2026-2027 Louisiana High School Planning Guidebook

Grow. Achieve. Thrive.

February 2026

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Table of Contents

Introduction

The 2026-2027 Louisiana High School Planning Guidebook is designed to consolidate policies and programs that are relevant to educators as they plan for the upcoming academic year and prepare students for career and college success. This guidebook is designed to help administrators, school counselors, and educators use key policies, programs, and resources to aid students and schools in achieving their goals. This guide has a focus on:

- Developing strong system-level foundations
- Building foundations in middle school
- Building foundations in high schools
- Building a strong foundation for after high school success

Strong System-Level Foundations

Louisiana's Education Priorities

- Early childhood leading to kindergarten readiness
- Literacy instruction aligned to the Science of Reading
- Math instruction from foundational to advanced skills
- Opportunities ensuring a meaningful high school experience
- An effective teacher for every student
- Expand educational choice for students and families

Attendance Initiative: The Power of Presence

LDOE is committed to reducing chronic absenteeism and truancy so students can fully engage with the exceptional teachers, rigorous curriculum, and targeted interventions available in their schools. By implementing a tiered, data-driven approach, LDOE seeks to improve both attendance and academic outcomes.

To promote consistent school attendance, school and school leaders should:

- **Regularly analyze attendance** data to determine patterns and identify at-risk students early.
- **Develop and implement strategic attendance support plans** that include targeted action steps and processes for monitoring the impact of interventions on student attendance and subsequent academic outcomes.
- **Strengthen attendance improvement efforts** by establishing and sustaining coherent collaboration among educators, families, and community partners.

Additional details regarding the attendance initiative can be found on the Power of Presence Landing Page.

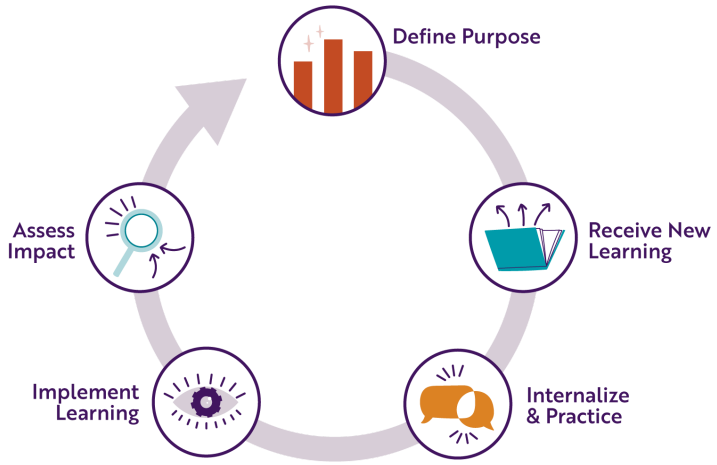
Policy requirements related to compulsory attendance and Carnegie credits can be found in Sections 1103 and 2314 of Bulletin 741, respectively.

Impact of Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

Chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10 percent or more of enrolled school days) and truancy (unexcused or unlawful absences) have significant and compounding impacts on students' academic success and long-term outcomes. Students who are chronically absent or truant are more likely to experience declines in academic performance and to fall behind in core subject areas. Research shows that increased absences are associated with lower reading proficiency by third grade and substantially reduced high school graduation rates, with chronically absent students facing up to a 40 percent decrease in graduation likelihood. Over time, persistent absenteeism and truancy can contribute to long-term economic consequences, including reduced earning potential and increased risk of unemployment.

Professional Learning Structures

The Louisiana Professional Learning Roadmap provides a clear pathway for school systems and schools to align their priorities and thus improve instructional practice through essential professional learning structures: school system-level Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs), school-level ILTs, and Teacher Collaboration that follows the High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle and is based on continuous improvement efforts.



HQPL Stages	Descriptions	Example
Define Purpose	Define the purpose of the planned learning. **How does the learning from the session benefit the participants?**	*The facilitator explains the reason for the learning and what benefits the learners will gain from the session.*
Receive New Learning	Introduce new content and information. **What new information will the participants need to know?**	*The facilitator introduces the problem choice and models the new learning with examples.*
Internalize and Practice	Put the new learning into action through guided practice to solidify understanding. **How can participants engage with the new learning and practice applying it?**	*New learning should be practiced with instructional materials, including student work.*
Implement Learning	Apply the new learning to their own instructional context. **Where can participants use the new learning?**	*Learners develop a plan to use the learning* *Learners apply the learning in their own instructional context.*
Assess Impact	Evaluate the impact of the learning achieved in the session. **What evidence do you have to show the new learning transferred??**	*Learners analyze student work to determine impact of new learning.*

School System-Level Instructional Leadership Teams

School System-Level ILTs should meet biweekly to continuously address instructional goals through ongoing learning, planning, and decision-making. This team is essential for setting clear system-wide goals, communicating with all stakeholders, creating a strategic long-range plan, and allocating resources accordingly. This is an ideal time for high school supervisors to bring data, ideas, and connections from high school leaders, teachers, and student needs to the forefront with other ILT members. A key responsibility of this team is to develop, support, and monitor system-wide expectations.

School Level Instructional Leadership Teams

Every school has its own ILT with clear instructional goals, a long-range plan, and consistent time to collaborate, ideally weekly. This team includes school leaders as well as teacher leaders and counselors. The purpose of this team is to align the school's professional learning around a clear focus area, so that teachers and counselors are supported to make instructional improvements in their classrooms. This team is critical to a high school's success as it can bring purpose, focus, and coherence to the continuous efforts of growing both teachers and students. The ILT team also aligns with and supports the work of high-impact leaders outlined in the Louisiana Leader Rubric.

The high school level ILT should include membership that represents all core content areas and at least one delegate for non-core courses. This could include teacher leaders or administrative staff. Membership could also include counselors or a counselor delegate and a delegate to represent certain student populations, like students with disabilities and/or English learners. Teacher leaders, master teachers, and mentor teachers should be provided with time in their schedules to facilitate teacher collaboration and ensure follow-up from this time occurs through ongoing observations, feedback, and planning support. These individuals could serve as instructors for part of the school day, with intentional time released from teaching duties to support their facilitating and coaching efforts. This approach could help to identify multiple teacher leaders across content areas.

Teacher Collaboration

Meaningful teacher collaboration groups content-alike teachers with school-day embedded time and space to improve instructional practices as outlined in the Louisiana Educator Rubric and ultimately improve student outcomes. Effective teacher collaboration meetings include the analysis of student work and planning for upcoming instruction using high-quality instructional materials.

To the extent possible, teacher collaboration groups should be conducive by grouping content-alike teachers, and should include special education and English learner teachers. Smaller groups could be used to increase individualized attention and in order to make the collaboration relevant for teachers. High school administrators should intentionally support teacher collaboration groups to help share the vision of strong professional learning and indicate that it is a priority for the school.

Building Strong Foundations in the Middle Grades

Preparing Middle Grade Students for Future Career and College Success

Career exploration should begin prior to high school, ideally starting in elementary school and deepening in middle school. During these years, students start to build stronger critical thinking skills, solve problems in a more structured and logical way, and become more aware of their own interests, values, and goals. These skills are fundamental not only for academic success, but for future workplace success as well.

Middle school is a natural time for students to explore careers and gain employability skills that will serve them well in the future. Students are able to point out how what they're learning now connects to future goals and opportunities. With early exposure to career exploration and the development of employability skills, students are more likely to stay engaged in their learning, reducing the risk of disengagement as they navigate adolescence. By introducing career exploration early on, schools can help students realize the connection between their academics and potential career paths. Experiences in middle school strongly influence closing achievement gaps, completing high school, and being considered career and college ready.

Career exploration activities could include

- Class projects
- Research assignments
- Guest speakers or virtual career spotlights
- Real world problem solving scenarios
- Career-themed books
- Data analysis using real-world careers
- Analyzing community case studies

Policy Requirements Career Exploration

Louisiana law (R.S. 17: 2925) requires schools to provide career awareness and exploration activities to all students in grades six through eight that create connections between what a student does in school and what the student wants to achieve in the future. Such activities can include:

- Career interest inventories
- Job shadowing and job mentoring
- Career Immersion Day

Schools should also hold informational meetings for the parents and legal guardians of students enrolled in eighth through twelfth grade to provide information regarding graduation requirements and curriculum choices. The meeting shall be held in conjunction with the scheduling of courses for the next academic year.

As stated under Act 238 of the 2020 Regular Session, when developing and reviewing their Individual Graduation Plans (IGP), students in middle and high school shall be provided information developed by the LA Works regarding the top twenty high-demand jobs in the state and in the student's region with the highest typical annual salary. Students should learn how to access information on the LA Works's website for the listed jobs and other high-demand, high-wage jobs, and be shown how to find educational programs offered in Louisiana that qualify the student for those jobs.

