

An Exploration of Outcomes in Two Student Pathways: High School Dropout and Early College Credit

Launch Louisiana

Thi Mai Truc Bui, MPAff, PhD

Himani Sharma, MA, MS, PhD

Rachel Veron, MPAff, PhD

Stephen Barnes, PhD



Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Public Policy Center



2026

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iv
Executive Summary	vi
Acknowledgements	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Legislative mandate.....	1
1.2 Focus areas for this report	1
2. Background.....	4
2.1 An overview of high school dropout in Louisiana	4
2.2 Early College Credit: State expansion and expected impacts.....	13
3. Data & Methods	24
3.1 Data	24
3.2 Method for HS dropout analysis	24
3.2.1 Identifying HS dropout students	25
3.2.2 Measuring HS dropout student outcomes	27
3.3 Method for ECC analysis	28
3.3.1 Identifying ECC students.....	22
3.3.2 Measuring ECC student outcomes.....	29
4. Findings	32
4.1 Labor market outcomes of HS dropouts.....	32
4.1.1 Summary statistics	32
4.1.2 Employment.....	34
4.1.3 Quarterly wages.....	39
4.2 Educational and labor market outcomes of ECC students	44
4.2.1 Summary statistics	44
4.2.2 High school graduation.....	50
4.2.3 Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment	55
4.2.4 Employment.....	60
4.2.5 Quarterly wages.....	68
5. Summary and Future Directions.....	79
References	81
Appendices	87
Appendix A.....	87
Appendix B – Definitions.....	92

Appendix C – Technical Appendix.....	94
Appendix D.....	98
Appendix E	99

List of Tables

Table 2.1 ECC program details and outcomes for DE, AP, and IB.....	18
Table 2.2 Share of Louisiana HS graduates completing ECC (DE, AP, or IB HS credits) or IBCs.....	19
Table 3.1 Demographic characteristics of HS dropouts.....	26
Table 3.2 Demographic characteristics for all HS students and linkable students	31
Table 4.1 HS dropout headcount and distribution by grade level.....	32
Table 4.2 HS dropout headcount by year and share of total.....	33
Table 4.3 ECC for all, linkable, and unlinkable Louisiana public HS student populations	45
Table 4.4 ECC for linkable students.....	46
Table 4.5 ECC by academic year	47
Table 4.6 Comparison of female gender composition of all HS students and ECC activity groups.....	48
Table 4.7 Race and ethnicity composition of ECC activity groups	49
Table 4.8 HS graduation by K-12 reported ECC for all, linkable, and unlinkable public HS students	51
Table 4.9 HS graduation by ECC for linkable students.....	52
Table 4.10 HS graduation by ECC and gender for linkable students	53
Table 4.11 HS graduation by ECC and race and ethnicity for linkable students	54
Table 4.12 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC for linkable students	55
Table 4.13 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC and gender for linkable students	56
Table 4.14 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC, race, and ethnicity for linkable students	57
Table 4.15 First program level pursued at first public college enrollment for public college enrollees by ECC for linkable students	58
Table 4.16 Mean duration (in months) between HS and first postsecondary enrollment by ECC for linkable students.....	59

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Share of 18-24-year-old population with less than HS attainment	6
Figure 2.2 Louisiana HS cohort graduation rates, 2005-06 through 2023-24	9
Figure 2.3 Share of population ages 18-24 with less than high school attainment by state.....	10
Figure 2.4 Average wage and salary earnings by educational attainment and age in Louisiana, 2017-2022.....	11
Figure 4.1 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout.....	34
Figure 4.2 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by dropout grade level	35
Figure 4.3 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by gender	36
Figure 4.4 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by race and ethnicity	37
Figure 4.5 HS dropout student employment pattern by quarters worked or full year annually and NAICS.....	38
Figure 4.6 Median quarterly wages and IQR trend after HS dropout	39
Figure 4.7 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout by dropout academic year.....	40
Figure 4.8 Median quarterly wages and IQR trend after HS dropout by gender	41
Figure 4.9 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout by race and ethnicity.....	42
Figure 4.10 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout, by dropout grade level	43
Figure 4.11 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status for linkable students.....	60
Figure 4.12 Employment status after HS by ECC group for linkable students.....	61
Figure 4.13 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and HS graduation for linkable students	62
Figure 4.14 Employment status after HS by ECC group and HS graduation status for linkable students	63
Figure 4.15 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status for linkable students	65
Figure 4.16 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students ...	66
Figure 4.17 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students	67
Figure 4.18 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status for linkable students.....	68
Figure 4.19 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group for linkable students.....	69
Figure 4.20 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and HS graduation status for linkable students	70
Figure 4.21 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status for linkable students	71

Figure 4.22 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions	72
Figure 4.23 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group and gender for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions.....	73
Figure 4.24 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions.....	74
Figure 4.25 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group and gender for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions.....	75
Figure 4.26 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions	77
Figure 4.27 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions.....	78

Executive Summary

Established by Act 394 of the 2023 Louisiana Legislature as one of the three annual reports, *Launch Louisiana* seeks to provide in-depth analysis of pathways and transitions through K-12 to college or career. This second report examines the short- and long-term outcomes of Louisiana high school (HS) students who we observe taking different pathways during high school.

We begin this report by exploring employment and wages of HS dropouts, comparing the short- and long-term trajectories of Louisiana's youth who move into the Louisiana economy without a HS diploma, comparing their trajectories to the trajectories of students who do attain a HS diploma. We provide subgroup analyses by gender, race and ethnicity, and dropout academic year cohort. In the second part of this report, we explore how students' early college credit (ECC) pursuits during HS is associated with later educational, employment, and wage outcomes. We explore how ECC activities, such as Dual Enrollment (DE), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) HS credit earning and other activities affect students' futures.

The analysis in this report uses integrated data from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Board of Regents (BOR), and Louisiana Works (LA Works) made available through Louisiana's Foundational Integrated Research System for Transformation (LA FIRST) (L.R.S. 17:3138.12).

Key findings: HS dropout

- **Approximately half of HS dropout students had no records of work in Louisiana across all years observed after HS**, suggesting that many HS dropouts in Louisiana may not find formal employment in Louisiana for long periods of time or seek work opportunities elsewhere.
- **The highest proportion of HS dropouts occurred in the 12th grade (31.5 percent)**. The dropout shares were relatively high immediately following the 2019-20 academic year.
- **Among HS dropouts, female and Black students are more likely to be linked to later in-state work** (observed in state Unemployment Insurance wage records).
- **Younger dropouts (9th grade) have lower rates of work initially, but their work participation increases over time** to align more closely with those who dropped out in later grades. Those who completed more schooling years in HS also appeared more often as full-year workers.

- **Nearly half of Louisiana’s HS dropouts in the study population were observed working at least one quarter over 10 years.** In the 10-year study period, on average, 28 percent of HS dropouts worked part year and in-state, and 27 percent worked full year and in-state.
- **The industry supporting the largest shares of HS dropout workers at all levels of work was Accommodation and Food Services.** Retail Trade supported a more stable proportion of HS dropout workers and was the second-most-common industry at all levels of work. Administrative Support, Waste Management, and Remediation Services and Health Care and Social Assistance were the next-most-common industries supporting Louisiana HS dropout workers. Among those who were observed working more quarters of the year, higher shares were observed in Health Care and Social Assistance, suggesting that those who can find employment in this sector tend to have more stable employment.
- **Real wages of HS dropout workers increased with time for those who maintained work.** Subgroup analyses reveal higher wage growth over time among HS dropouts who were male and Hispanic. Black student dropouts begin the study period after HS dropout with the lowest wages and experience the slowest wage growth.
- **Each additional year or grade level of HS completed is associated with higher earnings.** We find that an additional year of education before dropout was associated with a higher wage start and higher wage growth after dropout.
- **HS dropouts experience very slow wage growth over time.** Although quarterly median wages generally increased over time for Louisiana HS dropout students who worked, even after as much as 10 years after dropout, wages remained low, in the range of \$6,000 per quarter (the equivalent of \$24,000 annually), just above 138 percent of the 2025 federal poverty level for a single adult in Louisiana (\$21,597 annually).

Key findings: Early College Credit

- **We estimate that thirty-eight percent of Louisiana public HS students participated in an ECC activity in 2012-13 through 2023-24.** Among ECC activities, we found the highest participation in the categories of Louisiana college course HS students (23.9 percent), AP or IB HS credit students (21.3 percent), and DE HS credit students (21.2 percent).
- **ECC is associated with higher HS completion.** Over 90 percent of students who participated in different ECC activities graduate. Those with the highest share graduating are DE HS credit, AP or IB HS credit, and college

course HS students. Among ECC takers, subgroup analyses show higher HS graduation shares among female students and White and Other students.

