Dear Colleagues,

The hallmark of a quality education system is its capacity to send young adults into life after high school equipped and motivated for citizenship, work, and future learning. This 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.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, is 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. That changed in recent years, however. Last year, Louisiana led the nation in the percentage of seniors submitting a FAFSA, and with three months left until the July 1 deadline, ranks second in the country this year.

This year's results can be tracked weekly at the #FormYourFuture FAFSA Tracker. As of March 15, 60 percent of the Class of 2019 in Louisiana – about 28,686 public school and nonpublic school students – had completed the FAFSA. However, this number reflects wide variation across schools and school systems. In some schools, most students have already completed and submitted forms, while other schools and school systems trail the statewide average significantly. To see a school-by-school report, view the FAFSA submission data for all Louisiana school systems and schools.

The next two months will see a statewide push to top even last year's marks. Parents, counselors, students, and communities across the state will come together to support graduates in making their final submissions. To see specifics, and to see what's happening in your region, you can access a calendar of financial aid planning events across the state.

The decision to earn a credential or a degree is a life-changing one, and financial barriers should never have to stand in the way. Let's take down as many barriers as possible and send our graduates into adulthood with a door-opening next step.

As always, thank you for all you do for our children,

John

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Important Dates for School Systems

Upcoming Events

- **Assessment and Accountability Office Hours:** April 2 at 1:00 p.m.
- **April Superintendents’ Call:** April 3 at 10:30 a.m.
- **April School System Planning Call:** April 3 at 1:00 p.m.
- **Special Education Leader Monthly Webinar:** April 4 at 2:00 p.m.

Important Deadlines

- **FY2019 E-Rate Funding Application** deadline: March 27
- **2019-2020 System Enhancements** deadline: April 9

School System Support

**New: April School System Planning Call**

The April School System Planning Call will take place on April 3 at 1:00 p.m. The following school system supervisors should participate:

- Curriculum and instruction supervisors
- District test coordinators and accountability contacts
- Early childhood supervisors
- Federal Program supervisors
- High school and career and technical supervisors
- Personnel directors
- Talent (Mentors, Content Leaders, Teacher Leaders) supervisors

- **Webinar Date and Time:** April 3 at 1:00 p.m.
- **Webinar Link:** [https://ldoe.zoom.us/](https://ldoe.zoom.us/)
- **Meeting ID#:** 398875849

Email districtsupport@la.gov with questions.

**New: April Superintendents’ Call**

Superintendents are invited to participate in the Superintendents' Conference Call hosted by State Superintendent John White on April 3 at 10:30 a.m. Participants may begin dialing into the call 15 minutes in advance. Please follow the instructions below:

- **Webinar Date and Time:** April 3 at 10:30 a.m.
- **Webinar Link:** [https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/529591599](https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/529591599)
- **Phone Bridge:** 877-475-0109
- **Meeting ID#:** 5685704

You will need to identify yourself in order to be placed into the meeting. Please enter your full name, and school system name when logging in.

**New: BESE Tuition Program for Teachers Application for Summer and Fall 2019**

The BESE Tuition Program for Teachers provides tuition funding for selected classroom teachers to enroll in courses at regionally accredited colleges or universities in Louisiana. Online applications for
coursework funding for the summer and fall 2019 semesters is now open and will close on April 1. Program details, as well as a link to the application, can be found on the Continuing Opportunities for Educators page.

For questions about the BESE Tuition Program for Teachers, visit the Frequently Asked Questions page or contact stem@la.gov.

Assessment and Accountability

New: For District Testing Coordinators

General:
- The 2018-2019 Assessment Month-by-Month Checklist is located in the Assessment Library.
- All changes to secure shipping addresses, DTCs, or Accountability Contacts must be submitted to the Department using the DTC and Accountability Contact Update form found in the Assessment Library.
- The 2019-2020 Assessment Calendar has been updated in the Assessment Library. The ACT makeup date has been corrected to March 31.

K-2 Pilots
- Due April 30: Writing Sample Pilot testing materials must be shipped via prepaid mailer.