The Role of School Counselors in Middle Grades Career and College Planning

Middle school is a time of transition and growth. During this time, middle school counselors are in the perfect position to expose students to various career options, assisting students with exploring post-graduation plans. School counselors guide students in making connections between their education and future career and college opportunities. This knowledge and understanding help students develop skills necessary for both college and future employment.

Middle school career and college readiness development aims to build self-awareness. As students become more self-aware, this guides them in identifying career paths that match their unique skills and interests. With Perkins V funds available to expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) into middle schools, school systems should implement practices to ensure these programs effectively support middle school students. Plans for middle school CTE exposure should be created with clear objectives and outcomes that define what students will gain from these programs. For example, middle school CTE programs should offer students exposure to a variety of careers and industries, support them in exploring and developing their interests, and help them build foundational technical and employability skills that can be further developed in high school. Middle school CTE initiatives should be designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase awareness and exposure to careers
- Enhance self-awareness to identify potential career paths
- Develop employability skills
- Cultivate age-appropriate technical skills

Academic Foundations for Middle Grade Students

Literacy

Direct and explicit instruction is often an area that can be strengthened within middle school instruction. Providing direct and explicit instruction around the four major literacy components of reading, writing, speaking, and listening allows students to improve reading and comprehension of their content area texts. The Content Literacy Series offers seven reading strategies, seven writing strategies and two speaking and listening strategies that provide direct instruction through current High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in a whole-class or small group setting.

The Content Literacy Series is available in the Literacy Library under Content Literacy Support Resources. The Grades 3-12 Content Literacy Series Module on the Louisiana Professional Learning Platform offers an in-depth mini-course on the development of content literacy, as well as guidance on applying the strategies (the course code is CBB577NN). Videos on application can also be found at the bottom of the Professional Growth Page in the Literacy Library, under Grades 3-12 Literacy Support PD Series.

Math

Addressing unfinished learning with middle school students must be done using an acceleration approach. Several resources are available to build students' prior grade knowledge while still engaging in the work of the grade-level. Acceleration resources designed for each HQIM are noted within the Louisiana Guides to Implementing Math materials and posted on the Louisiana Math page under curriculum resources.

To support the success of all students Zearn School Accounts are available for all public schools serving grades K-8. Engagement in Zearn lessons positively impacts student math performance using the acceleration approach.

Individual Graduation Planning Process

Overview of the IGP Process

Bulletin 741 requires that by the end of the eighth grade, each student shall begin to develop, with the input of their parent(s) or other legal guardians and school counselor, an IGP. Every student's IGP, including those with an IEP, must detail the essential core courses they will take through tenth grade and specify the classes they will enroll in during their first year of high school.

By the end of the tenth grade, each student's IGP or the student's IEP, if applicable, shall outline the school graduation requirements relevant to the student's chosen postsecondary goals based on the student's academic record, talents, and interests.

Prior to revising a student's IGP, the school counselor should meet with the student's parent or legal guardian to explain the possible impacts the revisions to the plan might have on the student's graduation requirements and postsecondary education goals. Any revisions to a student's plan shall be approved in writing by the student's parent or legal guardian.

For a student with an exceptionality, except a student identified as gifted or talented and who has no other exceptionality, the student's IEP team, if applicable, shall assist in developing their IGP. IGPs for students who are assessed on LEAP Connect, are based on the related graduation requirements that best meet the student's postsecondary goals (TOPS U diploma requirements and Jump Start TOPS Tech diploma requirements) and are updated and revised in conjunction with the student's IEP.

Importance of the IGP in Exploring Educational and Career Opportunities Post-Graduation

The IGP assists students, their parents, and counselors in exploring educational and career opportunities to help make informed secondary and postsecondary education decisions as part of an overall postsecondary plan.

Each student, with the assistance of their parent or other legal guardian and school counselor, shall choose the high school curriculum framework and related graduation requirements that best meet their postsecondary goals. This plan will help students align their coursework and work-based learning opportunities with their career and educational goals beyond high school.

In addition to identifying coursework relevant to a student's graduation pathway, the IGP process incorporates career exploration to assist students with making informed decisions about their future careers. This will allow students to align their personal and professional goals with their future aspirations. Students should be exposed early in high school to career education. Coursework and counseling that involves career exploration should be included in the IGP, as well as career speciality or occupational goals and career clusters of interest to students based on their interests and future aspirations.

Informed Decision-Making: Helping Students Navigate Career Pathways

Helping students navigate career pathways means providing them with comprehensive information about various career options, allowing them to thoroughly assess their own skills, interests, and values, and making choices about which career path aligns best with their personal goals based on an understanding of each potential path.

As stated in Act 238 of the 2020 Regular Session, starting in the 9th grade, each student should have a web-based student profile that includes the student's academic and personal goals, planning for college, exploring careers, participation in extracurricular activities, and other skills and interests. All information contained in the profile also shall be included in the student's IGP developed based on R.S. 17:183.2 and 2925. When school counselors (or their qualified designee) meet with students and their families yearly to review and revise their profile, there should be a demonstration of how to access the LA Works's website information on high-demand, high-wage jobs. In addition, students should be provided with a listing of the high-demand, high-wage jobs in their region.

Integrating Career Exploration into the IGP

It is important to embed career exploration into the IGP to ensure that students and parents can make informed decisions about career options. It will assist students in identifying their interests and strengths, which shape their personal and professional goals. This can include specific coursework that addresses career exploration as well as counseling or coaching on career education. Career readiness courses, such as Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), prepare students for career and life success. These courses provide students the opportunity to explore their career interests, develop essential workforce skills, and research careers in various industries. Career exploration should inform student coursework in high school and post-secondary plans.

Students' desired career specialty and the career cluster in which they will be pursuing after graduation should be identified. This process should begin before the inception of the IGP in 8th grade, by offering students basic career education and making it known what pathways are available to them in high school as well as the jobs available in the region. This should continue throughout the student's high school career. It should include opportunities for students to learn about themselves, research potential careers, and inform school leaders about creating a plan to achieve student goals. Students should be intentionally scheduled into coursework to allow them to further develop their knowledge of careers and match their aptitudes and interests. Opportunities for technical skill development should exist and be at the forefront of decision-making concerning course scheduling. Diploma pathway decisions should be made with career exploration results as a guidepost. It can help students to decide on a post-secondary major or determine their career paths.

Parents should be informed of career options for students as well as how to understand student aptitudes and interests. This will allow them to assist students in choosing coursework that provides rich connections to their post-secondary aspirations. Parental input should occur at a minimum of once yearly to inform decisions made on the IGP.

Building Strong Foundations in High School

Aligning Interests with Academic Courses

Decisions about academic course progressions should be made to align with student interests. This process should begin in the middle grades and continue into high school while increasing in specificity and focus. Tools such as interest inventories can guide discussions with students about their future career aspirations. Understanding the student's career aspirations and desired high school experience will help the counselor support the student in:

- Making informed decisions regarding both academic and technical coursework.
- Engaging in coursework that not only provides them with the foundational skills needed to persevere into the diploma pathway of choice, but is also aligned closely to relevant and authentic contexts.
- Gaining access to extracurricular activities that align with their long-term goals.
- Preparing students for post-secondary education or careers that correspond with their personal and professional goals.
- Understanding what academic and career opportunities are available in their own community.

Core Subjects and Their Role in Career and College Readiness

English

English I and II play a vital role in preparing high school students for both college and career success. These foundational courses develop essential skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. The high-quality instructional materials used in these courses engage students in learning that is centered in complex grade-level texts to develop knowledge and skills that equip students with the academic tools needed for higher education, while also fostering adaptability in a rapidly changing workforce. Resources such as the Content Literacy series, Unit Study Study Protocol, and Lesson Preparation Protocol prepare English I and II teachers to best support students during instruction. Additionally, English resources such as the student-facing Reference Guides support students in the development of essential skills that are vital for post-secondary success and every profession. English I and II lay the groundwork for students to develop deep comprehension, exhibit informed decision-making, and participate in effective collaboration.

Math

Algebra I and Geometry or Integrated Math I and II provide the foundation for success in post secondary education, careers, or services. The mathematics in these courses provide students with the skills to interpret the mathematics of real life and to move on to more advanced coursework relevant to their future plans. Resources such as the High School Numeracy course and The Math Lesson Preparation Protocol and Math Unit Study Tool support teachers in intentional decisions necessary to address unfinished learning with students. Guides to implement each HQIM are also available on the Louisiana Math page under Curriculum Resources. As students move beyond required courses in mathematics, special consideration should be given to their individual college, career, or service aspirations so that they are provided relevant mathematics experiences.

