K12 ACADEMICS — STATE EDUCATION SERIES

Louisiana
Education Guide

A complete profile — schools, testing, graduation, accountability, school choice, teacher certification & financial aid, each in depth.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Everything about school in Louisiana.

This guide profiles **Louisiana**'s education system in seven parts, each a two-page deep dive with the key facts, plain-English explanations, and a link to the full, regularly-updated guide online. From K12 Academics, the world's largest education resource, online since 2004.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Education Overview · State Testing · Graduation Requirements · Accountability & Report Cards · School Choice · Teacher Certification · Financial Aid

SEARCH 200+ DIRECTORIES

K-12 Schools · Colleges & Universities · Vendors · Summer Programs · International Programs · Performers

Education Overview

EDUCATION IN LOUISIANA

Louisiana educates roughly 680,000 public K–12 students across about 70 parish and city school systems (Louisiana uses "parishes" rather than counties), overseen by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Louisiana is a national leader in school choice — and it just went...

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL

- **Start age** — 7 (by September 30)
- **End of compulsory age** — 18
- **Systems** — ~70 parish and city school systems
- **Satisfying it** — Public, nonpublic, or home study

PRE-K IN LOUISIANA

Louisiana does not offer a fully universal pre-K program, but it invests in early learning through several state programs — most notably LA 4 (the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program) , which serves at-risk and income-eligible 4-year-olds , alongside 8(g), NSECD, and Type III child-care programs, plus Head Start . Louisiana...

HOMESCHOOLING IN LOUISIANA

- **BESE-Approved Home Study Program** — Apply to BESE for approval and renew annually , showing that you offer a sustained curriculum "at least equal to" the public schools (submitting...
- **Nonpublic school not seeking state approval** — Operate your home as a home-based nonpublic school and simply register it with the state — less oversight, but without the approved-program status.

AT A GLANCE

Compulsory	Ages 7–18
Systems	~70 parishes
Testing	LEAP 2025
Diploma	24 credits (TOPS)
Choice	LA GATOR ESA

PARISH SYSTEMS & CHARTERS

Louisiana's largest school systems include Jefferson Parish , East Baton Rouge Parish , Caddo Parish (Shreveport), and St. Tammany Parish . Louisiana has one of the country's more significant charter-school sectors — roughly 150 charters serving over 12% of students — and, most distinctively, New Orleans (NOLA Public Schools) operates...

PRIVATE & INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN LOUISIANA

- **Catholic & parochial schools** — A very large network across the Archdiocese of New Orleans and dioceses statewide (Jesuit High, Brother Martin, St. Augustine, and Ursuline Academy —...
- **Independent schools** — Nonprofit, board-governed schools such as Isidore Newman School , Metairie Park Country Day, and Louise S. McGehee (New Orleans), and Episcopal...
- **Other religious schools** — Christian and other faith-based schools
- **Specialty schools** — Montessori and schools for specific learning needs

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL EDUCATION OVERVIEW GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

State Testing

WHAT YOUR STATE TESTS

Louisiana uses LEAP 2025 (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) in grades 3–8 and as End-of-Course (EOC) exams in high school, plus the ACT in grade 11. The EOC exams are tied to graduation . Run by the Louisiana Department of Education.

WHICH TESTS, WHICH GRADES

- **LEAP 2025 (grades 3–8)** — English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies
- **LEAP 2025 EOC (high school)** — Algebra I, Geometry, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History
- **ACT (grade 11)** — A statewide college-entrance test used in accountability
- **LEAP Connect** — Alternate assessment for eligible students

FORMAT & SUBJECTS

LEAP 2025 and EOC exams are online , with multiple-choice and constructed-response items. EOCs are taken when students finish the matching course.

IS PASSING REQUIRED TO GRADUATE?

Yes. To graduate, Louisiana students must meet the requirement on the EOC exams (reaching an approved achievement level across the required subjects), plus complete course and credit requirements. Students who don't meet the standard have retest opportunities and, in some cases, other pathways. Confirm the current policy with your school.



AT A GLANCE

Grades 3–8	**LEAP 2025**
Subjects	**ELA, Math, Science, Soc. Studies**
High school	**LEAP EOC + ACT**
EOC subjects	**Algebra I, Geometry, English I &…**
Grad requirement?	**Yes — EOC exams**
Format	**Online**

HOW IT 'S SCORED

LEAP 2025 reports achievement levels (Unsatisfactory, Approaching Basic, Basic, Mastery, Advanced); EOC results contribute to graduation and school scores. The grade-11 ACT is scored 1–36.

TESTING WINDOWS

LEAP 2025 (grades 3–8) is given in a spring window ; EOCs run in fall, spring, and summer windows tied to courses.

HOW TO PREPARE

- **Practice tests & released items** — LDOE provides practice materials matching the online format
- **Course-aligned review** — EOCs test the specific course
- **ACT prep for grade 11** — Our ACT guide applies to the statewide ACT

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL STATE TESTING GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Graduation Requirements

AT A GLANCE

Louisiana offers two diploma pathways — the college-prep TOPS University diploma and the Jump Start Career diploma — each requiring about 23–24 units . Louisiana is one of the few states that still requires passing end-of-course exams to graduate.

