Eloise Pruitt  
Lynn Walters-Rauenhorst