



Governor Jindal: Do Kids Really Count in Louisiana?

On July 22 the Annie E. Casey Foundation released its [2014 Kids Count Data Book](#), which ranks Louisiana 47th among the states in overall child well-being and 47th in education. On the same day, proponents of Common Core sued Governor Bobby Jindal on grounds that he has overstepped constitutional boundaries in his efforts to halt Common Core assessments. The day before, seventeen members of the Louisiana Legislature filed a suit to ask the court to do what they couldn't accomplish during the recent legislative session: halt Common Core.

In the shadows of the legal dispute, the *2014 Kids Count Profile* states that 50% of Louisiana's children are not attending preschool, 77% of fourth graders are not reading proficiently, 79% of our 8th graders are not proficient in math, and 28% of the state's high school students are not graduating on time. Looking at these outcomes, one can't help but wonder why anyone--let alone the state's top elected official and other elected leaders--would oppose Louisiana joining 40 other states in adopting a "common" set of higher academic standards designed to better prepare students for college and careers.

Like many other education advocacy organizations, Education's Next Horizon has supported nearly all of Governor Jindal's education reform initiatives. We are working very closely with the state administration and with stakeholders across Louisiana to build a high-quality early care and education system and a stronger statewide network of afterschool services. We will continue to advocate and promote policies that will improve the high school graduation rate and better prepare students for life beyond high school. And we pledge our continued support to classroom teachers in their efforts to improve the lives of children.

Our interest always will be what is best for Louisiana's children, teachers, and school leaders. The fight over Common Core is a fight for our future as a state but, more importantly, a fight for the well-being of under-served children in Louisiana who are most in need of more rigorous content and aligned teaching. In a state where 28% of the children live in poverty and where academic rankings in comparison to the rest of the nation have shown virtually no improvement in decades, one can't help but turn to Governor Jindal and other vocal opponents of Common Core and PARCC and ask "why?" Why oppose a reform effort that raises the bar, promises better results, and compares our results with other states? Why make our children, many of whom are poor and at-risk of failing, victims of partisan politics? Why make them the sacrificial offering for political ambition?

If kids really count in Louisiana, it is time our leaders show them that.

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