- **ECC is associated with higher college enrollment rates.** Louisiana public college and university enrollment rates are higher for any ECC takers than for non-takers, particularly for DE HS credit, AP or IB HS credit, and college course HS students. In subgroup analyses of ECC takers, we find higher college enrollment rates among females and White and Other students.
- **ECC is associated with work participation.** Any ECC takers were more likely to work at least one quarter per year after HS than those not participating in any ECC activities. The relationship between ECC and work participation may be mediated by HS completion: ECC may be related to HS completion, which is a critical predictor of work. Within an ECC activity group, the share of people with a HS diploma or equivalency who worked was often higher than for those in the ECC activity group who did not graduate from HS. We also found consistent results when comparing students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary versus those who did not: students with ECC who enrolled in Louisiana public postsecondary had stronger employment outcomes than those with ECC who did not. White any-takers and non-takers saw the largest shares of full-year work among racial and ethnic groups.
- **All ECC groups who worked experienced median wage growth for 10 years observed.** Four years after HS, college course only students were outearning all other ECC groups; however, by year 10, AP or IB HS credit and DE HS credit students' median wage earnings surpassed those in all other groups.
- **Signaling events such as HS graduation and college enrollment appear to interact positively with ECC, with higher median quarterly wage trajectories observed for completers with ECC.** The wage differences between college enrollees and non-enrollees were positive and larger for those participating in any ECC activities than non-takers, particularly in the long term. A similar trend exists when comparing HS graduates and non-graduates within the same ECC activity group.
- **Even with an ECC experience, a HS diploma, and college enrollment, females and Black students often earned less than other gender or racial and ethnic subgroups,** suggesting the need for additional exploration into the emergence, patterns, and causes and consequences of these early wage disparities for women and people of color in Louisiana.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank current and former leadership and staff of the Louisiana Board of Regents the Louisiana Department of Education, and Louisiana Works for sharing research ideas, data expertise, non-disclosure and report draft reviews, legal collaboration, and administrative support. Additionally, leadership and staff of the Louisiana Office of Technology Services (OTS) contributed to building and maintaining the secure data system, as well as to the extraction, preparation, and secure transfer of LA FIRST data and nondisclosure review of analyses using LA FIRST data.

Individuals critical to this report include Tristan Denley, Kim Kirkpatrick, Karthik Poobalasubramanian, John Tooraen, Kareem Awad, and Dawn Melancon at BOR; Thomas Lambert, Laura Boudreaux, and Emily Smiley at LDOE; Susana Schowen, Margaret Mabile, Osmar Padilla, Lawrence Aiken, and Kelly Ebey at LA Works; James Crawford, Chase Hymel, Matthew Vince, Amy Landry, Amanda Green, and Braylon Lazare at OTS; and Shane Katwaroo at eScholar.

At the Blanco Center, staff worked tirelessly to support this project. Thank you to the Information Division team, Ashish Kumar and Zhenghao Deng, who received, managed, processed, and prepared analytical files of LA FIRST data for research use and have maintained and expanded the data dictionary and documentation. Thank you to Claudia Laurenzano and Elijah St Pierre at the Blanco Center Data Team for translating our research findings into concise visualizations, thereby improving the interpretation of results. Additional thanks go to Heather Stone at the UL Lafayette College of Education and the Blanco Center's Emma Willis for providing us with writing assistance; Tia Williams for her support on the literature review; Robert Habans and Jenna Losh for providing valuable insights and assistance pertaining to public data and measurement, and Alejandra Leyton for valuable discussions on measurement.

1. Introduction

1.1 Legislative mandate

In 2023, the Louisiana Legislature established Louisiana’s Foundational Integrated Research System for Transformation (LA FIRST). LA FIRST is a longitudinal data system encompassing data shared by seven state entities¹ and Louisiana Local Education Agencies (LEAs) designed for independent public policy research for Louisiana, established as an initiative of the Board of Regents (BOR) and managed by the Kathleen Blanco Public Policy Center (Blanco Center) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Act 394 authorized three LA FIRST Legislative Research Reports. This *Launch Louisiana* report is an annual publication that uses LA FIRST data to explore pathways through elementary and secondary school as well as the secondary school to college or career transition.

The first *Launch Louisiana* report (Sharma et al. 2025) highlights key trends in kindergarten readiness, third grade reading scores, and enrollment in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions, as well as recent high school (HS) graduates’ quarterly wage outcomes.

1.2 Focus areas for this report

In this second *Launch Louisiana* report, we examine the employment and educational outcomes of Louisiana public HS students along two paths: those who drop out before attaining a HS diploma or equivalency and those who enrolled in early college credit while in HS. These topics are important for understanding the life outcomes of Louisiana residents and growing the economic opportunity structure of the state through education, skills development, and work participation.

HS dropout

In the first section of this report, we explore HS dropout using an independent analysis of state public school enrollment records, exploring the extent of HS dropout in Louisiana by HS grade level. We show that in Louisiana, HS dropout remains high in comparison to other states despite decades long declines both in the state and nationally in HS dropout. We explore who drops out of HS in Louisiana and how these students navigate their futures in Louisiana work.

Our analysis uses linkages between state public HS data and state Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage data to examine wages and employment statuses of students who dropped out of HS during the 2014-2015 through the 2022-2023 academic years, with subgroup analyses based on grade level of departure, age, race and ethnicity, school district at dropout, and dropout academic year.

¹ The Board of Regents, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the Office of Juvenile Justice, the Louisiana Department of Health, and the Louisiana Department of Education.

Early College Credit

In the second section of this report, we explore the expansion of participation in early college credit programs in Louisiana public high schools, including programs promoted for more than a decade by the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and BOR.

Early college credit (ECC) includes a range of instructional courses and testing aimed at increasing the number of students exposed to college-level course rigor and coursework while enrolled in high school. ECC courses can also provide college credits that transfer to postsecondary institutions in-state and beyond, potentially shortening the path and lowering the expense of postsecondary degrees or credentials for students and families. Part of a broader set of initiatives to increase the college and career readiness of high school students, ECC programs are provided to familiarize students with college before they would first enroll as full time students, to encourage students to continue accessing college education through enrollment after high school, and to help ease and promote successful college matriculation and college transitions for high school students by initiating an early transition experience while enrolled in HS. ECC includes options such as Dual Enrollment (DE) courses and Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework and curriculums.

The Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force recognizes the benefits of DE and has made recommendations to expand DE offerings and student access and supports for DE completion (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2024). In this report, we contribute to previous work of the Dual Enrollment Task Force and others who have explored the take up of early college credit in Louisiana by examining educational outcomes of ECC participants in high school and beyond. We explore ECC activity not only for Louisiana HS graduates, but for all Louisiana HS students, following ECC participants and completers through their HS years into Louisiana colleges and the Louisiana workforce, describing their early educational outcomes as well as employment and wage outcomes, noting differences by population subgroups. Among the main outcomes we analyze are HS graduation rates, Louisiana public college enrollment after HS, first college degree programs, the time to enroll in college after HS, and employment and wages after HS.

Organization of this report

Section 2, which follows, presents a brief overview of background information related to HS dropout and ECC in Louisiana. We describe the decline of HS dropout nationally and in Louisiana, briefly review recent federal and state education policies focused on HS dropout prevention and improving HS graduation rates, and explore the literature on the negative effects of HS dropout, including the deep and persistent disadvantages that HS dropouts experience in the American labor market. We also provide a general overview of the concept of ECC in Louisiana and describe its different forms, including but not limited to DE, AP, or IB. We describe a policy

history promoting the expansion of ECC, present evidence of the expansion of ECC in the state and nationally and provide a review of the extant literature exploring the connections between ECC experience and subsequent high school and college educational outcomes, employment, and earnings. Section 3 describes the LA FIRST data used in this year's report and the methods used to analyze them. Section 4 details our findings, and Section 5 provides a summary and discussion of our findings and presents directions for future research.

2. Background

2.1 An overview of high school dropout in Louisiana

High school dropout involves student and family decisions to end formal education before the completion of a HS diploma or equivalent. This section reviews the negative impacts of HS dropout for individuals and Louisiana economic futures, illustrates national and state successes in reducing HS dropout rates over the past decade, and proposes why HS dropout continues to be an area of challenge and focus for policy work in Louisiana.

HS dropout and labor market struggle

Completing HS is a crucial step in an individual's path towards college and employment. Prior research has found that adolescents often overlook the consequences of dropping out of HS (Oreopoulos 2007), yet HS dropout students often face substantial employment difficulties, with labor market and earnings issues lasting throughout their working lives. In a 2009 study, Sum et al. find that HS dropouts in the United States are less likely to participate in the labor force, experience higher unemployment rates, have higher job turnover rates and rates of year-long joblessness, and have lower mean annual earnings. Campbell (2015), using a sibling study, highlights the economic hardship caused by dropping out including negative effects for siblings who dropped out on weeks worked, income earned, and income to poverty ratio.

The value of a HS diploma

Human capital theories from economics predict that persisting in and completing high school and earning a high school diploma increases individual earnings in two key ways: returns to schooling and signaling value, also known as "credential" or "sheepskin" effects.

Returns to schooling

Economic theory predicts that more years of schooling leads to higher wages and earnings. When applied to explorations of the benefit of high school, Mincer models (1974) and adaptations predict that each additional year of high school completed should increase annual lifetime wages.

The value of an additional year of schooling to earnings has been estimated for different levels of schooling in empirical investigations in economics over the past several decades. In early pioneering work on the returns to schooling, Mincer (1974) estimated the rate of return on average annual earnings for U.S. White men in nonfarm occupations, finding that average annual earnings increased between the levels of 9-11 years of schooling and 12 years of schooling from \$4,660 to \$5,330 for

levels of 9-11 years of schooling and 12 years of schooling from \$4,660 to \$5,330 for workers of all ages. Replications and expansions of Mincer's approach by Card (1999) and Lemieux (2006) offer additional evidence of the earnings benefits of each additional year of high school completed.

