

# LOUISIANA

## SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE

### *for High School Students*



This document outlines how special education policies impact students with disabilities and serves as a reference guide for LEA administrators and high school staff who work with students with disabilities. It begins by outlining policies that impact all students with disabilities and follows the same framework to show how recent policy changes (The April Dunn Act & Alternate Assessment) impact smaller subgroups of students with disabilities.



# STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (IEP)

## STUDENT POPULATION

Students who meet the eligibility criteria for one of the [13 disability categories](#)<sup>1</sup> as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## COURSE OF STUDY

The vast majority of students with disabilities are working towards the regular standards and Carnegie Unit courses just like their non-disabled peers. The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifies the child's strengths and needs, academic goals, and accommodations necessary to support success with the academic standards and coursework.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

### [TOPS University Diploma](#)<sup>2</sup>

#### COURSES:

- English = 4 Units
- Math = 4 Units
- Science = 4 Units
- Social Studies = 4 Units
- Health/Physical Education = 2 Units
- Foreign Language = 2 Units
- Arts = 1 Unit
- Electives = 3 Units

#### ASSESSMENTS:

- [LEAP 2025](#)<sup>4</sup>: (A score of Approaching Basic/Fair or higher in Algebra I or Geometry, and Biology or U.S. History<sup>5</sup>)
- For students entering high school prior to 2017-2018 LEAP 2025 English II or English III. For students entering high school in 2017-2018 or after, LEAP 2025 English I or English II.

### [Jump Start Career Diploma](#)<sup>3</sup>

#### COURSES:

- English = 4 Units
- Math = 4 Units
- Science = 2 Units
- Social Studies = 2 Units
- Health/ Physical Education = 2 Units
- Jump Start Career Education = 9 Units

#### ASSESSMENTS:

- [LEAP 2025](#): (A score of Approaching Basic/Fair or higher in Algebra I or Geometry, and Biology or U.S. History)
- For students entering high school prior to 2017-2018 LEAP 2025 English II or English III. For students entering high school in 2017-2018 or after, LEAP 2025 English I or English II.
- Credentialing assessments as defined by the chosen [Jump Start Pathway](#)

## CONNECTION TO ACCOUNTABILITY

There are four components that create [high school and district performance scores](#)<sup>6</sup>, each weighted as 25% of the final score. The components consist of 1) LEAP 2025 assessments; 2) ACT scores; 3) Graduation rate (students who received a standard high school diploma); and 4) Strength of Diploma index (a scale that allows schools to earn 100 points for all students graduating with a diploma but additional points for student attainment of college credit or statewide Jump Start credentials). The Strength of Diploma index is found in §613 of [Bulletin 111, The Louisiana School, District, and State Accountability System](#)<sup>7</sup>.

**Statewide assessment scores:** All students must take all LEAP 2025 tests corresponding to the courses in which they are enrolled and progress to mastery. Points are awarded for scores of *Basic* or higher.

**ACT scores:** All students, with the exception of students who participate in the Alternate Assessment must take the ACT by the end of their junior year. They may additionally take the [WorkKeys assessment](#). Higher points are awarded to the two assessments.

**Graduation Rate and Graduation Index:** Students pursuing a diploma through traditional TOPS University or Jump Start Career Pathways are factored into the accountability system using the same criteria and weight.



# STUDENTS WITH PERSISTENT ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES RESULTING FROM A DISABILITY (APRIL DUNN ACT APPLIED)

## STUDENT POPULATION

Students with disabilities that persistently impact their ability to progress with the general education curriculum per the [April Dunn Act](#)<sup>8</sup>, become eligible when they meet one of the following criteria:

- A. receive scores **below** the combination of **Basic** and **Approaching Basic** on state assessments in two out of three most recent years: 6th, 7th, or 8th
- B. receive a score of Unsatisfactory or Needs Improvement on two administrations of the same EOC/LEAP 2025 test

## COURSE OF STUDY

Though these students demonstrate persistent academic difficulties, they must:

