

## *Quest for Success*

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## Quest for Success

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#### 1. What is *Quest for Success*?

*Quest for Success* (QFS) is an innovative, new, high school-level, career exploration course designed to prepare all Louisiana graduates for career and life success. The new course will help all students to:

- develop essential 21st century workforce skills - the ability to communicate, collaborate, and lead;
- explore new and exciting careers and industry sectors; and
- learn about themselves and their interests to successfully navigate high school, postsecondary education, and career pathways.

The course, to replace Louisiana's current *Journey to Careers* course, was written by leading educators from across the state as part of the [Louisiana Educator Voice Fellowship](#), a partnership between the Louisiana Department of Education and [America Achieves](#), a national non-profit organization. The Fellowship is part of Louisiana's comprehensive effort to improve career readiness in the state, including its hallmark [Jump Start](#) initiative.

*Quest for Success*' eight units are carefully planned to help students progress from knowing and being aware of themselves and themselves in relation to others, to leading responsibly, and leveraging these skills in identifying personal and career goals and planning for the future. Informed by business and industry and other experts, the curriculum includes a variety of industry-aligned performance tasks that simulate the real world of work and support development of a variety of in-demand, cross-sector, employability skills (e.g., collaboration, resource management, communication). Additionally, students will learn about high-growth, industry sectors (e.g., information technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing) and related career pathways, apply a variety of technology skills, and be asked to continuously reflect on their learning. Watch the [video](#) to hear from some of the Louisiana educators who created the course.

#### 2. Which students should take QFS?

*Quest for Success* is a high school-level course designed to help ensure *all* Louisiana high school graduates are prepared for career and life success. Due to the background knowledge required and rigor, this course will **only** be taught to students in the **eighth grade and higher**. During the course pilot, students who were in grades 7<sup>th</sup> grade and lower struggled with the course work and none of the classes were able to complete the course in its entirety. Local schools and districts will decide when to offer the course to students beginning in the eighth grade and spanning high school grades. Schools are strongly encouraged to offer it early – primarily to 8th and 9th grade students – to help students and their families explore their particular career interests and opportunities and make academic planning decisions (e.g., whether to follow a TOPs and/or JumpStart pathway, which courses to take, which extracurricular activities and work-based learning opportunities to pursue) aligned to these and following pathways to career success. If students are enrolled in this course before they enter eighth grade, then they will not receive high school credit for this course.

#### 3. Who will teach QFS? Can anyone teach it?

To ensure Louisiana teachers and students have the highest quality curriculum and aligned instructional materials, LDOE piloted the *QFS* course in Louisiana classrooms during the 2018-2019 school year and made revisions to the final curriculum. To support this effort, and ensure fidelity of implementation of the materials, only certified teachers who participate in LDOE-hosted summer training will be allowed to teach the course. Currently training is offered through LDOE Super Summer Institute. Dates for training are released each school year and training may be provided during the school year for special circumstances.

#### **4. Why is the state limiting who can teach the course?**

The *Quest for Success* curriculum, targeted instructional strategies (e.g., project-based learning, community experiences – see [The Promise of Partnerships: Engaging Industry to Improve Career Readiness](#)), and student activities and assignments (e.g., collaborative tasks, uses of technology) are vastly different from the previous *Journey to Careers* course. Effective implementation requires in-depth training, careful planning, local commitment, and deliberate approaches to course implementation. As a result, LDOE, in partnership with local schools and districts, is only allowing teachers who participate in the LDOE-hosted summer training or other sponsored LDOE training to teach the course.

#### **5. Can teachers use QFS in their other classes?**

*Quest for Success* is designed to include a variety of best practices (e.g., project-based learning, cooperative learning, frequent and task-specific, formative feedback) and high-quality student and teacher resources (e.g., college- and career-planning websites) that can support improved teaching and learning across the content areas. While teachers are encouraged to apply their new learning and resources in all of their school improvement work, they should NOT use specific instructional activities and assignments, lessons, units, or assessments in other courses. These are designed to be part of a comprehensive curriculum where each activity is carefully planned and sequenced to scaffold the next and their success depends on preserving this course coherence. Additionally, just as we would not want students repeating the same texts or assignments across grades and courses, we do not want students introduced to the same QFS activities outside of this course and multiple times in their academic career. In future years, we would hope that schools might develop their own plans and materials to extend, rather than repeat QFS learning. For example, schools are encouraged to continue to support students in developing and implementing their success planning, completing and revising individualized graduation plans, and researching and planning for postsecondary success (e.g., college visits, FAFSA completion).