Science

In high school Biology, students actively explore key concepts that help them make sense of the life sciences. The shifts in science called for by the Louisiana Student Standards for Science build through the primary grades and culminate in Biology to prepare students with the necessary problem-solving skills and foundational understanding of scientific principles that are critical to success in the advancing fields of STEM. The standards integrate disciplinary core ideas with scientific and engineering practices, along with crosscutting concepts, enabling students to develop usable knowledge that applies across science disciplines and prepares students for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Social Studies

The high school Civics course ensures that students acquire the foundational knowledge needed to become literate citizens able to contribute to a democratic society. *The Foundations of Freedom: a Louisiana Civics Program* broadens and deepens student understanding of the origin, structure, and functions of government, and provides students with practical knowledge of how the American system of government functions on local, state, and national levels. Students also gain an understanding of the philosophical and intellectual underpinnings of our constitutional republic.

Building Strong Foundations for English Learners in High School

Building strong foundations for English Learners (ELs) in high school requires international planning that ensures students can access grade-level coursework while continuing to develop English proficiency. ELs are expected to earn credits, meet graduation requirements, and prepare for college and careers at the same pace as their peers, often while still acquiring academic English. Because of this, foundational planning must prioritize both rigorous instruction and targeted language supports across the school day.

Effective planning begins with thoughtful scheduling and placement decisions. ELs should be enrolled in core content courses aligned to their graduation pathway, with language supports embedded rather than replacing access to content. English as a Second Language (ESL) coursework should be designed to build academic language skills that directly support success in English, math, science, social studies, and career-focused courses. As outlined in the *Secondary English Learner Toolkit*, placement decisions should be revisited regularly to ensure students are progressing appropriately and are not unintentionally limited in their access to coursework or diploma pathways.

Scheduling and placement decisions should be informed by regular review of multiple data sources, including English language proficiency data, course performance, credit accumulation, and progress toward graduation. Counselors, EL educators, and administrators should collaborate to monitor this information and adjust schedules, supports, and coursework as needed. Ongoing review helps prevent ELs from becoming unintentionally off track and ensures instructional and programmatic decisions remain aligned to both language development and graduation goals.

Language development is a shared responsibility across all content areas. Foundational instruction for ELs should include explicit attention to academic vocabulary, language structures, and opportunities for students to read, write, speak, and listen in meaningful ways during content instruction. When content teachers and EL educators collaborate to plan instruction and apply appropriate scaffolds, ELs are better able to engage with context texts, participate in discussions, and demonstrate their understanding. The *Secondary English Learner Toolkit* emphasizes that these supports are intended to provide access to grade-level standards without lowering expectations or modifying the content being taught.

In addition to academic and language foundations, intentional planning should support ELs in understanding graduation requirements, diploma pathways, and postsecondary options. Clear communication with students and families, ongoing review of progress toward graduation, and alignment between coursework and career interests help ensure ELs remain on track. Early and ongoing academic career planning is essential, as courses sequencing and credit decisions directly affect postsecondary opportunities.

Planning considerations may vary based on students' background and experiences, particularly for newcomers, students with interrupted formal education, and long-term ELs. These students may require additional flexibility, targeted advising, or adjusted timelines to support credit attainment while continuing to build English proficiency. Regardless of entry point, ELs should be supported in accessing advanced coursework, Career and Technical Education pathways, work-based learning experiences, and postsecondary options aligned to their interest and goals.

By building strong foundations early in high school, schools create conditions that allow ELs to access rigorous instruction, earn credits on time, and move confidently towards college and career pathways.

Building Fundamental Skills for College and Career Readiness

Success in high school transcends the earning of a high school diploma. Every student should have a plan in place that aligns to interest and career aspirations. Basic academic coursework should be aligned with clear pathways to student success. Students need to gain fundamental skills academically by scheduling students in required coursework that prepares them for any pathway they may choose in addition to high quality technical coursework. Students should also be scheduled into rigorous coursework aligned specifically to their post-secondary or career plans. The high school experience should build students' fundamental skills to ensure they are prepared to persevere into college or career after high school. These skills not only include academic skills, but also include communication, teamwork, financial literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving, which are essential to both college and career. All students, regardless of diploma pathway, should have the opportunity to participate in work-based learning opportunities that prepare them for a career after high school or post-secondary education.

When Building High Quality Career and Technical Education Programs aimed at strengthening technical skills, it is essential for leaders to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of existing programs. This assessment should identify areas that require foundational reinforcement, realignment, or expansion. CTE leaders must have a clear understanding of the following:

- **Barriers to Growth:** Assess both the actual and perceived obstacles that may hinder the advancement of CTE programs. This includes identifying issues such as funding limitations, stakeholder engagement, and market demand discrepancies.
- **Role of K-12 Education:** Recognize the significant impact that K-12 education has on the economic prosperity of local communities and the broader state. A strong CTE program can facilitate the development of a skilled workforce that meets local business needs.
- **Revised Accountability System:** Louisiana's revised accountability system will raise the bar for academic success, enhance the value of career education, and make it easier for the public to understand how schools are performing. It's named **Grow. Achieve. Thrive.**

High-quality high school CTE programs that offer opportunities for both TOPS University and TOPS Tech Career Diplomas students are often an overlooked component of the workforce development pipeline and are most effective when there is strong alignment between business, industry, and local school systems. By aligning goals and resources with workforce demands, school systems can develop and expand programs that contribute to long-term student and economic success. To do this well, education leaders need to pay close attention to local labor trends and build programs that are flexible, relevant and incorporate real-world learning experiences such as internships and Registered Apprenticeships.

Early Preparation for College and Career Acceleration

Louisiana's revised accountability system emphasizes the importance of early preparation for college and career success by ensuring students are on track for meaningful on-the-job training and postsecondary opportunities. School systems can strategically align coursework and career experiences to build strong workforce development pipelines that connect students to high-wage, high-demand careers in their regions.

- **Specialization**: CTE provides students with specialized skills and knowledge for specific career paths, thus preparing them for advanced education, apprenticeships, and in-demand jobs. CTE combines technical training with academics, ensuring students are well-prepared for their chosen professions.
- **Development of Industry-Specific Skills**: CTE programs are tailored to meet industry standards, ensuring students gain practical, job-ready skills. Whether in healthcare, information technology, skilled trades, or business, students build technical expertise that serve as a foundation for career specialization.
    - A health sciences student may begin as a medical assistant, patient care technician, or pharmacy technician before specializing as a nurse or surgical technician.
    - A welding student might start with basic welding techniques and later specialize in pipe welding or aerospace welding.
- **Hands-On Training & Practical Experience**: Through labs, simulations, internships, and apprenticeships, students apply their learning in real-world settings. This experience helps them understand industry expectations, sharpen their skills, and prepare for advanced roles or certifications.
- **Earning Industry Certifications & Credentials**: Many CTE programs allow students to obtain industry-recognized certifications that boost employability and provide a stepping stone for further specialization. Examples include:
    - CompTIA A+ for IT students
    - Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for healthcare students
    - AWS Welding Certification for welding students

A strong CTE pathway begins with intentional planning in the early years of high school, ensuring students build a solid foundation before progressing into specialized coursework. This includes strong literacy and numeracy skills. Foundational CTE courses should provide students with knowledge and skills that prepare them for advanced industry-based credentials. For example, moving NCCER Core coursework to 9th grade allows students to complete the foundational construction safety and skills training earlier. This will allow students more time to focus on mastering challenging concepts in more advanced NCCER courses. This structured approach allows students to maximize their time in high school, deepen their technical expertise, and increase their readiness for post-secondary education and the workforce.

Building Strong Foundations for Success After High School

Course Choice Program

The Course Choice Program provides students with specialized course opportunities that may not be available at their school. It allows students to physically attend courses on a college or university campus and offers courses in innovative career and technical education and internship opportunities. School systems can take advantage of this program by having their students earn credits towards a college degree, while also gaining experience in specialized areas that can lead to in-demand jobs.

The Course Choice Program also provides access to courses needed to complete Fast Forward Pathways, TOPS aligned courses, and courses embedded in a Certificate of Technical Studies, allowing students to gain access to advanced coursework, promoting future college and career success.

In order to utilize the Course Choice Program effectively, school systems need to refer to the current MFP Budget Letter to determine the allocated amount for the current school year. It is also important to designate someone at the school system and school level to handle reporting in the Course Choice Portal. School systems should work closely with course providers to ensure that students are properly registered through the provider's registration system. Once students are registered with the course provider, the enrollments are then reported in the Course Choice Portal by the designated deadline.

Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, the Course Choice policy was revised. The revised policy improves transparency, accountability, and student access to high-quality coursework through Course Choice. A key change is parental involvement. Schools must get written permission and ensure courses fit a student's graduation pathway. There is also a stronger focus on outreach, requiring schools to actively inform parents and students about available courses and funding.

Schools must give parents access to LDOE planning resources, helping them understand graduation requirements and the courses available through the Course Choice Program. Parents should be actively included in the course selection process, ensuring that decisions are made with both student goals and academic pathways in mind. Before a student can enroll, written parental permission is now required. If a course is not academically appropriate, does not align with the student's graduation plan, or conflicts with state guidelines, the school must notify parents and provide academic guidance. These steps ensure that parents are fully informed, involved, and able to make the best choices for their student's success.

School systems will now prioritize funding based on the following criteria:

1. Seniors who require a course in order to graduate or if student access to TOPS aligned courses is not available through the school or school system.
2. Students enrolling in courses are required to complete an associate degree in a Fast Forward pathway or a certificate of technical studies aligned to high wage, high demand jobs or work-based learning.
3. Students seeking access to TOPS aligned college credit.
4. Students enrolled in a Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR) or Urgent Intervention Required for Academics (UIR-A) schools.
5. Access to high quality academic content aligned to graduation requirements or access to high-quality career and technical content aligned to the Louisiana IBC state focus list which can be offered as recovery credit.
6. Students seeking coursework to increase a student score on a nationally recognized assessment (ACT, SAT, CLT, WorkKeys, or ASVAB) as defined in LAC 28:XI.1711 Bulletin 111.
7. Other priorities defined by the school system, approved by LDOE, and included in the School System's pupil progression plan prior to the student enrollment process.

Pathways to College

College bound students should be offered and supported through rigorous curriculums to prepare them for post-secondary coursework. In addition to academic rigor, they need clear guidance with financial aid planning and the college application process. To ensure they're ready for the transition, schools should also provide support for college entrance exams, such as ACT, SAT, and CLT assessments to measure post-secondary readiness.

Louisiana provides opportunities for students to earn and pursue work experiences and college credit. Early college credit can be earned through Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).

- **Academic Dual Enrollment:** Students can enroll in high school and college courses simultaneously and earn credit on both high school and college transcripts. Courses are taught by a college instructor or an approved high school educator. Dual enrollment courses can be technical or academic in nature. For guidance on dual enrollment, stakeholders can use the Louisiana Dual Enrollment Portal and the LDOE Dual Enrollment Resources One Pager. Schools should consult with their partner post-secondary institutions for specific information regarding requirements.
- **Advanced Placement (AP):** College Board offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses to earn college credit by demonstrating mastery of rigorous content through high school based coursework. For more information about AP course offerings and resources, please visit the LDOE AP Resources One Pager.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB):** The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a globally recognized program in which students develop knowledge, skills, and sense of purpose. Students who graduate from this program often receive college credit, as many universities recognize the courses.
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP):** The College-Level Program (CLEP) allows students to demonstrate mastery of college-level material through exams in various subjects. Students who achieve qualifying scores can earn college credits, as many universities recognize and accept CLEP exams. To see how CLEP credits transfer to Louisiana State University, visit their Early Credit Opportunities page.

Pathways to Work

High-quality CTE programs thrive best when schools, local businesses, and industries are aligned on what skills are needed in the workforce and how those skills are taught in the classroom. This alignment ultimately enables students to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers. CTE programs bridge the gap between high school and the world of work by offering technical dual enrollment, Registered Apprenticeships, regionally relevant credentials of value, and work-based learning. By strategically planning their coursework and experiences, students can participate in work-based learning programs, earn Certificates of Technical Studies (CTS), and even begin Registered Apprenticeships while still in high school. These advanced CTE opportunities allow students to develop career-ready skills, earn college credit, and establish strong connections with employers.

- **Technical Dual Enrollment:** Programs such as Fast Forward have been integral in providing students with opportunities to gain relevant work experience while earning high school and college credits. Fast Forward, in particular, supports students in acquiring industry-recognized credentials, preparing them for the workforce while allowing them to continue their academic studies. These pathways are designed not only to ensure students are prepared for success in the workforce but also to guarantee that they remain on track to complete their educational requirements. The integration of work-based learning with academic instruction creates a well-rounded educational experience that is highly valued by both students and employers.
- **Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS):** Students have the opportunity to earn a CTS through various CTE programs, particularly MJ Foster-eligible CTS's. The MJ Foster Promise Program has targeted five industry sectors (Construction, Healthcare, Information Technology, Manufacturing, and Transportation and Warehousing). CTS programs are offered through the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). CTS's can be earned through DE partnerships and offered at the high school facility if the instructor is certified by their LCTCS campus and the CTS is less than 60% of the aligned Technical Diploma and/or Associate Degree.
- **Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs):** Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) are federally regulated workforce development initiatives that provide employers with a strong return on investment. As an earn-and-learn model, RAPs offer apprentices a structured career pathway that integrates hands-on training with classroom instruction, ensuring they gain expertise in their chosen field. These programs help apprentices build essential skills and industry-specific knowledge. Upon completion, participants earn a nationally recognized, portable credential that validates their proficiency. Employers also benefit by gaining highly trained, certified professionals to strengthen their workforce**.** All of these programs are approved by the LA Works and the U.S. Department of Labor. Apprenticeship programs can be customized to meet the needs of business and the skills of apprentices. These programs also include on-the-job training, allowing apprentices to gain real-world experience in their chosen field while building a strong foundation for their careers.
- **High-Quality and Stackable Credentials:** Provide opportunities for students to earn industry-based certifications (IBCs) from the Louisiana State Focus List, allowing them to progressively build skills and gain credentials that are recognized and highly valued in the job market.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Louisiana students also have the option of earning work experience through Work-Based Learning. These experiences provide students with the skills necessary to attain employment in high-demand job sectors. Experiences include internships, cooperative education, and registered apprenticeships. WBL offers CTE students valuable opportunities to integrate academic knowledge with practical job experience. By participating in WBL, students can develop critical job skills, explore potential career paths, and gain hands-on experience in real-world settings. The LDOE has developed comprehensive Building High-Quality Work-Based Learning Programs, outlining the best practices for creating robust and high-quality WBL experiences for students.

Pathways to Service

Community Service

In 2013, the idea of the Community Service Endorsement was initiated by the Volunteer Louisiana Commission and approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Community service benefits students by contributing to personal growth, skill development, career development, and a sense of self-worth. School systems may award a Community Service Endorsement to students completing a minimum of 80 hours of service anytime between ninth and twelfth grade. Students may earn service hours identified in the Community Service Diploma Endorsement Categories. Documentation of community service is housed at the local high school. Every year, the LDOE and BESE recognize the top three school systems awarding the Community Service Diploma Seal at a BESE meeting.

Military Service

Students may choose to enter into military service while in or after exiting high school. Information on military academies and branches of service should be made available to students. Recruiters should be allowed on campus and given access to students based on their career goals to increase awareness of military branches and the benefits of military service. Students should be supported in taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), which the Department of Defense administers to assess aptitude and potential for military service, helping determine enlistment qualifications and suitable job roles.

Supporting Transitions to Post-High School Plans

Transitioning from High School to Post-Secondary Education or Workforce

Nearly 1 in 6 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 in Louisiana are disconnected from both school and work, the highest rate in the nation. High schools should provide the transitional support needed for students to either persist into post-secondary education or move to careers. Transitioning out of high school and into the world can require varying levels of support and options for student success and depend on the career interests and goals of graduating students.

A key component of student success post-graduation is ensuring students develop and understand their college and career pathway options early. Helping students understand both educational and career opportunities within their communities is particularly important.

A valuable tool in helping students understand local and statewide high-demand, high-wage career opportunities as well as post-secondary options aligned to those opportunities is the Louisiana Star Jobs portal. Here, individuals can filter by occupation, wage, star rating, and location, and find current job listings. The tool also connects occupations to post-secondary educational opportunities directly aligned to each job. Per Act 238 of the 2020 regular legislative session, schools are required to provide students with LA Works information on the top twenty high-wage high-demand jobs in the state and the students' region. School personnel must show students how to access this information on the LA Works website and provide students with a printed version of the jobs for the region. In addition, LDOE will maintain a link to LA Works on its website and all public middle and high schools.

To best support students as they transition into post-secondary education and the workforce, it is also vital to ensure students understand what credits earned in high school should transfer into the post-secondary institution of their choosing. The Prior Learning Matrix will verify the articulation of credentials and/or credits earned through the LCTCS system.

