Counselor Connect

November 2026

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Student Opportunities

TOPS Eligibility Testing Deadlines

Please share with administrators, school counselors, and test coordinators.

Please be aware of the following testing deadlines for **TOPS Eligibility**:

ACT: The **April** national test day is the last opportunity for students to receive a qualifying score without a penalty for the TOPS Scholarship.

SAT: The **March** national test day is the last opportunity for students to receive a qualifying score without a penalty for the TOPS Scholarship.

CLT: Students must achieve a qualifying score no later than the national ACT test date in **April** of the year they graduate from high school.

Students who use a later qualifying score will receive a one-semester or two-quarter reduction of their TOPS Award. The highest score MUST be used to qualify for TOPS, even if taken after these deadlines.

The ACT is administered on national test days throughout the United States. Registration and test day information can be found on the ACT website.

ACT Registration: LOSFA's ACT code is 1595.

Please contact custserv@laregents.edu with questions.

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ACT

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
December 12	November 6	November 29	December 22
February 27	January 22	February 9	March 16
April 10	March 5	March 23	April 20
June 12	May 7	May 25	June 22
July 10	June 4	June 22	July 20

Please contact mia.edwards@act.org with questions.

Free ACT Resources 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. You can share all materials with students to support test prep, including practice tests and test guides. ACT has also provided downloadable 2026-2027 posters for test dates and a counselor calendar.

Please contact mia.edwards@act.org with questions.

ACT Workforce Website

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

The ACT Workforce website has resources for CTE, K-12, and Adult educators. The content focuses on challenges, including career readiness assessment, skills certification, and community approaches to building talent pipelines. Content can be viewed based on your role working with CTE, Adult Education, or K-12.

Please contact mia.edwards@act.org with questions.

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Advanced Placement

AP Exam Orders

Please share with school leaders, AP coordinators, and school counselors.

The following deadlines apply to all AP Exams and all schools:

November 13: Final Ordering Deadline (Full year and fall semester AP courses and exam sections). Exams submitted after this date will incur an additional $40 late fee.

March 12, 2027: Spring course orders and fall order changes deadline.

Order updates should be managed in AP Registration and Ordering.

Please contact fhordge@collegeboard.org with questions.

Become an AP Reader

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

AP Reading is an annual event where AP teachers and college faculty score millions of responses from AP Exams. As a reader, you gain an in-depth understanding of the AP Exam so you can better assess your own students' work. If you are interested in applying for this professional learning opportunity, applications are currently being accepted.

Please contact fhordge@collegeboard.org 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 fhordge@collegeboard.org with questions.

Safe and Healthy Schools

School Physical Activity Award

Please share with administrators, teachers, and school counselors.

The Louisiana Department of Education recognizes that healthy, physically active students tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance, and classroom behaviors. Schools play a vital role in providing students with opportunities for regular physical activity before, during, and after school.

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The **School Physical Activity Award** recognizes exemplary public elementary and secondary schools that make physical activity an intentional part of the school experience and provide meaningful opportunities for students to be active throughout the day.

An **exemplary** school demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting physical activity through:

- Physical Education Classes
- Physical Activity Before and After School
- Physical Activity During School Hours
- Family and Community Engagement Activities
- Staff Involvement

State-level applications must be submitted through the application portal by **Thursday, January 21, 2027**.

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Human Trafficking Prevention Training

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

Act 737 (2026) supports Louisiana's efforts to prevent human trafficking by establishing requirements for public elementary and secondary schools to identify, report, and respond to suspected cases of human trafficking while connecting victims to appropriate services.

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, all public and charter schools must designate at least one school counselor, mental health professional, or school administrator to complete annual advanced human trafficking training. Training instruction shall be administered live, in-person or online.

The Department of Education, with the Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention, shall provide school boards with information on available training curricula and resources. Schools are required to maintain documentation of training completion to ensure compliance with state law.

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Fast Forward

Individual Graduation Plans Update

Please share with administrators and school counselors.

The Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) document has been updated to reflect Act 144 requirements. The plan now includes sections for middle school career activities and career interest inventories.

Additional documentation as required by Act 144 will be available in May 2027.

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

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Professional Opportunities

Fall 2026 Counselor Institute Sessions

Please share with school counselors and administrators.

Thank you to all who attended the **Fall 2026 Counselor Institute** sessions.

We hope you benefited from our informative sessions regarding topics and updates from the 2026 Legislative Session, course requirements, Safe and Healthy Schools, and Course Choice.

The slide deck and resources will be available on the Counselor Support page under the Counselor Institute tab.

Dates for the Spring 2027 Counselor Institutes will be released at a later date.

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

ACTE National WBL Leader of the Year Award

Please share with CTE Leaders, teachers, school counselors, and administrators.

Applications are open for the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) National Work-Based Learning (WBL) Leader of the Year Award. This award recognizes professionals who have demonstrated overall contributions to student success through community engagement, leadership roles, student organizations, WBL classroom innovations, and WBL advocacy. Please consider applying or nominating a deserving colleague.

The deadline is **November 30, 2026**, and nominees must be members of ACTE's WBL Division.

Please contact janj@provo.edu with questions.

Military Child of the Year® Awards

Please share with teachers, school counselors, and administrators.

Operation Homefront is now accepting nominations for the 19th annual Military Child of the Year® Awards, recognizing outstanding military children ages 13–18. Seven recipients — one from each service branch — will receive a $10,000 cash award, a laptop, and an all-expenses-paid, three-day trip to Washington, D.C., for themselves and their families.

