Counselor Connect

March 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.

ACT - Upcoming Test Dates

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

Below is the list of upcoming National ACT test dates and the registration deadlines.

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration	Scores Released
April 11	March 6	March 24	April 21
June 13	May 8	May 29	June 23
July 11	June 5	June 24	July 21

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

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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**.

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 provide students with a clear path from high school into training, postsecondary education, and career opportunities.

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

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Course Choice Spring Reporting

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

The Course Choice Portal is open for spring reporting with Public Higher Education Providers. The reporting deadline is March 6, at 5 pm.

Please contact coursechoice@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.

Fast Forward Summers 2025-2026

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

The Fast Forward Summers application is open. It will close on March 27. There will be a 2025-2026 Fast Forward Summers Overview webinar:

- **Date and Time:** Tuesday, March 10 at 1 p.m.
- **Zoom Link:** https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/92029261012?pwd=iMSCBwQST9dpObvIYDkUJJKCEs4xfr.1
- **Phone Dial-in:** 312-626-6799
- **Meeting ID:** 920 2926 1012
- **Passcode:** 963221

If you have any questions, please contact coursechoice@la.gov

Medicaid-Training Update

Please share with counselors, social workers, and coordinators.

The Sivic Solutions Group (SSG) conducted training for school districts and LEAs in January and delivered two webinar sessions to support participants and Time Study Coordinators. The training equipped participants and Time Study Coordinators with the knowledge required to complete sample moments and navigate the LA RMTS e-SivicMACS system.

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Random Moment Time Study (RMTS) Participant Training Video

LA Time Study Coordinator Training Video

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Professional Opportunities

Spring 2026 Counselor Institute In-Person Sessions

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

Registration for the Spring 2026 Counselor Institute in-person session is now available on Eventbrite. Attendees will participate in sessions focused on interactive, collaborative planning that promotes student success.

Three options for in-person sessions:

- **March 13:** Ouachita Parish
- **March 20:** St. Bernard Parish
- **March 27:** Calcasieu Parish

If you are unable to attend any of the three in-person session options, slide decks and handouts will be provided on the Counselor Support page after the last in-person session.

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

2026 Fast Forward Training Catalog

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

The Fast Forward Training Catalog provides a list of available professional development and training opportunities. 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.

2026 ACT Summit

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

Registration is currently open for the 2026 ACT Summit. The ACT Summit will be held on July 13-15 in Nashville, TN.

This event unites the expertise and focus of workforce professionals, higher-ed leaders, and K-12 leaders, creating a fully integrated experience that fosters cross-sector collaboration. Sessions are designed to spark collaboration, foster problem-solving, and shape the future of education and the workforce.

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

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2026 Medical Simulation Expo

Please share with healthcare educators, counselors, CTE supervisors, and operations specialists.

Registration is currently open for the 2026 Medical Simulation Expo, hosted by the Simulation Medical Training and Education Committee. The expo will be held on April 17 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

This free event is for healthcare educators to connect with peers, explore best practices, and enhance approaches to clinical training.

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

College Board Lunch & Learn: Updates on AP Business with Personal Finance and AP Cybersecurity

Please share with counselors, AP teachers, and testing coordinators.

The College Board is offering a webinar on March 24 to provide updates on two newer AP course offerings, AP Business with Personal Finance and AP Cybersecurity. These courses will launch in the 2026-27 school year. Participants will learn about the course content, implementation details, and how these courses prepare students with relevant, real-world knowledge and skills. Registration is now open.

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

Preparing for Spring 2026 AP Exams Webinar

Please share with counselors, AP teachers, and testing coordinators.

The College Board is offering a webinar on March 24 to provide critical updates and reminders for a smooth, successful testing experience. Participants will receive an overview of the latest enhancements to Bluebook and the Test Day Toolkit. The session will cover key proctor reminders, common pitfalls on test days, and best practices for supporting students before and during exams. Please register by March 23.

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.

