



Counselor Connect



December 2025

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Student Opportunities

ACT Navigator - College & Career Planning for Families

Please share with system leaders, counselors, teachers, and students.

[ACT Navigator](#) is an online resource that allows students to navigate the path through high school and what lies ahead. Access includes:

- Timely and actionable steps from freshman through senior year, organized by season, to help students stay on track.
- Guidance for education and career - whether they are going to college or directly into the workforce.
- Majors and career exploration.
- Resources for college admissions, financial aid, testing advice, and alternative paths.

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

Fast Forward

Fall 2025 Counselor Institute

Please share with school counselors, administrators, and CTE advisors.

Thank you to all who attended the webinar series and in-person workshops for the Fall 2025 Counselor Institute. We appreciate your feedback on the new format and hope you benefited from the Attendance, Vertical Alignment, and Post-Secondary presentations.

All presentations will be posted on the [Counselor Support](#) page for reference. Feel free to share with colleagues as you deem appropriate.



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Dates for the Spring 2025 Counselor Institutes will be released at a later date.

Please contact candace.joseph@la.gov with questions.

Standard and CTE Employment Certificates

Please share with CTE supervisors, administrators, WBL teachers, and counselors.

All students in work-based learning programs are required to hold an employment certificate. The specific type (Minor Employment Certificate vs. CTE Employment Certificate) is dependent on the nature of the opportunity.

Internships: Students participating in high-dosage opportunities (a total of 106.2 hours of on-the-job training) must obtain a **CTE Employment Certificate**.

CTE Employment Certificates:

- Require termination date
- Completed and signed by: Training employer, parent/guardian, teacher-coordinator, and student-trainee
- CTE Teacher-Coordinator completes and submits the electronic CTE Employment Certificate via the Louisiana Works website
- Prohibited occupations exemptions exist

Cooperative Education (Co-Op): Students employed in a part-time job (ex, Super 1, Raising Cane's, etc.) must obtain a [Standard Minor Employment Certificate](#).

Standard Employment Certificates:

- No expiration date
- Application to employ a minor
- Completed and signed by: Employer representative, parent/guardian
- Prohibited occupations apply

Please contact laborprograms@lwc.la.gov with questions.

Industry-Based Credential Bundles Update

Please share with CTE supervisors, administrators, WBL teachers, and counselors.

Louisiana Works (formerly the Louisiana Workforce Commission) will lead the development of industry-based credential bundles. Bundle concepts will be shared with regional economic development organizations, LCTCS, and LDOE to validate workforce demand and ensure alignment with post-secondary pathways.

Please note, school systems will not create or submit bundles themselves; however, they will play an important role in the process by recommending employer partners to LA Works for engagement. This approach is intended to ensure that bundles are responsive to employer needs, aligned with



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labor market demand, and designed to provide students with a clear path from high school into training, postsecondary, and career opportunities.

Please contact ibccouncil@lwc.la.gov with questions.

Course Choice Page Update

Please share with system leaders, CTE supervisors, principals, and counselors.

The [Course Choice webpage](#) has been refreshed to better support schools, counselors, and families. Updates include new Family Communications Tools under the Resources for Schools & Counselors section:

- Sample Parent Letter
- Parent Flyer
- Social Media Graphics

In addition, the page now features the new [Course Choice Road Map for School Leaders one-pager](#), designed to guide systems through key steps and considerations.

You can view all updates on the Course Choice [landing page](#).

Please contact coursechoice@la.gov with questions.

AI-Powered Python Pilot- Extended Application Period

Please share with system leaders, CTE supervisors, and Information Technology teachers.

The Louisiana Department of Education, in partnership with Bossier Parish Community College and Kira Learning, is launching a two-year pilot to expand AI-powered CTE education in Python Programming. Up to 15 School Systems will be selected to participate. Educators in the pilot will receive professional development, ongoing support, and access to Python-aligned curriculum and AI tools.

The [application](#) window has been reopened and will close on December 15. Final selections and the official start of the pilot will be shared after the application closes. The pilot will begin with a focus on building teacher fluency through hands-on training and support, with flexibility for rolling enrollment as school systems prepare for implementation in the 2026–2027 school year.

