

# JUMP START

## Expanding Opportunity for Louisiana Students

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*Major changes from draft Blueprint for Public Comment indicated in italics*

## Introduction

### The Need for Change

Louisiana is rich with natural resources. From gulf shores to piney woods, and along every mile of the Mississippi River, our state teems with opportunity for our people to enjoy prosperous lives.

While most Louisiana jobs do not require a four-year college degree, *the majority require advanced credentials that come with an education after high school. They require fundamental academic skills coupled with advanced education at a community college or technical education facility.*

Today, however, only 28 percent of Louisiana high school students end up achieving a four-year or two-year college degree.

Simply put, too few young adults in Louisiana have the skills and credentials to assume the high-wage jobs offered in today's Louisiana economy.

Missing from this picture is a different choice for students and families: *a state-of-the-art system of career and technical education provided by high schools, community colleges, and employers themselves. By offering experiences tailored to students' interests, such a system can motivate students to succeed. By offering credentials that give graduates a leg up in Louisiana's economy of today and tomorrow, such a system can prepare more graduates for a productive adulthood.*

For years, an unfortunate stigma has often discouraged parents and students from pursuing career and technical education. Just one percent of high school graduates in Louisiana earn a Career Diploma.

*In part, this stigma results from fundamental misconceptions about career education in today's day and age. Modern career education combines rigorous academics, technical preparation and workplace experiences, preparing students for the two-year college education that is needed for today's workforce. Far from being a final stop on the way to a low-wage career, today's career and technical education offers opportunity to continue education in college, part-time or full-time.*

*Across Louisiana today not enough students have access to modern career education. And for those students choosing career studies, too few have the option to select courses relevant to Louisiana's*



high-wage careers. Of all industry certificates granted to Louisiana students today, two-thirds certify only basic computing and customer service skills, rather than the skills needed in the chemical, construction, engineering, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing and transportation jobs prevalent in our state today.

If we are to offer more Louisiana graduates a path to the middle class, we must overcome both this discouraging stigma and these barriers to meaningful career coursework and credentials.

## Introducing Jump Start

Jump Start is the state's new program for school districts, colleges, and businesses to collaborate in providing career courses and workplace experiences to high school students, *allowing them to continue their education after high school*, certifying them for the career fields most likely to lead to high-wage jobs.

Jump Start will be an elective path for students pursuing a university-preparatory diploma, while it will be a required path for students pursuing a Career Diploma.

While in high school, participating students will be provided more time in the school day and school year to achieve industry certificates or college credentials in addition to their high school diplomas. These credentials will qualify graduates to continue their studies after high school or to launch a career upon graduating. Jump Start credentials will be state-approved and valued by Louisiana employers.



To support this goal, Jump Start includes several key shifts in state policy. For example, Jump Start seeks to end the long-standing stigma against career education by ceasing to label students as either “career-bound” or “college-bound.” To ensure the students have access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment and professionals, Jump Start will convene industry, higher education and school systems, creating public-private partnerships rather than asking cash-strapped high schools to go it alone. And Jump Start will honor students’ achievements in career fields through significant accountability rewards for schools and school districts.

This document outlines the policy changes associated with this new strategy.

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### Note on Career Education Courses and Student Organizations

The document does not speak to the entirety of career education in Louisiana, and this proposal does not seek to replace quality work already underway. For example, students should continue to benefit from student organizations such as Future Farmers of America (FFA), or from elective coursework entailed in agriculture education curricula.

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### A Note on the Timing of Proposed Policies

No school or school district will be required to participate in Jump Start immediately. *The Jump Start program will provide school districts with implementation flexibility – a gradual phase-in of Jump Start policies over several years – and substantial support.* Educators, students, and parents will have time to learn from the success of others, if they so choose, before being required to participate.