LEAP 2025
- Test setup for LEAP 2025 3-8 is open in eDIRECT. DTCs and STCs can begin adding TA numbers, ensuring all students are in eDIRECT at the appropriate site, verifying accommodations, and creating test sessions on this date.
- Test setup for high school LEAP 2025 will open on March 25.
- Materials for computer based testing for grades 3-8 arrived last week. The additional materials for CBT is open in eDIRECT.
- School systems needing to request 2017-2018 test scores for English I and US History 5-level must complete the 2017-2018 Test Score Request Form located in the Assessment Library under Resources and Forms. Email the completed form to assessment@la.gov.
- The Participation Form for Nonpublic School Students is due April 5 to DRC.

LEAP Connect
- School test coordinators and test administrators must complete the Post-Administration Oath located in both the LEAP Connect and LAA1 TAMs. The TAMs can be found in eDIRECT under General Information, Documents, LEAP Connect/LAA1 Spring 2019, and Manuals.
- The LEAP Connect and LAA1 scores will be available in May and posted in eDIRECT.

ELPT
- School test coordinators and test administrators must complete the Post-Administration Oath located in the ELPT Summative TAM.
- The ELPT scores will be available in May. Results will be posted in the AIR Online Reporting System (ORS) that is accessed through the ELPT portal.
- By April 1: Test administrators/proctors, district test coordinators, school test coordinators, and technology coordinators should complete the ELPT Survey.

ACT and WorkKeys
- Now - March 29: Receive materials for makeup testing at the district office.
- Today, March 26: Deadline to order ACT-approved accommodations and/or support materials for the April 2-8 testing window.
- Now-April 1: Request for ACT to add and remove students by submitting the Enroll or Unenroll Students file and update student information in PANext for makeup testing.
- Conduct sessions for examinees to complete non-test information on the answer document. Only required if not completed previously.
- April 2: Administer the make-up ACT on paper with standard time.
- April 2-8: Administer the make-up ACT on paper with accommodations and/or supports.
Assessment Administration Support and Training
The next Assessment and Accountability Office Hours call will be April 2 at 1:00 p.m.

- Webinar Link: [https://ldoe.zoom.us/](https://ldoe.zoom.us/)
- Webinar Phone Number: 669-900-6833
- Meeting ID#: 393463942

The Office Hours Questions and Answers document is posted in the Assessment Library. Email assessment@la.gov with questions.

**Reminder: Complete Surveys to Participate in Educator Review Committees**
Please share with teachers and supervisors, including those who work with special education (students with disabilities or significant disabilities), visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and English learners.

Please have teachers and supervisors access the Assessment Development Educator Review Committees document, in the Assessment Guidance Library to learn specific information about the review committees convening for 2019. This document includes links to surveys for each committee that teachers and supervisors should complete in order to be considered for participation.

Survey closing dates:
- April 5 for late May and early June committees
- April 26 for June committees and science standard setting committees
- May 15 for July committees
- July 5 for August committees

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

**High School Pathways**

**New: Collegiate Athletics Compliance Informational Session**
Please share with professional school counselors.

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOFSA) is holding a workshop for secondary professional school counselors on April 5 at the Galvez State Office Building, 602 North 5th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The workshop will provide information on student-athlete eligibility and student-athlete registration for major athletic associations (NCAA, NJCAA, and NAIA). It will also provide information on the financial aid/scholarships the associations provide and recommendations for school counselors to effectively advise their student athletes to prepare for their transition to post-secondary education as student-athletes.

For more information, please contact rhonda.bridevaux@la.gov.

**Educator Preparation**

**Reminder: Important Changes to Educator Certification Applications**

The Department processes over 4,000 certification questions and applications per month. In order to better serve school systems, the Department recommends the following:

- Use Teach LA Live! to submit both applications and questions to the certification team.
- Schedule office hours in the online portal for specific certification questions.
  - Speak with a Certification Specialist during office hours – this is for personnel directors.
and/or administrative staff only.
- Please include name and contact number when scheduling.

To increase efficiency, the Department will no longer accept paper applications after May 1.

Please contact christy.bellue@la.gov with questions.

**Special Education**

**New: Join the Special Education Leader Monthly Webinar**

The Department will hold its monthly webinar for school system directors, supervisors, and coordinators of special education on April 4 at 2:00 p.m. Topics will include upcoming deadlines, updates, guidance, and training opportunities. Pre-registration is not required.

