

THE STATE OF FINANCIAL AID IN LOUISIANA

*A Report of the Louisiana
Financial Aid Working Group*

November 2023



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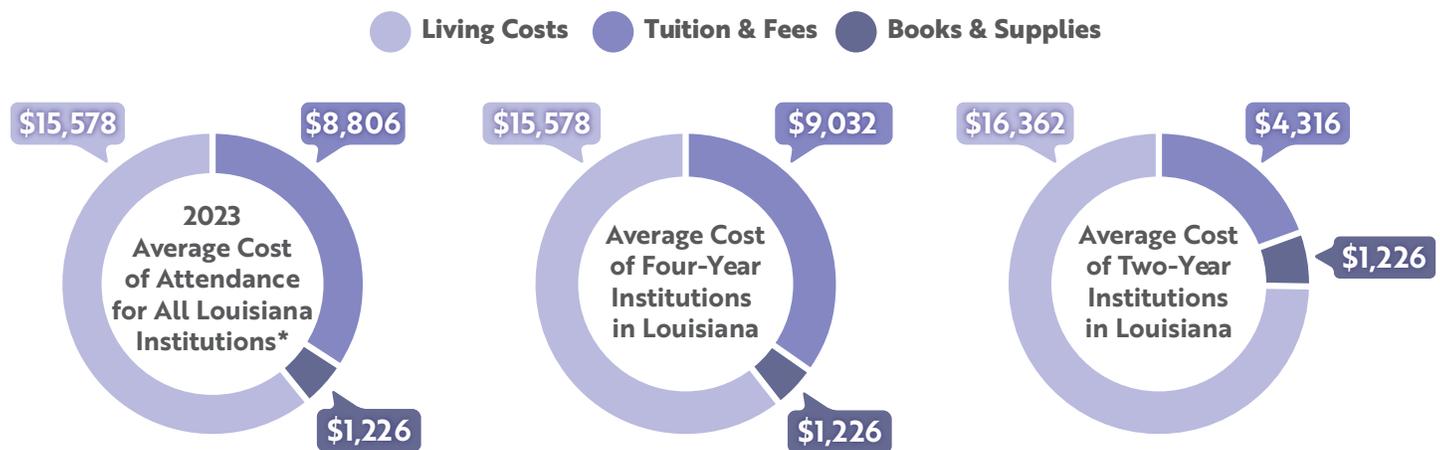
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POSTSECONDARY ACCESS IN LOUISIANA

The nation is experiencing fewer students enrolling in post-secondary education, and Louisiana is no different, but the state still managed to close out 2022-2023 with 78% of seniors submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). While Louisiana has made great progress, there still remain gaps in access to and completing college by socio-economic status, even amongst higher-achieving economically disadvantaged students. Some students who are eligible for aid still fail to submit the FAFSA. FAFSA submission rates can be raised by providing education and personal assistance to students. Louisiana has created a policy around FAFSA submission and increased awareness about the importance of applying for financial aid to further postsecondary education.

POSTSECONDARY COSTS

One of the most prominent barriers to postsecondary education or training in Louisiana is cost. Too few students and families have the money to fund a four-year degree or industry training program without assistance.



*Source: [College Tuition Compare](#)

POSTSECONDARY FUNDING SOURCES

Louisiana students are afforded many state and federal financial aid options such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students to help combat the costs of postsecondary education and training.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The FAFSA is a form prepared annually by current and prospective postsecondary students to determine their eligibility for student financial aid such as Pell grants, work study programs, and federal student loans. Students complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school and again each year they are in a postsecondary institution to continue qualifying for aid. Early completion is encouraged since students may qualify for additional state or institutional aid.

Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

TOPS is a scholarship program for Louisiana residents who attend any of the following institutions:

- Louisiana public college or university;
- school in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System;
- approved proprietary and cosmetology schools;
- institutions in the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

TOPS Opportunity, Performance, Honors, and Tech awards are based on a student's coursework, GPA and ACT score.