# THE JUMP START EXPERIENCE

## Transition to High School & the Individual Graduation Plan

No adolescent can completely predict his or her course of study in high school at the age of 12 or 13. No middle school student should be expected to make a life-altering decision. While Jump Start coursework does not commence until the student is in high school, two policy changes seek to end the practice of labeling students as “career-bound” or “college-bound” at the end of middle school or early in high school.

1. Struggling students will no longer be required to choose a career path in 8th grade in order to proceed to high school. Schools and families used to face a stark choice when students struggled on the 8th grade LEAP test: repeat another year of middle school or proceed to 9th grade labeled as a “career education student.” This practice, while intended to open doors for struggling students, has had the unfortunate effect of grouping low performing students and making career education less attractive to others. Now, 8th grade students who are not proficient in reading and math may now be enrolled at the appropriate high school site in a transitional 9th grade. While in



transitional 9th grade they will be required to take remedial coursework detailed in their Individual Graduation Plans. But they will also be able to take courses (including electives) for credit in areas in which they are proficient, including Jump Start career course work.

2. The Department of Education will support legislation to focus the required Individual Graduation Plan process on a one-year time horizon, rather than requiring a prediction of coursework from 8th grade through the senior year. This will allow counselors, parents, and students to focus on what is needed to keep students on track, while avoiding labeling the student.

## Developing Fundamental Skills (9th & 10th grades)

Louisiana’s 9th and 10th grade students will take common fundamental coursework, irrespective of the diploma they ultimately receive. ***Appendix 1, a table of Career Diploma graduation requirements, includes an explanation of this fundamental coursework.***

At the same time, students will also take elective courses pursuant to their interests and needs in the 9th and 10th grade years. Thus, Jump Start regional proposals, described below, may include elective career and career planning courses for 9th and 10th graders. By recommending career elective courses early, Jump Start may expose students to interests they otherwise would not seek.

Finally, the state will continue to require that students pursuing a Career Diploma gain early experience in foundational career skills and awareness: interpersonal communications, personal responsibility and workplace organization. These skills are essential elements of any education and should be taught through a thoughtful curriculum.

*This does not mean that students must complete Journey to Careers in order to graduate. Students can meet the career skills course requirement through coursework identified and developed by public-private Jump Start teams, as detailed below.*

The Department of Education will provide a menu of options and supports to assist in this process, including private education providers and career counseling services. *Career counseling and planning will be a required and central element to each Jump Start regional proposal.*

## Pathways to the Future (11th and 12th grades)

Typically beginning in the 11th grade, students make choices that determine their path to graduation and to education after high school. For students seeking TOPS Opportunity or TOPS Honors awards, for example, this means pursuing the Core Four diploma. For students on the Basic Diploma and Career Diploma paths, this has meant selecting a state-prescribed, six-course “Area of Concentration” (AOC) in a career or alternate area of study offered by the school. The AOC does not necessarily lead to a credential in these areas, however, and is often offered in career areas that offer little economic opportunity.

Jump Start will gradually replace these state-prescribed Area of Concentration requirements with a regional planning process, convening public-private teams to provide sequences of career courses, workplace experiences, and industry credentials that prepare students for high-wage job opportunities. (Many Areas of Concentration overlap with or are included in Jump Start credentials described below.) Rather than prescribing all course sequences on a statewide basis, the process allows greater local input into determining relevant career coursework and credentials.

At the same time, rather than supporting courses that do not lead to a credential that is meaningful in the workplace, the process requires that regional teams plan to provide courses leading to credentials relevant to high-wage jobs (*you can find the proposed BESE policy bulletin outlining the Jump Start program as [Appendix 2](#) to this document*).



1. The Louisiana Workforce Investment Council (WIC) has identified high-wage careers that offer graduates statewide the greatest opportunity for employment and continued education. The WIC has established an official list of these statewide industry-based certificates.