- continue to take tests for all test-eligible courses in which they are enrolled,
- continue to be taught and assessed based on the regular academic standards, and
- be enrolled in Carnegie Unit bearing courses, just as their non-disabled peers

Their IEP should identify:

- individual performance criteria for courses and associated EOC test
- academic goals and objectives aligned to the standards for the course
- accommodations necessary to support success with the academic standards and coursework(s) in which April Dunn Act eligibility will be applied

Individual performance criteria developed by IEP teams may be incorporated when awarding Carnegie credits provided the student has full access to, shows involvement in, and makes progress in achieving the state content standards. More information on IEP goal setting and individual performance criteria under the April Dunn Act may be found in the [Individual Performance Criteria Guidance](#):<sup>9</sup>

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

### [Jump Start Career Diploma](#)<sup>10</sup>

#### COURSES:

- English = 4 Units
- Math = 4 Units
- Science = 2 Units
- Social Studies = 2 Units
- Health/Physical Education = 2 Units
- Jump Start = 9 Units

#### ASSESSMENTS:

- LEAP 2025/EOC: (A score of Approaching Basic/Fair or higher in Algebra I or Geometry, and Biology or U.S. History)<sup>11</sup>
- For students entering high school prior to 2017-2018 LEAP 2025 English II or English III. For students entering high school in 2017-2018 or after, LEAP 2025 English I or English II.
- Credentialing assessments as defined by the chosen [Jump Start Pathway](#)<sup>12</sup>

[Jump Start Pathways](#)<sup>13</sup> require a student to achieve sets of industry recognized credentials comprised of a package of skills and competencies. If the IEP team determines an eligible student is not progressing successfully toward completion of a traditional Jump Start culminating credential, they have the ability to determine the appropriate exit point the student must achieve.

The Jump Start: [Students with Disabilities Implementation Guidance](#) provides further details.

## CONNECTION TO ACCOUNTABILITY IMPACT

There are four components that create [high school and district performance scores](#)<sup>14</sup>, each weighted as 25% of the final score. The components consist of 1) EOC exam scores; 2) ACT scores; 3) Graduation rate (students who received a standard high school diploma); and 4) Graduation Index (a scale that allows schools to earn 100 points for all students graduating with a diploma but additional points for student attainment of college-credit or statewide Jump Start credentials).

**Statewide assessment scores:** All students within this student population must take all EOCs corresponding to the courses in which they are enrolled. Points are awarded for scores of *Good* or higher.

**ACT scores:** All students within this student population must take the ACT by the end of their junior year. They may additionally take the [WorkKeys assessment](#). The higher score of the two assessments will be factored into the formula.

**Graduation Rate and Graduation Index:** A Diploma earned through an alternate pathway earns the same number of points as a Diploma earned through a traditional Regional Pathway for the purpose of Cohort Graduation Rate and Graduation Index.



# STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE (ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT ELIGIBLE)

## STUDENT POPULATION

Students with disabilities that significantly impact cognitive functioning are eligible to participate in an [alternate assessment](#) (LEAP Connect) in lieu of the regular statewide assessment (LEAP 2025).

Students with significant cognitive disabilities that meet the State’s alternate assessment eligibility [criteria](#), and participate in the alternate assessment, can earn a high school diploma if they meet the graduation requirements outlined in this section.

## COURSE OF STUDY

Students who participate in the alternate assessment require extensive modification to their curriculum and their assessment is aligned with the [Louisiana Connectors](#). Students are not required to meet the Carnegie credit graduation requirement and may take courses focused on applied learning and career preparation. The alternate assessment is a performance-based assessment designed for students whose instructional program is aligned with the Louisiana Connectors. Course decisions for alternate assessment eligible students should be driven by the least restrictive environment determined by the IEP team.

Students who participate in the alternate assessment must take the English Language Arts, Math, and Science LEAP Connect in 11th grade.

High School students who do not score Level 2 or higher on the alternate assessment may complete a growth portfolio approved by the district Special Education Director (or their designee) to fulfill the assessment component for the purposes of graduation.