- **Webinar Date and Time:** April 4 at 2:00 p.m.
- **Webinar Link:** [https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/432848651](https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/432848651)
- **Webinar Phone Number:** 408-638-0968 (for dial-in only)
- **Meeting ID#:** 432848651

For more information, please contact specialeducation@la.gov.

**Data**

**New: End-of-Year Data Collections**

Please share with data coordinators and data managers.

Several systems are open or will be opening soon for the end of year data submissions. This will be the last opportunity for school systems to submit final school calendars, staff data, student data, and student transcripts. The submission deadlines for these end of year collections are later in the school year. Please refer to the 2018-2019 Benchmark Calendar for deadlines and additional reminders.

Please email systemsupport@la.gov with questions.

**New: 2019-2020 Sponsor Site System (SPS)**

Sponsor Site requests for the 2019-2020 school year are now being accepted. This includes closure of existing schools/sites, changes to existing schools/sites, and the addition of new schools/sites. Submit requests via the Sponsor Site Information Form by June 30 (for school closures) and July 15 (for new schools and changes to existing schools).

Please email systemsupport@la.gov with questions.

**New: 2019-2020 System Enhancements**

The Department is currently working to enhance the following data systems for the 2019-2020 school year, to improve user experiences and adhere to state and federal policies and legislation: Compass, eScholar, PEP, SER, SIS, SPS, and STS. Draft Technical Specifications for 2019-2020 System Enhancements are now live in INSIGHT for review.

As part of this process, the Department is asking school systems to review the enhancements and submit feedback by April 9.
Following the feedback period, four webinars will be held for school system and vendors to discuss final specifications. Please note, registration is required. Webinar login details will be automatically provided to participants upon registration.

- April 12 1:00-2:30 p.m.
- April 15 2:00-3:30 p.m.
- April 16 9:00-10:30 a.m.
- April 17 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Please email kaylie.loupe@la.gov with questions.

**Reminder: February 2019 Data File of Economically Disadvantaged Students**

The Department will release the February 2019 data file of economically disadvantaged students for each school system on March 29 for the purposes of informing grants, federal funding, and subgroup determinations. The single Excel file, *LEA Code LEA Name Feb 2019 Economically Disadvantaged*, will be available through July 1 on the Data Management FTP site. FTP coordinators should locate their individual school system file and share it with their federal program and finance staff.

Please email systemsupport@la.gov with questions.

**Finance**

**New: Fiscal Year 2019 Year-End Deadlines**

Please share with business managers and financial officials.

The Office of Federal Support & Fiscal Operations, Expenditure Control have set eGMS grant submission year-end deadlines to ensure that the Department uses all of its FY19 funding. Failure to meet these deadlines risks funding availability. The Department cannot guarantee the payment of late claims and/or late claims might have to wait until the following fiscal year (June 2020) for funds to be available.

Please contact andrea.kirumba@la.gov with questions.

**Reminder: Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) Mid-Year Adjustments**

Please share with business managers and financial officials.

The transmittal memo in addition to the March 2019 Budget Letter has been updated to include the October and February mid-year adjustments for students and the final local per pupil amount for charter schools. The supporting documentation is provided in the Department’s Minimum Foundation Program Library.

Please contact ldoemfphelpdesk@la.gov with questions.

**Reminder: Proposed Fiscal Year 2019-2020 MFP**

The BESE adopted MFP resolution and formula was submitted to the Legislature on March 15. The proposed MFP documents for FY2019-2020 are available in the Department’s Minimum Foundation Program Library.

Please contact ldoemfphelpdesk@la.gov with questions.

**Reminder: Final Charter School Per-Pupil Amounts for FY2018-2019**
The final FY 2018-2019 Charter Per-Pupil amounts have been completed and are now available. The local revenue representation per pupil amount for charter schools is required to be updated from the initial to the final amount and used in the MFP formula allocation according to Louisiana Revised Statute 17:3995.

Please contact ldoemfphelpdesk@la.gov with questions.

**Policy**

**Reminder: March BESE Meeting Summary**

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) met on March 13 and approved a number of bulletin revisions and recommendations. A [summary](#) of the approvals that directly impact the activities of school systems is now available.

Please email ryan.n.gremillion@la.gov for more information.