Please contact fastforward@la.gov with questions.

Professional Opportunities

College Board Monthly Office Hours

Please share with administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators.

The College Board is offering monthly office hours to provide resources and updates on the AP Program. Participants can also attend to ask general questions. Each office hour will have a designated topic and will begin at 10 a.m. on Microsoft Teams. The dates and topics are:



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- [December 9](#); AP Potential

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

2026 Louisiana ACT Summit

Please share with administrators, counselors, CTE supervisors, and testing coordinators.

[Registration](#) is currently open for the 2026 Louisiana ACT Summit. The Louisiana ACT Summit will be held on January 28 at the Raising Cane's River Center in Baton Rouge.

This event offers education and workforce leaders the opportunity to exchange ideas, deepen their knowledge, and explore real-world solutions to today's most pressing problems. Attendees will participate in sessions designed to spark collaboration, foster problem-solving, and shape the future of education and the workforce.

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

Louisiana High School Teachers Workshop

Please share with school counselors, CTE teachers, and high school teachers.

[Registration](#) is now available for the Louisiana High School Teachers Workshop, in collaboration with LSU and the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR). This one-day event, led by UCAR's Science Education (SciEd) team, will help Louisiana educators bring real-world weather science into their classrooms. The purpose of this event is to deepen understanding of hurricanes and climate impacts in Gulf communities, provide curriculum-ready resources for classrooms, and empower educators to foster resilience and action among students.

This event will be held on **March 7, 2026**, at the Rotunda Conference Room (1019), ECE Building, LSU, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 20-30 participants will receive a \$100 stipend, along with complimentary lunch and refreshments.

Please contact RMostafiz@agcenter.lsu.edu with questions.

College Board Lunch & Learn Webinars

Please share with administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators.

The College Board is offering virtual webinars in the upcoming months that are specialized for the state of Louisiana. The webinars will provide meaningful assistance and resources for the Advanced Placement (AP) program. Participants can also attend to ask general questions. Each webinar will have a designated topic and will begin at noon using Zoom. The dates and topics are:

- [January 13](#); Benefits of Offering Advanced Placement Courses
- [February 10](#); Tips for Growing AP on Your Campuses

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.



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ACT: How to Create a College & Career Readiness Day Webinar

Please share with administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators.

ACT is offering a webinar on creating a College & Career Readiness Day at your school. ACT plans to help schools design an inspiring event that energizes your school and unites your community around student success. [Registration](#) is currently open for the virtual event, which will be held on **January 14** at 11 a.m. A recording will be available to registered participants.

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

Resources

LEADS Counselor Handbook

Please share with superintendents, human resource directors, school leaders, systems leaders, and counselors.

The [Louisiana Counselor Rubric and Evaluation Handbook](#) is now available in the [LEADS Library](#). This handbook provides examples to deepen understanding of the rubric indicators. Coaching questions and sample evidence are also included. Evaluators are encouraged to use this resource to assist with the counselor evaluation process.

Please contact leads@la.gov with questions.

Free ACT Practice Materials for Counselors

Please share with administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators.

ACT is offering free [ACT practice materials for counselors](#). These materials will help counselors access the most useful materials. All materials can be shared with students to help with test prep, including practice tests and test guides.

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

LOSFA Outreach Events

Please share with administrators and counselors.

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance provides several outreach events, seminars, and workshops for schools, institutions, and organizations. These events can be delivered virtually and in person. Access the [Event Scheduling Guide](#) for more information about LOSFA Events, or submit requests using the [Event Request Form](#).

Please contact losfa.scheduling@la.gov with questions.



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LOSFA Career Exploration Survey

Please share with administrators, CTE coordinators, dual enrollment coordinators, and counselors.

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), in partnership with business and industry leaders across the state, is coordinating career exploration tours and in-classroom activities to help high school students explore high-demand career pathways.

