



LOUISIANA'S PLAN

A PLANNING GUIDE
FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS
IN IMPLEMENTING PRIORITIES
AND ALIGNING FUNDING

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OVERVIEW

Since Louisiana’s school facilities first closed in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, school systems and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) ensured that the safety of students and staff was of utmost priority. Additionally, LDOE and school systems have worked together on providing all students access to continuous learning while remaining safely at home. 100 percent of school systems report they are offering some type of continuous learning and plan to do so through the end of the school year. However, it is estimated that 31 percent of Louisiana students in K-12 do not have access to a device, and 33 percent do not have access to the internet, thereby limiting the accessibility of these opportunities for continued learning. As a result, and in anticipation of school facility closures or modified operations in the coming year, **the Department is focused on ensuring that school systems are prepared for a strong start to the 2020-2021 academic year.**

Louisiana school systems have created strong academic plans. A strong start to the 2020-2021 academic year must build on those academic **priorities** and ensure they are adapted to meet new academic and operational demands, including how to open and operate facilities that keep staff, students, and their families safe.

School systems’ plans, submitted to LDOE through the Super App process, outline a coherent academic foundation, including a plan for the use of high-quality curricula, assessments, and teacher development. To ensure a strong start in 2020-2021 and the continued implementation of these plans, the Department will provide guidance and funding for quality and consistency of instruction, access to continuous learning, and safe, healthy facilities.

STRONG START FOR EVERY STUDENT

- **Every student’s academic needs are identified** at the beginning of the year using a high-quality, standards-aligned diagnostic tool.
- There is **a plan for every student**, including extra time and support for students with the greatest unfinished learning from the prior year.
- There are **clear next steps for every high school student and recent graduate**, who will enter a new economy.

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION PLANNING

- All school systems must have strong, yet agile **continuous education plans** that provide standards-aligned instruction using high-quality curriculum during modified operations, including provisions for:
 - **1:1 device and internet access**, including assistive technology for students with disabilities.
 - **A strategic communications plan** to connect with every student on a daily basis, provide weekly feedback on students’ work, and communicate a family’s role in supporting their child’s continuous learning.
 - **Versatile delivery methods** for instruction, related services, and professional development.
 - **Adaptive staffing models** that enable feedback on students’ work and frequent communication with students and families.
 - **Flexible and opportunistic calendars and school schedules** that maximize learning opportunities in a dynamic public health context.

In support of the work that school systems will do to incorporate these new priorities into their plans for the school year, this Strong Start 2020 Planning Guide includes:

- CARES Act Funding Information
- The Strong Start 2020 Priorities
- Guidance on the Strong Start 2020 Application process
- Details on funding allowability
- A timeline
- Support information

School systems will use three resources to plan for and submit a successful Strong Start 2020 Application.

- 1. STRONG START 2020 PLANNING GUIDE**
- 2. STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES**
- 3. STRONG START 2020 APPLICATION**

STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES OVERVIEW

The below Planning Priorities are designed to support school systems as they plan for a strong start to the 2020-2021 academic year. The priorities focus on actions and supports that will minimize learning gaps from the 2019-2020 school year, prepare for a strong start to 2020-2021, and plan for the future. School systems will have the opportunity to commit to the planning priorities within the eGMS Strong Start 2020 Application. Through these assurances and additional application questions, school systems will be able to unlock funding to support the priorities.

Aligned to the [School System Planning Domains](#), the Strong Start 2020 Planning Priorities address the unique circumstances school systems must consider for the upcoming school year and are structured by Domain, Priority, Priority Funding Guidance, Application Questions, and Resources.

DOMAINS: The four school system planning domains categorize the most critical areas for a strong start: Core Academics, Students with Diverse Needs, Workforce Talent, and LEA Systems.

PRIORITY: Each domain is further subdivided into 3-4 priorities. These priorities illustrate excellence and are aligned to the key decisions school systems will make for a strong start in 2020-2021.

PRIORITY FUNDING GUIDANCE: Identified for each priority is whether it is eligible for expenditures with competitive funding. Those that are eligible for competitive dollars list how school systems can use those funds to support the priorities.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS: Each priority requires school systems to complete an assurance. In addition, some priorities have application questions that school systems will complete in eGMS.