#### **6. If I teach QFS, can I substitute my own resources for those in the curriculum?**

While we want and expect teachers to use their professional judgement to make different decisions about instructional strategies – based on your expertise, available resources, students' needs, etc. – we also want you to be as deliberate as possible in following the overall plan for the course. Your Louisiana colleagues gave a lot of thought to the scope, sequence, and pacing of content and the various performance tasks. As stated above, each unit and performance task is designed to be part of a comprehensive curriculum where each activity is sequenced to scaffold the next. If activities are substituted, there is the potential for students to miss key aspects of the curriculum which will be important to learning in future units. While teachers may supplement/add to course materials to further scaffold or extend student learning (e.g., to differentiate support for struggling readers, students with disabilities, or English Learners), teachers commit to use and NOT replace the materials provided. (Note, some materials are offered as background and/or supplemental or optional. In most cases, these are delineated as such and teachers are encouraged to make their best professional judgements about which of these to use and how to best meet the specific needs of their students and the learning goals of the course.)

#### **7. Why are there so many technology-based resources and activities in the course materials? Do we have to be a one-to-one school to offer the course?**

Most of us use computers in some sort or fashion every day in our job and we know that nearly all of our students will be expected to do so in their future work. As we heard from industry partners as we designed the course, they are increasingly seeking employees who not only are familiar with and competent in using specific program applications (e.g., Word, EXCEL, PowerPoint, LinkedIn), but who are also demonstrate needed information and digital literacy skills (e.g., how to search for, synthesize, use, and appropriately share information in a digital environment) and model executive, communication, and collaboration skills in this space. *QFS* deliberately embeds a variety of these skills into course activities and authentic performance tasks.

While we acknowledge that so much technology integration will be new to some teachers, students, and schools and may present some early implementation challenges, we believe that it is essential to preparing students for future

career and life success. However, you do not have to be a one-to-one device school in order to offer the course or implement it with fidelity. Teachers may choose to leverage computer labs and/or class sets of computers or tablets (or student cell phones in schools with approved, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies) for different parts of the course. Some resources (e.g., specific websites) can be used in whole class instruction, instead of by small groups or individuals and some materials can be printed. Teachers should make sure to carefully review units and activities in advance to ensure appropriate access to technology-based and other appropriate resources to meet the specified learning objectives and best prepare students for the demands of the world of work in the 21st century.

**8. The course includes lots of team activities and projects, but my students don't behave in groups. Can I skip or change these?**

While we want and expect teachers to use their professional judgement to make different decisions about instructional strategies – based on your expertise, available resources, students' needs, etc. – we also want you to be as deliberate as possible in following the overall plan for the course. (It will be important for teachers to clearly set expectations for group work and appropriately model expectations for completing the activities. Use of gradual release of responsibility is encouraged for students less experienced in collaborative work, but teachers should work to move students quickly from guided to independent practice.) The classroom discussions, small-group activities, and project-based learning tasks engage students in learning about or reflecting on themselves and their own work, including applying knowledge and skills in new contexts, new problems, and with different people. These, most notably collaboration and communication skills, are in high-demand and prove to be important lifelong skills that will serve them in nearly every job across different industries. (See [Leveraging Project-Based Learning for Career Readiness](#) resources for ideas, inspiration, and research-supported thinking to move forward with effective, high-quality project-based learning.) Though it may be difficult at first, teachers should not skip or significantly alter the design of these activities.

**9. Where do teachers get the materials to teach QFS? What are the costs to the school?**

The curriculum is hosted virtually by the Louisiana Department of Education and can be located on the LDOE website. There are no costs to the school to implement, though among the recommended resources there are some, like Nepris, that do have a cost. To the extent possible, we have focused on Open Education Resources and tried to limit the number of resources that cost. Where those are included, that is generally signaled and other alternatives identified. Hard copies of materials are also being offered to all instructors that will attend training during Super Summer Institute.