Career exploration tours will take place on-site at business and industry facilities, providing students with real-world exposure to healthcare, manufacturing, construction, information technology, and various working environments. Additionally, LOSFA can coordinate in-classroom, virtual, or hybrid experiences to support further career readiness, college planning, and financial aid awareness.

We invite your school or organization to complete this short [interest survey](#) so we can better align these opportunities to your needs.

Please share this survey with any staff, instructors, or administrators at your school or site who are involved in career development, dual enrollment, postsecondary transition, or who have the authority to make decisions about student programming.

Please contact losfa.counselors@la.gov with questions.

AP Resources for Counselors

Please share with administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators.

The College Board offers [free counselor resources](#) needed to support and advise students on their journey to college and career. Resources include assistance with preparing specialized students, advising, [reference guides](#), handouts, and [counselor toolkits](#).

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov with questions.

Reminders

Community Service Diploma Endorsement

Please share with school system administrators and counselors.

Students have the opportunity to earn 80 hours of community service during their high school years and earn the [Community Service Diploma Endorsement](#). Visit the [Diploma Endorsement webpage](#) for more information.

Please contact jenny.moran2@la.gov with questions.

America 250 Diploma Endorsement

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

America 250 is a national initiative created by Congress to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in 2026. Each state, including Louisiana, has established its own



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commission to plan meaningful programs, recognitions, and events that honor America's past and inspire its future.

The America 250 seal will appear on the diplomas of Louisiana public high school graduates in the Class of 2026. The commemorative emblem honors both the nation's founding and the importance of preparing students to be informed, engaged citizens.

Please contact jenny.moran2@la.gov with questions.

Civics Diploma Endorsement

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

The 2025–2026 school year marks the first time students are eligible to earn the [Freedom Framework Diploma Endorsement](#), a new recognition for high school students who demonstrate excellence in civics education.

The endorsement is awarded to students who score Mastery or above on the LEAP 2025 civics assessment. Recipients will receive an additional seal on their diplomas and wear a red, white, and blue honor cord during graduation ceremonies.

Please contact amy.willis@la.gov with questions.

2025-2026 Graduate Diploma and Seal Orders

Please share with school counselors, principals, data coordinators, and personnel responsible for ordering diplomas and seals.

Please use the [Diploma and Seal Order Form](#) to submit an order for 2025-2026 graduates. All diploma requests must be submitted through the electronic form by February 6, 2026. Only one form should be completed for each school system. The LDOE will cover the costs for the initial order and distribution.

Please contact jenny.moran2@la.gov with questions.

Discipline Reporting

Please share with counselors, system leaders, and data managers.

[Act 497 \(2025\)](#) amended [R.S. 17:416.BorC](#) requires school systems to report expulsion data, including the number of occasions for committing offenses in sections B or C. Therefore, student discipline data should be accurate and current in the local SIS and should be reported to LDOE daily. Data managers are encouraged to automate the SIS to upload student data daily. The LDOE will monitor discipline submissions and contact school systems that are not submitting on a regular schedule.

Please contact terran.perry@la.gov with questions.



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Intuit Food Truck Program for Career & Technical Education (CTE)

Please share with system leaders, counselors, ProStart teachers, and CTE supervisors.

The [Intuit Food Truck Program](#) is a free work-based program for CTE high school students. The program provides hands-on training in running a business. Selected districts will receive a state-of-the-art food truck, along with supporting grants, curriculum, and free access to Intuit products, to prepare students for the real world with vital financial, technical, and entrepreneurial skills. [Applications](#) are accepted year-round and should be completed by the CTE Director or a District Leader.

Please contact fastforward@la.gov with questions.

Financial Aid Planning

Please share with school system counselors and personnel who assist students with financial aid planning for postsecondary opportunities.

The 2026-2027 [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) is now open to help students fund postsecondary education.

Students should complete the FAFSA if applying for the federal Pell Grant, federal student loans, the Louisiana GO Grant, and TOPS.

The TOPS application is on the LOSFA website if applying for TOPS only.

Please contact ldfinancialaid@la.gov with questions.