LOUISIANA'S PLAN FOR INCREASING POSTSECONDARY ACCESS

By not completing the FAFSA, Louisiana students forego millions each year in federal grants, state opportunities, and other postsecondary funding. Additionally, students who are awarded TOPS or other state scholarships still seek additional assistance with living expenses, textbooks, and academic fees.

IMPROVING STATE POLICY

These student financial aid gaps call for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to financial aid planning that will benefit all students equitably and preserve the attainment of postsecondary education for future generations.

In December of 2015 the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved a policy regarding postsecondary planning for graduating public high school seniors. The policy sought to increase student access to state and federal financial aid by requiring graduating seniors to either

- complete the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) application or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- declare a hardship; or
- submit a waiver to the local school system.

These policies were made effective with the start of the 2017-2018 school year and applied to the Class of 2018.

IMPROVING STATEWIDE FINANCIAL AID PLANNING

In order to provide even greater access to financial aid for Louisiana's students, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) formed the Financial Aid Working Group to evaluate the state's financial aid application completion rates, identify deficiencies and solutions for communities with low completion rates, and provide a comprehensive list of recommendations to the LDOE on how to improve financial aid completion rates statewide. The Financial Aid working group continues to meet quarterly to analyze current trends and best practices in financial aid planning and create a network of resources for students around the state.

Specifically, the working group was charged with three tasks:

- 1 Develop a state action plan to track school-level financial aid form completion and make recommendations to the Department regarding changes in policy or funding opportunities deemed necessary to ensure that the new policy is implemented with fidelity;
- 2 Support the Department in the ongoing identification of services and programs available for schools and families; and
- 3 Assist in the development of partnerships and alliances with financial aid-related support programs, services, and stakeholders.

The Financial Aid Working Group will work through the 2023-2024 school year to increase FAFSA completion during the pandemic and encourage students to move on to postsecondary education, overcoming perceived barriers.

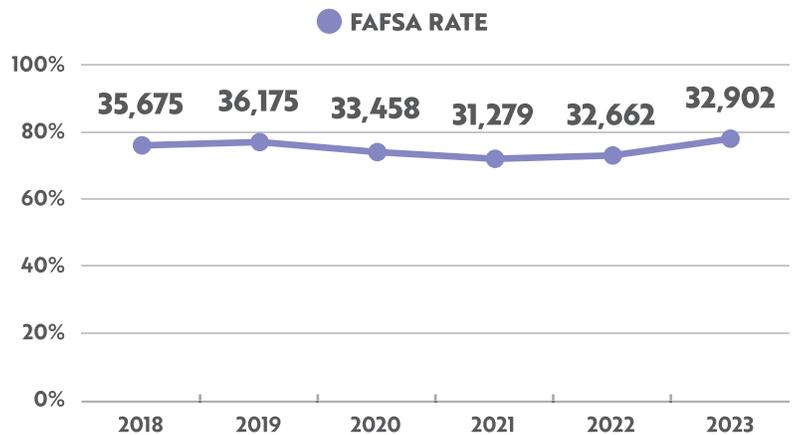
Additionally, the working group recommended that the LDOE publish an annual report, *The State of Financial Aid in Louisiana*, to report financial aid completion rates amongst high school seniors, and highlight those school systems and schools with the highest submission rates.

IMPROVING STATEWIDE FAFSA APPLICATION RATES¹

STATE/NATIONAL COMPARISONS

The National college Attainment Network (NCAN) reports that nationally FAFSA submission was down approximately 4 percent due to factors related to the pandemic. There was a 4 percent decline at Title I schools which serve predominately economically disadvantaged youth. Despite these obstacles, Louisiana had a 78 percent completion rate for all schools, public, and non-public, at the June 30, 2023 deadline, coming in second in the nation.

FAFSA SUBMISSION RATES FOR LOUISIANA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



STATE SUBMISSION DATA ANALYSIS

The state additionally analyses submission data by subgroup. Below are the results from the three years of policy implementation.