Nominations are open to children of Active Duty, Reserve, National Guard, Gold Star, and retired military families. Anyone can submit a nomination; no account creation is required. This program is free.

Please contact danielle.campbell@operationhomefront.org with questions.

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Resources

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.

LOSFA School Counselor and Administrator Assistance
Please share with administrators and school counselors.

School Counselors and Administrators can schedule 30-minute one-on-one assistance from a LOSFA representative regarding LOSFA programs and college access information, including TOPS scholarships and Louisiana's savings programs.

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

Labor Market Briefings
Please share with administrators, career counselors, counselors, and teachers.

LA Works has begun providing monthly Labor Market Briefings to explore labor market trends, share helpful resources, and answer questions from session participants.

Meetings will be held the 2nd Wednesday of every month at noon through Microsoft Teams.

Please contact LMI@la.gov for more information.

Lela College Planning
Please share with teachers, school counselors, and administrators.

Lela's publications for high school seniors have been posted at Planning for College - Louisiana Education Loan Authority. Please share with your senior families.

Please contact info@lela.org with questions.

Reminders

Digital Devices Guidelines
Please share with school system leaders, school administrators, and school staff.

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The prevalence and use of digital devices (e.g., computers, laptops, tablets, Chromebooks, smart devices, project screens, smartboards, and smartphones) by students and educators are an everyday component of the school day and our individual lives. The Louisiana Department of Health and other stakeholders developed the guidelines in collaboration.

These guidelines provide school systems with health and safety resources based on best practices for effectively integrating digital devices in public schools. The resources are not exhaustive but are intended to provide school systems with age-appropriate time and usage guidelines regarding various digital devices.

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. View the Community Service Diploma Endorsement Categories document for examples of service categories and activities.

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

Financial Aid Planning

Please share with school system administrators and counselors.

The 2027–2028 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form is now available. If assistance is needed with completing the FAFSA, visit Lela.org or mylosfa.la.gov for free resources and support.

Please visit lela.org or contact GeauxFAFSA@laregents.edu with questions.

Counselor Question of the Month

Q: Tell me about Course Choice. What is it, how does it benefit our students, what is the parent's role, and how is it paid?

A: Course Choice is a high-value opportunity for Louisiana students that allows them to take the classes they need, even if those classes aren't offered at their school. This includes core courses, foreign language, test preparation, dual enrollment, career and technical education, Advanced Placement (AP), and other important courses that support graduation, college, and career goals.

Parents play an important role in this process by helping identify the right opportunities for their students. Schools and school systems support families by guiding them through the process, assisting with enrollment, and making sure everything runs smoothly.

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Course Choice funding is **prioritized** based on student need and alignment to state goals. Below are the current priorities, in order:

1. **Graduation or TOPS Requirements**
   Students who need a course to graduate or to meet TOPS eligibility—and the course is not available at their school.
2. **Fast Forward Pathways**
   Students enrolled in courses required for an associate degree, certificate of technical studies, or work-based learning tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs.
3. **College Credit**
   Students pursuing TOPS-aligned dual enrollment or AP courses.
4. **CIR/UIR-A Schools**
   Students attending schools designated as Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR) or Urgent Intervention Required for Academics (UIR-A).
5. **Academic and Career Recovery**
   Students needing high-quality credit recovery in academic or career/technical courses that meet graduation or Louisiana IBC state focus list requirements.
6. **Test Preparation**
   Students enrolling in courses to improve scores on nationally recognized assessments (ACT, SAT, CLT, WorkKeys, or ASVAB).
7. **Local Priorities**
   Other priorities defined by the school system, approved by LDOE, and outlined in the district's pupil progression plan.

Additional resources for school counselors, leaders, families, and students are available on the Course Choice Program page.

Scholarships/Funding Opportunities

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

Army ROTC Scholarship (Deadline: Varies)

Too Cool to Pay for School Scholarship (Quarterly Deadlines: March, June, September, and December)

Vincent G. June Endowed Scholarship (Deadline: November 15, 2026)

Hagan Scholarship Foundation (Deadline: December 1, 2026)

Thurgood Marshall College Fund (Deadline: December 1, 2026)

Jimmy Rane Foundation Scholarships (Application opens: December 1, 2026)

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ARRL Helen Laughlin AM Mode Memorial Scholarship (Deadline: December 30, 2026)

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

Dell Scholars Program (Application opens: December 15, 2026; Application closes: February 15, 2027)

Louisiana Title 29 Dependents' Educational Assistance Scholarship (Deadline: December 31, 2026)

Build Ford Tough Scholarship (Deadline: January 15, 2027)

Louisiana Restaurant Association Education Foundation (LRAEF) (Deadline: January 30, 2027)

Brent P. Poor Memorial Scholarship (Deadline: January 31, 2027)

National Association of Junior Auxiliaries (Deadline: February 1, 2027)

Simon Youth Foundation Scholarships (Deadline: February 12, 2027)

Connect With Our Office

Office of Career and College Readiness Contact Information

highschoolacademics@la.gov	General questions about the office and about graduation requirements
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 school safety, school bus transportation, coordinated school health, school health advisory councils, mental and behavioral health initiatives, nursing, or school-based Medicaid
ppp@la.gov	Questions related to pupil progression
transcripts@la.gov	Questions about duplicate high school transcripts for graduates

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Monthly Calls

Office of Career and College Readiness	November 19 at 3 p.m.
Alternative Education	December 3 at 10 a.m.
School Safety	December 9, 2026
Safe and Healthy Schools- Community of Practice	January 28 at 2 p.m.

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