Signaling value and the “credential” or “sheepskin” effect of the HS diploma

Earning a HS diploma may convey earnings benefits above and beyond what might be expected from additional years of schooling alone. Signaling theory in economics proposes that certain milestone educational achievements may “signal” to employers that a person possesses certain abilities or traits that make attainment of the diploma more likely. HS completion helps signal those underlying attributes, perhaps more so than the value of the education itself. A related concept is the “credential” or “sheepskin” effect, in which the completion of a diploma provides a disproportionate jump in earnings above and beyond what a normal year of additional schooling would convey to workers. The economics literature has quantified this empirically applying administrative data sets and other data resources to measure the incremental boost in earnings above and beyond that final year of schooling for diploma and degree completers.

Whether the HS diploma or equivalency provides a signal reward (as an indicator of underlying worker attributes) or a credential or sheepskin effect (a reward for completion of the credential only above and beyond the years of education completed) has been explored in prior research, with mixed results. Clark and Martorell (2014) found no evidence of a signal value of the HS diploma in their analysis of state administrative data from Texas and Florida from the 1990s and early 2000s. Schulkind and Sandler (2019) found no wage returns to HS diploma completion among teen mothers who gave birth before and after HS completion, but high school birth did decrease teen mothers' chances of HS graduation. Similarly, an international study in Belgium also found no HS diploma effects on wages (Mazrekaj et al. 2019).

For the GED, an alternative to the HS diploma for HS dropouts, Jepsen et al. (2016) exploited a fuzzy regression discontinuity method and found an increase in earnings two years after GED testing for men, but this effect faded away in subsequent years. They did not find any significant effects of GED signal value for women. Tyler and Willett (2000) found a GED signal value boosting earnings of dropouts by 10 to 19 percent for a young, White group, but statistically insignificant effects for other groups. Heckman and Rubinstein (2001) explored the GED as a mixed signal of both higher cognitive (i.e., academic) and lower non-cognitive (e.g., thinking ahead, planning for the future, persisting) skill. They found that even though GED earners perform better in cognitive skill when compared to HS dropouts with similar backgrounds (which would predict higher earnings), they also had lower non-cognitive skills (which would predict lower earnings for GED earners relative to comparable students who earned a HS diploma or dropped out).

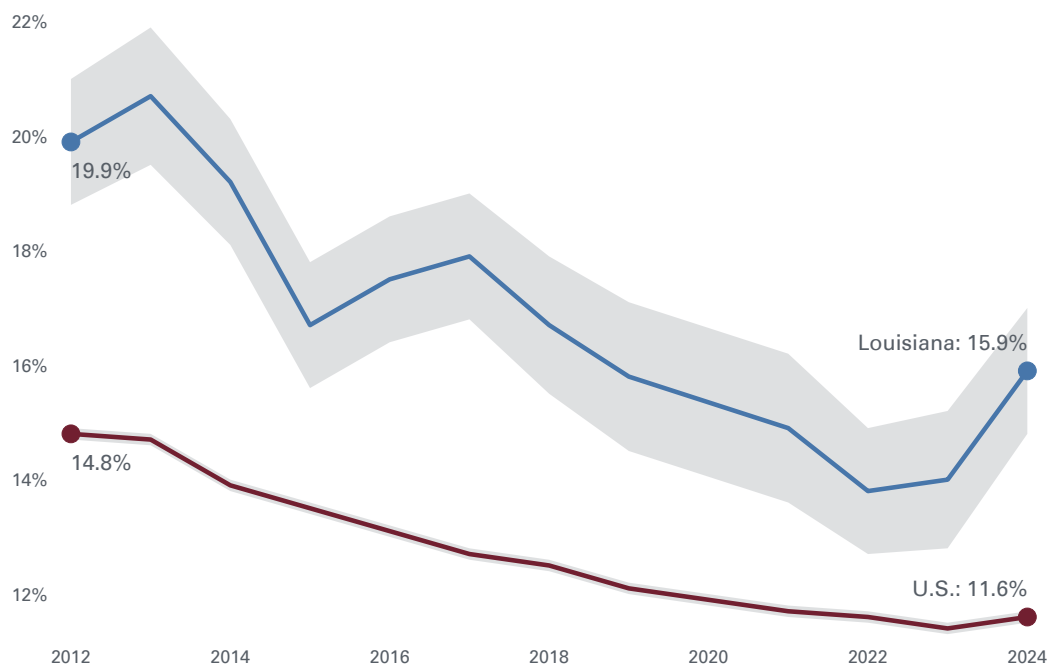
These areas of research suggest the enduring value of a high school education for student futures. Empirical economic study has provided evidence that the journey through high school, year by year, has the potential to improve earnings and student futures with each year of high school completed by the student and may convey additional benefits to those that leave HS with a diploma or equivalent.

Success story: The fall in HS dropout

Over the past several decades, a sustained focus on increasing HS graduation rates and reducing HS dropout has coincided with noteworthy reductions in HS dropout rates. The share of population transitioning into young adulthood without a HS diploma is on the decline in Louisiana and nationally.

Figure 2.1 illustrates this reduction in the rate of young adults with less than a HS diploma for the U.S. and Louisiana since 2012. We see a decline for the nation and for Louisiana, suggesting a reduction in dropout before HS graduation and an improvement in educational attainment of a HS diploma, high school equivalency credential, or even higher levels of educational attainment. The figure also illustrates a narrowing of the gap between the lower U.S. rate and the higher Louisiana rate between 2012 through 2023, although the gap somewhat widens again in 2024.

Figure 2.1 Share of 18-24-year-old population with less than HS attainment



Source: Blanco Center analysis of ACS 1-Year Estimates, S1501 Educational Attainment, 2012-2024

Note: 2020 data is unavailable; Shaded areas represent margins of error.

History of Louisiana's efforts to reduce HS dropout and improve HS graduation

What state policies and actions underlie the state's success in improving educational attainment, and HS attainment, in particular? High school graduation has been a long-standing focus area in federal and state education policy. This section highlights a few major efforts to improve HS graduation rates and reduce HS dropout in Louisiana over the past twenty years.

High School Redesign Commission. Before and during hurricanes Katrina and Rita and guided by the national accountability standards of No Child Left Behind (2002), Louisiana focused its efforts to curb high school dropout rates in 2004 through Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's High School Redesign Commission, an effort which continued under Governor Bobby Jindal's administration. The Commission released two reports in 2006 and 2007 evaluating the state of high school education in Louisiana and providing recommendations to improve, among other things, high school graduation rates (Louisiana Department of Education 2006; Rowley et al. 2011).

Dropout Early Warning System. Under the Jindal administration, the Department of Education introduced the Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS), which identified students at risk of dropping out due to frequent absences, poor academic performance, or repeat behavioral issues (Rowley et al. 2011). The administration set up school-level dropout intervention programs, as well as "catch-up" or credit recovery programs for struggling students.

HS graduation rate goal setting. In 2009, the Louisiana Legislature set a strong goal for BESE and the State Superintendent of Education to raise the state's 67 percent graduation rate to 80 percent by the graduating class of 2014 (La. Act 257, 2009), a goal it later achieved.

Career Diploma. In 2009, the Louisiana Legislature voted to create a Career Diploma option for Louisiana high school students, a rigorous, career major option for students that would exist as an option alongside the existing academic diploma comprised of college preparatory coursework (Rowley et al. 2011; La Act 246, 2009). The Career Diploma required students to earn 23 units, rather than 24 required in the academic diploma. It also included seven units in a career area of concentration. After 2009, student take-up of the Career Diploma option expanded slowly. Beginning in 2014, with its integration into and development alongside the state's JumpStart program, student take-up of the Career Diploma expanded more rapidly (Louisiana Department of Education 2019). Ultimately, the JumpStart program and Career Diploma pathways were integrated into the current-day TOPS Tech JumpStart career diploma, which blends academic coursework with career training and Industry-Based Credentials (IBCs) and HS work experiences.