WIC-identified credentials are more “culminating” rather than “foundational” credentials; while they do not always qualify students to assume employment immediately, they represent a student’s mastery and employability rather than basic skills alone. *They also provide students advanced standing in many college programs through required dual enrollment courses (you can find a table of statewide CTE pathways and certifications attached as [Appendix 3](#)).*

As described below, an important function of Jump Start Regional Teams is to propose additional statewide industry credentials to the WIC for consideration.

2. Jump Start Regional Teams – public-private partnerships made up of school systems and their governing authorities, two-year colleges, local industry, and economic and workforce development experts – exist to develop innovative courses of study for students pursuing a Jump Start credential. Jump Start explicitly calls on local educators and industry to modify and enhance standard approaches and credentials. Ideally, through the work of regional teams, Louisiana will gain a set of new industry credentials and courses.

Regional teams will have two primary responsibilities.



First, regional teams will design plans for providing courses and workplace-based experiences leading to WIC-approved, statewide credentials. These plans will draw on the curricula and assessments established by industry credentialing bodies, but they will also include logistical details such as where courses will take place, transportation details, schedules, and credit equivalents. *Jump Start Regional Teams may also propose to offer alternate, rigorous credentials in the statewide job areas (a certified apprentice program, for example, or an AWS credential in lieu of NCCER). The LDE will collaborate with Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to review and approve these alternative credentials.*

Second, Jump Start Regional Teams will identify career opportunities important specifically to their region of the state, for which students may earn industry credentials. These may be prominent jobs that do not feature a level of economic opportunity as great as the statewide career fields; they may also be lucrative professions limited to specific geographies. Supported by the state, Jump Start Regional Teams will propose workplace experiences and coursework leading to these regional credentials.

**You can find a Jump Start Regional Team Guidebook attached as [Appendix 4](#), providing guidelines for the formation of Jump Start Regional Teams, how they will operate and how they can submit applications for Jump Starting Jump Start grants.**



3. The Louisiana Department of Education will offer a menu of support services – in curriculum design and in student counseling, for example – from which Jump Start Regional Teams can draw as they create plans for statewide and regional credentials. The menu of support services offered by the LDE to regional teams is outlined on page 3 of proposed Bulletin 138, attached as [Appendix 2](#).

The state will ultimately approve Jump Start Regional Teams' proposals, allowing the region to grant students credit toward graduation and generating accountability points for schools and districts.

4. Primarily in the 11th and 12th grade years, students will then aspire toward basic or advanced credentials in statewide or regional career areas: industry-based certificates or credentials earned through dual enrollment coursework (Certificates of Applied Sciences, Certificates of Technical Studies, or Technical Diplomas). Students graduating with a Core Four Diploma may take these Jump Start courses as electives and may earn a credential that would generate accountability points. Students graduating with a Career Diploma will be required to complete a Jump Start statewide or regional credential.

**You can find sample “Days in the Life” of four Jump Start students – including new examples of a transitional 9th grader and a student who transfers for her senior year to a school that doesn’t offer her already-started CTE pathway – in [Appendix 5](#) .**



# JUMP START SUPPORTING POLICIES

## Graduation

Students pursuing any of the state's diplomas may pursue and achieve a Jump Start credential.

For students achieving a Core Four diploma, Jump Start courses are electives, outside of required coursework.

**Appendix 6** provides a Jump Start Policy Implementation Timeline, describing the timetable schools can use to implement new graduation policies that are part of the Jump Start program.

