LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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CORE CURRICULUM

The TOPS Core Curriculum Reference Tables used in the Student Transcript System (STS)are available on LOSFA's website. Click here for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Core Reference Table. Click here for the TOPS Tech Core Reference Table. For Professional School Counselors and Administrators who have access to the Department of Education's LEADS Portal, click here to access the tables in STS.

Q-1. Do I need to take the TOPS Core Curriculum?

A. Students who entered the 9th grade in the 2015-2016 academic year have the option of the TOPS University Diploma or the Career Diploma. The core curriculum required for each of these is different, and eligibility for TOPS is dependent upon which core curriculum you complete. You should periodically discuss course requirements with your high school guidance counselor to ensure that you are on track to graduate **AND** to be eligible to receive TOPS.

You should create an account on the Louisiana Student Hub (https://mylosfa.la.gov/applications/student-hub/) and keep up with your progress toward meeting the requirements for a TOPS award. Note that LOSFA will not be able to provide you with this information unless your parents provide consent for LOSFA to receive your academic data. See the Q&A on Privacy.

Q-2. If my high school does not offer a TOPS core course, can it be waived?

A. No, a TOPS core course cannot be waived, except under limited circumstances for students with disabilities and/or exceptionalities.

You are required to complete the TOPS Core Curriculum requirements. If your school does not offer a course, other arrangements such as correspondence, distance learning, or dual enrollment for college credit must be made to acquire the course before graduation if you want to qualify for a TOPS award. These classes must be listed on your official high school transcript at the time of graduation to be considered for the TOPS Core Curriculum.

NOTE: Grades earned in dual enrollment courses will be included in the calculation of your TOPS Cumulative GPA after your first semester in college. Any grades you have earned for college courses prior to your first semester as a full-time student will be included in this calculation. High grades in these dual enrollment or summer courses will help to increase your GPA, while lower grades will decrease your GPA.

Q-3. I graduated from an out-of-state/out-of-country high school. Do I have to meet the TOPS Core Curriculum requirements to be eligible for a TOPS award?

A. No. You are NOT required to meet the TOPS Core Curriculum requirements to qualify for a TOPS award. **HOWEVER**, you must have a qualifying ACT or SAT score of at least:

TOPS Tech: ACT - 20 SAT – 1030
TOPS Opportunity: ACT 23 SAT- 1130
TOP Performance: ACT 26 SAT - 1230
TOPS Honors: ACT 30 SAT - 1360 ,

In addition to the requirement that you must achieve a higher score on the ACT, you must also meet all other TOPS eligibility requirements, including citizenship and Louisiana residency.

Q-4. I did not take French I, but I took French II and French III. Can these two classes be used to meet the Foreign Language requirement?

A. Yes. The TOPS statute only requires two units in the same language.

Q-5. I am taking American Sign Language. Can these courses be counted as TOPS Core Curriculum foreign language courses?

A. Yes. Note that the Louisiana Department of Education does not consider courses currently designated as "Signing" or "Sign Language" to include all the necessary components of American Sign Language, so these courses are not acceptable as substitutes.

Q-6. Can I be eligible for TOPS if I graduated early and could only take Business English instead of English IV?

A. No. You would not be eligible for TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors because the TOPS statute requires English IV. **However**, you may be eligible for the TOPS Tech Award **IF** you have followed the TOPS Jump Start Curriculum and completed all required courses for that curriculum.

Q-7. In the past, some of the TOPS Core Curriculum courses could be substituted for Art. What courses does this include for 2021-2026 graduates?

A. The following courses satisfy the Art requirement in the TOPS Core Curriculum: 1 unit of performance courses in music, dance, or theater; or 1 unit of studio art or 1 unit of visual art; drafting: or Speech III and Speech IV (both for 1 unit). Other TOPS Core Curriculum courses may not be used to substitute for Art. You should talk with your counselor to determine all of the available course options that will satisfy the Art requirement.

Q-8. If I passed a proficiency test for a foreign language, can the unit be used for completion of the TOPS Core Curriculum foreign language requirement?

A. Yes. If your high school credits the foreign language unit obtained through proficiency testing in the Student Transcript System (STS), it may be used for the TOPS Core Curriculum. You must receive credit for two units in the same foreign language.

Q-9. I have taken college courses for credit. May these be considered as part of the TOPS Core Curriculum for TOPS purposes?

A. Yes. College level courses taken independently during the summer or in a dual enrollment program such as TOPS Tech Early Start, whether in the classroom, on-line, or by correspondence, may be used to qualify for TOPS if your high school determines the courses are TOPS core equivalent courses and approves the course for high school credit, and if the courses are credited on your official high school transcript using the correct Department of Education course code and transmitted to LOSFA by the

Student Transcript System.

