

The 9th grade transition is a critical time for high school students, often determining the likelihood of graduation; nearly 40% of overage 8th graders who are retained subsequently dropout of school. It is critical to acknowledge that struggling students need support beyond academic remediation. Struggling students need multi-faceted, intensive and customized support in all areas to achieve social, emotional, and academic progress.

As schools seek to address the challenges of 9th grade transition, it is critical to (a) ensure a smooth, well-planned transition for all students and (b) plan proper supports for struggling students who need additional academic remediation.

The document helps counselors (a) support school-wide student planning throughout Individual Graduation Plans and (b) implement Transitional 9th Grade for appropriate students. The following items are included to assist with Transitional 9th Grade Implementation:

- [Transitional 9th Grade Key Policies](#)
- [Step 1: Identify Students](#)
- [Step 2: Determine Placement of Non-Proficient Students](#)
- [Step 3: Plan for Student Support](#)
- [Step 4: Select Appropriate Curriculum](#)
- [Counselor Tools and Supports](#)
- [Accountability Implications](#)

TRANSITIONAL 9th GRADE KEY POLICIES

Policy contained in Bulletin 1566, [Pupil Progression Policies and Procedures](#), allows placement of students who are unable to meet the standard of proficiency in 8th grade in transitional 9th grade to improve the likelihood of high school graduation by providing the necessary remediation in a high school setting. The highlights of the transitional 9th grade policy include:

- **Remediation and Retesting:** Students failing to achieve the standard required for promotion to the 9th grade shall participate in 50 hours of summer remediation and take the applicable retest (if offered) to be placed in transitional 9th grade. Students passing the applicable retest shall be promoted to 9th grade. During the school year, schools shall provide counseling and a variety of remediation options (face-to-face and online) to help students succeed.
Note: There will not be Summer Retest in 2015.
- **Local Decision-making:** Placement in transitional 9th grade shall be at the discretion of the school where the student was enrolled in 8th grade. Schools are highly encouraged to use the transitional 9th grade placement option as data show that students placed on a high school campus are more likely to become high school graduates. The School Building Level Committee (SBLC)¹ at the sending school will review data such as standardized test scores, past coursework and student behavioral data to determine the most appropriate setting for each student. The SBLC team must consist of a school counselor, administrator, teachers familiar with the student and the student's guardian. Each LEA shall enroll students placed in transitional 9th grade, subject to any approved school admission requirements.
- **Inclusion in High School Graduation Cohort:** Students placed in transitional 9th grade are considered 8th graders for accountability purposes and are not included in the high school graduation cohort during their first year on the high school campus. These students can enroll in high school-level classes, including career education courses, which parents and schools deem appropriate (i.e. the student is capable of successfully passing the course). EOC test scores earned by students in transitional 9th grade shall be transferred or banked in the same manner as students who take EOC exams in middle school. Students shall enter the high school cohort following one year in transitional 9th grade and become eligible to graduate in four years, provided the student meets graduation requirements within that time.

¹ Students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria in Act 833 of the 2014 Legislative Session will have promotion decisions determined by their IEP team. More information on high school special education policies may be found in [this document](#).

Students who have been outside a traditional public school setting for one calendar year may be placed in transitional 9th grade as long as they have never been enrolled previously in 9th grade. This includes students who were considered to have been dropouts during their 8th grade year, as well as students who were enrolled in non-public schools or approved home school programs. In accordance with BESE policy, students enrolling in public schools following enrollment in approved non-public schools and home study programs shall take a standard placement test.

LEAs shall address how they will make transitional 9th grade placement decisions, as well as address remediation, in their Pupil Progression Plans.

STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING GUIDE

STEP 1: Identify Students

Identify eligible T9 students and the areas in which they are proficient or non-proficient. During the state assessment transition in Spring 2015, LEAs will determine appropriate placement criteria. Based on a review of local Pupil Progression Plans, most LEAs are basing these decisions on the following data points:

- Benchmark assessments
- Performance on classroom assessments
- Course grades
- Student growth
- IEP goals
- Attendance

Remediation: Students failing to achieve the standard required for promotion to the 9th grade must participate in summer remediation (See **TRANSITIONAL 9th GRADE KEY POLICIES: Remediation and Retesting**) to be placed in Transitional 9th Grade. Schools must provide counseling and a variety of remediation options (face-to-face and online) to help students succeed in their remediation efforts.

BESE Approved Language from Bulletin 1566, Pupil Progression Policies and Procedures:

At the conclusion of the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, LEAs shall follow the guidelines set forth in §701.B to determine, based on evidence of student learning, whether eighth grade students may be promoted to the ninth grade or placed on a high school campus in transitional ninth grade. The percentage of an LEA's eighth graders placed in transitional ninth grade is expected to remain stable over time. In the event that the percentage of an LEA's eighth graders placed in transitional ninth grade in 2015-2016 exceeds the percentage of eighth graders in that LEA eligible for transitional ninth grade at the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year, the local superintendent of that LEA shall provide a written justification to the state superintendent.

