

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](#)
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TRANSITIONAL 9th GRADE KEY POLICIES

Policy contained in Bulletin 1566, [Pupil Progression Plan Guidance](#), 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:

Support for Students

LEAs shall offer, at no cost, extended, on grade level instruction through summer remediation to students who, based on a preponderance of evidence of student learning, are considered to be academically struggling, did not take the spring LEAP tests, and failed to meet the passing standard set forth in §701 and §703 of the bulletin 1566. The LEA shall provide transportation to and from the assigned LEAP remediation summer site(s) from, at a minimum, a common pick-up point.

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.

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

LEAs shall follow the guidelines set forth in §703 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 exceeds the percentage of eighth graders in that LEA eligible for transitional ninth grade at

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](#).

the conclusion of the prior school year, the local superintendent of that LEA shall provide a written justification to the state superintendent.

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 LEAP 2025 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.

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. The LEA determines appropriate placement in ninth grade or transitional ninth grade for students who transfer to the LEA from another state or country, no later than October 1 of each school year.

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. 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

STEP 2: Determine Placement of Non-Proficient Students

The initial decision to place a student in the Transitional 9th Grade or to retain a student in the 8th 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) [Statewide assessments results](#) (if available); 2) student growth data and/or results from a teacher's SLT process; 3) results of benchmark assessments rated as Tier 1 or 2 through the [Instructional Materials Review](#) process and/or the state released ELA and math practice tests; 4) performance results on classroom assessments aligned to the state academic standards (e.g. unit assessments from Tier 1 curricula, teacher made assessments in [EAGLE](#)); 5) IEP goals; 6) course grades; 7) attendance; and 8) 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 [National College Attainment Network \(NCAN\)](#), provides [an advisor training module](#) for school counselors to create a comprehensive [early awareness program](#) 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 CTSOs.

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

Instructional materials are one of the most important tools educators use in the classroom to enhance student learning. It is critical those materials fully align to state standards and are high quality if teachers are to provide meaningful instruction. No program is a silver bullet, so principals must support their teachers to choose and use each program in a way that supports the unique students in their building.

Review the posted [instructional resource reviews](#).

Hundreds of titles have been reviewed by educators and experts from across the state. The Department tiers programs so that schools can easily see which programs are more and less aligned to Louisiana's academic standards. 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 has also identified a number of trends in missing curricular components and has released a series of resources to help districts select high-quality curricula. 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 \(ELA\) planning resources](#): Classroom-ready daily lesson plans for grades 3-12. Each unit includes three culminating tasks and lessons that prepare students for those tasks, integrating rich texts and all standards.
- [Math planning resources](#): Includes resources to support math remediation and guides for using the Eureka math curriculum with Louisiana's math standards.
- [Social Studies planning resources](#): Includes scope and sequence documents and instructional tasks.

Once a strong curriculum is chosen, principals must ensure all teachers receive professional development on how to implement the curriculum. Using the [curriculum implementation scale](#), principals should observe teachers, review classroom assessment data, and look at student work to determine the level of support teachers need with implementing the curriculum effectively. Principals should also use the series of collaboration sessions ([session 1](#), [session 2](#), [session 3](#), and session 4) to learn how to develop a better professional development plan for their teachers around curriculum implementation.

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 Remediation programs used throughout the school day and school year will not account for more than 35 percent of total instructional minutes
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 which shall be based in significant part, on student performance on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program with goals and objectives which are compatible with the competency-based education program and which supplement standards approved by BESE.

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 drop 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 include through the end of T9 (e.g., transitional 9th graders do not have two years, transitional 9th and 9th grade, to earn credits for DCAI).

Carnegie Course Credits (earned by the end of 9 th grade or Transitional 9 th)*	DCAI Points Per Student
7+	150 pts.
6.5	125 pts.
6	100 pts.
5.5	75 pts.
5	50 pts.
4.5	25 pts.
4	0 pts.
3.5	0 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 are encouraged to 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, just as it would for an 8th grader who was successful on an EOC. Act 833 eligible students in grades 9-12 are required to take all EOCs corresponding to the courses in which they are enrolled. Points are awarded for scores of Good or higher.