



Counselor Connect



January 2026

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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.

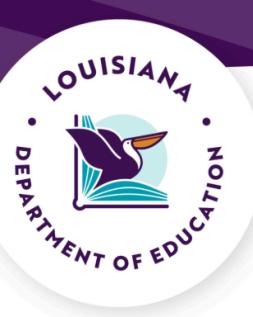
Fast Forward

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**.



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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 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 Spring Reporting

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

The [Course Choice Portal](#) is open for spring reporting. Please ensure all enrollments are reported by the deadline.

The portal closes for Private Providers on January 30, 2026. The portal closes for Public Higher Education Providers on March 6, 2026

Please contact coursechoice@la.gov with questions.



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Course Choice Family Awareness Campaign

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

Beginning this month, LDOE will launch a digital campaign to help families learn more about Louisiana's Course Choice program during the January–February scheduling window for fall 2026 classes. The ads will direct families to a dedicated [Course Choice Family webpage](#), where they can find additional information about course options and guidance to contact school counselors for support.

School and district teams are encouraged to review the [LDOE Course Choice webpage](#) and the resources linked below. These tools help teams understand the program, communicate effectively with families, and provide informed next steps when questions arise. Schools may also consider linking the [Course Choice Family webpage](#) on local sites and materials so families can easily access accurate information.

Helpful Resources:

- [Course Choice School Roadmap](#): A step-by-step guide for school leaders outlining how to plan, communicate, approve, enroll, and manage payments for the Course Choice program..
- [Parent Sample Letter](#): A customizable communication template schools can send to families introducing the Course Choice program and inviting them to discuss opportunities with their child's counselor.
- [Course Choice Program Flyer](#): A one-page overview for families explaining what the Course Choice program is, what types of courses are available, and how to get started by contacting their school counselor.

Please contact coursechoice@la.gov with questions.

Professional Opportunities

Save the Date! Spring 2026 Counselor Institute In-Person Sessions

Please share with school counselors and administrators.

Save the dates for our Spring 2026 Counselor Institute sessions! In person sessions will be held on March 13 (Ouachita Parish), March 20 (St. Charles Parish) and March 27 (Lafayette Parish). Additional details and registration information will be available in the February Counselor Connect.

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

2026 Louisiana ACT Summit

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

[Registration](#) is 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.



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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.

SREB Crisis Recovery Network Counselor

Please share with school counselors.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is seeking 40 school counselors in each SREB state to serve on the Crisis Recovery Network. Network members receive specialized training in crisis response and recovery, building capacity within their own school, district, or institution, as well as enabling them to support other schools within their state or the SREB region in times of catastrophic crisis. SREB Crisis Recovery Network members need a combination of education, experience and specialized training in crisis intervention and recovery, and must be recommended by their superintendent.

SREB covers all training and deployment costs. The initial two day workshop will be held on March 2-3 in St. Charles Parish. Additional information and the [application](#) to become a member are currently available on the [SREB website](#).

Please contact linda.tyree@sreb.org 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 coming months tailored to the state of Louisiana. The webinars will provide meaningful assistance and resources for the Advanced Placement (AP)



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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.

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.

ACAC Webinar: Support High School Juniors in Making Informed College Decisions

Please share with school counselors.

ACT's American College Application Campaign (ACAC) is a new initiative designed to guide high school juniors through the college match and fit process. This initiative equips counselors with resources and activities that help students build balanced college lists, understand what "math and fit" really means, and prepare for senior applications. [Registration](#) is now open for this session that will take place on January 27 at 12 p.m.

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

Computer Science Implementation Regional Tour

Please share with administrators, counselors, CTE supervisors, STEM coordinators, and system leaders.

The LDOE is hosting a three-stop regional tour to support school system leaders in developing a comprehensive K-12 Computer Science implementation plan. The sessions will guide participants through developing effective, system-level implementation strategies using state supports and key resources available in the [Louisiana K-12 Computer Science Education Plan](#). Registration is required to attend the in-person sessions.

- January 28: [Tangipahoa](#)
- February 5: [Baton Rouge](#)
- February 24: [Bossier](#)

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.



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2026 Fast Forward Training Catalog

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

The [Fast Forward Training Catalog](#) provides a list of professional development and training opportunities available. The catalog includes virtual, in-person, and hybrid training options for many Industry-Based Certifications (IBCs) on the State Focus List. Please be sure to check out the professional development offerings as they are updated regularly.

Please contact fastforward@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.

Louisiana Education Loan Authority

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

The Louisiana Education Loan Authority (Lela) is Louisiana's nonprofit resource for free FAFSA completion assistance, college access, and affordable financing. It is a division of the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority (LPFA) — a nonprofit public trust established to provide financing assistance and benefits to the people of Louisiana.

The Lela team assists families with FAFSA-related questions through its FAFSA HELPlne (844-463-2372) and [scheduled virtual appointments](#). Lela also offers a \$1,000 FAFSA Completion Scholarship and free resources to Louisiana high school counselors, students, and families, including a [FAFSA Completion Guide](#), Parents' Guide to Planning and Paying for College, and a College Planning Checklist at www.lela.org.

Please contact info@lela.org 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.



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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.

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.

2025 ACT College and Career Readiness Workshops

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

Access is still available for the 2025 ACT College and Career Readiness Workshops [on demand](#). The workshop series features expert-led sessions designed to help educators, counselors, and administrators prepare students for success. Session topics include:

- Enhancing Student Opportunities
- PreACT for Success
- ACT Instructional Mastery Courses
- National ACT College and Career Readiness Workshop

The ACT College and Career Readiness Workshops will return in 2026. [Register](#) to be notified when registration opens for the 2026 workshops.

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.



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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 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 for 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.



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[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.

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

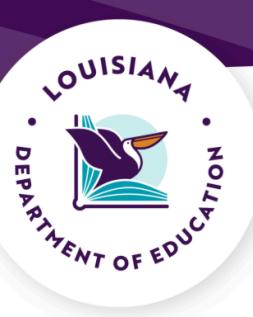
Please share with school system counselors and personnel who assist students with financial aid planning for postsecondary opportunities.

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 ldefinancialaid@la.gov with questions.



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Ask CoCo

Q & A With COounselor COnnect!

Q: What are the Career Exploration policy requirements for middle school students?

A: 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 Days

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.



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.

[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)

[Southern Foundation: Clyde and Carrie W. McHenry Endowed Scholarship](#) (Deadline: Varies)

[Southern Foundation: City National Bank Endowed Scholarship](#) (Deadline: Varies)

[Southern Foundation: Dow Alumni Scholarship Fund](#) (Deadline: Varies)

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

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



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

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

[LELA: \\$1,000 FAFSA Completion Scholarship Drawing](#) (Deadline: Varies)

[LELA: \\$1,000 Choose Louisiana Scholarship Drawing](#) (Deadline: Varies)

Connect With Our Office

Office of Career and College Readiness Contact Information

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

Monthly Calls

Office of Career and College Readiness	<u>January 15 @ 3 p.m.</u>
Safe and Healthy Schools	<u>January 22 @ 2 p.m.</u>
Alternative Education	<u>February 12 @ 10 a.m.</u>



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