Identifier	June 30, 2021	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2023
All Public School Students	71%	74%	80%
Females	87%	87%	85%
Males	76%	77%	74%
TOPS University Diploma	86%	89%	87%
Jump Start Career Diploma	63%	65%	62%
Economically Disadvantaged	78%	80%	76%
Non-Economically Disadvantaged	78%	87%	85%
Special Education	56%	76%	81%
English Language Learners	37%	44%	70%
Homeless	78%	81%	73%
White	83%	83%	81%
Black	83%	84%	80%
Hispanic	63%	69%	66%
American Indian	79%	81%	76%
Asian	90%	91%	88%
Native Hawaii	82%	83%	75%
Multi Race	82%	83%	77%

NATIONAL COMPARISONS

The [National College Access Network \(NCAN\)](#) published the national completion rates and rank of all states by percent of growth since the previous year each week during the FAFSA cycle from October until the June 30, 2023 priority deadline. The data cut off point is the June 30 deadline, but many students went on to complete a FAFSA after this date, which is not reflected in this report. Since the implementation of the policy, Louisiana has finished at number one in the nation for FAFSA completions with the exception of 2020 where we were number two due to COVID waivers of policy. NCAN reported that 75 percent of students in Louisiana completed the FAFSA by the June 30 priority deadline.²

¹ The policy requiring students to complete a FAFSA or have a waiver is satisfied by having a legitimate submission. The vast majority of FAFSA submissions are ruled complete; however, there are some submissions with errors that students do not go back in to correct as their plans for higher education may have changed.

² NCAN combines both private and public school students in its FAFSA submission rate count.

SCHOOL SYSTEM COMPARISONS			
School System	Percent Submitted 2021-2022 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2022-2023 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2023-2024 Cycle
Acadia Parish	57%	62%	69%
Allen Parish	72%	70%	75%
Ascension Parish	75%	85%	84%
Assumption Parish	88%	88%	93%
Avoyelles Parish	90%	91%	87%
Beauregard Parish	66%	63%	66%
Beinville Parish	70%	87%	81%
Bossier Parish	66%	66%	76%
Caddo Parish	69%	70%	73%
Calcasieu Parish	60%	59%	63%
Caldwell Parish	90%	86%	91%
Cameron Parish	57%	73%	78%
Catahoula Parish	84%	100%	100%
Central Community School District	74%	76%	61%
City of Baker School District	47%	53%	80%
City of Bogalusa School District	78%	81%	81%
City of Monroe School District	76%	83%	83%
Claiborne Parish	67%	64%	71%
Concordia Parish	82%	78%	90%
DeSoto Parish	81%	80%	79%
East Baton Rouge Parish	80%	93%	91%
East Carroll Parish	87%	77%	100%
East Feliciana Parish	78%	71%	66%
Evangeline Parish	76%	83%	87%
Franklin Parish	58%	58%	70%
Grant Parish	59%	61%	96%
Iberia Parish	57%	67%	67%
Iberville Parish	92%	90%	91%
Jackson Parish	76%	82%	82%
Jefferson Davis Parish	81%	76%	79%
Jefferson Parish	69%	78%	76%
Lafayette Parish	85%	81%	78%
Lafourche Parish	67%	70%	78%
LaSalle Parish	60%	73%	60%
Lincoln Parish	77%	71%	81%
Livingston Parish	81%	83%	88%
Madison Parish	74%	95%	76%
Morehouse Parish	64%	60%	85%
Natchitoches Parish	74%	92%	100%
Orleans Parish	70%	68%	81%
Ouachita Parish	62%	67%	73%
Plaquemines Parish	81%	83%	82%
Pointe Coupee Parish	63%	67%	72%