Ask CoCo

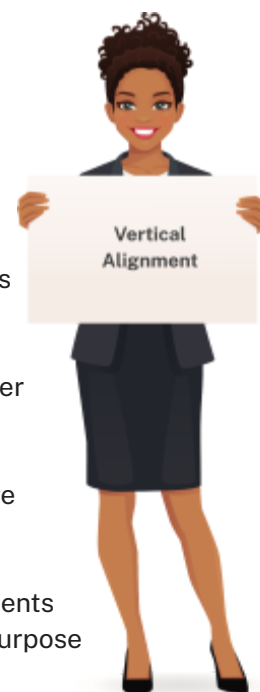
Q & A With COunselor COnnect!

Question: What is **Vertical Alignment**, and why does it matter?

Answer: Vertical Alignment is the intentional coordination of curriculum and pathways across elementary, middle, and high school that reflect local community and workforce needs. Each school level, elementary, middle, and high school, works together so students move seamlessly from early career awareness to career exploration, then to credentialing and career readiness. This alignment should also reflect local community and workforce needs.

When we intentionally connect learning across grades, we're not just improving systems, we're expanding opportunities for students.

- It **motivates** young students and expands access to high-demand careers. When students can see how what they're learning applies to real life, they begin to build a sense of purpose and engagement.





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- Early **exposure** helps them identify their interests, strengths, and future possibilities, especially in high-wage, high-demand fields.
- It **aligns** credential attainment with labor market demand. If a region has strong industry sectors but limited related course offerings or low credential attainment, that's a signal of misalignment. Our goal is to ensure that what's offered in schools reflects the workforce needs in our communities.
- It directly **impacts** SPS outcomes. Higher IBC attainment and dual enrollment strengthen the Strength of Diploma Index, and effective course sequencing and advising tied to IGPs improve the Graduation Rate Index. In other words, vertical alignment doesn't just help students; it improves overall school performance.

Scholarship/Funding Opportunities

Scholarship awards can range significantly, from modest amounts, such as \$50-\$500, from local organizations to substantial sums, including full tuition, from larger institutions. Smaller scholarships, despite their lesser amounts, can be a great way to secure funding and often have fewer applicants.

[Louisiana Red Beans and Rice Foundation Scholarships](#) (Deadline: December 15, 2025)

[Stromberg's Scholarship Program](#) (Deadline: December 31, 2025)

[Regions Rising Forward Scholarship Contest](#) (Deadline: December 31, 2025)

[Niche No Essay Contest](#) (Deadline: December 31, 2025)

[The Southeastern Honors Scholarship](#) (Deadline: January 15, 2026)

[Brent P. Poor Memorial Scholarship](#) (Deadline: January 31, 2026)

[Louisiana Solid Waste Association Scholarship](#) (Deadline: February 1, 2026)

[SkillsUSA Member Scholarships](#) (Deadline: Varies)

[Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education \(TEACH\) Grant](#) (Deadline: Varies)

[BigFuture Scholarships](#) (Deadline: Monthly drawing)

[1st Financial Bank USA Financial Goals Scholarship](#) (Deadline: Monthly Drawing)



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Connect With Our Office

Office of Career and College Readiness Contact Information

highschoolacademics@la.gov	General questions about the office and about graduation requirements
ldefinancialaid@la.gov	Questions related to the financial aid policy or for assistance with FAFSA completion
coursechoice@la.gov	Questions related to Course Choice/Supplemental Course Allocation
fastforward@la.gov	Questions related to Fast Forward and Jump Start
healthyschools@la.gov	Questions related to healthy schools, healthy communities, and the whole child
ppp@la.gov	Questions related to pupil progression
transcripts@la.gov	Questions about duplicate high school transcripts for graduates

Monthly Calls

Alternative Education	December 11 @ 10 a.m.
Office of Career and College Readiness	December 18 @ 3 p.m.
Safe and Healthy Schools	January 22 @ 2 p.m.

Do you or a colleague need to sign up for the [Counselor Connect](#) newsletter? Please subscribe via the following [link](#).