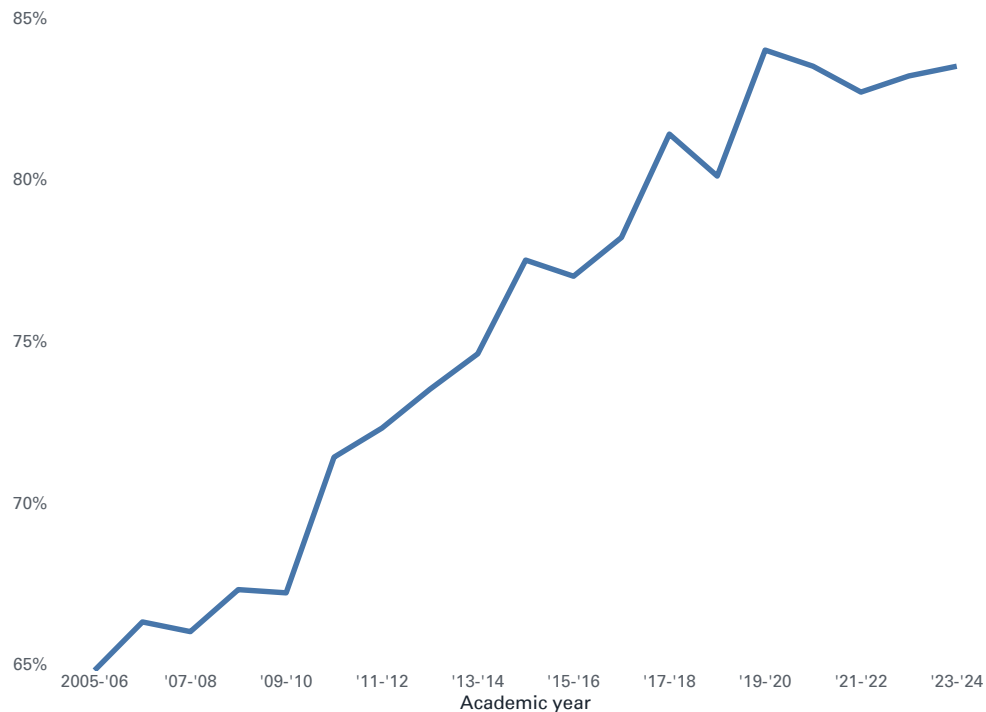
Expansion of early college credit and college preparation in HS. Over the past two decades, BESE also took steps to expand college and career readiness offerings for students in HS, including dual enrollment courses, career-focused paths and IBCs, and Advanced Placement courses. Starting in 2013, the state required all HS students to complete the ACT standardized test for college entry. Louisiana began requiring all students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in the 2017-18 school year, regardless of their diploma pathway (Culbertson et al. 2019). Some of these policies aimed at universally promoting college-going have recently been revoked by state leaders. In 2024, the universal ACT testing requirement was revoked by the Louisiana Legislature, but the testing requirement was maintained for students in the academic TOPS diploma pathway program (La. Act 635, 2024). In 2025, BESE revoked the FAFSA application requirement for HS graduation in Louisiana, starting with the class of 2025 (DeBaun 2025). Currently, BESE and BOR have stated a joint goal that “beginning with the freshman class of 2025 all Louisiana public high school graduates will complete high school with college credit (academic and/or career-technical), a postsecondary credential of value or both” (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-a).

HS graduation rates in state accountability. Since 1999, Louisiana has tracked school and district performance through School Performance Scores, with performance scores linked to a letter grading system to communicate school and district performance and quality to the public (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-b). HS graduation rates have also been a part of rigorous state accountability standards since at least 2006 (Louisiana Division of Administration 2006). BESE has continued their emphasis on HS graduation rates in “Grow. Achieve. Thrive.”, a new, simplified accountability scorecard for Louisiana schools. The Thrive component of the high school scorecard focuses on high school metrics and performance with the cohort graduation rate, defined as the share of 9th grade HS students who earned their diplomas on time, set as the first metric (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-c).²

As seen in Figure 2.2 (and consistent with Figure 2.1 above), between 2005-06 and 2024-25, Louisiana HS graduation rates have risen from 64.8 percent in 2005-06 to 85 percent in 2024-25, indicating substantial growth in HS attainment and substantial decline in HS dropout. No single policy can be credited. As explained above, a variety of policies have likely factored into the retention of students in HS through the attainment of their diplomas, not the least of which has been consistent and focused attention on HS success by state leaders.

² For more information on the new LDOE accountability measures in “Grow. Achieve. Thrive.”, view this LDOE [informational webinar](https://doe.louisiana.gov/data-and-reports/informational-webinar). Current School Performance Scores can be found at <https://doe.louisiana.gov/data-and-reports/performance-scores>.

Figure 2.2 Louisiana HS cohort graduation rates, 2005-06 through 2023-24



Source: Louisiana Department of Education public data

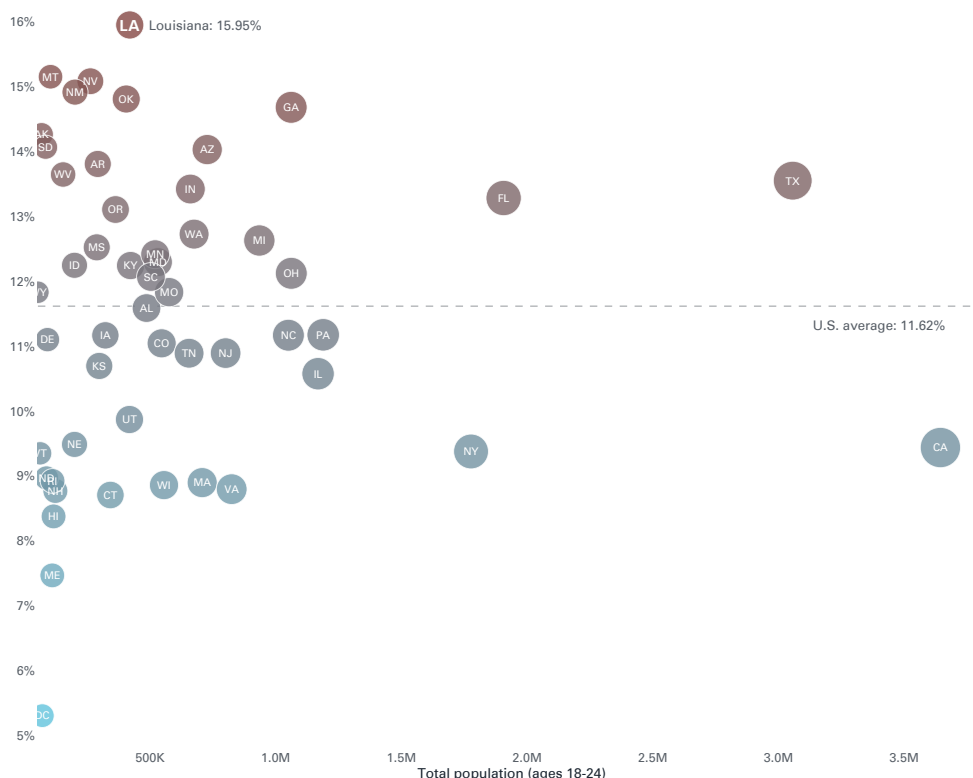
Reducing Louisiana's HS attainment gap

Reducing the share of the young adult population with less than HS attainment is a success story for the U.S. and Louisiana, evidence that it is more often the case now that young adults enter the labor force as HS graduates. Louisiana's falling rates of HS nonattainment moving the state closer to the U.S. average over the past two decades is an additional sign of progress.

Still, Louisiana's population distribution in the less than HS attainment category remains above the national average, signaling further room for growth in HS attainment, along both traditional and non-traditional HS equivalency pathways, to bring the state into alignment with decades-long goals to increase HS graduation rates and attainment rates and to reduce HS dropout rates.

While Louisiana HS nonattainment rates are declining for new cohorts of HS students, Louisiana continues to have high HS nonattainment rates for youth and young adults *relative to other states*. Figure 2.3 shows another view of the most recent year of 2024 American Community Survey educational attainment data. In this plot of U.S. states, Louisiana had the highest percent of young adults aged 18-24 who have less than a HS education.

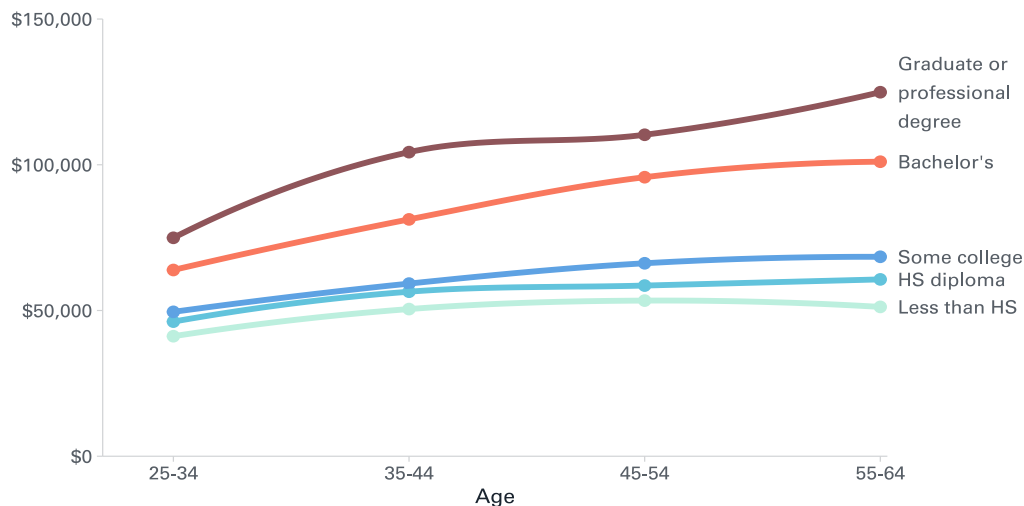
Figure 2.3 Share of population ages 18-24 with less than high school attainment by state



Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates, S1501 Educational Attainment, 2024

Continuing to raise HS attainment in Louisiana is an important area for sustained focus in Louisiana. Youth, young adults, and adults who do not attain a HS diploma are expected to continue to struggle as they pursue their career trajectories in the Louisiana economy. We illustrate the potential consequence, in the form of low starting earnings and earnings growth, over the age profile of wages in Figure 2.4, reproduced from the Blanco Center’s 2025 Louisiana’s Employment Outcomes Legislative Research Report (Habans et al. 2025).

