Fall 2026 Counselor Institute

Louisiana Department of Education

October 2026

Entry Survey

- Possible survey questions ….
  - How comfortable are you with WBL?
  - How comfortable are you with TOPS U and TOPS Tech graduation requirements?
  - How comfortable are you with completing student IGPs including the new legislation where students need interests surveys and career awareness activities
  - What barriers do you think prohibit you from accomplishing tasks such as IGP completion, incorporating career activities, scheduling students into WBL opportunities, etc.

Louisiana's Education Priorities

- **Early childhood** leading to kindergarten readiness
- **Literacy** instruction aligned to the Science of Reading
- **Math** instruction from foundational to advanced skills
- Opportunities ensuring a **meaningful high school experience**
- An effective **teacher for every student**
- Expand **educational choice** for students and families

Key Responsibilities for Counselors in Louisiana

Support student social and personal development

Prepare students for college, career, and military pathways

Promote academic achievement and remove barriers to learning

Envision every student being supported to thrive academically, socially, and personally

Advocate for fair access to opportunities for all learners



Counselor Institute Workshop Agenda

Time	Session
8:30-9:00 a.m.	**Arrival & Sign In**
9:00-9:15 a.m.	**Opening, Welcome, Slido Activity, Objectives**
9:15-9:45 a.m.	**LDOE Updates**
9:45-10:00 a.m.	**Safe and Healthy Schools Updates & Counselor SLTs**
10:00-10:10 a.m.	**Student Policy and Specialized Programs**
10:10-10:20 a.m.	**Course Choice & Diploma Endorsements**
10:20-10:35 a.m.	**Break**
10:35-11:00 a.m	**Work-Based Learning**
11:00-11:30 a.m.	**Building Relationships with Post-Secondary**
11:30-12:00 p.m.	**Questions, Closing and Survey**

Activity



Objectives

Participants will:

01

Role & Skill Development

Understand their role in assisting students with developing skills that will allow them to graduate service, career, and/or college ready.

02

Credentials & Pathways

Understand the how and why students of all interests and capabilities can graduate with credentials that will provide them with career and life long opportunities.

03

Career Preparedness

Understand that ***all*** students are career students. The goal is to ensure that students graduate prepared.

LDOE Updates

Financial Literacy

For Fall grade 9 entry 2024-2025 and thereafter, **Financial Literacy** is required for:

- **TOPS University** students, and has its own category as a course requirement.
- For students entering grade 9 in the Fall 2024-2025 on the **TOPS Tech** diploma pathway, **Financial Literacy** is a required course and may be used to satisfy one of the four math credits.
- For **TOPS Tech** grade 9 entry *prior* to 2024-2025, students must take four units of math, of which Financial Math is an option.

Financial Literacy

Update: The following **core equivalents were approved** and are effective for the graduating class of 2028:

- Dual Enrollment Course: Arts Business and Personal Finance (Common Course Code CPFL1003)
- AP Business with Personal Finance

ACT 695- Math Curriculum

ACT 695 (2026) updated legislation that pertains to core math curriculum requirements.

Key Provisions:

- **Sequence Flexibility:** Permits students to substitute certain math core curriculum requirements without having to take the courses in a certain sequence.
- **Allowed Course Options:** Allows students to choose between traditional and integrated pathways:
  - Algebra I or Integrated Math I
  - Geometry or Integrated Math II
  - Algebra II or Integrated Math III

Example Scenario:

A student can complete:

- **Algebra I**
- **Integrated Math II**
- **Algebra II**

and fully meet the **TOPS Core Curriculum** requirements.

Computer Science

Core equivalents were approved at the Joint Board of Regents/Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting in December 2025 and are effective for the graduating class of 2031:

Computer Sciences as a math:

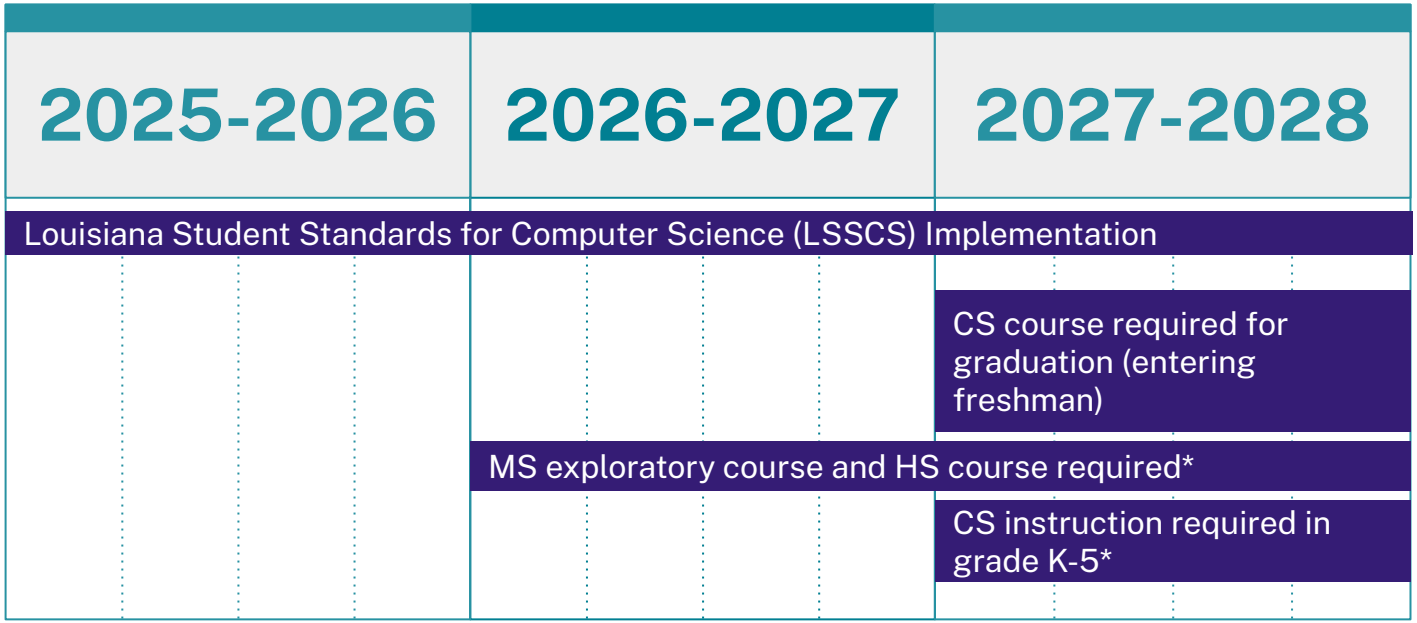
- Statistical Reasoning
- Introduction to Computational Thinking
- Data Science
- Quantitative Reasoning

Computer Sciences as a science:

- AP Computer Science Principles
- Computer Science I
- Computer Science II
- Data Manipulation and Analysis
- Modeling and Simulation

Contact stem@la.gov with questions.

Computer Science Implementation Timeline



*applies only to public schools

Contact stem@la.gov with questions.

Individual Graduation Plans: ACT 144

01. Plan Development

Eighth Grade Requirement

By the end of the **eighth grade** every student shall begin to develop an Individual Graduation Plan to guide the next academic year coursework and to assist the student in exploring educational and career possibilities and in making appropriate secondary and postsecondary education decisions as part of an overall postsecondary plan.

02. Course Mapping

Core Sequence

By the end of the **eighth grade**, each student's IGP or IEP, if applicable, shall list the required core courses to be taken through the tenth grade and shall identify the courses to be taken in the first year of high school.

03. Annual Review

Yearly Update

IGPs should be reviewed, updated and signed by a parent or guardian on a **yearly** basis and parents must be notified on any potential impacts.

Individual Graduation Plans: ACT 144

As a result of ACT 144:

- Document at least one middle school career related activity in the student's IGP (R. S. 17:183.2(A)) AND ensure that career interest inventories are done in grade 6 and updated in grades 7 and 8 (R. S. 17:2925 (B)).

Individual Graduation Plan Template

IGP Guidance

Please refer to Bulletin 741 for additional details.

Career Awareness Activities Updates

Previous: At least six activities shall be conducted in grades 6-8 to prepare students for choosing a career option at the high school level. Such activities ***may*** include field trips, guest speakers, community services, and other activities designed to introduce students to occupations in demand in Louisiana.

As a result of ACT 144: At least **three** of the six activities for each grade level ***shall*** meet one of the following criteria:

- An activity that provides direct interaction with an employer
- An activity that involves career pathway instruction linked to high school course options
- An activity that provides a work based learning exposure
- A career interest inventory

Each school that enrolls students in grades K-5 ***shall*** provide students with at least **one** career awareness experience or activity in a category listed above.

Amendments to TOPS Tech Eligibility

ACT 794 (2026) expands **TOPS Tech initial eligibility requirements** to allow a student to qualify using two of the following three academic criteria:

- at least a **2.50 cumulative grade point average** on the core curriculum;
- a minimum **ACT score of 17 or a Silver Level score on the ACT WorkKeys**;
- or successful completion of either at least nine academic or technical early college credits, which may be attained through dual enrollment, or equivalent validated skills and learning measures as approved by the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council.