STEP 2: Determine Placement of Non-Proficient Students

Placement in Transitional 9th Grade shall be at the discretion of the local school or school system where the student was enrolled in 8th grade. However, schools are highly encouraged to make such placements, as data show that students placed on a high school campus are less likely to dropout. The School Building Level Committee (SBLC) at the middle school will review standardized test scores, past coursework, and student behavioral data to determine the most appropriate setting for each student.

- Data indicators for student placement include: 1) the student's reading level (e.g., [The Lexile® Framework for Reading](#)); 2) [Statewide assessments results](#) (if available); 3) results of benchmark assessments rated as Tier 1 and Tier 2 through the [Instructional Materials Review](#); 4) State-released ELA and Math [practice test results](#); 5) performance results on classroom assessments aligned to the State Standards (e.g. teacher-made assessments in [EAGLE](#)); 6) results of assessments aligned to the priority content outlined in the [assessment guidance](#); 7) growth from beginning of the year pre-test to end of year post-test

aligned to the State Standards; 8) IEP goals; 9) [Explore® test](#); 10) [student growth data](#); 11) course grades; 12) attendance; and 13) student graduation support profile.

- Student Profile Considerations (Employment, Career Inventory, Transient)
 - Employment Considerations
 - Readiness - Does the student have the necessary skills?
 - Interests - Knowing what students find worthy of their time and their hobbies outside of school go a long way in establishing rapport and in building a higher interest level in subject matter.
 - Anecdotal Information - offers important considerations about students in terms of their strengths and concerns.
 - Career Inventory Considerations
 - Career interest inventories typically describe or illustrate (often with pictures and videos) many occupations and job tasks and ask youth to rate how much they would enjoy doing each job or task. By rating their level of interest in a wide range of occupations, these inventories help young people recognize their predominant interests and preferences.
 - Career interest inventories can be used in school classes, in afterschool and community youth programs, in workforce development programs, and at home.
 - Explore free career interest inventory tools that youth can access on the Internet.
 - Adapt methods and materials to suit individual youth needs.
 - Use the career interest inventory results as a starting point for engaging youth in exploration and planning for careers and postsecondary education.
 - Transient Considerations
 - Provide solid transition programs for mobile students
 - Include administrative procedures that increase the overall quality of the school
 - Implement flexible classroom strategies
 - Incorporate collaborative support and effective communication

STEP 3: Plan for Student Support

Create a customized counseling structure (e.g., a support team) to support each Transitional 9th Grade student.

The College Board's [National Office for School Counselor Advocacy](#) (NOSCA), released [guides](#) for school counselors to create a comprehensive program of individual student planning for college and career readiness.

Career counseling, a part of career development, is a focused effort starting in middle school and accelerating in high school to help students: 1) identify the career they might pursue; 2) attain the competencies and certifications they need to secure entry-level employment; and 3) build the habits and life skills necessary to be productive adults. Effective career counseling should:

- encourage all teachers in each pathway to become de facto career counselors in their specialty, an informal-but-powerful strategy;
- reinforce emphasis on joint curricular planning between academic and CTE teachers;
- retain career counseling capacity (in-person or online) to provide all students with some form/modality of one-on-one career and college planning in both 10th and 12th grades;
- form (or expand) career-technical students organizations (CTSOs) in targeted job sectors, relying on teacher-advisors and industry partners to mentor the student-members of these organizations;
- develop region-wide teacher professional development (PD) modules emphasizing Jump Start and specific high-demand job sectors that can be implemented in every school district;
- recruit “near-peer” mentors (i.e., recent graduates who are gainfully employed in targeted industries), with the option of “importing” and “exporting” some of these young success stories to outlying parishes that may lack this population; and
- hold multi-school district industry mentoring events where students from different high schools can meet with industry partners who can then perhaps provide informal mentoring or help form CTOSs.

Determine how often this structure should evaluate an individual student's progress, specifying the data the support team will use to identify student progress and gaps

- Quarterly support team meetings are recommended as interim progress checks
- Review course grades
- Review common assessments
- Review attendance records
- Review discipline reports
- Review teacher/mentor evaluations

Evaluate student growth and identify next steps

- Review academic data to determine if student is progressing
- Assess whether the student has socially acclimated to the high school campus and matured in his/her academic life (attendance, course work, homework, class participation and study habits)
- Plan ongoing counseling and mentoring
- Create an Individualized Graduation Plan that will support the student in the 9th grade cohort based on his/her ongoing needs

Provide Career Readiness Course Opportunities

Career development is a lifelong process that students begin in middle school and accelerate in high school. Career development includes:

- a) developing an understanding of different career opportunities;
- b) learning the foundational academic skills necessary to attain and succeed in employment;
- c) developing the behavioral skills necessary to attain and succeed in employment;
- d) learning about different college options (types of schools, programs and schedules); and
- e) developing individual plans to guide learning and career searches, during and after high school.