College level courses taken in an early admissions program must be reported on the forms required by the Louisiana Department of Education. See the Q&A on Early College Admission Programs for additional information.

Q-10. I grew up in China and speak fluent Chinese, but I am just now learning English. Can the English courses count as the foreign language, and if not, can the fact that I speak Chinese count?

A. No. English is not considered a foreign language. The English courses are part of the core curriculum. You must take and pass the foreign language courses during high school. By itself, the fact that you speak Chinese does not count towards the TOPS Core Curriculum foreign language requirement; **however**, if you pass a proficiency test in Chinese and it is credited on your official transcript and is entered in STS, it may be used to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

Q-11. Who should be contacted to get approval for courses taught at a high school that may be equivalent to courses in the TOPS Core Curriculum?

A. Requests for equivalent courses from public schools must be submitted by the school board to both BESE and LOSFA. Requests for equivalent courses from non-public schools must be submitted by the school's governing body to both BESE and LOSFA. A copy of the course syllabus must be included with the request. Note that a course not listed in Bulletin 741 will not be considered.

Q-12. Can Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III substitute for TOPS Core Curriculum courses?

A. Yes. Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III substitute for Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. Separately, the courses substitute as Integrated Mathematics I for Algebra I, Integrated Mathematics II for Algebra II, and Integrated Mathematics III for Geometry.

Q-13. I earned ½ unit in two different performance courses in music, dance, or theater. Can these courses be used to complete the 1 full unit of performance courses required as a substitute for Art?

A. Yes. You may use two ½ unit performance, or two ½ unit visual arts, or two ½ unit studio arts courses, or two ½ unit drafting courses, or two ½ unit photography courses to substitute for Art.

Contact LOSFA by email at custserv@la.gov or by mail to request a determination through an audit if there is a computation problem.

NOTE: The ½ units of credit received must be in the same program type to satisfy the TOPS Core Curriculum requirement (performance, studio, or visual arts). For example, one ½ unit performance art courses may not be combined with one ½ unit studio arts courses to satisfy the Art requirement.

Q-14. How many core units do I have to earn to complete the core curriculum for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Awards?

A. You must earn 19 core units.

Q-15. Can I substitute Agriscience I & II for the 3rd science course requirement and the additional math/science requirement?

A. You must earn four math units and four science units. Agriscience I & II (both for one unit) may be used to satisfy one unit of the science requirement.

Q-16. Can I use Anatomy and Physiology as one of the advanced science courses?

A. Beginning with 2018 graduates, Human Anatomy and Physiology may be used to substitute for Biology II.

Q-17. Can I receive TOPS Core Curriculum credit for both Anatomy and Physiology and Biology II?

A. No.

Q-18. If I received a "D" in Art and I have a higher grade in an extra TOPS Core Curriculum elective such as World Geography, will the grade for the elective substitute for Art in calculating the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

A. No. The only courses that satisfy the Art requirement are: 1 unit of performance courses in music, dance, or theater; or 1 unit of studio art or 1 unit of visual art; 1 unit of drafting; or Speech III and Speech IV (both for 1 unit). Other TOPS Core Curriculum courses may not be used to substitute for Art.

Q-19. If I received a "D" in Art and I also have one unit of Studio Art with an "A," which do you use to calculate the TOPS Core GPA?

A. Since the Studio Arts course has the higher grade, it will be used to calculate the TOPS Core GPA.

Q-20. If I fail Art and do not repeat the course, but I have an eligible elective to substitute, how is my GPA calculated?

A. The Art course will not be considered because a failed course cannot be used to complete the TOPS Core Curriculum. The grade received in the eligible substitute will be used to calculate your TOPS Core GPA.

Q-21. If I take two band courses to substitute for one Art course, do you average the two band course grades?

A. No. Since only one unit of band is required to satisfy the Art requirement, the band course with the highest grade will be used.

Q-22. I took one year of Beginning Chorus and earned an "A" the first semester and a "B" the second semester. Can I take the first semester "A" of Beginning Chorus and the second semester "A" of Advanced Vocal Ensemble to equal one whole unit of the required unit of a performing art for purposes of meeting the Art Requirement?

A. Yes. One-half unit of a one-unit course may be separated and matched with ½ unit of another course of the same program type (performance, studio, or visual arts) to satisfy the Art requirement. Contact LOSFA by email at custserv@la.gov or by mail if you believe that an art course with a higher GPA should be used to calculate your TOPS Core GPA.