Figure 2.4 Average wage and salary earnings by educational attainment and age in Louisiana, 2017-2022



Source: Habans et al. 2026, reproduced with authors’ permission; Blanco Center analysis of IPUMS USA (U.S. Census and American Community Survey)

Note: Estimate is in 2022 dollars for full-time, year-round workers. 2020 is excluded from the estimate due to the pandemic.

The average wage plots shown by age group (from left to right) for each Louisiana educational attainment group (in differently colored lines) show a strong, positive trajectory for bachelor’s-and-above-degree earners and slow, low, or no growth for other, lower attainment categories of some college, HS diploma, and less than HS. Because these trends are based on workers observed in full-time, year-round employment, the broader labor market experiences of workers imply even larger differences for those with less than a HS diploma given the higher prevalence of part-time work, unemployment, and not participating in the labor market among those with less than a HS diploma.

Motivation for continued focus on HS dropout and HS diploma attainment

Louisiana's low ranking nationally for HS attainment among youth is tied to declining, but still relatively high rates of HS dropout in Louisiana. These trends signal an enduring and persistent challenge that state leaders must continue to work through to usher more of its citizens through HS into paths of economic prosperity in the state.

In this report, we will explore HS dropout in Louisiana using LA FIRST data, focusing on the wage trajectories of HS dropouts, highlighting population subgroup differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. Through our study, we aim to help decision-makers better understand the extent and severity of Louisiana's enduring challenges related to HS dropouts and to identify patterns that may help to inform future policymaking and focused efforts.

2.2 Early College Credit: State expansion and expected impacts

In recent years, Louisiana lawmakers have emphasized early HS student exposure to rigorous college preparatory coursework, college courses, and early college credit to help motivate students to complete HS and to continue in postsecondary study leading to college degrees, credentials, and validated skills and learning. This can be seen through the goals of the BOR Dual Enrollment Task Force; new career pathways in HS in the Louisiana Jumpstart Graduation Pathways (L.a. Act 643, 2014); universal ACT testing for all HS students (in effect until academic year 2024-2025); state and university-based policies allowing students to earn early college credit through dual enrollment, state institution acceptance of students' test scores on AP or IB end-of-program tests, and CLEP tests to earn early college credit.

For this report, we begin with a focus on HS student ECC activity through DE, AP, and IB coursework. We provide brief introductions to each course type, along with national and Louisiana enrollment trends for these college-level courses.

Dual Enrollment (DE)

What is DE? DE courses are college-level courses taken by HS students that allow students to earn both HS and college credits simultaneously. These courses can be taught by college faculty members or qualified HS teachers. Students have multiple options to take DE courses, including on-site at college or HS campuses, online, or in a hybrid environment. There are two types of DE courses in Louisiana: academic and technical courses. While academic DE is designed for transfer to selected postsecondary programs and/or applicable toward BOR's statewide general education requirements, the technical DE is an applied course that aims at developing specific technical skills to prepare students for immediate employment or career entry (BoR Academic Affairs Policy 2.22 Student Eligibility Requirements for Dual Enrollment 2019). DE courses are designed to benefit students' academic and career paths by providing early college experience for HS students, saving time and money toward the attainment of college credentials and degrees, and potentially leading to earning a certification, degree, or transferable credits as well as helping students access resources and prepare for college (Louisiana Dual Enrollment n.d).

Dual Enrollment policy in Louisiana. The Louisiana BOR announced a Statewide Interim Dual Enrollment Policy for public postsecondary institutions in Louisiana in December 2017. This policy was intended to guarantee that HS students were taking courses equivalent to those offered in colleges. To ensure the quality and transferability of DE courses, the policy required college-level grading and meeting the eligibility requirements required by postsecondary institutions (BoR Academic Affairs Policy 2.22 Student Eligibility Requirements for Dual Enrollment 2019). In addition, the DE program began an alignment to the Jump

Start Program, which previously focused on career preparation and technical education. After transitioning from a workforce model to a college-and career-readiness model, Jump Start became more aligned with the state’s DE initiative. In today’s Jump Start program, DE is embedded within La. Act 128 of the Regular Session (2019) created the Dual Enrollment Framework Task Force to develop recommendations for establishing a statewide Dual Enrollment Framework. It aimed to provide equal access to DE for all HS juniors and seniors, with a special focus on access for traditionally underrepresented students, low-income students and students of color. The Task Force’s mission aligns with the BOR attainment goal of 60 percent of Louisiana’s working-age population holding a postsecondary credential, with 85,000 annual completions by 2030 (Louisiana Board of Regents n.d.). In the same year, the BESE and the BOR set a joint goal that every HS graduate should earn college credits (academic and/or career-technical), a postsecondary credential of value, or both, starting with the senior Class of 2029 (Louisiana Board of Regents n.d.).

Several policy changes have been made since then that would both grow DE and accomplish these new statewide attainment goals. In 2021, the Fast Forward initiatives were launched (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2021). These initiatives include planning grants to create partnerships to redesign the HS experience and were designed to increase the number of HS graduates with an associate degree or apprenticeship in high-demand fields (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2021). In 2022, the Louisiana legislature passed an Act establishing a counseling and advisement policy to ensure that school counselors have enough skills and knowledge to advise students on advanced courses, including DE (La. Act 209, 2022). Additionally, the Louisiana legislature passed a policy allowing HS students access to DE at other schools within the same school system, regardless of attendance zone. (La. Act 533, 2022).

In 2023, BOR increased the use of multiple measures for students’ eligibility for DE, leading to expanded access to DE courses among Louisiana HS students. Furthermore, the BOR also added a new college admission pathway, allowing students to use ECC earned from DE, AP, IB, or CLEP scores³ with a qualifying GPA for college admissions (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2023). The DE Task Force also began a collaboration with three postsecondary institutions to create a graduate-level DE Teacher Credential Program, which will lead to an increased number of credentialed DE instructors (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2023).

DE trends in the U.S. and Louisiana. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, the number of DE enrollees was 2.8 million U.S. students in the 2023-2024 academic year (Community College Research Center n.d.). This was a 12.7 percent increase

³ The College Board’s College Level Examination Program (CLEP®) is a nationally recognized credit-by-examination program that provides high school students an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of college-level materials in introductory subjects and earn college credit.

relative to the previous academic year. In the same academic year, there were 40,159 DE students in Louisiana, an increase of 14.2 percent relative to the 2022-2023 academic year (Community College Research Center n.d.).

In the 2024-25 academic year, Louisiana HS students completed 107,042 DE courses, growth from 100,673 courses in the 2023-2024 academic year. While DE grew continuously between 2019-20 and 2024-25 academic years in Louisiana, increases have slowed slightly in recent years (Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2025).

Advanced Placement (AP)

What is AP? AP courses provide an opportunity for students to attempt college-level work by taking rigorous courses on HS campuses. Students taking AP courses might earn college credit and/or advanced placement, allowing students to bypass certain courses in college, if they score a three or higher out of five in a national standardized end-of-course exam and the university accepts these AP courses (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-d). The advantages of taking AP courses include earning college credits before enrolling in a postsecondary institution, reducing the time to finish a college degree, signaling to colleges a motivation to succeed, demonstrating a commitment to finish college-level work, and providing student flexibility in college access (major changes, second degree enrollment, internship applications) (College Board n.d.-a). Refer to Appendix B for further detailed information on the AP program.

AP policy in Louisiana. District and school provision of AP coursework options for students in Louisiana are optional, not mandatory (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-e). Louisiana's Course Choice Program allows Louisiana students to take certain classes which can be offered online, in person, or as a combination of both, even if their schools do not offer these classes, including AP courses (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-f). This policy creates more opportunities for HS students to earn early college credits through AP course-taking. In Louisiana, the AP exam fee subsidy offers students at public schools opportunities to earn college credits from AP courses at minimal cost, particularly increasing support for low-income students in access to, attendance, and success while taking AP courses (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-d).

AP trends in the U.S. and Louisiana. Many colleges and universities accept college credits and advanced placement earned by taking AP courses, leading to its popularity among HS students nationally. Over 1.2 million U.S. students in the Class of 2024 took at least one AP exam, accounting for 35.7 percent of HS graduates and leading to a 2.9-percentage-point increase relative to the Class of 2014 (College Board n.d.-b).

The percentage of the Class of 2024 taking at least one AP exam in Louisiana was 26.1 percent, 9.6 percentage points lower than the national level (College Board n.d.-b). The lower Louisiana figure likely reflects a combination of factors at play, including student access to AP coursework and student take-up of available AP coursework in local school districts as well as state-level emphasis on dual enrollment courses. Louisiana students earning a score of three or higher on an AP exam accounted for 10.1 percent of the Class of 2024, compared to 22.6 percent nationally (College Board n.d.-b). Overall, student participation in AP coursework has grown in Louisiana over the past decade. The 10-year growth in the percentage of HS graduates taking AP courses between the Class of 2024 and the Class of 2014 was greater in Louisiana (6.8 percentage points) than nationally (2.9 percentage points) (College Board n.d.-b). More than 20,000 Louisiana students took the AP exam during the 2024-2025 academic year, and 60 percent of them scored a three or higher on the AP exam, indicating a 12-percentage-point increase compared to the previous year (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-g).