CREDIT & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The TOPS University diploma (24 units) is college-prep: 4 English, 4 math, 4 science, 4 social studies, 2 world language, 1 arts, 1.5 PE/health, and electives. The Jump Start Career diploma (23 units) swaps in a career/technical sequence with an industry credential.

TESTING TO GRADUATE

Yes — students must pass LEAP end-of-course exams (across English, math, science, and social studies) to graduate, earning a required composite. Louisiana ties graduation to these assessment results.

DIPLOMA TYPES & HONORS

The two diploma pathways (TOPS University and Jump Start Career) let students choose a college-prep or career-technical route, both leading to a standard diploma. The Seal of Biliteracy is available.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

The Jump Start Career diploma builds in industry-based credentials — a strong option for career-bound students.



AT A GLANCE

Diplomas	**TOPS University & Jump Start Car...**
Units	**23—24**
Exit exam?	**Yes — LEAP EOC exams**
Confirm with	**Your district**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How many credits does Louisiana require?** — The state sets a minimum, but your district may require more — confirm locally.
- **Does Louisiana require a test to graduate?** — Yes — you must pass LEAP end-of-course exams to graduate.
- **Are there different diploma types?** — Yes — plus honors designations and seals; see the diplomas section.
- **What if my student is behind on credits?** — Talk to the counselor about credit recovery and alternative pathways.
- **Where do I confirm the exact requirements?** — Your school counselor, district, and the state department of education.

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Accountability & Report Cards

AT A GLANCE

Louisiana gives each school a School Performance Score (SPS) that maps to an A-F letter grade , published on the Louisiana School Finder .

HOW THIS STATE RATES SCHOOLS

The SPS (on a scale up to about 150) combines test achievement, growth (progress), graduation rate and strength of diploma (high schools), and other indicators, then converts to an A–F grade. Read the components — especially growth/progress — alongside the letter.

WHAT GETS MEASURED

- **Academic achievement** — How students score on state tests (proficiency in reading/ELA and math)
- **Academic growth / progress** — How much students improve year to year — not just where they land
- **Graduation rate** — For high schools (the 4-year cohort rate)
- **English-learner progress** — How English learners are progressing toward proficiency
- **School quality / student success** — An extra indicator — often attendance/chronic absenteeism, college/career readiness, or similar

FINDING & READING THE REPORT CARD

Look up any school on the Louisiana School Finder (louisianaschools.com) . Review the performance-score components and the trend, not just the grade.

AT A GLANCE

Format	**A-F (from a Performance Score)**
Scale	**School Performance Score (0–150)**
Tool	**Louisiana School Finder**
Look up at	**louisianaschools.com**

HOW FAMILIES SHOULD USE RATINGS

- **Read it in context** — A school's score reflects its students' circumstances too, not only its quality
- **Look at growth, not just scores** — Growth shows how much a school moves students — often more telling than raw proficiency
- **Check the trend** — Is the school improving over time?
- **Look past the summary** — Dig into the underlying data (subgroups, attendance, readiness)
- **Then visit** — Data raises questions; a visit answers them (see our guide on evaluating a school)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How does Louisiana rate schools?** — Louisiana assigns an A-F grade from a School Performance Score (up to ~150).
- **What do the ratings measure?** — Test scores, growth, graduation rate, English-learner progress, and a school-quality indicator.
- **Where do I look up my school?** — On the state's official report-card portal (see below).
- **Should I choose a school by its rating alone?** — No — use it as a starting point, weigh growth and context, and visit.
- **What are CSI and TSI?** — Federal labels for schools flagged for Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement.

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORT CARDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

School Choice

AT A GLANCE

Louisiana enacted the LA GATOR Scholarship , an Education Savings Account (ESA) program that is phasing in and replacing the state's former private-school voucher. Louisiana also has a significant public charter sector (especially in New Orleans).

THIS STATE'S CHOICE PROGRAMS

The LA GATOR (Giving All True Opportunity to Rise) Scholarship provides an account for private-school tuition and approved expenses. It is phasing in — with priority for lower-income students first — and is intended to broaden over time. Confirm the current amounts and eligibility.

ELIGIBILITY

The program phases in with early priority for lower-income families , broadening in later years. Confirm the current-year eligibility and any caps.

APPLYING

Apply through the Louisiana Department of Education's LA GATOR program. Watch the application window and confirm requirements.

LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE STATUS

LA GATOR is newly launching and phasing in , and (like several new programs) may face legal or budget developments — confirm the current status.



