



Counselor Connect



August 2024

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Student Opportunities

TOPS Tech Early Start

Please share with principals, counselors, and CTE coordinators.

The TOPS Tech Early Start application has been revised, effective May 15, 2024. Students must complete the approved [TOPS Tech Early Start application](#) to be eligible for funding. Failure to use the required form will result in an audit finding.

TOPS Tech Early Start is only available to 11th and 12th grade PUBLIC high school students.

Questions regarding TOPS Tech Early Start should be directed to Krishundra Nelson at Krishundra.Nelson@la.gov.

Middle School News

School Counselor Rubric

Please share with principals and counselors at all grade levels.

The new [Louisiana Counselor Rubric](#) aligns to current school counselor competencies, creates a new awareness to the roles of counselors, and parallels with the new Louisiana Educator and Leader rubrics. School counselors, like professionals in any field, require an evaluation tool that is comprehensive, relevant and supportive of their unique roles and responsibilities.



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The new evaluation tool also allows for customization based on the needs of your schools. School counselors are scored on specific, measurable, relevant goals that allows for a growth mindset and continuous improvement throughout the school year. Counselors will be evaluated based on five domains with 13 indicators. Effectiveness scores are based on a five point scale, with three being proficient. The rubric is 50% of the overall score for your evaluation, and the remaining 50% comes from SLTs.

Additional webinars for counselors to learn more about the new evaluation rubric will be provided at a later date. Previous webinars can be found under the [Louisiana Educator Advancement and Development \(LEADS\)](#) section of the LDOE evaluation page.

Please contact leads@la.gov for more information.

Professional Opportunities

College Board Weekly Office Hours

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

The College Board is offering weekly office hours starting on August 8. Topics will include the AP 2024 exam schedule and digital AP exams. Please feel free to join the weekly discussion on any questions that you have about AP exams and resources.

- **Webinar Date and Time:** Every Tuesday; 10 a.m.
- **Webinar Link:** [Microsoft Teams Meeting Link](#)
- **Webinar ID:** 232 293 189 414
- **Passcode:** 7VQcYk

Please contact fhordge@collegeboard.org for more information.

College Board Counselor Workshops

Please share with counselors.

The College Board is their annual free online [Counselor Workshops](#) between August 27-September 12. Workshops are designed for new and experienced counselors. They will provide key information and best practices to help guide students and their families through the college planning process.

Please contact caronda.bean@la.gov for more information.

National ACT State Organizations Virtual Conference

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

[Registration](#) is open for the 2024 National ACT State Organizations Virtual Conference on August



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14-15. This virtual professional development event unites stakeholders and leaders who have a shared mission: building a community of educators and workforce professionals to help people achieve education and workplace success. This conference is open to members and nonmembers.

Please contact charmaine.cureton@la.gov for more information.

ACT® College & Career Readiness Workshops

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

ACT® will be hosting [College and Career Readiness Workshops](#). [Registration](#) for in-person workshops that offer content specific to Louisiana is open. Please register at least two weeks in advance of the workshop date to ensure availability of workshop materials.

In person workshops are at 9 a.m. at the following locations:

- September 10 (New Orleans)
- September 12 (Baton Rouge)
- September 17 (Alexandria)
- September 18 (Lake Charles)
- September 19 (Lafayette)

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

ACT® Work Ready Communities Boot Camp

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

[ACT® Work Ready Communities](#) will be hosting a 2 day in-person boot camp at **Northshore Technical College in Lacombe** on **August 28-29, 2024**. If interested, please complete the [Work Ready Communities Boot Camp Application](#). A CVENT registration link, along with an agenda and pre-bootcamp training modules will be sent out once the application is received. The cost to attend is \$150 per person. ACT® asks that a minimum of 2 representatives from each parish attend both days.

Please contact cheri.hughes@act.org with questions.

Resources

Financial Aid Planning

Please share with school counselors and those responsible for FAFSA completion.

The [FAFSA policy](#) has changed. The graduation cohort of 2024-2025 and beyond are not required to complete the FAFSA as a part of their graduation checkout. This policy change doesn't remove the requirement of local education agencies (LEAs) to provide students and their parents or guardians with information regarding financial aid programs to support postsecondary education and training. LEAs must ensure that each student receives adequate support in completing and submitting an



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application for financial aid. However, a student action related to FAFSA completion will not be required. An updated parent and student financial aid planning toolkit is available to school systems. Here are a few national toolkits you can use.

- [NCAN Toolkit](#)
- [Federal Student Aid Financial Aid Toolkit](#)
- [LDOE FAFSA Financial Aid Toolkit](#)

Please contact ldefinancialaid@la.gov with any questions.