SCHOOL SYSTEM COMPARISONS			
School System	Percent Submitted 2021-2022 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2022-2023 Cycle	Percent Submitted 2023-2024 Cycle
Rapides Parish	79%	91%	82%
Red River Parish	77%	74%	74%
Richland Parish	69%	83%	75%
Sabine Parish	82%	90%	78%
St. Bernard Parish	83%	77%	95%
St. Charles Parish	77%	75%	86%
St. Helena Parish	66%	77%	88%
St. James Parish	82%	80%	86%
St. John the Baptist Parish	78%	86%	87%
St. Landry Parish	72%	70%	71%
St. Martin Parish	59%	69%	69%
St. Mary Parish	67%	67%	72%
St. Tammany Parish	74%	67%	78%
Tanigipahoa Parish	65%	79%	77%
Tensas Parish	67%	77%	70%
Terrebonne Parish	71%	73%	78%
Union Parish	94%	100%	100%
Vermilion Parish	65%	67%	74%
Vernon Parish	79%	85%	82%
Washington Parish	81%	88%	79%
Webster Parish	67%	62%	66%
West Baton Rouge Parish	74%	80%	85%
West Carroll Parish	58%	66%	71%
West Feliciana Parish	86%	84%	83%
Winn Parish	70%	79%	86%
Zachary Community School District	83%	68%	83%

HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS	
School Name	Percent Submitted
Natchitoches Parish Technical And Career Center	100%
Ebr Acceleration Academy	100%
Sicity Island High School	100%
Grant High School	100%
Southside Alternative High School	100%
Union Parish High School	100%
Summerfield High School	100%
Lakeview Jr./Sr. High School	100%
Simpson High School	100%
Thomas Jefferson High School For Advanced Studies	100%
Edward J Sam Accelerated School	100%
East Iberville Elementary/High School	100%
Lsu Laboratory School	100%
French Settlement High School	100%
South Cameron High School	100%
Central High School	100%
Harrisonburg High School	100%
Monterey High School	100%
General Trass High School	100%
Georgetown High School	100%
Elton High School	100%
Riverside Alternative High School	100%
V. B. Glencoe Charter School	100%
Avoyelles High School	99%
Fisher Middle/High School	98%
Baton Rouge Magnet High School	98%
Hathaway High School	97%
The Willow School	97%
Magnet Academy For Cultural Arts	96%
New Orleans Center For Creative Arts	96%
Rosepine High School	96%
Haynes Academy School For Advanced Studies	96%
Lafayette High School	96%
Walker High School	95%
Natchitoches Central High School	95%
Chalmette High School	95%
Lake Charles College Prep	95%
Ville Platte High School	94%
Liberty Magnet High	94%
Independence High Magnet	94%
Edna Karr High School	93%
Converse High School	93%
St. Amant High School	93%

HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS	
School Name	Percent Submitted
Beekman Charter School	93%
Hahnville High School	93%
Glenmora High School	93%
Caddo Parish Magnet High School	93%
Patrick F. Taylor Science & Technology Academy	93%
Assumption High School	93%
Quitman High School	93%
Simsboro High School	93%
Winnfield High School	93%
Young Audiences Charter High School	93%
Benjamin Franklin High School	92%
Louisiana School For Math Science & The Arts	92%
Plainview High School	92%
White Castle High School	92%
Mamou High School	92%
D'arbonne Woods Charter School	92%
Northside High School	92%
Jeanerette Senior High School	92%
Gueydan High School	92%
Vidalia High School	91%
North Vermilion High School	91%
Northwood High School	91%
Caldwell Parish High School	91%
West St. John High School	91%
Ebarb School	90%
Saline High School	90%
Jewel M. Sumner High School	90%
St. James High School	90%
Marksville High School	89%
Choudrant High School	89%
Delhi Charter School	89%
Jefferson Virtual High School	89%
Benton High School	89%
Delta Charter School Mst	89%
Southern University Lab School	89%
North Desoto High School	89%
Livingston Collegiate Academy	89%
North Caddo High School	89%
Block High School	89%
Elizabeth High School	88%
Frederick A. Douglass High School	88%
Springfield High School	88%
H. L. Bourgeois High School	88%

HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS	
School Name	Percent Submitted
Weston High School	88%
Brusly High School	88%
St. Helena College And Career Academy	88%
John F. Kennedy High School	88%
New Harmony High Institute	88%
Mt. Hermon School	88%
Eleanor Mcmain Secondary School	87%
Plaquemine Senior High School	87%
Mcdonogh #35 College Preparatory School	87%
Negreet High School	87%
Alexandria Senior High School	87%
Live Oak High School	87%
North Central High School	87%
Belle Chasse High School	87%
Wossman High School	87%
Madison Preparatory Academy	87%
David Thibodaux Stem Magnet Academy	87%
Hicks High School	87%
Denham Springs High School	87%
Virtual Academy Of Lafourche	86%
East St. John High School	86%
Js Clark Leadership Academy	86%
Tioga High School	86%
Thibodaux High School	86%
Carroll High School	86%
Reeves High School	86%
Montgomery High School	86%
Morehouse Magnet School	86%
Sophie B. Wright Institute Of Academic Excellence	86%
Delcambre High School	86%
Varnado High School	85%
Ferriday High School	85%
Maurepas School	85%
Oak Grove High School	85%
Scotlandville Magnet High School	85%
Richwood High School	85%
Patterson High School	85%
Downsville Community Charter School	85%
South Terrebonne High School	85%
C.e. Byrd High School	84%
Mandeville High School	84%
Abramson Science And Technology School	83%
Avoyelles Public Charter School	83%

HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS	
School Name	Percent Submitted
Welsh High School	83%
Buckeye High School	83%
Dodson High School	83%
Lutcher High School	83%
West Feliciana High School	83%
La School For Ag Science	83%
Albany High School	83%
Helen Cox High School	83%
Leesville High School	83%
Haynesville Jr./Sr. High School	83%
Holden High School	83%
Pitkin High School	83%
Zachary High School	83%
Covington High School	83%
Captain Shreve High School	82%
Loreauville High School	82%
Dutchtown High School	82%
G.w. Carver High School	82%
Castor High School	82%
Northeast Claiborne Charter	82%
Phoenix High School	82%
Grand Lake High School	82%
Logansport High School	82%
Pine School	81%
Bogalusa High School	81%
Ringgold High School	81%
Bastrop High School	81%
Pearl River High School	81%
Breaux Bridge High School	81%
Rapides High School	81%
Doyle High School	81%
Mangham High School	81%
Fontainebleau High School	80%
North Iberville High School/Stem Academy	80%
Centerville High School	80%
Northshore High School	80%
Kentwood High Magnet School	80%
Thrive Academy	80%
Pickering High School	80%
Baker High School	80%
Sterlington High School	80%
Living School	80%

APPENDIX: FAFSA DATA COLLECTION

Currently the only source for public school only FAFSA data besides self-reporting is on the USDOE website. Weekly/bi-weekly USDOE data can be found at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school>.

While USDOE data is informative, it does have some limitations. Some of the limitations of USDOE data include

- Students can submit multiple applications using different identifying information
- Students who are overage fall within the current definition of a senior (beginning in January, first-time submitters up to 19 years old were present in data)
- School can have a change in the official count of seniors during the current school year
- School is listed more than one time in the data with name variations
- School has less than 10 seniors and are therefore not included in reporting
- School has 5 or fewer applications on file and not included in school reporting but included in district reporting

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, USDOE submitted applications were matched with official state data in the Student Transcript System to indicate that students have met graduation requirements.

The LDOE uses USDOE data to calculate FAFSA data for Louisiana public schools. The data included in this report reflects the number of FAFSAs submitted among first-time filing applicants at the cutoff date who will have received their high school diploma by the start of the school year for which they are applying for aid.

The LDOE data uses USDOE reported numbers and school system self reporting and calculates based on the number of actual graduates in the Student Transcript System (STS). This data is reported by numbers submitted, divided by the number of graduates. Final district and school year percentages are calculated on the state/national priority deadline for FAFSA submission as of June 30. The Department communicates data to the field through School System Support teams each week.

FAFSA data on public and nonpublic school completions can be found at the National College Access Network's (NCAN) Form Your Future FAFSA Tracker (<https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>).