AT A GLANCE

Program	**LA GATOR Scholarship (ESA)**
Replaces	**The former statewide voucher**
Phase-in	**Prioritized first, broadening**
Plus	**Public charters (esp. New Orlean...**
Confirm with	**The state program**

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE, TOO

- **Open enrollment / transfers** — Attend a public school outside your zone, where allowed (see our finding-your-school guide)
- **Charter schools** — Tuition-free public schools of choice (where available)
- **Magnet schools** — Tuition-free public schools with a specialized focus
- **Homeschooling** — Legal in all 50 states (rules vary)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does Louisiana have a private-school-choice program?** — Yes — Louisiana's LA GATOR ESA is phasing in (replacing the former voucher).
- **What's the difference between an ESA and a voucher?** — A voucher pays a private school directly; an ESA is a flexible parent-managed account for many approved expenses.
- **What is a tax-credit scholarship?** — Donors get a tax credit for giving to organizations that fund private-school scholarships.
- **Is there public school choice too?** — Yes — open enrollment, charters, and magnets (plus homeschooling).
- **Where do I confirm the details?** — On the official state program site (see below).

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL SCHOOL CHOICE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com →

Teacher Certification

HOW LICENSURE WORKS HERE

Louisiana certifies teachers through the Louisiana Department of Education . You complete an approved program, pass the required Praxis exams, and earn a Level 1 Professional Certificate , advancing to Level 2/3 with experience and (for higher levels) a master's.

WHICH TESTS THIS STATE USES

- **Praxis Core** — Basic skills — or satisfied with qualifying SAT/ACT scores
- **Praxis Subject Assessments** — Content test(s) for your certification area
- **Praxis PLT** — Principles of Learning and Teaching (pedagogy) for your grade band
- **Reading** — A reading-instruction requirement applies for elementary candidates

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET LICENSED

- **A bachelor's degree** — From an accredited college or university
- **A state-approved teacher-preparation program** — Completed at a college or through an approved alternative route
- **Student teaching / clinical practice** — Supervised classroom experience
- **Pass the required exams** — See the exams section above
- **A background check** — Fingerprint-based criminal background check
- **Apply to the state** — Submit your application and documents to the licensing agency



AT A GLANCE

Agency	Louisiana Department of Educatio...
Basic skills	Praxis Core (or qualifying score...
Content & pedagogy	Praxis Subject + PLT
Certificate	Level 1 — then Level 2/3

OTHER PATHS INTO TEACHING

Most states offer alternative routes for career-changers and those with a degree in another field. In Louisiana, these typically let you start teaching while completing licensure requirements — through district or university alternative-certification programs, residencies, or emergency/provisional permits. Requirements (and the exams)...

RECIPROCITY & OUT-OF-STATE LICENSES

- **Interstate agreements** — Most states participate in the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement, which eases (but doesn't guarantee) recognition of an out-of-state license
- **You may still owe exams** — States often require you to meet their own testing (or coursework) requirements, sometimes within a grace period
- **Check both states** — Confirm the specific steps with Louisianas agency and your current state

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL TEACHER CERTIFICATION GUIDE
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Financial Aid

THE STATE AID PICTURE

Louisiana's best-known state aid is TOPS — a merit program that covers tuition at Louisiana public colleges — administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) .

NEED-BASED STATE GRANTS

- **GO Grant** — A need-based supplement for Louisiana students with remaining financial need (often stacked with TOPS or Pell).
- **M.J. Foster Promise** — Aid for adults pursuing credentials in high-demand fields.

MERIT & LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)** — Covers tuition (at award levels) at Louisiana public colleges for residents who complete the TOPS core curriculum and meet GPA and ACT/SAT...

COLLEGE SAVINGS (529 PLAN)

Louisiana's START Saving Program (529) offers a state income tax deduction and matching earnings enhancements for eligible families.

APPLYING & THE STATE AGENCY

- **File the FAFSA early** — It's the trigger for state grants and many scholarships
- **Register with Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance** — Create the state agency's student account to track and claim awards
- **Confirm your details** — Verify residency, GPA, and enrollment as required
- **Meet any extra requirements** — Some programs need a separate form, GPA, or service commitment
- **Reapply every year** — State aid is awarded annually

AT A GLANCE

Merit	**TOPS (covers tuition)**
Need supplement	**GO Grant**
Adults/high-demand	**M.J. Foster Promise**
529 plan	**START**
Agency	**LOSFA**

DEADLINES & TIMING

State deadlines are typically much earlier than the federal FAFSA deadline , and some aid is first-come, first-served until funds run out. File the FAFSA as soon as it opens (in the fall) and confirm the state's specific priority date.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How do I get Louisiana state aid?** — File the FAFSA (and any state form) by the deadline; Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance administers the programs.
- **Is it need-based or merit?** — Both — Louisiana offers need-based grants and merit scholarships.
- **Are the deadlines earlier than federal?** — Usually yes — file early, as some aid is first-come.
- **Can I use it out of state?** — Most Louisiana aid is for in-state schools; check each program.
- **Does this list private scholarships?** — No — this guide covers official state programs only.

READ LOUISIANA'S FULL FINANCIAL AID GUIDE
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