1. Because Jump Start credentials offer meaningful workplace opportunity for students on any diploma path, the state will merge the Basic Diploma with the Career Diploma, starting with the cohort entering high school in 2014. No student who plans to graduate in 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017 will be forced to vacate his/her path to a Basic Diploma, but starting in 2017–2018, the state will not offer a Basic Diploma. Students pursuing a Basic Diploma through spring 2017 can either achieve a Jump Start credential or complete an Area of Concentration to meet graduation requirements. However, through spring 2017, Area of Concentration options for this diploma remain in place.
2. Starting with the cohort entering high school in the fall 2014, Career Diploma students will be required to have completed a Jump Start credential in order to graduate (through spring 2017 students may opt to achieve an Area of

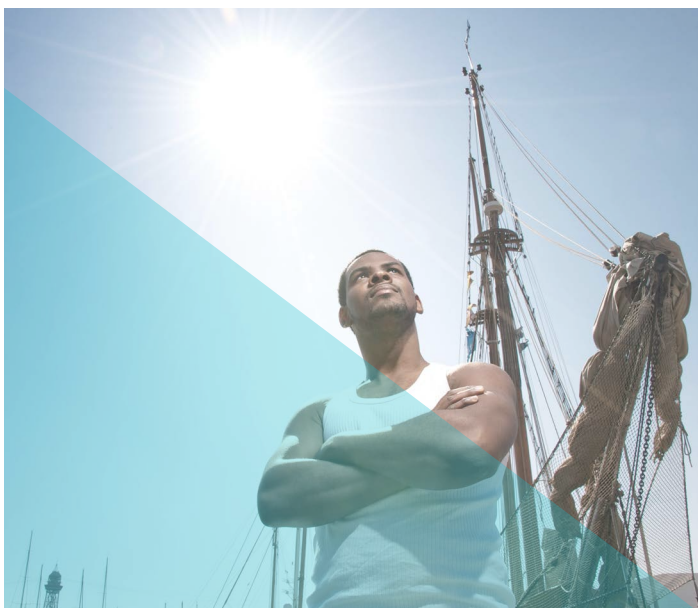


Concentration, per **Appendix 6**). Students may graduate with a regional Jump Start credential or a statewide Jump Start credential.

Career Diploma students will continue to be required to achieve 23 credits, or their equivalents. *Nine of these credits, or their equivalents, must be focused on the Jump Start pathway for students graduating with this diploma. Reserving this amount of space in the school year and school day is essential for students pursuing career credentials that provide advanced standing in college or workplace settings.* Jump Start Regional Teams will determine equivalent credits for students spending significant periods pursuing credentials that require workplace experience, for example.

3. All graduates also are required to achieve standard end of course test requirements. Students also must take the EPAS tests: Explore, Plan, and ACT. Jump Start teams may elect to have students pursuing the Career Diploma take the WorkKeys test in addition to the ACT. The Department of Education will establish a policy creating score level equivalents between the ACT and WorkKeys. A student's highest equivalent score, either the ACT or WorkKeys, would generate ACT index accountability points.

**You can find a table of graduation requirements attached as **Appendix 1**.**



A Note on Special Education and Diplomas

Today there are students in Louisiana whose disabilities have led to their being labeled “non-diploma-bound.” These students will have working lives as adults, but academic challenges have led educators to determine that they are unlikely to meet traditional requirements for a high school diploma.

No student should be expected to live life as a working adult but be precluded from achieving a high school diploma as a matter of policy. Often, workplace-based education that teaches important life and occupational skills provides such students a viable path through high school and beyond. And while it would be a mistake to create a special education-specific diploma that systemically lowers standards for students with disabilities, we must strive to provide these students with economic opportunity and the adult life it affords.



As part of the Jump Start initiative, the Department of Education will convene a working group of practitioners to design a solution regarding diploma options, career options, and economic opportunity for those students currently deemed “non-diploma-bound.” It is the aspiration of this working group that Louisiana build on its successful workplace-based programs for students with disabilities to offer a diploma to students with significant challenges in a way that does not compromise on academic expectations for students with disabilities as a whole.

School Accountability

Credentials in high-wage career fields offer students a chance to continue their education. For too long, however, career outcomes have not been rewarded at the highest levels of our state’s accountability system, perpetuating the stigma against career pathways and creating little incentive to engage in public-private partnerships. Jump Start changes this by establishing specific rewards for career credentials at every level of the high school accountability system.