The Board of Regents Articulation Matrix will verify the articulation of credentials and/or credits earned at four-year institutions. Teaching students about what courses and credentials transfer into their post-secondary settings will allow them to make informed decisions about their education and career paths, maximize transferable credits, reduce time and cost in postsecondary programs, and smoothly transition into their chosen fields with a clear understanding of their next steps.

Some things to consider when preparing students to engage with post-secondary institutions:

- Develop and distribute a student-friendly guide or checklist outlining which dual enrollment courses and industry-based credentials articulate to specific degree pathways.
- Integrate post-secondary planning into advising by reviewing students' coursework and credentials in relation to their post-secondary goals.
- Provide students with the document(s) needed to verify their dual enrollment credit/certification with the post-secondary institution.
- Provide students with a point of contact at the post-secondary institution of their choice who accepts the proof of dual enrollment credit/certification.

Supporting Students in College Applications and Career Pathway Decisions

Students exiting high school will be going on to post-secondary education, careers, or military service. High schools should offer transitional support to help students attain their aspirations. It is important to counsel students consistently to uphold their post-secondary plans and ensure they are prepared to persist.

If students are on a post-secondary pathway, they should be supported in filling out college applications to their institutions of choice. They should be made aware of entrance requirements for the institutions of choice and their transcripts should be evaluated to ensure they are meeting all requirements. Assistance should be offered for students to research major areas of study and the identification of schools that offer those particular pathways. Students should be made aware of scholarship opportunities and assisted with applying for them. Workshops should be offered to students on completing college essays to gain entrance into their preferred institutions. The Louisiana Office of Students Financial Assistance (LOSFA) hosts a Louisiana College Application and Access Month in October that assists students with their post-secondary plans. Students on a college pathway should also receive guidance on measures of post-secondary success through assessments such as the ACT, SAT, or CLT.

Students transitioning from high school to work should be counseled on career pathways. Education and assistance with searching for job postings and completing a job application should be integrated into the guidance services for students. These lessons should include how to write a resume and adapt that document to meet the needs of individual employment options. Experiences should include job interview training. In addition, WBL opportunities should be available to career-bound students to prepare them for employment after high school. Students should be invited to career/job fairs to make connections and be

afforded employment opportunities. They should receive support to take the ACT WorkKeys exam to measure career-relevant skills for workplace success.

Students entering military service should receive support in applying to military academies and/or access to recruiters from military branches to assist with matriculating into service. Support should be in place to assist students in taking the (ASVAB) to determine their aptitude for military service. Students entering military service should be tracked, and offer letters from military branches should be retained to receive credit in the revised accountability system.

Financial Aid Planning for Post-Secondary Education

Post-secondary education is a pathway to in-demand careers and quality of life. It can open doors to career pathways and is integral to employment in certain fields. Secondary institutions must educate students about financial aid planning opportunities to afford students who are interested in post-secondary options the ability to achieve their goals.

Conversations about funding post-secondary education options should begin with students in the ninth and tenth grade so needs can be assessed, and students and parents can be ready to make decisions about funding those opportunities. Funding college opportunities is a suggested topic in the financial literacy course graduation requirement. Student discussions around post-secondary plans, the TOPS Scholarship, and other scholarship opportunities should be initiated. It is the responsibility of schools to assist students and parents in assessing the need for postsecondary financial aid planning and with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if that is their desire. Resources to assist school systems regarding financial aid are available.

LOSFA can help students and parents with the FAFSA application process by assisting with setting up Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID numbers, gathering information needed to complete the form, and completing all required parts of the application. If you have questions or need assistance contact LOSFA:

- Email LOSFA at custserv@la.gov
- Access LOSFA via web at mylosfa.la.gov
- To speak to a representative call LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626

Federal Student Aid (FSA) is responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under *Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965*. These programs provide grants, work-study, and loan funds to students attending college or career school.

Accountability Guidance

Louisiana's Revised Accountability System

Grow.Achieve.Thrive. is Louisiana's revised K-12 accountability system which went into effect for the 2025-2026 school year. Louisiana has raised the bar for academic success, enhanced the value of career education, and made it easier for the public to understand how schools are performing. Instead of using complex formulas, the revised formula prioritizes simplicity and transparency where each school's scores equals the percent of their students who meet the expectation.

Accountability Components

A school's grade is measured by up to nine components for elementary and middle school and up to twelve components for high school. The number of components used for a school performance score is dependent on the school having the minimum number of 15 full academic year students for whom data is available. Each component will simply ask: What percent of a school's students met the expectation?

Schools earn 0-100 points for each component where one (1) point is awarded for each percentage of students. The points earned for each component are added together and divided by the total number of available points to determine the percentage of points earned.

Grow.

Simply described, we expect students to make meaningful progress toward the next level of proficiency. The *Grow* components answer the question: "What percent of students are making progress on their understanding of grade level content as measured by state assessments?"

The *Grow* components are included in calculations grades K-12. These components are:

- The percent of students growing in English Language Arts

- The percent of students growing in Mathematics
- English Language Arts growth for the lowest twenty-five percent of students
- Math growth for the lowest twenty-five percent of students
- The percent of English Learners growing in English Language Acquisition (EL).

These components are measured by student performance on statewide standardized assessments through demonstrating a learning gain from the prior year to the current year.

Achieve.

Simply described, we want to know if students in a school are on grade level. The *Achieve* components answer the question: "What percent of students are on grade level?"

The *Achieve* components are included in calculations grades K-12. These components are:

- The percent of students who demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts
- The percent of students who demonstrate proficiency in Mathematics
- The percent of students who demonstrate proficiency in Science
- The percent of students who demonstrate proficiency in Social Studies.

These components are also measured by student performance on statewide standardized assessments. Proficiency is defined as the percentage of students scoring Mastery or Advanced in each subject.

Thrive.

The *Thrive* components are only included for schools which have had a graduation cohort conclude in the most recent year. These components are:

- The graduation rate
- % of students earning a passing score on nationally recognized assessments
- % of students prepared for career or college (and earned aligned high quality credentials), or are entering military service.

By measuring these components, Louisiana is setting the expectation that our students will *grow, achieve, and thrive*.

Below is the format for how these component scores will be shared on the revised Louisiana Accountability Scorecard. This revised format creates new opportunities for dialogue, and understanding areas for improvement in our state.

Louisiana's Accountability Scorecard					
% of Students Growing		**% of Students Who Are Proficient**		**% of High School Students Thriving**	
Math		Math		Graduation Rate	
English		English		Ready based on a nationally recognized exam	
Math Growth for lowest 25% of students		Science		Accelerated into college coursework, career training, or service	
English Growth for lowest 25% of students		Social Studies		Did 25% of your Career Accelerating Students complete a work based learning experience? (Y/N)	Y/N
English Language Acquisition (ELL)				Does your school have a certified foreign language immersion program? (Y/N)	Y/N
				Average:	

Letter Grades

Based on the school's score, a school is assigned a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. The letter grades are equivalent to the following:

A — produces excellent student achievement and progress

B — produces above average student achievement and progress
C — produces satisfactory student achievement and progress
D — produces less than satisfactory student achievement and progress
F — fails to produce adequate student achievement and progress

Below represents a simulation based on 2024 data.

Letter Grade	2024 Simulated Elementary / Middle	2024 Simulated High	2024 Simulated District		Final Scale
A	53.6 to 100	54.5 to 100	48.9 to 100	Each time 50% or more schools on a scale earn A/B combined the following year the scales go up by 5 points until we reach the final scale	90 – 100
B	44.3 to 53.5	45.3 to 54.4	42.9 to 48.8		80 – 89
C	32.7 to 44.2	33.0 to 45.2	35.9 to 42.8		70 – 79
D	26.7 to 32.6	26.1 to 32.9	31.1 to 35.8		60 – 69
F	26.6 and below	26.0 and below	31.0 and below		0 – 59

After cut ranges have been set based on the 2024 school year's data, in any year in which 50 percent or more of schools or districts on a scale earn a grade of A or B, the scale required to earn a school grade will be raised by five percent for the following year. These automatic increases will continue until the scale reaches the final scale.

Calculating Scores

A simulated 2026-2027 calculator is available in the Accountability library. This calculator provides systems with the opportunity to estimate the SPS using the revised accountability formula outlined in this document. This calculator may be updated between now and 2027 based on feedback. This is a tool to only estimate SPS. It is not intended to determine a final school or district performance score.

Alternative School Performance Scores

There have been no policy changes for alternative school performance scores. Alternative education schools continue to receive accountability scores based on the following indices for local accountability.

