

LDOE Weekly Newsletter



April 14, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

This week, the Governor indicated the real possibility of [plans to extend the closure of school facilities](#) through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year to curb the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This extension is necessary for the health and safety of our students, teachers, school personnel, and wider communities, but it is a decision that brings with it uncertainty.

This feeling is particularly strong among our graduating high school seniors, who have been unable to experience many of the traditional milestones that come with this important time in their lives. Louisiana Teacher of the Year Chris Dier, in [a letter to seniors that gained national attention](#), said it best, "This year may not be what you envisioned, but I'm eager to see what you do with it. It is still very much your year."

As we move forward, we ask that you continue to support this special group of students and reassure them that the path forward remains.

The path for life after high school requires not only skills and knowledge but also a plan and personal direction. Any plan for life after high school must account for the cost of education and how it will be afforded.

While [financial aid planning](#) is not a requirement for high school graduation this year, [the Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#), or FAFSA, is still required to qualify students for TOPS, TOPS Tech, and all forms of federal financial aid, including Pell grants and work study programs. Completing the FAFSA is essential not just for attending universities but also for affording community college, technical college, job training, and industry credentials.

For years, Louisiana graduates left hundreds of millions of dollars in education and training funds on the table, and Louisiana lagged behind the rest of the nation in the percentage of graduates seeking a funded postsecondary education. For the past two years, however, Louisiana has led the nation in the percentage of seniors submitting a FAFSA, and with only a few months left until the July 1 priority deadline, Louisiana ranks second in the country this year.

This year's results can be tracked weekly at the [#FormYourFuture FAFSA Tracker](#). As of April 3, 64 percent of the Class of 2020 in Louisiana – about 31,000 public school and nonpublic school students – had completed the FAFSA.

Despite this unprecedented and uncertain time, Louisiana aims to top even last year's marks. Parents, counselors, students, and communities across the state continue to come together to support graduates in making their final submissions. The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid, for example, recently launched [its "FAFSA Now" campaign](#) to share information and resources, including virtual assistance, with the Class of 2020.

Today's current events present unique barriers for our graduates as they take their next steps; financial barriers should not be one of them. Let's take down as many barriers as possible and send our graduates into adulthood with a door-opening next step.

In service,

Beth Scioneaux
Acting State Superintendent

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Important Dates for School Systems

Upcoming Events

- [Assessment and Accountability Monthly Call](#): April 21 at 4:15 p.m.
- [Super App Competitive Funding Webinar](#): April 30 at 11:00 a.m.

Important Deadlines

- [IDEA Draft Grant Application Public Comment](#) deadline: April 24
- [Remote AP Access Form](#) deadline: April 24

Postponed/Canceled Events

- Student of the Year events (Postponed)
- Spring 2020 Counselor Institutes (April; rescheduled as virtual institutes)
- 2020 Teacher Leader Summit (May, in-person convening canceled; virtual session offerings will be shared in coming weeks)
- 2020 Jump Start Super Summer Institutes

Please note: The [2019-2020 School System Support Calendar](#) has been updated to include these changes.

School System Support

New: COVID-19 Guidance

In response to the ongoing health crisis, all public schools in the state of Louisiana are currently closed.

Please reference the Department's [COVID-19 Information and Resources](#) webpage for regularly updated guidance. Review the [K-12 Frequently Asked Questions](#) document that is specific to the concerns of school systems for the most up-to-date information. Child care providers should refer to the [Early Childhood Frequently Asked Questions](#) for specific guidance. For education-specific information, contact the Department at LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.

Please contact the Louisiana 211 Network by dialing 211 with questions about coronavirus, or text the keyword LACOVID to 898-211 for the most current information about the outbreak as it becomes available.

New: Guidance on ESF-17 Cyber Management During COVID-19

As individuals continue the transition to online Zoom meetings, the State's ESF-17 team strongly recommends everyone to [take the following steps](#) to ensure Zoom meetings are properly secured:

- **Require passwords for all Zoom meetings.**
- **Never post Zoom links over public platforms\social media.**
- **Set screen sharing to “Host Only.”**
- **Update all Zoom applications.**
 - (iOS/MacOS/Windows10)
- **Use the “Waiting Room” for Zoom meetings open to public participation.**
 - A virtual staging area that stops your guests from joining until you're ready for them.
 - Meeting hosts can customize Waiting Room settings for additional control and [personalization](#).

Victims of a teleconference hijacking or “Zoombombing,” are strongly encouraged to report the event to the State's Cyber Crimes Unit (CCU) at Louisiana State Police Fusion Center by phone at 800-434-8007 or via email at lafusion.center@la.gov as soon as possible.

New: School System Planning

The Super App Competitive Funding Webinar has been rescheduled to be held on April 30 at 11:00 a.m. to review important information regarding Super App competitive funds. Federal Programs Directors and Super App Planning Team members directly involved in budgeting funds should attend. Webinar details are listed below.