International Baccalaureate (IB)

What is IB? The IB program is a globally recognized program providing high-quality education for students ages 3 to 19. Two out of four IB program types are designed for HS students: the Diploma Programme and the Career-related Programme. The IB program is taught at schools authorized by the global not-for-profit educational foundation, International Baccalaureate (Organization International Baccalaureate n.d.-a). To participate, students are required to enroll in a full-time IB program with six courses and are eligible to earn college credits while still in HS if they score a four or higher out of seven on standardized end-of-course exams (Louisiana Department of Education n.d.-h). Students enrolled in an IB program prepare for their futures by accumulating skills and knowledge, such as critical thinking, communication and research skills, knowledge connection across subjects, ownership of their own learning, and growth of an internationally minded citizen. Refer to Appendix B for further detailed information about the IB program.

IB trends in the U.S. and Louisiana. The U.S. is the top country providing IB programs with 1,894 current IB schools offering IB programs including 928 schools offering the Diploma Programme and 199 offering the Career-related Programme (Organization International Baccalaureate n.d.-b). As of academic year 2025-2026, there are eight IB schools⁴ in Louisiana, and four of them offer the Diploma Programme (Organization International Baccalaureate 2024): Hammond High Magnet School, John Ehret High School, Morris Jeff Community School, and Riverdale High School.

⁴ The eight schools with IB programs are Hammond Eastside Magnet School, Hammond High Magnet School, John Ehret High School, Kehoe-France School, Kehoe-France School - Northshore, Morris Jeff Community School, Riverdale High School, and St. Frederick High School.

With an aim at expanding access to the IB program in Louisiana, the International Baccalaureate Organization launched its first U.S. pilot study in Louisiana, which allows high schools to teach selected Diploma Programme courses before earning full authorization as a Diploma Programme school. They engaged high schools statewide to participate in a pilot study in the fall of 2025 (Organization International Baccalaureate 2025).

Comparing DE, AP, and IB

What are the differences among DE, AP, and IB? Table 2.1 summarizes these three ways to pursue ECC, which are the focus of this report, and how these ECC options are used in postsecondary institutions. For both AP and IB, students are eligible for college credits if they score at or above the threshold score on a single exam; students taking DE courses can apply to earn college credits based on the final course grade. There are no academic requirements to take AP or IB courses, but students need to satisfy certain eligibility requirements to take a DE course (Refer to Appendix B for further information on DE eligibility requirements). Regardless of the college course types by which students pursue ECC, students can apply to transfer their college credits to Louisiana public colleges. AP or IB HS course credits, with high examination scores, articulate well and are portable for early college credit nationwide. All takers of DE, AP, or IB courses can select to either claim or not claim the college credits. Students taking any type of college-level course (DE, AP, or IB) will see their performances in these courses reflected in their HS GPAs.

Table 2.1 ECC program details and outcomes for DE, AP, and IB

	DE	AP	IB
College credit is earned through a single exam		x	x
College credit is earned through a final course grade	x		
A certain test score is required to participate	x		
College credit is likely to transfer to a Louisiana public college	x	x	x
College credit is likely to transfer to more selective out-of-state colleges		x	x
Students can elect to either claim or not claim the college credit	x	x	x
Taking these courses will affect a student's HS grade point average	x	x	x
Courses have quality points that boost a student's HS grade point average	x	x	x

Source: Louisiana Department of Education (n.d.-i)

Trend in DE, AP, IB, or IBC Completion

Table 2.2 shows the share of Louisiana public HS graduates with at least one course credit or credential, including any positive ECC credits (DE, AP, or IB) or earning Industry Based Credentials (IBCs)⁵ for the graduating classes of 2016 through 2023. There has been an upward trend in the number of HS graduates with these courses and credentials, increasing from 67.62 percent to 88.28 percent. Since the Class of 2021, the number has remained stable at around 88 percent for each class. These numbers indicate that a large majority of students graduate with at least one ECC course (DE, AP, or IB) or an IBC.⁶

⁵ Industry-based credentials (or IBCs) are certifications created by industries to confirm that individuals have mastered the critical skills necessary to be effective employees.

⁶ Please note that these completer percentages are measured differently and are slightly higher than those reported by the BOR in its Dual Enrollment 2025 Report. The Dual Enrollment 2025 Report uses a measure of the share of public high school graduates earning at least one passing grade for TOPS Core Curriculum courses of either DE, AP, or IB; receiving a high score on an AP, IB, or CLEP exam; or earning a basic statewide or IBC (reported in Louisiana Dual Enrollment 2025 Report). We did not have access to the data of AP, IB, or CLEP exam scores to replicate the statistics reported in Louisiana Dual Enrollment 2025 Report.

Table 2.2 Share of Louisiana HS graduates completing ECC (DE, AP, or IB HS credits) or IBCs

HS graduation class year	HS graduates with ECC (DE, AP, or IB HS credit) or IBC completion (%)
2016	68.0
2017	81.7
2018	85.4
2019	86.9
2020	88.3
2021	88.5
2022	88.0
2023	87.9

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: HS graduates with any credentials indicate those earning any positive credits of DE, AP, or IB (regardless of whether they earned college credits from these courses) or earning at least one Industry-Based Credential (IBC). These percentages are higher than those monitored by the BOR Dual Enrollment Task Force (2025, Figure 6), we expect, for each HS graduating class cohort because we include all ECC HS credit course completions, while the BOR’s measure counts only those students who completed an ECC course *and* earned college credit through test scores (AP/IB), grades (DE), or completions (IBC).

The increase in DE, AP, IB, and IBC course taking in Louisiana is the result of public policies aimed at promoting college and career readiness in Louisiana, particularly through the expansion of DE courses. This growth motivates our choice of studying ECC with an in-depth analysis of the relationship between student’s ECC patterns and secondary and postsecondary educational success and career pathways.

Related Literature

As discussed above in the intention and design of ECC programs nationwide and in Louisiana, taking ECC courses is expected to bring certain benefits to students. Previous studies show advantages not only with respect to postsecondary outcomes but also for other outcomes such as HS graduation and earnings. Prior research also provides some evidence that these experiences can contribute differently to the academic pathways of underrepresented or disadvantaged students.

ECC effects on high school graduation

Prior studies show the benefits of DE on short-term outcomes, such as HS graduation. Buckley et al. (2022) compare the educational outcomes of students at schools offering “ample” DE opportunities with those at schools offering “few”

opportunities, revealing a higher graduation rate among students with more DE options. Lee et al. (2022) also find a positive relationship between HS graduation and DE among Nebraska's HS students in the Class of 2018. In the analysis of DE in Oregon, Pierson et al. (2017) link statewide data from the Oregon Department of Education to all seventeen local community colleges and detects that the HS graduation rate of DE students is higher than the state average.

Other papers conduct analysis at the school district level and find consistent findings relating DE with HS graduation outcomes. Villarreal (2018) examines the correlation between the average number of DE credits earned at the Texas school district level and HS and postsecondary educational outcomes of students within the same school district. This paper finds that in a district with a higher average number of foreign languages dual credit earned is associated with a higher HS graduation rate. The correlation is also positive between DE credits earned from social science or math courses and HS graduation.

There is also evidence of the benefits of DE for increasing HS graduation by considering career-focused DE programs only. For example, Hughes et al. (2012) carry out a three-year study examining outcomes of dually enrolled students in California. Both their regression analysis and propensity score method indicate that students with career-focused DE had higher HS graduation rates than their peers in the districts.

ECC effects on postsecondary educational outcomes

College enrollment and persistence. With regard to college enrollment and persistence, researchers have also investigated how taking college-level courses gives students more opportunities to explore college options. Using a nationally representative HS longitudinal study from 2009, Kremer (2022) matches students with and without DE in HS using propensity score matching and finds that those taking DE courses have higher odds of college attendance and full-time course registration. This research also detects that dually enrolled students are less likely to enroll in two-year institutions and take remedial coursework.

There is previous work examining the postsecondary outcomes at the state level in Texas, where a positive correlation between DE and educational outcomes in postsecondary is found. Giani et al. (2014) use the Texas State Longitudinal Data System to examine whether DE improves students' postsecondary outcomes, including postsecondary access, first-to-second-year persistence, and college attainment. They find a positive correlation between the number of DE courses HS students completed and all postsecondary outcomes. Their findings also suggest that, on average, DE courses are more beneficial to HS students than advanced coursework. These findings align with the results of Villarreal (2018), which also notes the positive correlation between DE and college enrollment and college persistence in Texas. There are similar statewide analyses of DE in

Nebraska (Lee et al. 2022), Oregon (Pierson et al. 2017), and college enrollment in Illinois (Blankenberger et al. 2017) that provide consistent findings.

Regarding technical DE, Wang et al. (2015) indicate the positive correlation between the DE of students attending two-year technical colleges and the likelihood of college entry without delay and summer enrollment. Consistent results are also found in other research studying the postsecondary outcomes of students taking different types of college-level courses. In a study of HS students taking college-level courses including DE, AP, and IB in Texas using student-level state data, Struhl and Vargas (2012) find that HS students who completed college-level courses were significantly more likely to attend college. This paper also finds that individuals taking college-level courses during HS are more likely to earn an associate degree or higher within six years of graduating from HS.