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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 HELPline (844-463-2372) and scheduled virtual appointments. Lela also offers a $1,000 FAFSA Completion Scholarship and free resources for 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.

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.

Reminders

Medicaid-Charter Schools

Please share with counselors, school nurses, social workers, and coordinators.

Charter LEAs that undergo a name change or transition to a new Charter Management Company. Charter

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LEAs are required to:

- Notify the state of Louisiana Medicaid Fiscal Intermediary/Gainwell Technology Provider Enrollment Unit and the Louisiana Department of Health immediately
- Update the Provider Enrollment File Form
- Complete the Link/Unlink and Working Relationship Form
- Mail forms with an original signature to the Gainwell Provider Enrollment Unit

All required updates and approvals should be completed to ensure records, accountability, and compliance remain accurate and up to date.

Please contact Healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Safe and Healthy Schools Community of Practice Calls

Please share with school counselors, social workers, school nurses, coordinators, system leaders, administrators, teachers.

Safe and Healthy Schools team hosts monthly Community of Practice Calls on the fourth Thursday of each month at 2 p.m. Each month, an expert presents on topics related to school safety, school health, transportation, nursing, suicide and bullying prevention, health and physical education, School-based Medicaid funding, the Coordinated School Health Initiative, school health advisory councils, and Project Aware.

March – Family Engagement 2.0, presented by Sarah Harrell, MSNPA, MSW, LMSW, Research Associate, LSU: Social Research and Evaluation Center (SREC)

- **Date and Time:** March 26 at 2 p.m.
- **Zoom Link:** https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/96110034221
- **Phone Dial-In:** 470-250-9358
- **Webinar ID:** 961 1003 4221

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

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

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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.

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.

College Board Deadlines and Reminders

Please share with administrators, counselors, testing coordinators, and AP teachers.

The College Board would like to remind school systems of upcoming deadlines:

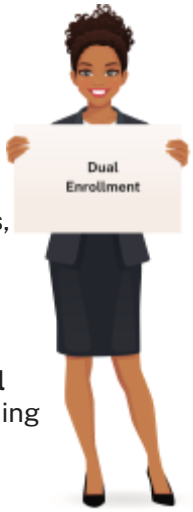
- March 13: Deadline for AP Coordinators to submit final updates for AP Exam Orders.
- April 30: Deadline to finalize student fee reduction status in AP Registration & Ordering.
- April 30: AP Digital Portfolio deal for performance tasks in AP Seminar, AP Research, and AP Computer Science Principles.

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

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Ask CoCo

Q & A With COunselor COnnect!



Q: How do students benefit from taking Dual Enrollment Courses?

A: Thrive: Measures how well students are prepared for college, careers, or service after graduation. **Dual enrollment** contributes by providing postsecondary credit and high-quality credentials, which directly reflect student readiness and support school-level Thrive outcomes.
Achieve: Focuses on academic mastery and achievement. **Dual enrollment** allows students to take accelerated coursework that challenges them academically while earning credit, reinforcing mastery in key subjects.
Grow: Tracks student progress over time, highlighting improvements in achievement and readiness. **Dual enrollment** data can demonstrate growth in both academic and postsecondary readiness metrics, providing actionable insights at the school and system level.

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.

Regions Riding Forward Scholarship Contest (Deadline: March 31, 2026)

The Karen E. Domingue-Maillet and Solvay/Eco Services Scholarship (Deadline: March 31, 2026)

Coca-Cola Scholarship (Deadline: April 1, 2026)

College Board: Big Future Scholarships (Deadline: Varies)

SkillPointe Foundation Scholarship (Deadline: Every Quarter)

Home Depot Foundation's Path to Pro Scholarship (Deadline: Last day of March, June, September, and December)

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)

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)

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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	March 12 @ 10 a.m.
Office of Career and College Readiness	March 19 @ 3 p.m.
Safe and Healthy Schools	March 26 @ 2 p.m.

Do you or a colleague need to sign up for the **Counselor Connect** newsletter? Please subscribe via the following link.