K-8	High School
• Progress Index • Interests and Opportunities Index	• Progress Index • Core Academic Credit Accumulation Index • Dropout/Credit Accumulation Index • Credential Attainment Index • Interests and Opportunities Index

The SPS and letter grades for alternative schools are as follows:

A = 100-150

B = 85.0-99.9

C = 70.0-84.9

D = 50.0-69.9

F = 0-49.9

The final accountability results issued in the fall semester of each year reflect the configuration of the alternative school as it existed the prior spring semester. For combination alternative schools, which have a grade configuration that includes a combination from both K-8 and 9-12 receive a score from a weighted average of the K-8 SPS and the 9-12 SPS.

- The K-8 SPS is weighted by the number of students eligible to test during the spring test administration.
- The 9-12 SPS is weighted by the sum of assessment units from students who are initial testers for high school LEAP, plus the students eligible to take the ACT®. Students with high school LEAP and ACT® will count only one time.

For alternative schools with configurations that include ninth through eleventh grades, but do not have a twelfth grade, the school performance score will consist only of the indices available to calculate.

Resources

The School and District Accountability rules in Bulletin 111 describe policy more specifically.

The LDOE Accountability library has been updated to include resources and webinars for a variety of audiences (school administrators, teachers, counselors, and central office employees). Guidance documents are also included to assist families, students and business/industry partners in understanding the revised Accountability system, and how to assist with student success.

The LDOE website also contains additional information about school and district grades, including the results of the calculation for each school and district in the Data Center. This information is also made available on LouisianaSchools.com. Additional information describing the calculation and historical information are available in the Accountability Library.

For more detailed information on how to calculate school performance scores based on the revised accountability system, please see the Simulation Guidebook.

What is a high school equivalency diploma? How can I find out more information about it?
The high school equivalency diplomas currently offered in Louisiana include the HiSET® and the GED. High School Equivalency is governed by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). High School Equivalency is no longer recognized in the accountability model.

Accountability FAQS

Preparing 8th Grade Students: T9, DCAI, and Graduation Cohort

1. What happens if state assessments indicate that an 8th grader is not ready to enter 9th grade?
Schools should refer to the transitional 9th grade policy in their Pupil Progression Plan for guidance.

2. For alternative schools only, do the credits earned by transitional 9th graders count toward DCAI?
Yes, credits earned by students in T9 count toward the dropout credit accumulation index. The Carnegie credits earned by a student in T9 are analogous to that of a first-time 9th grader.

3. For alternative schools only, do credits earned after the T9 year count toward DCAI?
Carnegie credits that are earned through the end of a student's transitional 9th grade year count in the school's dropout credit accumulation index. Credits earned by the transitional 9th grader in a future year are not included in DCAI calculations.

4. When does a student in transitional 9th grade enter the graduation grade cohort?
A student enters the graduation cohort the year after transitional 9th grade, regardless of grade level.

5. What happens if a student drops out in T9?
If a student drops out in the transitional 9th grade year, that student is included in the cohort and earns zero points.

LEAP

1. Do students in a Jump Start pathway have to take the same tests and/or courses?
All students who are on the Jump Start Career Diploma pathway taking regular LEAP assessments will take a core/foundational set of academic courses in grades 9 and 10. All students must take the corresponding LEAP test for any course that has one and the score must be included in their final grade for the course. All Louisiana students must take a high-school level English and math test, Biology, and Civics, regardless of courses taken or graduation pathway, by their third year of high school.

2. What happens if a student transfers from a nonpublic or out-of-state school? Do they take LEAP?

The following rules apply for transfer students who are Louisiana residents transferring into the Louisiana public school district from out-of-state schools, nonpublic schools, or approved home study programs.

- A transfer student is not required to take the LEAP tests for courses he/she already successfully completed for Carnegie credit.
- A transfer student shall be required to take the LEAP test for courses he/she previously took but did not pass.
- A transfer student may choose to take the LEAP test for a course he/she has already successfully completed if he/she scored Unsatisfactory on a LEAP test in another course and the student must pass the LEAP test for one of the LEAP pairs.

3. Which score counts if a student retakes a LEAP test?
The score from an initial LEAP test is the only score that is used for accountability. If the initial test is taken in the summer, the LEAP will be used for accountability calculations in the following academic year.

Nationally Recognized Exams

1. Which scores are used for students in the Nationally Recognized Exams indicator in Thrive?
Accountability points are based on the highest ACT®, SAT®, CLT®, WorkKeys®, or ASVAB® certificate score that is available by April of the expected graduation year for a cohort. While all students can use the WorkKeys® certificate to meet this indicator, all TOPS University students must all have taken the ACT®, SAT® or CLT®. Students will only be included the year of their expected graduation as a member of the official graduation cohort.

2. What if a student takes a nationally recognized exam multiple times?
The school and district are held accountable for the highest ACT®, SAT®, CLT®, WorkKeys®, or ASVAB® exam by the end of the graduation cohort window.

3. What happens if a student takes the ACT®, SAT, CLT or ASVAB at a different school?
The ACT score is used under two of three Thrive indicators. All students in a graduation cohort must have data from all three Thrive indicators. ACT participation will no longer be determined by grade enrollment. Students will be credited on Thrive indicators based on what they have earned in the four year cohort window. It does not matter where the indicator credit was earned.

4. When will student performance on WorkKeys® count toward accountability results?
WorkKeys® is in Thrive under the indicator of Nationally Recognized Exams. While all students in the graduation cohort can use WorkKeys gold or platinum to meet the indicator, TOPS University students must have also taken the ACT®, SAT®, or CLT®.

The nationally recognized exam component is calculated by the percentage of students in the graduation cohort earning one of the following:

- ACT® of 20+; or
- SAT® of 1040+; or
- Classical Learning Test® (CLT) of 67+; or
- WorkKeys® Gold or Platinum; or
- 59%+ ASVAB (AFQT)

Please note that University diploma students must take the ACT, SAT, or CLT, but any nationally recognized exam will count for accountability.

Graduation Cohort

1. How does the accountability system account for students who enter the school after grade 9?
If a student enters a Louisiana school for the first time as a 10th grader, the student will be placed with the cohort that is in their second year of high school. If a student enters a Louisiana school for the first time as an 11th grader, then the student will be placed with the cohort that is in their third year of high school. All students who enter the cohort at grades other than grade 9 will count at the LEA if they are enrolled by October 1 of their third year and fourth year of high school, unless they are dropouts. Dropouts count at the last school of record, regardless of October enrollment. If the student is counting at the LEA, the student is assigned to the school in the LEA where they were enrolled on October 1 of their fourth year and there is no interruption of enrollment at the school of 45 or more days. Additionally, all students who transfer within an LEA on or before October 1 of the fourth cohort year are included in the graduation rate.

2. Are students who graduate in five or six years included in the accountability system?
The revised accountability system does not award credit for students who graduate in five or six years in the graduation rate. The cohort graduation rate measures the extent to which students graduate on time (in four years). However, students who do not

graduate on time may be counted as meeting goals for the other two Thrive indicators: Nationally Recognized Exam and College/Career Accelerator.

3. What happens if a student graduates early?
Students are included in the graduation rate for the year in which they are expected to graduate. For instance, a student who enters 9th grade in the 2023-2024 academic year is included in the 2026-2027 cohort graduation rate, even if the student graduates in an earlier year.

Graduation Index

1. What are TOPS core courses and how do I find information on what counts as TOPS core courses?
LOSFA maintains current lists of Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) requirements. Visit the TOPS web page for more information.

2. What is the CLEP® test? How can I find out more information about it?
CLEP® is a computer-based, credit-by-exam opportunity that offers the chance for students to be awarded college credit for knowledge gained outside of the classroom. High schools may apply to become an authorized CLEP® testing center through an application and certification process. Visit the CLEP® exam web page for a list of the tests.

3. If a student earns multiple AP®, IB®, or CLEP® scores, which one is used for the Thrive indicators?
A student meets the goal of the Thrive indicators if they meet at least one of the options.

School Performance Scores

1. How can I estimate SPS?
The LDOE provides school performance score calculations in the LDOE accountability library.

2. How will the school performance scores and letter grade ranges for combination schools be calculated?
There is a single SPS calculated for a combination school using only the indicators that are available for the school. Any school with a cohort graduation rate will utilize the high school indicators and scale; all other schools will utilize the elementary school scale.

3. Are there any changes to how students are included in the revised accountability model indicators?
There are no changes to the full academic year rule. In the new accountability model, there must be at least 15 full academic year students who have data for the indicator.

4. How is CIR, UIR, and UIN identification changing with the revised accountability model?
There are currently no changes in approved policy to change Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR), Urgent Intervention Required (UIR), and Urgent Intervention Needed (UIN) identification. Intervention labels based on out-of-school discipline will be removed, pending ED approval. Please see the SPS FAQ in the data center for current CIR, UIR, and UIN policies.