- **Webinar Date and Time:** April 30 at 11:00 a.m.
- **Webinar Link:** <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/212342956>
- **Webinar Phone Number:** 646-876-9923
- **Meeting ID#:** 212 342 956
- **Meeting Password:** 022648

Please contact ldoe.grantshelpdesk@la.gov with questions

Assessment and Accountability

For District Testing Coordinators and Accountability Contacts

Update: Waivers for Testing

- To date, the only students who have a waiver from the assessment graduation requirements are graduating seniors who were enrolled at the time of school closing and were in the February 1 enrollment report.
- The current waiver does not apply to students who were not enrolled in school or students who are not yet eligible to graduate.
- In May, the Department will request a change in policy to waive the assessment requirement for a high school assessment-eligible course earned in 2019-2020 for students who would have been initial testers in spring 2020. Students who failed a subject test in a prior administration will not be eligible for the waiver of the assessment requirement.

Update: NAEP Age 17 Long-term Trend (LTT) Assessments

- NAEP Long-Term Trend (LTT) assessments that were scheduled for March 16 for students aged 17 have been suspended. All schools should have received notification from the NAEP helpdesk.

Update Cohort Graduation Data Certification

- Pending the duration of the stay-at-home order, the opening of cohort graduation data certification is scheduled to open on May 13. Accountability contacts will be notified when plans are finalized.

Update GOLD ECE Guidance

- On March 20, the Department received federal approval to waive assessment requirements for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Teaching Strategies *GOLD* documentation for the May checkpoint will not be required.

Update GOLD OSEP Guidance

- TS GOLD OSEP Administrators should follow the same process for completing intended exit assessments for any children who would have been exited as a result of a withdrawal from ECSE services or within six weeks of the child's 6th birthday. Administrators are encouraged to use any data collected during winter checkpoint and input into the OSEP license to use as a final rating for this school year. Even if an administrator is exiting the child now, an exit assessment should include the end of the school year date and all ratings should be finalized before completing the exit assessment.

Assessment Administration Support and Training Office Hours

The next **Assessment and Accountability Monthly Call** will be on **April 21 at 4:15 p.m.** Webinar details are listed below.

- **Webinar Date and Time:** April 21 at 4:15 p.m.
- **Webinar Link:** <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/202189164>
- **Webinar Phone Number:** 646-876-9923
- **Meeting ID#:** 202 189 164

Reminder: Assessment Development Educator Review Committees, Summer 2020

All LEAP 2025 Social Studies, LEAP 2025 ELA, and LEAP Connect Item Content and Bias Review committees will convene virtually. Review the [Assessment Development Educator Review Committees](#) document in the [Assessment Guidance Library](#) for more information and to access links to complete interest surveys. All LEAP 2025 Rangefinding, Data Review, and Alignment Review committees are postponed until summer 2021.

Please contact michelle.mcadams@la.gov with questions.

High School Pathways

New: Advanced Placement Exams

Please share with AP Coordinators, school counselors, and teachers.

Advanced Placement Exams will be administered this year at home, for those who opt to participate, from May 11 to 22 or June 1 to 5 (make-ups). The College Board has released [guidance for AP Exams](#) for school systems and educators. School systems or students that need assistance regarding technology or connectivity need to fill out this [form](#) by **April 24**.

The Department has reconciled a set of [AP Assessment Updates](#) and [AP Exam FAQs](#).

For more information please contact meredith.mcgovern@la.gov.

New: Diploma Orders

Please share with school system administrators and school counselors

Diploma printing is currently on track and diploma seal shipments are scheduled to arrive on time. Receipt of the diploma shipment requires a signature. If the original order address requires a change, contact meagan.thompson2@la.gov.

The Department also published [guidance](#) for schools that opt to hold virtual graduation ceremonies.

Please contact megan.thompson2@la.gov with questions.

Special Education

New: Updated Resources for Supporting Students with Disabilities During Continuous Learning

The Department has released new and updated resources to support students with disabilities during continuous learning.

Documents on this page are being continuously updated. If you've opened a document more than once, please clear your history/cache and refresh the page to view the most up-to-date version.

- [Virtual Small Group Instruction for Students with Disabilities: Privacy Guidance](#) - new resource
- [Individual Contingency Plan for Continuous Learning](#) - new resource
- [IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures](#) - updated resource with additional information on Part C to B transition, Act 833 and Section 504.

All resources are available in the Continuous Learning section of the [Students with Disabilities](#) landing page.

Please contact specialeducation@la.gov with questions.

New: Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Vacancy

The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) advises the Department on the provision of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for children with disabilities and provides guidance on special education programs and services. The panel is seeking [applications](#) for members to serve 3-year terms beginning July 1 in the following roles:

- Parent of a child with a disability
- Teacher
- Administrator of a program for children with disabilities
- Representative of a private school
- Representative of an institution of higher education that prepares special education and related services personnel
- Representative of the State juvenile or adult corrections agency

Prospective members should email applications to specialeducation@la.gov by **May 8**.