

According to the U.S. Department of Education, more students fail 9th grade than any other grade level, creating what has been called the “**9th grade bulge or bump**”. In addition:

- **Nearly 40 percent of overage 8th graders in Louisiana** that are retained, subsequently **dropout of school**
- **75 percent of 9th graders** that do not complete Algebra I will not graduate on time

As schools seek to address the challenges associated with the transition to and through 9th grade, it is critical to **a.) ensure a smooth, well-planned transition for all students and b.) identify struggling students early c.) plan proper supports to ensure that all students are on-track to graduate on time.**

As a result, the Louisiana Department of Education is providing direct funding to school systems to support a ninth grade academy planning year. A **Ninth Grade Academy (NGA)**, as defined for the purposes of this initiative, is a comprehensive program designed in alignment with the LDOE’s **5 academy pillars** or Warren Easton High School’s **S.H.A.P.E** framework. All expenditures shall be aligned to elements of the 5 pillars and services rendered by the **required external support partner**.

- **S**TUDENT-CENTERED RESOURCES including an integrated early warning system coupled with structures that promote student agency, connectedness and success
- **E**XPANDED **H**UMAN CAPITAL SUPPORT at the ninth grade level that is comprised of a designated administrator, professional school counselor, academic advisor and family liaison or community partner all working collaboratively
- **A**CADEMIC SUPPORT that provides opportunities for students to improve academic skills and behaviors through direct tutoring, improved study habits, organization and time management, writing, computational skills, note taking, speaking persuasively and the use of technology.
- **P**ROFESSIONAL LEARNING opportunities for faculty and school leaders that are designed to build capacity and promote professional development
- **A**UTHENTIC LEARNING **E**XPERIENCES such as career exploration, project based learning, postsecondary partnerships and research projects that require students to investigate and grapple with societal challenges

Select **Yes** during the *Achieve!* application process to apply for this optional funding opportunity.

**Selection Criteria** | Grant awards will be prioritized using the selection criteria below:

- School systems that do not have existing ninth grade academies
- School systems with graduation rates equal to or below 80%
- School systems with truancy rates of 25% or higher
- School systems with at least 25% of it’s 9th graders receiving grades of F on report cards (An “F” in a year-long core course (English, math, science or social science) in the ninth grade decreases the probability of eventually

graduating by 30 percentage points, even if a student has strong test scores. [What Matters for Staying on Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools](#): Consortium on Chicago School Research)

**Examples of approved NGA Planning Expenditures and Deliverables:**

- An Academic Advisor or Graduation Coach, including benefits
- A 9th grade level administrator, including benefits
- A family engagement officer, including benefits
- Costs associated with authentic learning or career exploration opportunities, i.e. job shadowing, project based learning or postsecondary campus visits
- Teacher stipends for extended duties, i.e. summer bridge programs or afterschool tutoring
- 9th grade stakeholder professional learning

Please contact [jerrick.hornbeak@la.gov](mailto:jerrick.hornbeak@la.gov) with any questions.