ACT 794: Academic Year 2026-2027

ACT 794 (2026) provides amendments to the initial and continuing eligibility requirements for TOPS Tech recipients:

- Permits TOPS Tech recipients to attend a postsecondary school on a **part-time** basis.
- Students will **no longer be required** to enroll full time each semester or to earn 24 hours each academic year.
- Students must utilize their full award within three years of beginning a postsecondary school.
- This limitation on the timeframe is the same as that which is provided for M.J. Foster Promise Program recipients. Since both of these programs are workforce driven, it is reasonable to impose such a limitation on the timeframe for use of the award.

Career Coaching Vendors

As a result of ACT 413 (2026), the LDOE will provide a list of Career Coaching Vendors that school systems may utilize starting January 2027 on the Professional Learning Partner Guide.

The release date was **October 1** for vendors to apply on the LDOE Request for Applications (RFA) platform.

The application will remain open until **October 31**.

Contact candace.joseph@la.gov with questions.

Safe and Healthy Schools Updates

Human Trafficking Prevention Training

- Act 737 (2026), requires each school, including charter schools, to designate at least one employee to receive annual advanced training on human trafficking.
- The designated employee must be a school counselor, mental health professional, or school administrator.
- Training instruction shall be administered live, in-person or online. The Department of Education with Governor's Office of Human Trafficking Prevention shall provide information on available training curriculums and resources to school boards.

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Suicide Prevention Training

R.S. 17:437.1 (Jason Flatt Act), school personnel are required to complete a one time, one hour training in suicide prevention training and maintain documentation of training completion.

Suicide Prevention Resources for Schools:

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Suicide Prevention Toolkit for High Schools
- The Jason Foundation: Training Modules for Suicide Awareness and Prevention
- Peer Initiative Resources
- Teacher Resources

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Student Suicide Prevention Awareness Act

ACT 548 of 2026, requires public schools to post suicide hotline information, including the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, on school websites and, when applicable, on student identification cards to increase awareness and access to crisis support resources.

Schools are required to:

- Post the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline information prominently on their school website.
- Include the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline information on student identification cards, if the school issues ID cards to students.

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

Behavioral Health Services for Public School Students

ACT 944 (2026), provides relative to behavioral health services for public school students.

Behavioral health services benefits include:

- Expands access to behavioral health services in public schools.
- Supports partnerships between schools and behavioral health providers.
- Promotes timely identification, referral, and access to student mental health services.
- Strengthens coordination of school-based behavioral health supports.

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with questions.

School Counselor SLTs

What are School Counselor SLTs?

- SLTs for counselors are designed to measure the impact of **counseling practices** on **student outcomes** and align with the school's broader goals.
- Counselor SLTs should **align** with the school's overall improvement goals, and should utilize school data to **identify** areas of need.
- Alignment ensures that counseling efforts **contribute to schoolwide priorities** while addressing targeted supports that **improve student success**.
- Counselor SLTs help ensure that counseling programs remain **responsive** to student needs and **support** continuous improvement within the school community.

School Counselor SLT Guidance Document

Counselor SLTs should **align** with the the counselor's role and the **overall goals** of the school.

When developing SLTs, counselors **should**:

- Review relevant data (current and trend data over the last 3-5 years);
- Review the school improvement plan;
- Identify an area where counseling supports can positively impact student success; and
- Select a goal that focuses on outcomes that counselors can influence through their work with students, families, and school staff.

Elementary and Middle School Counselors

Elementary	Middle
• Targeted Attendance • Targeted Behavior/Discipline • Targeted Academics • Targeted Well-Being • Career Awareness • Parental Engagement	• Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs) • Targeted Attendance • Targeted Behavior/Discipline • Targeted Academics • Career Exploration • Parental Engagement

- **Targeted Academics** -Use data (e.g., failure report, D/F list, current and cumulative GPA reports, needs assessments, etc.) to identify group(s). Provide individual counseling, small group counseling, and/or classroom lessons that address barriers and improve academic outcomes

- **Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs)**- Ensuring that all students starting in Grade 8 have a plan that guides their high school coursework and postsecondary goals. Counselors/Career Coaches should meet with the parent or legal guardian yearly to explain how any changes would impact graduation and career goals. In addition, at least one career-related activity and interest inventory should be documented. (ACT 144) (R.S. 17:2925)

High School Counselors

SLT 1	SLT 2
Thrive	**Counseling**
• Increasing college readiness through DE, AP, or honors enrollment and completion • Targeted IBC completion • Supporting Work-Based Learning • Cohort Promotion Rate	• Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs) • Targeted Attendance • Targeted Behavior/Discipline • Targeted Academics • Parental Engagement

- **Targeted IBC Completion** - supporting teachers and students who may be struggling by providing interventions such as tutoring, parent contact, and counseling.
- **Supporting Work-Based Learning** - Increasing work-based learning opportunities by reaching out to businesses and industry for partnerships, setting up opportunities for students to engage with industry professionals and learn workforce readiness skills, and ensuring the best alignment between students and available resources.
- **Parental Engagement** - communication and touchpoints with guardians aligned to the school goal. Can be measured by feedback surveys, sign-in sheets, etc.