GRADUATION INDEX POINTS  
(revised based on stakeholder input)

25	HiSET
50	Six-year graduate with any diploma
75	Five-year graduate with any diploma
100	Four-year graduate with any diploma (includes Career Diploma student with a regional Jump Start credential)
110	Four-year graduate with any diploma achieving a basic statewide Jump Start credential OR having at least one passing course grade for TOPS credit of the following type: Advanced Placement, college credit, dual enrollment*, or International Baccalaureate. <i>Four-year graduates achieving both a basic statewide Jump Start credential and a passing course grade for TOPS credit in course types listed above will generate 115 points.</i>
150	Four-year graduate with any diploma achieving an advanced statewide Jump Start credential OR having at least one test score at the following levels: AP score of 3 or higher, IB score of 4 or higher, or CLEP score of 50. <i>Four-year graduates achieving both an advanced statewide Jump Start credential and a qualifying test score listed above will generate 160 points.</i>

\* For the basic credential 110 point award, dual enrollment must count for TOPS Core Curriculum credit starting with 2014-2015 graduates.

You can find a table of statewide CTE pathways and credentials, along with the accountability points generated, attached as [Appendix 3](#).

## Funding Jump Start

Providing needed coursework must be supported by the resources to do so. Technical education in the craft trades or healthcare fields costs more than foundational work in, for example, customer service or basic computing.

The 2014–2015 MFP Task Force, convened to make recommendations to BESE on the funding formula for next school year, has issued two proposals regarding career education:

1. The Task Force proposed to double the career education funding weight for courses in high-growth, high-wage fields from 6 percent of the standard amount to 12 percent of the standard amount, contingent upon districts applying for funds and dedicating them toward career equipment, facilities, and teacher training.

2. The Task Force also recommended a subsidy for districts enrolling high school students in BESE-approved career courses and college credit courses outside of the high school, allowing funding for both higher education and private providers of Jump Start courses.

BESE and the Department of Education will also support legislative proposals that seek to make greater use of TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start funding for students seeking Jump Start credentials in community and technical college settings, or in other settings outside of the traditional high school. While TOPS policy is determined by the legislature and not by BESE, it is evident that current limits prohibit too many students from taking advantage of TOPS Tech Early Start funds, especially students who may need Jump Start coursework the most.

## Teaching Jump Start Courses

Public-private partnerships create opportunities to expose students to the most experienced adults in their career fields.

1. The MFP Task Force proposed dedicating additional technical education funds in the MFP toward teacher preparation, allowing teachers of introductory craft trades courses, for example, to gain full qualifications to train and certify students. The state also plans to host NCCER Summer Academies in 2014 to assist in achieving this goal.
2. The Department will propose changes to teacher certification policies to facilitate industry professionals' entry into teaching positions, giving greater credit to workplace experience and expertise and providing essential training on instructional strategies.

## Policy Timeline

***Appendix 6 indicates the timing of policy changes associated with Jump Start over the next four years, until the program's final implementation.***

The LDE will hold a series of webinars to brief stakeholders on all Jump Start policies. These webinars are scheduled for 2:30pm on Friday, March 7, and 3:30pm on Tuesday, March 11 and March 18. You can find the webinar slides attached as [Appendix 7](#).

Stakeholders can request information from the Jump Start team by emailing [JumpStart@la.gov](mailto:JumpStart@la.gov).

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<a href="#">Appendix 2</a>	Proposed BESE Policy Bulletin 138: Jump Start Program
<a href="#">Appendix 3</a>	Jump Start Statewide CTE Pathways/Certifications
<a href="#">Appendix 4</a>	Jump Start Regional Team Guidebook
<a href="#">Appendix 5</a>	Jump Start: Day in the Life of Four Students
<a href="#">Appendix 6</a>	Jump Start Policy Implementation Timeline
<a href="#">Appendix 7</a>	Jump Start Webinar Slides