If a student who takes the alternate assessment enrolls in and completes a course that has a corresponding LEAP 2025 assessment, they must take the test and it must count as at least 5% of their final course grade.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

### COURSE EXPERIENCES (can be applied courses or Carnegie credit courses):

- English = 4 Credits
- Math = 4 Credits
- Science = 2 Credits
- Social Studies = 2 Credits
- Electives = 2-4 Credits
- Career Preparation = 7-9 Credits

### ASSESSMENTS:

- End of Course (EOC): While not required, EOC assessments are taken if students are enrolled in an EOC course.
- ACT: Students who take the alternate assessment are not required to take the ACT series of assessments.

Students assessed on the alternate assessment are able to pursue an alternate pathway to a high school diploma. This pathway consists of academic, assessment, workforce readiness/career preparation, and transition components that the student must meet in order to receive a diploma and mirrors the requirements of the traditional graduation pathway.

A student who takes the alternate assessment may be awarded a diploma when they have met all pathway requirements including evidence that there is a plan for the student to successfully transition away from services provided by the school system. The diploma awarded will look identical to a regular high school diploma and the student’s transcript will identify whether the student took Carnegie unit courses or applied credit courses. In the rare situation that a student participating in the alternate assessment does not meet the graduation requirements for a high school diploma, the student may still pursue a Certificate of Achievement.

## ACCOUNTABILITY IMPACT

There are four components that create [high school and district performance scores](#)<sup>16</sup>, each weighted as 25% of the final score. The components consist of 1) EOC exam scores; 2) ACT scores; 3) Graduation rate (students who received a standard high school diploma); and 4) Graduation Index (a scale that allows schools to earn 100 points for all students graduating with a diploma but additional points for student attainment of college-credit or statewide Jump Start credentials).

**Statewide assessment scores:** Proficient scores on the alternate assessment are factored into the school and district performance score at the same weight as proficient scores on EOCs. All alternate assessment eligible students are required to participate in the alternate assessment or LEAP to meet the federal mandate that all students enrolled in public school are assessed on their academic knowledge.

**ACT scores:** Students who participate in the alternate assessment are not required to participate in the ACT and are not factored into this component.

**Graduation Rate and Graduation Index:** Diplomas earned by students on the Jump Start diploma pathway are counted as graduates in the graduation rate and the Strength of Diploma index. They are counted in the year that they exit and do not enroll again by October 1 or reach the age of 22.

# FOOTNOTES & RESOURCES

1. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.8>
2. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/tops-university-course-requirements.pdf>
3. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/jump-start-career-diploma-graduation-requirements.pdf>
4. [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/assessment/high-school-assessment-frequently-asked-questions.pdf?sfvrsn=5beb971f\\_26](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/assessment/high-school-assessment-frequently-asked-questions.pdf?sfvrsn=5beb971f_26)
5. LEAP 2025 assessments are taken at the end of each corresponding course. However, all high school students, must take the Algebra I or Geometry and the English I or English II LEAP 2025 assessment by the third year of high school, with the exception of students who participate in alternate assessment, they must take the noted LEAP 2025 tests if earning course credit. Students with disabilities may use testing accommodations as determined by their IEP team.
6. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/performance-scores>
7. <http://doa.louisiana.gov/osr/lac/28v83/28v83.doc>
8. <http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=916099>
9. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/academics>
10. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/jumpstart/jump-start-career-diploma-graduation-requirements.pdf>
11. The April Dunn Act allows IEP teams to determine whether LEAP 2025/EOC passage is required for eligible students.
12. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/jump-start-graduation-pathways>
13. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/jump-start-graduation-pathways>
14. <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/performance-scores>
15. Students who take the alternate assessment and entered a high school cohort in 2014-2015 or prior may earn a high school diploma by meeting the requirements for a Certificate of Achievement and one of the three transition requirements outlined in the April Dunn Act. Students earning a diploma by meeting these requirements will not be awarded accountability points.