5. How will LEAP Connect scores be used in the new accountability model?
LEAP Connect scores will be used for all components that require a LEAP score.

- For the percentage of students scoring mastery for ELA, math, and science students who earn an achievement level of “At Goal” or “Above Goal” will be considered proficient.
- For growth, students will have met growth if 1) the student moves from the lower half of scale score ranges for *Below Goal* and *Near Goal* to the upper half of scale score ranges for the achievement levels, 2) the student scores *At Goal* in the prior year and earns at least 1 scale score point in the same achievement level or scores *Above Goal*, and 3) the student earns *Above Goal* in the prior year and maintains the same achievement level.

Students participating in LEAP Connect will be included in the students with disabilities subgroup calculations.

6. How are students identified for growth of the lowest 25%?
To determine the students in the lowest 25%, for ELA and math separately:

For the denominator

- Establish the number of students who represent 25% of the total number of students who meet the full academic year definition for inclusion and who have both a prior year and current year LEAP score for ELA and/or math. Do not separate the students by grade level.
- Rank order all students from 850 to 650.

- Beginning with the lowest scale score, include the number of students who represent 25% to identify students who are in the denominator.

For the numerator

- Count the number of students in the denominator who met growth criteria. Divide this number by the total number of students in the lowest 25% (denominator) to calculate the percentage of students meeting growth.

7. Will newly arrived English Learners (EL) be given two years in a U.S. school before they are counted in the assessment indicators?
Newly arrived English Learners are defined as students who have been in U.S. school for less than two calendar years. Please see below how newly arrived ELs are included in each component:

- A newly arrived EL can be excluded from the percentage of students who score proficient in ELA, math, science, or social studies during the first two years of enrollment in a U.S. English-speaking school.
- A newly arrived EL is excluded from the growth components for their first year of testing. They will be included in the second year for both LEAP ELA/Math and ELPT/ELPT Connect growth.
- A newly arrived EL cannot be excluded from the ELPT/ELPT Connect indicator.

8. What awards can schools earn under the revised system?
The Top Gains/Growth Award recognizes schools with exceptional growth.

9. Who do I contact when I have questions about SPS?
Please email accountability@la.gov with any additional questions.

Comprehensive Exams

1. **What are comprehensive exams?**
   Comprehensive exams are new, subject-based assessments to replace the existing course-based ELA and math LEAP assessments in high school. The comprehensive exam for ELA will replace the LEAP English I and II exams. The comprehensive exam for math will replace LEAP Algebra I and LEAP Geometry exams. Passing both ELA and math comprehensive exams will be required for high school graduation for students entering the high school cohort in 2026-2027 and beyond.

2. **What is the purpose of the comprehensive exams?**
   Comprehensive exams will reduce the number of tests taken by high school students and ensure that all students test as required by law. This is aligned to the Department's goals of reducing test time and increasing time available to support students so they can thrive.

3. **Will high school students be required to take any other high school assessments?**
   At this time, students will continue taking LEAP Biology and LEAP Civics in high school assessments concurrent with course enrollment, and applicable graduation requirements remain unchanged. Other assessment requirements remain unchanged including nationally recognized assessments.

4. **When will students take comprehensive exams?**
   Comprehensive exams are required for students entering the high school cohort in 2026-2027 and beyond. Students will take the exams two years after entry into the high school cohort. LEAP Biology and Civics exams will continue to be concurrent with course enrollment. At this time, there is not a plan for any standalone field testing.

5. **If a 2026-2027 freshman takes a course with a LEAP exam (Algebra I, Geometry, English I, or English II) do they still have to take the LEAP exam, since they do not need it for graduation requirements?**
   Yes, the LEAP exam will still count as part of their final grade requirement for the transitional 2026-2027 year. These exams will also be included in the school performance score calculations.

6. **Where can I find more information about comprehensive exams?**
   The comprehensive exams FAQ can be found in the Accountability library.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION PLAN

BASIC INFORMATION

Name:	**9th Grade Entry Date:**	○ **Academic Support Plan Attached**
High School Attending:	**Originating Middle School:**	

EDUCATION GOALS

Diploma Pathway	○ TOPS University Diploma ○ Jump Start TOPS Tech (Career) Diploma
Diploma Endorsements	○ Community Service Diploma Endorsement ○ Freedom Endorsement ○ State Seal of Biliteracy ○ STEM Diploma Endorsement
Financial Aid & Scholarships	○ TOPS Honors ○ TOPS Performance ○ TOPS Opportunity ○ TOPS Tech Early Start ○ TOPS Tech ○ TOPS Excellence

COLLEGE & CAREER GOALS

Career Occupation Interests (Option 1):		**Jump Start Graduation Pathway Interests (Option 1):**	-
Career Occupation Interests (Option 2)		**Jump Start Graduation Pathway Interests (Option 2):**	-
Post-High School Workforce Plans:	○ On-the-Job Training ○ Military ○ Employment	**Certifications:**	○ Advanced ○ Basic Bundle ○ Basic

COURSE PLANNING

Subjects	6th–8th/T9 Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Graduation Tracker: TOPS U Min Req	TOPS U Earned	TOPS Tech Min Req	TOPS Tech Earned
English						4		4	
Mathematics						4		4	
Science						4		2	
Social Studies						4		2	
Health						.5		.5	
Physical Education						1.5		1.5	
Foreign Languages						2		0	
Computer Science[3]						2027-2028		2027-2028	
Financial Literacy[2]						1			
Arts						1		0	
Electives						2		9 CTE	
Credit Totals									

EXTRACURRICULAR & EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES

Activities	6th-8th/T9	9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade	Awards/IBCs
Extracurricular						
Employment						
Community Service						

ASSESSMENTS

	Academic						Personal		Notes
College & Career Readiness	ACT		CLT		ASVB		ACT Engage		
	SAT		WorkKeys				Skills Inventory		
LEAP 2025	English		English I		English II		Career Interest		
	Math		Algebra I		Geometry		Learning Styles		
	Science		Biology				ONET Profiler		
	Social Studies		Civics		US History/Civics				

Gifted & Talented Courses		AP, IB, & Cambridge Courses		CLEP Exams		Articulated Credit/Dual Enrollment Courses			
Course	**Credit**	**Course**	**Score**	**Course**	**Credit**	**Course**	**Credit**	**Course**	**Credit**

SIGNATURE APPROVALS

	6th–8th/T9	Date	9th	Date	10th	Date	11th	Date	12th	Date
Student										
Parent/Guardian										
Counselor/Advisor										

TOPS UNIVERSITY
(College Diploma) Course Requirements

For incoming freshmen in the 2014-2015 through 2023-2024 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics	4 Units
Science	4 Units
Social Studies	4 Units
Foreign Language	2 Units
Art	1 Unit
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Unit
Electives	3 Units
TOPS University Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 24 Units	

For incoming freshmen in the 2024-2025 through 2026-2027 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics	4 Units
Science	4 Units
Social Studies	4 Units
Foreign Language	2 Units
Art	1 Unit
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Unit
Electives	2 Units
Financial Literacy	1 Unit
TOPS University Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 24 Units	

For incoming freshmen in the 2027-2028 and beyond minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics	4 Units
Science	4 Units
Social Studies	4 Units
Foreign Language	2 Units
Art	1 Unit
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Unit
Electives	1 Units
Financial Literacy	1 Unit
Computer Science[3]	1 Unit
TOPS University Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 24 Units	

Refer to Bulletin 741 and the LDOE Graduation Requirements page the most current information.

TOPS Tech
(Career Diploma) Course Requirements

For incoming freshmen in the 2014-2015 through 2022-2023 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics	4 Units
Science	2 Units
Social Studies	2 Units
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Units
Jump Start course sequence, workplace experience, and credentials	9 Units
TOPS Tech Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 23 Units	

For incoming freshmen in the 2023-2024 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics[1] [2]	4 Units
Science	2 Units
Social Studies	2 Units
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Units
Jumpstart course sequence, workplace experience, and credentials	9 Units
Jump Start 1.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen through the 2020-2021 school year.	
Jump Start 2.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen in the 2020-2021 school year and beyond.	
TOPS Tech Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 23 Units	

For incoming freshmen in the 2024-2025 through 2026-2027 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics[1] [2]	4 Units
Science	2 Units
Social Studies	2 Units
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Units
Jumpstart course sequence, workplace experience, and credentials	9 Units
Jump Start 1.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen through the 2020-2021 school year.	
Jump Start 2.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen in the 2020-2021 school year and beyond.	
TOPS Tech Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 23 Units	

For incoming freshmen in the 2027-2028 school year minimum requirements:

Courses	Units Required
English	4 Units
Mathematics[1] [2]	4 Units
Science	2 Units
Social Studies	2 Units
Physical Education	1.5 Units
Health	0.5 Units
Computer Science[3]	1 Unit
Jumpstart course sequence, workplace experience, and credentials	9 Units
Jump Start 1.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen through the 2020-2021 school year.	
Jump Start 2.0 course sequence available for incoming freshmen in the 2020-2021 school year and beyond.	
TOPS Tech Diploma Minimum Course Requirements Total 24 Units	

Students with exceptionalities assessed on the regular academic content standards who meet certain requirements may attain a career diploma by meeting the requirements of their IEP. See Bulletin 1530 — Louisiana's IEP Handbook for Students with Exceptionalities. Students with exceptionalities assessed on the alternate academic content standards may attain a career diploma by meeting the requirements in § 2320 of this bulletin.