Comparing secondary educational outcomes between students with either AP or DE Wyatt et al. (2015) reveal that taking college-level courses in HS, such as AP (regardless of the AP exam scores) and DE, is associated with a higher likelihood of college enrollment and persistence at a four-year college than those who do not take either of these courses. Interestingly, the evidence of higher college enrollment at four-year institutions is stronger for DE course takers; however, the positive association with college persistence is larger for AP course takers. There is also evidence of positive contributions of the IB program, particularly the Diploma Programme, to college matriculation. According to Bergeron (2015), 78 percent of students joining the Diploma Programme between 2008 and 2014 enrolled in college immediately after HS, which was 9 percentage points higher than in the national cohort. Diploma Programme cohorts (95 percent) were also more likely to enroll in four-year institutions than the national cohort (60 percent).

College performance and completion. Not only are DE and AP linked to a higher likelihood of college enrollment and persistence, but they are also correlated with improved academic performance and college completion. In the analysis of outcomes for students in technical dual enrollment, Lee et al. (2022) indicate better college performance for dually enrolled students. Studying both DE and AP courses, Wyatt et al. (2015) find that students scoring three or above on an AP exam or DE students at four-year institutions had a higher first-year college GPAs than those who took neither AP nor DE. According to Radunzel et al. (2014), students in Texas high schools taking dual credit or DE courses were more likely to earn a B or higher in subsequent college courses and complete a bachelor's degree than those who did not take these courses. Villarreal (2018) also finds a positive correlation between DE and degree completion, particularly for a shorter time to degree completion. Blankenberger et al. (2017) detect consistent findings regarding a higher likelihood of obtaining a baccalaureate degree for students with dual credits in Illinois, particularly for DE students deciding to enroll at community colleges and at non/less competitive entry institutions.

ECC effects on earnings

Prior studies suggest that DE is also a potential strategy for boosting income. Dhaliwal et al. (2025) apply the propensity score matching method to estimate the causal effects of DE on financial well-being among Texas HS graduates. They conclude that earnings of DE participants are 4-9 percentage points higher than for non-participants, although student loans are higher for DE participants. Similarly, Buckley et al. (2022) detect positive effects of DE on later income among students in Colorado.

Subgroup analysis based on demographic characteristics and socio-economic conditions

Current literature provides evidence that the benefits of DE vary across subgroups based on demographic characteristics and socioeconomic conditions. Pretlow and Wathington (2014) examine whether DE outcomes are associated with a 2005 policy change aimed at expanding DE participation in Virginia. Overall, access to and participation in a DE program increased after the policy change; however, minority groups were significantly underrepresented among participants. Using survey data on first-time college students in 2004, An (2013) also detects differences in DE program participation between low- and high-SES students; yet DE appeared to be beneficial for both low and high-SES students, increasing their first-year GPAs and reducing the need for remediation courses in college.

There are some studies showing stronger evidence of better outcomes for dual enrollees in underrepresented or low-income subgroups. Struhl and Vargas (2012) find a positive correlation between DE and postsecondary outcomes, such as college attendance, persistence, and associate degree completion within six years, for all racial groups and low-income students. Their research also shows a higher likelihood that students from low-income families in Texas will pursue a four-year college. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) find that the positive associations between DE course taking and academic outcomes (HS graduation, college attendance and persistence) are greater for racial minority students, first-generation students, and low-income students.

In contrast, there is very little evidence of improved outcomes for underrepresented groups in AP courses. Owen (2025) shows that students from non-economically disadvantaged families, White and Asian students, and higher-achieving students are more likely to register for additional AP courses, widening the existing gap in AP course participation. Additionally, this paper only detects evidence of better outcomes for schools with higher AP course availability for the most academically prepared students.

Generally, previous research highlights the benefits of DE, AP, and IB on students' short- and long-term outcomes, including college enrollment, persistence, performance, and completion. There is also empirical evidence that taking DE courses contributes to an increase in HS graduation rates and lifetime earnings. However, the benefits of DE, AP, and IB in Louisiana are understudied, and this report aims to fill the knowledge gaps by exploring the connections between advanced and college-level course-taking and early credit earning during HS and various outcomes over both the short- and long-term.

3. Data & Methods

This report focuses on the education and employment outcomes of two groups of Louisiana public HS students: (1) HS dropouts and (2) ECC students. We discuss the LA FIRST data used for both analyses in Section 3.1 and provide details on the methods applied to study Louisiana HS dropouts in Section 3.2 and ECC students in Section 3.3.

3.1 Data

Data used in this report draw from three main data sources: LDOE, BOR, and LA Works. We use LDOE data to analyze student enrollment and transcript data, including student-level courses and credits earned while enrolled in a public K-12 school. These data allow us to identify public HS dropout students and public HS recorded ECC activity. These data, when linked with other state data sources in LA FIRST, allow us to study these students' later academic outcomes, including postsecondary outcomes, employment, and earnings in Louisiana.⁷

From BOR data shared with LA FIRST, we use Statewide Student Profile System (SSPS) data, which provides student demographic characteristics, programs, courses, and degree level enrollment information for Louisiana public postsecondary students by academic year. We use an SSPS dataset to identify college enrollment at Louisiana public postsecondary institutions during and after HS.

LA Works collects data related to wages of people working in Louisiana that are reported to the state by employers through mandatory quarterly reporting tied to state Unemployment Insurance (UI) coverage. We use Louisiana UI wage data to study wage outcomes of three Louisiana public school student groups of interest: students who dropped out of HS, students with ECC activities while in HS, and students with no ECC activities during HS. The UI wage record also includes information on the workers' occupations (Standard Occupational Classification, or SOC code, or job title) and employer industry (North American Industry Classification System, or NAICS code).

3.2 Method for HS dropout analysis

We use linked data from the LDOE and LA Works to study the wages of HS dropout students who dropped out from the 2014-15 through the 2022-23 academic years using wage records ranging from 2014 Q1 to 2025 Q2.

⁷ Full implementation of eScholar Unique Identifiers (LASID) for public K-12 students in Louisiana was achieved in academic year 2015-2016. The number of students with linkable data (i.e., nonmissing Social Security numbers that could be linked), particularly students at grades 11 and 12, prior to this year is smaller in eScholar and LDOE linked LA FIRST data.

3.2.1 Identifying HS dropout students

To identify HS dropout students, we use HS student enrollment records and apply the following exclusions: removed students who attained a HS diploma or GED at any time during HS as well as students reported as being dead or incapacitated at any time during HS. Then, we removed “transfer” students, which included any student who had transfer exit reason codes the last time they appeared in the LDOE student enrollment records.⁸ We call the set of individuals who remained in the data after these exclusions our “potential dropout population.” Next, we examined the dropout dates for the potential dropout population to exclude from our analysis of HS dropout those students with dropout dates from the 2014-15 academic year through the 2022-23 academic year.

We calculated the dropout date as the exit date for the last time a student appeared in the LDOE enrollment records. For example, if a student was observed as enrolled for the whole academic year, the last time they appeared in the enrollment records (no exit date), we assigned the dropout date as the end date of that academic year. In the case that a student had zero attendance days when they last appeared in the records, we use enrollment records from the previous academic year. Please refer to Appendix C – Technical Appendix, section A, for further explanation of the methods we follow to identify the dropout date of each student.

Our analysis focuses on the population of HS students who dropped out between and including academic years 2014-15 through 2022-23. For this sample of HS dropout students, we explored linked demographic information (race, ethnicity and gender) from the LDOE.⁹

This process gave us 52,204 unique HS dropout student records, representing students who dropped out between 9th and 12th grades before completing a HS diploma or GED including academic years 2014-15 to 2022-23 with demographic information.¹⁰

Representativeness of linkable high school student dropouts. Due to limitations on linkable data for students from K-12 school districts that have not yet shared data with LA FIRST, outcomes findings in this report will focus mostly on Louisiana public HS students with enrollment in LEAs that opted in to data sharing with LA FIRST with linkable identifying information. In this report, we call these students “linkable students.” As of September 25, 2025, when analytical files for this year’s analysis were prepared, this included 73 out of 164 Louisiana LEAs. The linkable sample of HS students from the 2012-13 to 2023-24 academic years accounts for 64.6 percent of the total Louisiana public HS population in that study period. For a full list of opt-in districts, please see Appendix A, Table A2.

⁸ We define the last time a student appears in the LDOE records if we observe an exit date the last time a student shows up in the student enrollment records (including the case when last exit date is equal to the last entry date). Please refer to Appendix C – Technical Appendix, section A for more information.

⁹ Demographic characteristics are recorded the first time students appear in the LDOE enrollment table between the 2012-2013 and 2023-2024 academic years. If a student has more than one value of gender at first enrollment, we assign “undefined gender” to these records.

¹⁰ Refer to Appendix C – Technical Appendix, section A for more information.

The HS dropout students included in our analysis are the subset of all Louisiana HS dropout students in the study period, representing those with K-12 linkable data. Compared with all public HS dropout students in Louisiana, the linkable population tends to drop out at around the same age and grade level, on average. The gender profiles of the linkable HS dropouts and all dropouts are similar. There are several key differences between the linkable HS dropouts and all HS dropouts. In the linkable population, we find:

- A higher share of Black students (65.1 percent) than for all HS dropouts (58.3 percent).
- A lower share of Hispanic dropout students (4.3 percent) than for all HS dropouts (12.3 percent) (Table 2.1).
- A slightly higher share of White students (27.8 percent) than for all HS dropouts (26.9 percent).

Overall, these differences suggest a greater presence of Black HS dropout students in the linkable sample and a smaller presence of Hispanic HS dropout students than in the state. Increased participation of LEAs in LA FIRST data sharing will improve our ability to make inferences about all public HS students in Louisiana. The analysis of HS dropout outcomes summarized in this report is generalizable only for the linkable students and participating in LEAs in the state.