A Middle School/Transitional 9th Grade Career Readiness opportunity includes:

- ✓ Career Exploration - career fairs, career presentations, Career Awareness course (including Financial Literacy, student interest testing)
- ✓ College Awareness - school posters, college representatives presentations, college campus visit(s)

STEP 4: Select Appropriate Curriculum

Principals and teachers must be critical consumers of instructional materials. Whether districts enforce a particular set of materials or not, principals determine the quality of their use and implementation. No program is a silver bullet, but principals have a series of resources to help them choose, supplement, and implement quality materials.

The Department helps schools **choose aligned curricula** through their [instructional resource reviews](#). Hundreds of titles have been reviewed at the request of schools and districts. These reviews, led by educators and experts from across the state, assess alignment to Louisiana's state standards. The Department tiers programs so that schools can easily see which programs are more and less aligned. The [rubrics](#) for these reviews are available so that districts can review the materials on their own as needed as well.

Through these reviews, the Department identified a number of trends in missing components of curricula. To enhance programs that are not fully aligned, the Department committed to releasing a series of **resources to help districts supplement** any program they are currently using. These include:

- **Teacher toolbox**: Comprehensive set of tools for educators and districts. Teachers can also access [grade specific libraries](#) for easier use.
- **English language arts guidebooks**: Full unit plans for full courses grades K-12. Each unit includes three culminating tasks and lessons that prepare students for those tasks, integrating rich texts and all standards.
- **English language arts framework**: An interactive framework complete with recommended instructional strategies that are embedded in the guidebook. These strategies can also be used with any curriculum.
- **Math Guidebooks**: Provide two types of tasks to help students master the conceptual skills necessary for long term success. Also included is guidance on how to target critical remediation for struggling students.

Once strong curriculum and supplemental materials are chosen, principals and teachers align formative and interim assessments to ensure they know where students are and are not learning the standards.

Schedule Student Coursework

- Exemplar struggling student school schedule

Subject	Foundational Skills Core/T9 Credits	Example Courses
English	2	English I, English II
Math	2	Algebra I, Geometry
Physical Education	1.5	Physical Education
Health	.5	Health
Science	2	Biology I, Environmental Science, or Physical Science
Social Studies	2	Civics, U.S. History
Remedial/Intervention Courses (if applicable)	2	Remedial or Intervention English / Math
Electives	2	Career Readiness, Agriculture, Business, Family and Consumer Science, Art, Choir, Etc.
Total	14	English I, English II

COUNSELOR TOOLS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Graduation Plans

By the end of the 8th grade, every student (with the assistance of his parent or other legal custodian and school guidance personnel, counselor) or IEP team (when applicable) shall begin to develop an [Individual Graduation Plan](#) (IGP). An IGP guides the next academic year's coursework, assisting students in exploring educational and career possibilities and in making appropriate secondary and postsecondary education decisions as part of an overall career postsecondary plan.

Pupil Progression Plans

The local [Pupil Progression Plan](#) is the comprehensive plan developed and adopted by each LEA. The plan is based on the specifics of the LEA's educational program is aligned to state laws and BESE policies. At the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, due to a delay in test scores resulting from the administration of new assessments, placement decisions for fourth and 8th grade students shall be made according to local pupil progression plans, which shall outline the evidence of student learning used to make promotion decisions. Such evidence shall include, but not be limited to, performance on classroom assignments or benchmark assessments (Bulletin 1566 §701).

ACCOUNTABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Inclusion in High School Graduation Cohort

Students placed in Transitional 9th Grade shall not be included in the high school’s graduation cohort during their first year on the high school campus. These students can enroll in high school-level classes, including career education courses, that parents and schools deem appropriate, with a goal of keeping them on track for on-time graduation. Following one year in Transitional 9th Grade, students shall enter the high school cohort. Offering remediation in an age-appropriate setting is critical to the success of low-performing students, particularly during the transition to high school. The student is automatically placed in 9th grade the year after T9 – this means that students who dropout in T9 will be in the graduation cohort.

Dropout Credit Accumulation Index (DCAI)

The transition from 8th to 9th grade is critical for student success. Schools with an 8th grade earn points for the numbers of credits students accumulate by the end of the 9th grade (and Transitional 9th Grade, where applicable). This encourages a successful transition to high school by allowing students access to Carnegie credits early and often. Points are awarded as follows:

Note: Credit accumulation for transitional 9th graders ends when the student completes his T9 year (e.g., transitional 9th graders do not have two years to accumulate credit on the high school campus).

Carnegie Course Credits (earned by the end of 9 th grade or Transitional 9 th)*	DCAI Points Per Student
6+	150 pts.
5.5	125 pts.
5	100 pts.
4.5	75 pts.
4	50 pts.
3.5	25 pts.
3 or less	0 pts.
3 year 8 th grade student	0 pts.
Dropout	0 pts.

End-of-Course (EOC) tests: Students in T9 shall take EOCs. If they score below proficient they may retest without penalty to the school. If they score proficient, then the score shall count in the high school’s accountability points just as it would for an 8th grader who is successful on an EOC.