[1]Geometry is now required for JumpStart TOPS Tech (Career Diploma) students with a Fall grade 9 2023-2024 entry year and thereafter. For grade 9 entry prior to 2023-2024, students must take three additional math courses of which Geometry is an option.

[2]For Fall grade 9 entry 2024-2025 and thereafter, Financial Literacy is required. For grade 9 entry prior to 2024-2025, students must take four units of math, of which Financial Math is an option.

[3]For Fall grade 9 entry 2027-2028 and thereafter, Computer Science is required. For TOPS University, this requirement can be satisfied by fulfilling the credit in math, science or a Foreign Language (R.S.17:5025). For TOPS Tech, this requirement shall be one of the nine credits in Jump Start or it can be satisfied by fulfilling the credit in math or science (R.S.17:183.3).

Refer to Bulletin 741 for additional policy information and the LDOE Graduation Requirements page for course titles.

APPENDIX I: COURSE REQUIREMENTS CHART

Fall Grade 9 Entry 2024-2025

	TOPS UNIVERSITY DIPLOMA		JUMP START TOPS TECH CAREER DIPLOMA	
SUBJECTS	**#Units**	**Courses**	**#Units**	**Courses**
English	1	**One of the following:** English I, English Language Part 1: Cambridge IGCSE, or English Literature Part 1: Cambridge IGCSE	1	**One of the following:** English I, English Language Part 1: Cambridge IGCSE, or English Literature Part 1: Cambridge IGCSE
	1	**One of the following:** English II, English Language Part 2: Cambridge IGCSE, or English Literature Part 2: Cambridge IGCSE	1	**One of the following:** English II, English Language Part 2: Cambridge IGCSE, or English Literature Part 2: Cambridge IGCSE
	1	**One of the following:** English III, AP English Language and Composition, IB Literature, IB Language and Literature, IB Literature and Performance, English Language Part 1: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), or Literature in English Part 1: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors)	2	**Two units from the following:** Technical Writing, Business English, English III, English Language Part 1: Cambridge AICE- AS (Honors), Literature in English Part 1 Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), English IV, any AP or IB English course, English Language Part 2: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), Literature in English Part 2: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), or comparable Louisiana technical college courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by BESE
	1	**One of the following:** English IV, AP English Literature and Composition, IB Literature, IB Language and Literature, IB Literature and Performance, English Language Part 2: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), or Literature in English Part 2: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors)		
	NOTE: If a student chooses to take the A level Cambridge course, the second unit will count as an elective credit.			
Mathematics	1	Algebra I	1	Algebra I, Applied Algebra I, or Algebra I-Part 2 *(The elective course Algebra I-Part 1 is a prerequisite.)*
	1	Geometry	1	Geometry[1] or Applied Geometry
	1	Algebra II	1	Financial Literacy
	1	**One of the following:** Algebra III, Advanced Math-Functions and Statistics, Advanced Math-Pre-Calculus, Pre-Calculus, IB Math Studies (Math Methods), Calculus, AP Calculus AB, IB Mathematics SL, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, IB Further Mathematics HL, IB Mathematics HL, Probability and Statistics, AP Computer Science A, Statistical Reasoning, Additional Math-Cambridge IGCSE, Math 1 (Probability and Statistics): Cambridge AICE (Honors), Math 1 (Pure Math): Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), Math 2 (Part 1): Cambridge AICE-A Level (Honors), or Math 2 (Part 2): Cambridge AICE-A Level (Honors)	1	**One of the following:** Math Essentials, Algebra II, Advanced Math-Functions and Statistics, Advanced Math-Pre-Calculus, Algebra III, Pre-Calculus, Business Math, Probability and Statistics, Statistical Reasoning, Transition to College Mathematics, Comparable Louisiana Technical college courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by BESE; Additional Math-Cambridge IGCSE; Math 1 (Pure Math) Cambridge AICE-AS (honors); or Integrated Mathematics I, II and III (may be substituted for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II).
	NOTE: The Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III sequence, including the Cambridge IGCSE Integrated Math sequence, may be substituted for the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II sequence.			
Science	1	Biology I	1	Biology I
	1	Chemistry I	1	**One of the following:** Chemistry I, Physical Science, Earth Science, Agriscience II*, Environmental Science, Principles of Engineering, any AP or IB science course, PLTW Principles of Engineering, Principles of engineering (LSU Partnership), Physics I: Cambridge IGCSE, Biology II: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), Chemistry II: AICE-AS (Honors), or Physics II: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors)
	2	**Two units chosen from the following:** (a) Earth Science; (b) **one of** Environmental Science or Environmental Awareness; (c) **one of** Physical Science, Principles of Engineering, PLTW Principles of Engineering, or Principles of Engineering (LSU Partnership); (d) Agriscience II*; (e) **one of** Chemistry II, AP Chemistry, IB Chemistry I, IB Chemistry II, or Chemistry II: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (f) **one of** AP Environmental Science or IB Environmental Systems; (g) **one of** Physics I, IB Physics I, AP Physics I, or Physics I: Cambridge IGCSE; or (h) **one of** AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, AP Physics C: Mechanics, IB Physics II, AP Physics II, or Physics II: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (i) **one of** Biology II, AP Biology, IB Biology I, IB Biology II, Biology II: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors), or Human Anatomy and Physiology		
	*The elective course Agriscience I is a prerequisite for Agriscience II.			
Social Studies	1	**One of the following:** U.S. History, AP U.S. History, or IB History of the Americas I	1	**One of the following:** U.S. History, AP U.S. History, or IB History of the Americas I
	1	**One of the following:** Civics with a section on free enterprise, Government, AP U.S. Government and Politics: Comparative, or AP U.S. Government and Politics: United States	1	**One of the following:** Civics, Government, AP U.S. Government and Politics: Comparative, or AP U.S. Government and Politics: United States
	2	**Two units chosen from the following:** (a) **one of** European History, AP European History, Western Civilization, or History (European): Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (b) **one of** World Geography, AP Human Geography, IB Geography, Physical Geography, or Geography: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (c) **one of** World History, AP World History, IB History of the Americas II, or History (International): Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (d) **one of** IB Economics, Economics, AP Macroeconomics, AP Microeconomics, or Economics: Cambridge AICE-AS (Honors); (e) AP Psychology, (f) History of Religion, (g) African American history or (h) Dual Enrollment Psychology		
Health and Physical Education	0.5	Health Education	0.5	Health Education
	1.5	Physical Education I and II; Adapted Physical Education I and II for eligible students in special education; JROTC I, II, III, or IV; or Physical Education I (1 unit) and 1/2 unit of Marching Band, extracurricular sports, Cheerleading, or Dance Team	1.5	Physical Education I and II, Adapted Physical Education I and II for eligible special education students, ROTC I, II, III, IV or Physical Education I (1 unit) and 1/2 unit from among the following: Physical Education II, Marching Band, extracurricular sports, Cheerleading, Dance Team
	NOTE: JROTC I and II may be used to meet the health education requirement. Refer to §2347.			
Foreign Language	2	Two units from the same language (§2345)		
Art	1	Art (§2333), Music (§2355), Dance (§2337), Theatre (§2369), Speech III and IV (one unit combined), Fine Arts Survey, Drafting, Media Arts (§2354), Photography I/II, Digital Photography, or Digital Design (§ 2338)		
Electives Jump Start	2	Electives	9	Jump Start course sequence, workplace experiences, and approved credentials (a minimum of one industry-based credential is required for graduation)
Financial Literacy	1	Financial Literacy		
Total Units	**24**		**23**	

Refer to Bulletin 741 and the LDOE Graduation Requirements page the most current information. REVISED MARCH 2026

1 Geometry is now required for JumpStart TOPS Tech (Career Diploma) students with a Fall grade 9 2023-2024 entry year and thereafter. For grade 9 entry prior to 2023-2024, students must take three additional Math courses of which Geometry is an option.