**10. What resources are needed to teach QFS?**

Each of the eight units includes a unit plan, teacher guide, performance task student resources, and student performance rubrics. These tools provide educators with the information necessary, including identifying needed classroom materials for hands-on activities, to teach the course with fidelity and meet both learning objectives and our goals for students' career readiness. Of note, a variety of core and supplemental resources (e.g., texts, videos, web-based applications) have been carefully selected to support this learning and are included among these. Every effort has been made to identify open education resources (OER) that can be freely accessed by schools. However, in identifying the highest-quality and most-appropriate resources, some for-fee tools and resources have been included. Wherever possible, these have been identified and/or alternative resources suggested. Materials required for each activity are listed in the teacher guide for each unit. Some activities require materials such as paper plates, straws, and paper or plastic cups. Additionally, because QFS activities are meant to simulate and prepare students for the real world of work, the course relies heavily on authentic technology use. We understand that technology access varies across sites as do policies for use of specific internet sites and resources. Teachers will need to plan and adjust accordingly to simultaneously adhere to local policies, manage limited technology resources, and ensure implementation fidelity. (Note, there are a number of websites and software programs embedded in the curriculum that both teachers and students need access to. To help teachers and their sites plan accordingly, a full list of websites/applications and a list of materials are available.)

**11. The materials refer to the state standards in the content areas, why? Do you have to be a core subject teacher to teach this course?**

Just as key career readiness skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, and resource management) are developed over time and across the content areas, so too are core academic skills, particularly for language and literacy learning. All teachers should be conscious of the ways they can more deliberately support the development of the whole child and best prepare him/her for academic and career success; we each have a role to play. As a result, the *QFS* unit plan and other resources are designed to very clearly draw attention to the cross-curricular connections and relevant core academic standards embedded in the course and display how *Quest for Success* can help students develop expected knowledge and skills of other content areas. *Quest for Success* teachers do not have to be core subject teachers, but they should be committed to supporting the whole child.

## **12. How should *Quest for Success* students be assessed and graded?**

The *QFS* materials identify the specific learning goals for each unit and major performance task(s). Additionally, a variety of checks for understanding and mini-assessment activities are embedded in the curriculum, and project-specific rubrics are provided to assess and provide feedback on student performance on each major unit task. Teachers are encouraged to use these to reinforce learning goals, support students in reflecting on their own learning and providing feedback to peers, and providing meaningful feedback to help students continue to take ownership for and make progress in their learning. Additionally, these rubrics can support summative feedback to students.

LDOE leaves the actual creation of specific [Student Learning Targets](#) (SLTs) up to the local LEAs. As with other courses taught, teachers should make grading decisions based on local grading policies (e.g., guidelines for accounting for attendance, participation, and homework), best practices, and their professional judgement to ensure all students receive fair and accurate reports of their progress in the course.

## **13. What is the course code for *Quest for Success* and how should enrollment and completion be included on the student transcript? What, if any graduation requirements does it meet?**

The course code for *Quest for Success* is 080411. The course was developed to be part of the 9-credit, regionally designed Jumpstart Pathways and can be taken for high school credit. The course is also considered a [CDF course](#).

## **14. How will we know if the course is successful?**

The ultimate indication of our students' career readiness and our effectiveness in preparing them will be found in the career and life success experienced by our students after they leave us – the extent to which they are employed in jobs they enjoy and that allow them to earn a good living, support their families, and meaningfully contribute to their communities. Indeed, these are bold ambitions and meeting them and will require more than the promise of a single course or instructor, no matter how innovative. We will all need to be more reflective and planful about how we define and support career readiness across content areas, courses, and the full PreK-12 continuum. (See [Getting Real About Career Readiness](#) to help your school or district focus on career readiness.) However, we can't effectively assess this level of impact in a single year.

## **15. What happens to *Journey to Careers*?**

*Journey to Careers* along with other potential introduction career courses will start to be phased out from the Louisiana Department of Education's available course listings starting in the 2020-2021 school year. LDOE will work with school systems to provide additional training opportunities to ensure all teachers are able to be trained.

## **16. How can schools fund *Quest for Success* and the transition to this course?**

*Quest for Success* qualifies for the 6% MFP adder (\$238) per student enrollment because it is considered a "technical" CTE course. See the [Jump Start Funding Guidance Sheet](#) for more information.

## **17. Who do we contact if we have questions?**

Please contact Ted Holmes at [tedrick.holmes@la.gov](mailto:tedrick.holmes@la.gov) with any questions.