

# DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS ENTERING 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE IN 2014-2015 AND BEYOND

## 9<sup>TH</sup> AND 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE:

During the first two years of high schools, students should focus on attaining basic levels of literacy, numeracy, and problem solving skills. Every 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade student (beginning 2014-2015 and thereafter) will take core academic classes to work towards a diploma.

Following the student's 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, a student may choose to work toward a Jump Start TOPS Tech Pathway or pursue the TOPS University Pathway. Students may choose both pathways. Student pathways should connect with real outcomes after high school – for both college-bound students and career-bound students. Decisions are made with counseling and guidance, based on the student's interests, capabilities and ambitions.

## 11<sup>TH</sup> AND 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE:

Identifying an appropriate individualized student graduation pathway is a critical step at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade year. Both pathways help students prepare for postsecondary success and gain access to scholarships.

The ***TOPS University Pathway*** ensures that students going to four-year colleges have taken a true college preparatory curriculum while in high school and have every chance possible to receive TOPS. Students who complete a ***Jump Start TOPS Tech Pathway*** will have attained an industry credential and also be prepared to continue postsecondary opportunities at a Louisiana state community college or technical school.

**TOPS UNIVERSITY PATHWAY:** Students selecting the TOPS University Pathway will continue to pursue core academic credits that mirror the TOPS Core curriculum. Having completed all core course credits, students may graduate from high school early, or pursue AP®, IB®, CLEP®, or dual enrollment credits.

Students on the TOPS University Pathway are rewarded for completing more rigorous AP®, IB®, and dual enrollment courses because these courses receive additional weight in the calculation of the TOPS GPA: TOPS weighted GPA Grid. The TOPS GPA determines not only a student's eligibility for the TOPS award but also determines if the student is qualified to receive additional financial support during college. Students who receive TOPS tend to graduate from college; students who attend a four-year university but do not achieve TOPS tend to end up with no diploma and a great deal of debt.

Students graduating on the TOPS University Pathway may also complete Jump Start courses as electives and earn a credential.

**JUMP START TOPS TECH (CAREER DIPLOMA) PATHWAY:** Jump Start is the state's new graduation pathway for Louisiana's students. Students graduating with a Jump Start TOPS Tech Career Diploma will be required to attain Jump Start statewide or regional credentials.

The Jump Start vision: students of all interests and capabilities will graduate high school by earning credentials that provide new opportunities for a successful adulthood for all students.

Students completing a statewide or regional Jump Start pathway will also be prepared to continue their postsecondary education, at a community college or technical school, and training utilizing a TOPS TECH scholarship.