RESOURCES: Resources aligned to each priority are linked to support school systems in planning for each priority. All resources will be available by May 8.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PLANNING PRIORITIES

- 1. CORE ACADEMICS:** School systems have a coherent academic foundation including a plan for high-quality curriculum, assessment, and teacher professional development across all grade levels and core content areas. This includes a plan for ensuring students have access to individual student graduation planning services, quality TOPS University and Jump Start diploma pathways, and college and career transitional supports.
- 2. STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS:** School systems address the unique needs of all students including English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities. This includes a plan for early and accurate identification, high-quality and aligned instruction, specialized supports, and coordinated transitions. Schools also focus on creating and maintaining a learning environment that develops social, emotional, and academic skills.
- 3. WORKFORCE TALENT:** School systems implement strategies to identify, recruit, retain, and coach top talent—especially in high-needs schools and high-needs content areas.
- 4. LEA SYSTEMS:** School systems build a quality, cohesive birth to grade 12 system and organize themselves in a manner that helps struggling schools to improve. School systems that are Lead Agencies define a vision for their community network and increase access to and the quality of early childhood programs. Additionally, school systems can increase access to high-performing schools for students attending low-performing schools.

STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES

CORE ACADEMICS

School systems have a coherent academic foundation including a plan for high-quality curriculum, assessment, and teacher professional development across all grade levels and core content areas. This includes a plan for ensuring students have access to individual student graduation planning services, quality TOPS University and Jump Start diploma pathways, and college and career transitional supports.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PRIORITY	PRIORITY FUNDING GUIDANCE	APPLICATION QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
The school system will assess students' academic needs through the use of high-quality screeners for students in grades K-3 and high-quality ELA and math diagnostics in grades 3 to high school. The school system will create an individual plan for students with the most significant learning gaps.	The Department will provide a screener for grades K-3 and a diagnostic for grades 3 to high school at no cost.	N/A	Diagnostic and Screener Guidance Addressing Unfinished Learning Gaps
The school system will have a plan for the continuous use of aligned curricular materials during periods of school facility closure or modified operations, exclusive to adaptations produced by instructional materials providers.	School systems may request funds to purchase additional materials/adaptations to ensure continuous learning using an approved high-quality curriculum.	Provide the high quality ELA, math, and/or science curriculum and the necessary supplements/materials to ensure continuous learning.	Strong Start 2020: Instructional Materials Guidance Addressing Unfinished Learning Gaps
The school system will provide continuous instruction in non-core subjects, including CTE courses, during periods of school facility closure or modified operations.	School systems may request funds to purchase materials and other costs related to supporting synchronous, asynchronous, and blended instruction in non-core courses, including CTE.	Provide the non-core courses, including CTE, and necessary supplements/materials to ensure continuous learning.	Non-Core CTE Curriculum and Course Materials Guidance
The school system will ensure high school students continue on their paths to graduation and a successful post-secondary transition. The school system ensures each student has an updated IGP that reflects any changes needed due to interruption of instruction and that Class of 2020 graduates receive additional college and career support and mentoring through December 2020.	School systems may request funds for an approved post-secondary planning partner to support IGP updates for high school students and college and career transitions for graduated seniors.	Provide name of approved planning partner and additional cost.	Student Promotion and Planning Supports

STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES

STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

School systems address the unique needs of all students including English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities. This includes a plan for early and accurate identification, high-quality and aligned instruction, specialized supports, and coordinated transitions. Schools also focus on creating and maintaining a learning environment that develops social, emotional, and academic skills.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PRIORITY	PRIORITY FUNDING GUIDANCE	APPLICATION QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
The school system will ensure the well-being of all students and educators by providing social and mental health supports, including mental health screening upon return to school.	The Department will provide access to a mental health screener, and additional supports will be available for students who qualify for trauma support services.	N/A	Guide to Supporting the Well-Being of Students and Staff Student Engagement and Success Partner Guide (coming soon)
The school system will ensure that English Learners have access to curriculum and service delivery, including language support services during periods of school facility closure or modified operations.	School systems may purchase supports for an approved high-quality curriculum to ensure continuous learning for English Learners.	N/A	Supporting ELs During School Closures/Distance Learning
The school system will ensure all students with disabilities receive instruction and related services and have access to devices that meet their unique needs regardless of school facility closures and/or modified operations.	School systems may request funds to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistive technology or adaptive equipment for students with disabilities. Training for direct service providers on remote service delivery from approved organizations in the Partnerships for Success Guide. 	What additional funds is the school system requesting to support assistive technology or adaptive equipment so all students with disabilities have access to instruction and related services? What additional funds is the school system requesting to train direct service providers on remote service delivery?	Partnerships for Success Guide Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services Virtual Small Group Instruction for Students with Disabilities: Privacy Guidance
The school system will conduct compensatory education reviews of all students with disabilities and will provide compensatory services accordingly.	The Department will make available funds to support costs related to compensatory educational services and will provide details later this year once school systems have assessed needs.	N/A	Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures for Students with Disabilities

STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES

WORKFORCE TALENT

School systems implement strategies to identify, recruit, retain, and coach top talent—especially in high-needs schools and high-needs content areas.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PRIORITY	PRIORITY FUNDING GUIDANCE	APPLICATION QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
The school system has a comprehensive professional development plan that provides professional learning for staff regardless of facility closures, including training for all teachers on distance learning protocols and methods. This plan will be updated by June 30.	School systems may request additional funding to modify professional development plans.	Provide the name of the approved professional development vendor and the additional cost of providing PD virtually.	Strong Start 2020: Professional Development Plan Template Professional Development Vendor Guide
The school system will ensure all Mentor Teachers and new ELA, math, and science Content Leaders are trained, either virtually or in-person.	The Department has provided support for these activities through the School System Planning Process.	N/A	Strong Start 2020: Professional Development Vendor Guidance Mentor Teacher and Content Leader Approved Vendor List
The school system will develop an adaptive staffing plan to be used during periods of school facility closure or modified operations.	School systems may request funds to partner with an approved vendor to develop an adaptive staffing plan.	Provide the name of the proposed partner and cost.	Expanding Learning Time Guidance

STRONG START 2020 PLANNING PRIORITIES

LEA SYSTEMS

School systems build a quality, cohesive birth to grade 12 system and organize themselves in a manner that helps struggling schools to improve. School systems that are Lead Agencies define a vision for their community network and increase access to and the quality of early childhood programs. Additionally, school systems can increase access to high-performing schools for students attending low-performing schools.

SCHOOL SYSTEM PRIORITY	PRIORITY FUNDING GUIDANCE	APPLICATION QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
The school system will develop a plan to reopen school facilities and, when necessary, close school facilities in line with forthcoming public health guidance.	N/A	N/A	Forthcoming
The school system will adopt flexible and opportunistic calendars and school schedules that maximize learning opportunities throughout the year, as well as ensure continuous learning during periods of school facility closures or modified operations.	N/A	What strategies will the school system employ to expand/maximize learning time?	Expanding Learning Time Guidance
The school system will implement a strategic communications plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with every student daily; • Provide feedback on student work at least weekly; and • Help families understand their role in supporting their child’s continuous learning. 	N/A	N/A	Guidance for Staffing and Student Monitoring Guidance on Communicating During School Interruptions
The school system will have a 1:1 student ratio for devices (laptop or tablet) and internet connectivity for every student grades preK-12 and a plan to issue these devices to students for use at home, if necessary. If Internet access is unavailable, the school system will ensure students have a reliable phone line.	School systems may request funds to purchase student devices and to provide connectivity for every student.	DEVICES How many students do not have access to a device? CONNECTIVITY How many students do not have access to the internet?	Technology for Continuous Learning
The school system will ensure that, at minimum, it maintains the number of four-year-old seats filled in the 2019-2020 school year.	School systems may fund four-year old seats.	N/A	Guidance for Early Learning at Home

TIMELINE AND SUPPORT

TIMELINE

ACTION	DATE
● The Strong Start 2020 Planning Guide is released.	APRIL 30
● LDOE hosts Strong Start 2020 Webinar.	APRIL 30 AT 1:00 PM
● Strong Start 2020 Flowthrough funding becomes available in eGMS. Strong Start 2020 Application becomes available in eGMS.	MAY 1
● All Strong Start 2020 resources are available.	MAY 8
● School systems must submit the Strong Start 2020 Application within eGMS to be eligible for Incentive funds.	MAY 29
● BESE approves competitive allocations.	JUNE
● LDOE hosts Strong Start Funding webinar.	JUNE
● Strong Start 2020 Priority funds are loaded in eGMS.	JUNE 19

SUPPORT

Support for completing the Strong Start 2020 application will be provided through:

- [Strong Start 2020 Launch Webinar](#)
- [Strong Start 2020 Library](#)
- [LDOE Weekly Newsletters](#)
- [School System Planning and Superintendent Calls](#)
- [Network Teams](#)
- **Email:** Contact LDOE.GrantsHelpDesk@la.gov and include “Strong Start 2020” in the subject line.