Dual Enrollment Requirements Update

Please share with system supervisors, principals, and counselors.

The Louisiana Board of Regents updated the [dual enrollment policy](#) effective beginning in the Fall of 2023. The revisions introduce new eligibility criteria, delivery formats, and instructor requirements to enhance access and maintain rigor in dual enrollment courses. The updates include changes around eligibility requirements and modality.

Please contact jumpstart@la.gov with any questions.

Digital Devices Guidelines

Please share with school system leaders, school administrators, and school staff.

The [Digital Devices Guidelines](#), developed in collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health and other stakeholders, provide school systems with health and safety resources for the effective integration of digital devices (e.g., computers, laptops, tablets, chromebooks, smart devices, projection screens, smartboards, and smartphones) in schools. The resources are intended to provide school systems with age-appropriate time and use of best practices..

Please contact healthyschools@la.gov with any questions.

Reminders

- Core Reference Tables showing which courses satisfy the various diploma path curriculum requirements can be found in STS by clicking the Reports tab.
- A student is not considered a Louisiana graduate until a graduation date is displayed on the STS transcript, and the transcript is certified.
- [All Things Jumpstart](#) provides CTE related guidance/resources.
- TU Pathway: 030362 Studio Piano II and 030363 Studio Piano III have been added to the core tables in category 19 Arts under the core set Music. Please recalculate your students if they have taken these courses and they were previously not applying.



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- Foreign Languages I and II of the approved list have been added to the U05-U20 jumpstart pathways in STS for BSSY 2023.
- **Save the Date:** Fall 2024 Counselor Institute is scheduled for late October 2024. Registration information will be shared in the September newsletter. Please share with your counseling colleagues.

Ask CoCo

Q & A With COounselor COnnect!

Q: We have students who completed graduation requirements in summer school. Since they didn't graduate in May, would they be coded as 2023-2024 or 2024-2025 graduates?

- The "Coding Correctly" Counselor

A: According to the STS User Guide, a graduation date is the date a student actually completes ALL requirements for graduation. In the case of a summer graduate, this would be the date the summer coursework was completed. Any student with a graduation date on or before August 31 would be considered a graduate of the previous year.



Scholarships/Funding Opportunities

[TOPS Tech Early Start](#)

[Future Educator Scholarship](#) (Deadline: Sunday, August 18)

[Rustic Pathways](#) (Deadline: Sunday, August 25)

[Shout It Out Scholarship](#) (Deadline: Monday, September 30)

New: U.S. Senate Youth Scholarship Opportunity

Please share with social studies supervisors, secondary administrators, counselors, and student council advisors.

Louisiana Department of Education in partnership with the [William Randolph Hearst Foundation](#) will select two juniors or seniors to serve as delegates for the 63rd Annual Washington Week Program March 1-8, 2025. These two students will each receive a \$10,000 scholarship after attending all sessions scheduled for that week. Please visit the [awards page](#) for additional information.



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- Any junior or senior holding an elected or appointed leadership position at school, in the community, in the state, or in the nation may qualify to apply.
- The Jotform application will be posted on the [Louisiana Department of Education website](#) by **August 15, 2024**. Once the application has been submitted, it will trigger the release of the list of essay topics and directions for the proctored writing session from the state coordinator to the school sponsor. These topics are considered test secure by the Hearst Foundation and are to be treated as such.
- The deadline for portfolio submission is **October 4, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.** Applications will not be returned. Finalists will be notified by **October 25, 2024**.
- The national exam and interviews will be held on **November 8, 2024**, in Baton Rouge.
- Finalists will be notified by our office in early December of their selection as a delegate or an alternate for the week of **March 1-8, 2025**.
- The delegates must be able to attend all scheduled events in Washington D.C. the week of **March 1-8, 2025** to receive the college scholarship.

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

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
sca@la.gov	Questions related to Supplemental Course Allocation/Course Choice
jumpstart@la.gov	Questions related to Jump Start
healthyschools@la.gov	Questions related to healthy schools, healthy communities, and whole child
ppp@la.gov	Questions related to pupil progression



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Monthly Calls

Child Welfare and Attendance	August 8 at 8 a.m.
Alternative Education	August 8 at 10 a.m.
Office of Career and College Readiness	August 15 at 3 p.m.
Safe and Healthy Schools	August 22 at 2 p.m.

Do you or a colleague need to sign up for the [Counselor Connect](#) newsletter? Please subscribe via the following [link](#).