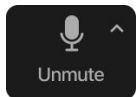
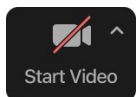


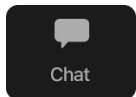
Zoom Meeting Preparation



- Please make sure your phone or computer is muted to minimize background noise.
 - To do this, hover over the bottom left-hand side of your screen and click “Mute.”



- Please make sure you have turned off your camera to save bandwidth and prevent any connectivity issues.
 - To do this, hover over the bottom left-hand side of your screen and click “Stop Video.”



- Please submit questions during the presentation in the “Chat” function located on the bottom of your screen.

If you require an interpreter or have other accessibility needs for future LDOE meetings, please contact LDOEcommunications@la.gov.



Alternative Education Quarterly Call

Starting Strong: Building a Culture of Belonging, Accountability,
and Success in Alternative Education



September 3, 2026

Agenda

- Starting Strong: Building a Culture of Belonging, Accountability, and Success in Alternative Education
 - Resetting the Culture
 - Building Relationships From Day One
 - Balancing Accountability and Opportunity
 - Academic Re-Engagement
- Announcements
- Questions and/or Feedback

Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with any questions.



Resetting the Culture

- What do we want students to feel when they walk through the door?
 - Safe, respected, and welcomed.
 - Sense of belonging.
 - Hope and possibility.
 - Respect is reciprocal.

Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with any questions.



Resetting the Culture

- Establishing clear expectations and consistent routines
 - Students need to know what is expected.
 - Consistency creates predictability, which helps students feel secure.
 - Expectations should be simple, visible, taught, practiced, and reinforced.
 - Avoid assuming that students already know the routines.
 - Staff should have a shared understanding of how expectations are handled so that students receive a consistent message from classroom to classroom.

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Resetting the Culture

- Creating a culture that is structured without feeling punitive
 - Structure and punishment are not the same thing.
 - The goal is not simply to control behavior, it is to teach students the skills they need to manage behavior successfully.
 - Correct behavior while preserving the student's dignity.
 - Build opportunities for students to repair mistakes and rebuild relationships.
 - Be intentional about recognizing positive behavior.

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Connect Before You Correct
 - For many students in AE, school failure may have shaped how they view adults, school, and themselves.
 - Some expect to be judged, rejected, or unsuccessful.
 - Our first responsibility is to communicate: “You are welcome here, we believe you can succeed, and we are going to help you get there.”
 - Small, consistent interactions matter.

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Change the Questions: From Judgement to Curiosity
 - First response can determine whether a student becomes defensive or becomes willing to engage.
 - Asking appropriate questions helps students accept responsibility for behaviors and outcomes.
 - Understand the behavior before determining the appropriate response.
 - Move from reaction to restoration.
 - Move from punishment to problem-solving.

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Build trust through consistency.
 - Trust is built through repeated experiences.
 - Give students the opportunity to see that adults can be trusted, even when students make mistakes.
 - Student may test a relationship before trusting it.
 - Every challenging interaction is not disrespect.
 - Sometimes students are wondering if you will give up on them, too.

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Trust does not mean lowering expectations.
 - “I care about you enough to hold you accountable.”
 - Students need both support and high expectations.
 - Provide support, scaffolding, encouragement, and second chances.
 - Be clear about the difference between:
 - Understanding
 - Showing grace
 - Building relationships

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Create a “fresh start” environment.
 - The past is not their permanent identity.
 - Don't ignore the history, but avoid allowing it to define the student's future.
 - Ask the question, “What do you want to be this year?”
 - Identify one achievable goal and celebrate progress towards it.

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Building Relationships From Day One

- Make every interaction an opportunity.
 - Hallway greeting
 - 5 minute check-in
 - Noticing positive things
 - Identify goal

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Accountability and opportunity can exist together.
 - Choices have consequences.
 - Teach students how to make better choices.
 - Does your response hold the student accountable while keeping them connected to the path toward graduation and success?

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Maintain structure without creating disconnection.
 - Establish clear rules, routines and consequences.
 - Limit risk of creating further disconnection from school.
 - Consequence should not be the end of the conversation.