Counselor SLT Samples

SLT Counselor Sample Sets:

- TOPS Core Dual Enrollment
- Discipline
- Individual Graduation Plans

School Counseling SLT Webinars

Webinar dates and times will be announced soon!

Student Policy and Specialized Programs

Bullying Policy Information

Bulletin 741, Chapter 13

Each public school shall develop, adopt, and implement a policy prohibiting bullying in accordance with **R.S. 17:416.14**.

Bullying Compliance

The bullying policy must:

- Be implemented year-round
- Include a definition of bullying
- Establish procedures
- Address consequences for offenders
- Provide remedies and support for victims
- Prohibit false reports and retaliation
- Investigate and report school employees who fail to take appropriate action

Bullying Compliance

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a **pattern** of one or more behaviors directed toward a student by another student or group of students that occurs more than once and includes:

- Obscene or threatening gestures.
- Written, electronic, or verbal communication
- Physical acts or unauthorized use of another person's property.
- Repeated and intentional exclusion or social isolation.

Bullying Compliance

To meet the definition of bullying, the behavior **must** also result in one or more of the following:

- Physical harm
- Reasonable fear of physical harm
- Damage to a student's property.
- Reasonable fear of damage to a student's property.
- A severe, persistent, and pervasive pattern of behavior that:
  - Creates an intimidating educational environment.
  - Interferes with a student's educational performance.
  - Disrupts the orderly operation of the school.

Course Choice

Course Choice

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.

If you are new to Course Choice visit lacourses.net and contact coursechoice@la.gov to receive informational/training materials and technical assistance.

Course Choice

- Course Choice includes parental choice options to allow those closest to students to request opportunities to assist students to succeed in high school and beyond. Visit the Course Choice Tools for Parents page for more information.

- Policy outlines how systems must prioritize the use of SCA funding and make decisions on enrolling students in Course Choice programming. Visit the Course Choice Program page to review those priorities.

Course Choice

Upcoming Deadlines:

- **October 23** portal closes for public postsecondary enrollments fall/full year
- **November 23** portal opens for spring enrollments
- **January 29** portal closes for private provider enrollments spring
- **March 5** portal closes for public postsecondary enrollments spring

Enrollments must be in the portal by the stated deadlines to be eligible for SCA funding.

If you have any questions, contact stephanie.marcum@la.gov.

Diploma Endorsements

Diploma Endorsements/Seals

Bulletin 741, Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators: §2317. High Schools outlines the diploma endorsements Louisiana high school students may earn upon graduation.

- Community Service
- Biliteracy
- STEM
- Freedom Framework
- Fine Arts (new 2026-2027 school year)

Information can be found on the Diploma Endorsement FAQ.

State Seal of Fine Arts

- Students may earn the **State Seal of Fine Arts Endorsement** by completing four Carnegie credits in one arts discipline (3.00+ GPA)
- Students must also complete an arts-related BESE-compliant capstone/portfolio
- Visit the State Seal of Fine Arts page on the Department's website for information.

Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning provides opportunities for students to receive on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in all CTE program areas.

Three types of WBL opportunities:

- Cooperative Education
- Internships
- Registered Apprenticeships

Work-Based Learning

- **Cooperative Education** - Schools partnering with local employers to deliver on-the-job training.
- **Internships** - Hands-on workplace experience aligned with high demand industry.
- **Registered Apprenticeships** - Structured On-the-Job Training (OJT) combined with technical instruction.

Work-Based Learning

Requirements	Cooperative Education	Internship	Registered Apprenticeship
Agreement/MOU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student Enrolled in Correctly Coded Course	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hours	Minimum 15 Per Week	106.2 Total	Minimum to 2,000
Paid	Yes	Yes	Yes
Classroom Instruction	5 Hrs per week	Once per week/26.55 hours	Up to 4 Carnegie Units Louisiana Works

Work-Based Learning

Work-Based Learning students **must** be scheduled into an approved course code.