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Use discipline as a teaching opportunity.
 - Discipline should answer more than “What consequence does this student deserve?”
 - We should ask “What skills does this student need to develop?”
 - Students need support.

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Move away from the “last chance” mentality.
 - “Last chance” message can communicate that we are waiting for the student to fail.
 - Consider alternatives instead of “last chance.”
 - Repeated mistakes signal a need for more intentional intervention.

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Redirection is different from removal.
 - Removal may be necessary.
 - Removal alone does not necessarily change the behavior.
 - Plan for when the student returns.

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Don't let one behavior define the student.
 - Make a point to not reinforce the idea that a student is a “problem”
 - Correct the behavior without rejecting the student.

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Balancing Accountability and Opportunity

- Keep the end goal in sight.
 - The goal is to help students.
 - Every interaction should move toward that goal.

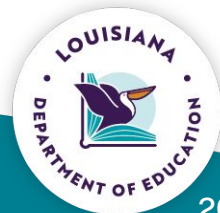
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Academic Re-Engagement

- Identify academic gaps quickly.
 - Know where they are academically.
 - Do not assume that a struggling student is unwilling to learn.
 - Use available data to identify needs, gaps, deficiencies, strengths, and patterns.
 - Identify what students don't know and what they already know.

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Academic Re-Engagement

- Make instruction meaningful and standards-aligned.
 - AE students deserve the same access to rigorous, standards-aligned instruction.
 - AE should not mean alternative academics.
 - Connect standard to real-world applications.

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Academic Re-Engagement

- Avoid busywork.
 - Students may disengage when they feel that the schoolwork is repetitive or designed to keep them occupied.
 - Every assignment should have a clear purpose.
 - Prioritize quality over quantity.
 - Provide learning in different ways.

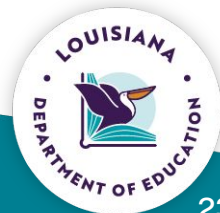
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Academic Re-Engagement

- Create early academic wins.
 - Students need to experience success early and often.
 - Give students opportunities to prove to themselves that they can be successful.
 - Start with achievable goals then increase the level of challenge.
 - Celebrate wins.

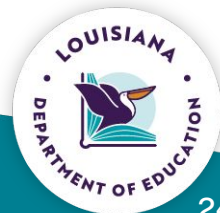
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Academic Re-Engagement

- Don't confuse rigor with frustration.
 - Rigor means appropriate challenge with the support necessary to be successful.
 - Goal is to help students move from “I can't do this” to “I can't do this yet.”

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Academic Re-Engagement

- Make progress visible.
 - Provide evidence that students are moving forward.
 - Help students understand various aspects of their learning.
 - Goal is for progress to create momentum.

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Academic Re-Engagement

- Connect academic success to the future.
 - Students need to see how today's work connects to tomorrow's opportunities.
 - Help students connect academics various career options.

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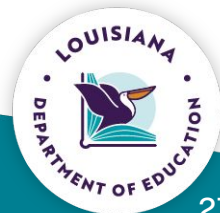


NAEA Annual Conference

Registration is now open for the 2026 National Alternative Education Association's Annual Conference. The NAEA Annual Conference is a space dedicated to advance the field of alternative education by sharing wisdom, knowledge and expertise with other like-minded educators and leaders.

- **When:** October 5-7
- **Where:** Baltimore, MD
- **Cost:** Registration \$595

Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with questions.



LDOE Monthly School Safety Calls

- September 9
- October 14
- November 11
- December 9
- January 13
- February 10
- March 10
- April 14
- May 12
- June 9
- July 14

Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with questions.



Calendar and Topics

Date	Event
September 9 at 10 am	<u>School Safety Monthly Call</u>
December 3 at 10 am	<u>AE Quarterly Call</u>
October 5 - 7	<u>2025 NAEA Conference</u>
September - May	AE Site Visits

Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with any questions.



Questions & Feedback

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Please contact tiffany.thomas@la.gov with any questions.