Work-Based Learning Guidelines

Minor Employment Certification

Submitting Certificates - Schools that are employers should submit their certificates by emailing them to: employmentcertificate@la.gov.

The school will receive an acknowledgement email that the certificate was received by LA Works.

For additional questions, contact **LA Works**:

Phone: 225-342-2683

Email: employmentcertificate@la.gov

Work-Based Learning

To receive Work-Based Learning support, systems can make a request for technical assistance by emailing fastforward@la.gov.

Career, College, or Service Acceleration

University Accelerator

- ACT of 20 or SAT of 1040 or CLT of 67, PLUS…
- TOPS Aligned AP of 3, or IB of 4, or 6 DE credits with a C or Better, or Math 25+, ENG 26+, SAT math 590+, SAT W&L 33+, 3 CLEP with course enrollment recognized by BoR flagship

Career Accelerator

(High-Quality Credentials)*

- Basic Bundle + WBL, or
- Advanced Credential + WBL, or
- 2 years of a Fast-Forward Aligned Registered Apprenticeship, or
- Certificate of technical studies in a high wage / high demand industry.

Service Accelerator

- Signed Military Acceptance Letter

or

- Service Academy Acceptance

***All registered apprenticeships and credentials must be LWC approved.**

Building Relationships with Post Secondary

Why Partnerships Matter

- Increase access to dual enrollment
- Improve student success
- Align coursework with career and college goals
- Strengthen workforce pipelines
- Support seamless student transitions

The Counselor's Role

Counselors help students:

- Explore career interests
- Select appropriate pathways
- Understand dual enrollment options
- Connect with postsecondary partners
- Prepare for life after high school

Five Strategies for Strong Partnerships

1. Communicate Early
2. Build Relationships Year-Round
3. Align Student Goals
4. Understand Available Supports
5. Celebrate Student Success

Communicate Early and Often

Successful partnerships include:

- Annual planning meetings
- Shared academic calendars
- Designated points of contact
- Regular counselor updates
- Registration timelines

Helping Students Make Informed Choices

Students should understand:

- Degree pathways
- Transfer requirements
- Technical pathways
- Career outcomes
- Course sequencing

Know Your Postsecondary Partner

Understand:

- Student support services
- Tutoring
- Disability services
- Advising
- Career services
- Orientation
- Financial aid resources

Louisiana Spotlight

Innovative Practices Across the State

Practice	Example
Career Readiness Transcript	Nicholls
Career Compass Coaches	Northwestern
Early Alert System	Southern
Counselor Breakfasts	Fletcher
Facilitator Model	LSU/ULM/Southeastern
Student Success Orientation	SOWELA

Common Themes Across Louisiana

- Relationships matter
- Early planning improves outcomes
- Student advising is essential
- Flexible delivery models expand access
- Student support drives success

2026 Legislative Updates: Key Takeaways for Counselors

Act 438 (2026) Statewide DE application and tuition consistency.

Board of Regents-led legislation: This is a Board of Regents initiative, and the Board of Regents is responsible for overseeing implementation.

This Act calls for postsecondary to utilize a uniform application process. It will be streamlined. The Department is monitoring implementation.

2026 Legislative Updates: Key Takeaways for Counselors

Act 547 (2026) LCTC pilot program regarding partnerships for transportation and logistics pathways, an exploration of new workforce and dual enrollment opportunities with local technical colleges.

2026 Legislative Updates: Key Takeaways for Counselors

Act 355 (2026) Expanded TOPS-Tech eligibility for certain military veterans.

Be aware when advising military-connected students and recent graduates.

Resources

- Louisiana Department of Education Dual Enrollment Resources
- Dual Enrollment Portal Board of Regents
- ApplyDE
- Fast Forward
- MJ Foster Promise Program
- LOSFA

Reflection

Ask Yourself…

- How often do I communicate with my postsecondary partners?
- Are students selecting courses aligned to their goals?
- Do I know what supports are available for my students?
- What is one partnership I can strengthen this year?

Survey

Thank you for your engagement today!

Please take a moment to complete this short feedback survey — your input helps us improve future sessions and better meet your needs.

Appendix: Resources

Key Tools & Resources

- Counselor Rubric and Handbook
- Jump Start Website
  - Jump Start Graduation Pathways
- IGP Template
- Fast Forward
- High School Planning Guide
- WBL Guidance
- Fast Forward Funding Guidance
- Reframing CTE Messaging Handout
- Career Integration and Planning Handout
- 2026 TLS Sessions (In Our Exploration Era)
- 6-8 Computer Science Implementation Framework
- 9-12 Computer Science Implementation Framework