Table 3.1 Demographic characteristics of HS dropouts

	All HS dropouts		Linkable HS dropouts	
	N = 52,204	%	N = 33,753	%
Female		40.3		40.3
White		26.9		27.8
Black		58.3		65.1
Hispanic		12.3		4.3
Other		2.6		2.9
		Mean		Mean
Age at dropout		17.1*		17.2
Dropout academic year		2018.0		2017.9
Grade level at dropout		10.6		10.6
Dropout academic year		2018.0		2017.9
Grade level at dropout		10.6		10.6

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of all HS students and linkable HS students from 2014-15 through 2022-23. Linkable sample is HS students in opt-in school districts as of September 25, 2025 with linkable information. Race and ethnicity categories may not sum due to rounding. *Age at dropout for all HS dropout sample based on 42,489 nonmissing observations.

3.2.2 Measuring HS dropout student outcomes

To explore the employment outcomes of HS dropout students, we focus on two outcome measures: quarterly median wage since dropout and quarterly employment status since dropout.

We linked HS dropout student records to individual LA Works quarterly UI wage records for students who were enrolled in K-12 LEAs that opted in to provide linkable student data to LA FIRST.

For these students, we created a time variable measuring the difference in quarters between when a student dropped out and their wage record (with 0 being the quarter when the student dropped out). For example, if a student dropped out in the academic year 2015-16, quarter 2, and has a wage record in the same year and quarter, the time variable will take the value 0. We only considered the time values of 0 and above, which represent all Louisiana UI quarterly wage earnings in the same quarter or after the student's HS dropout quarter.

Quarterly employment status since dropout: We compute the number of quarters an individual worked in Louisiana UI-covered employment each year since dropout. We further perform this analysis by grade level at dropout, gender, race or ethnicity, and NAICS group.¹¹

Quarterly median wage since dropout: We compute the median wages of the linkable population by relative time (quarter) since dropout within the set of records found in UI-covered employment.¹² All wage estimates are rounded to the nearest \$10. We further perform this analysis by gender, race and ethnicity,¹³ grade level at dropout,¹⁴ academic year cohort at dropout, dropout age,¹⁵ and LEA.¹⁶

As we examine employment and wage outcomes of students in this report, it is also important to note that our research team is unable to observe non-UI-covered wage earnings. Louisiana UI wage data represents Louisiana UI-covered wage earnings only and does not include wages or earnings from out-of-state work, gig work, federal employment, self-employment, or wealth or investment earnings.

¹¹ We assign the NAICS code of the highest wage for the year since dropout.

¹² We sum the wage records for each person in each year-quarter. We subsequently use the monthly Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI) retrieved from Federal Reserve Economic Data to adjust these quarterly wage records to express all wages in 2025Q2 dollars. We calculate the CPI for a particular quarter-year as the mean of CPI in months for that year-quarter. The baseline year-quarter is 2025Q2. We then compute the adjusted wage in a year-quarter as $\text{Adjusted wage} = \text{total quarter wage} * \text{CPI base} / \text{CPI (wage quarter-year)}$.

¹³ We used Gender and FedRaceEthnicityCd from the LDOE enrollment files to identify demographic information.

¹⁴ If a student has more than two grade levels at the dropout date, we choose the higher grade level as the dropout grade level.

¹⁵ If a student has more than two ages at the dropout dates, we choose the higher age. We limit our exploration to those who dropped out between ages 14 and 25.

¹⁶ For those with more than two LEAs at the dropout date, we choose the one with the maximum number of enrolled days.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, UI laws cover an estimated 98 percent of U.S. nonagricultural employment and 96 percent of the wage-and-salary civilian labor force nationally. However, a measure of the complete set of income resources a family or household may apply in their family or household budgets is beyond the scope of this report.

3.3 Method for ECC analysis

The second portion of our analysis explores ECC among Louisiana public HS students. In the ECC analysis, we explore student course taking, course completion, and HS credit earning in DE, AP, and IB courses, as well as college course taking while in HS (enrollment identified in BOR data as HS student enrollment) and college course taking only while in HS (HS college course taking that is not part of dual enrollment).

3.3.1 Identifying ECC students

Our identification of public HS students pursuing ECC considers K-12 DE, AP, or IB credits observed in LDOE transcript data for all public HS students. When HS student data were linkable for public HS students from LDOE records (when districts opted in to share student data with LA FIRST), they were linked with BOR data to observe additional dimensions of HS student ECC activity observable in patterns of enrollment across LDOE and BOR records.

LDOE requires districts to report individual-student-level data on student enrollment and completion of DE, AP, or IB credits. BOR requires Louisiana public postsecondary institutions to report when an enrolled student is known to be a HS student. We use individual data linking between LDOE (in academic year 2012-13 to 2023-24) and BOR data (in academic years 2008-09 to 2024-25) to compare enrollment patterns in order to identify any additional students who may have pursued coursework at a BOR institution while still enrolled in HS but not recorded by their HS or BOR as part of any formal dual-enrollment credit process.

This report uses a five-category (all public HS students) and a seven-category (linkable public HS students only) framework to report ECC activities. Note that student classification in these categories is not mutually exclusive. Thus, a single student can be part of the summary statistics of one or more of these ECC activity groups based on their course taking and completion patterns.

The five-category framework, observable for all public HS students in LDOE data only, includes the following ECC activity categories:

1. **DE HS credit students:** Public HS students who earned positive DE course credits before or during HS, as recorded in LDOE transcript files.
2. **AP or IB HS credit students:** Public HS students who earned positive AP or IB course credits before or during HS, as recorded in LDOE transcript files.

This measures K-12 course credit, not college course credit, because AP and IB test scores are not part of LA FIRST LDOE data sharing.

3. **DE, AP, or IB HS credit students:** Public HS students who earned any positive credits of DE, AP, or IB before and during HS, as recorded in LDOE transcript files.
4. **No DE, AP, or IB HS credit students:** Public HS students who did not earn any positive credits of DE, AP, or IB before and during HS, as recorded in LDOE transcript files.
5. **All public HS students**

The seven-category framework, observable for all categories for linkable students only, includes the following reporting categories:

1. **DE HS credit students** (as described above)
2. **AP or IB HS credit students** (as described above)
3. **College course HS students:** Public HS students with HS student status identified as part of their enrollment record in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution, as recorded in BOR enrollment files.
4. **College course only students:** Public HS students with observed BOR enrollment during their time enrolled in HS (grades 9-12), but who were not reported with DE, AP, or IB HS credit
5. **Any-takers:** Summary category including DE HS credit students, AP or IB HS credit students, College course HS students, or College course only students
6. **Non-takers:** Summary category including students who were not any-takers
7. **All linkable HS students**

For further information on detailed technical steps to identify DE HS credit students, AP or IB HS credit students, college course HS students, and college course only students, refer to technical Appendix C – Technical Appendix.

3.3.2 Measuring ECC student outcomes

We report four key outcomes for HS ECC students: HS graduation, public college enrollment after HS, annual employment after HS, and quarterly wages after HS.

HS graduation is measured at the individual level as whether the student exited a Louisiana public HS with a diploma or equivalency. It is reported in aggregate as a percentage or share equal to the number of students in the group with a HS graduation divided by the total number of students. We only observe graduation or equivalency in Louisiana public HS in LDOE data; therefore, it is possible that

some students may have transferred and graduated outside of the Louisiana public HS system who are not counted as graduates by our measure, but who may have actually graduated.¹⁷

Public college enrollment is measured at the individual level as whether a student enrolled in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution after they left HS either with or without a HS diploma or equivalency. It is reported in aggregate as a percentage or share of students who enrolled equal to the number of students in the group with a HS enrollment divided by the total number of students in the same group. We consider public college enrollment records between the 2008-09 and 2024-25 academic years to identify whether students enrolled in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions after HS. More details about the matching process to BOR enrollment data are provided in Appendix C – Technical Appendix, section 6.

We also show *the first public college program level pursued* for students who enrolled in public postsecondary institutions and the *mean duration (in months) between HS graduation and first public college enrollment*, which is calculated only for students who had public college enrollment in Louisiana between academic years 2012-13 and 2024-25.

Annual employment status after HS measures how many quarters an individual worked each year after leaving or graduating from HS in categories of full-year (worked four quarters per year), part-year (worked one to three quarters per year), and no record (had no UI wage record in the year).

Employment and wages after HS are identified by linking HS student data to UI wage records from LA Works for up to 12 years after leaving or graduating from HS. We consider wage outcomes from 2014Q1 to 2025Q2 and restrict our analysis to employment and wages observed after the date students left or graduated from HS.

Quarterly wage is the sum of all UI wages an individual earned in a certain quarter-year, and quarterly wage is CPI-adjusted with the baseline of 2025Q2 to express all wages analyzed in 2025Q2 dollars. We report wages in quarters relative to the quarter-year individuals left HS, similar to how we report quarterly wages of HS dropouts (e.g., quarter one after HS departure, quarter two, quarter three, and so on).

Demographic characteristics. For each outcome, we present subgroup analyses based on demographic characteristics of gender, race, and ethnicity. Gender, race, and ethnicity are identified using LDOE enrollment demographic information. The method we use to identify the demographic characteristics of students is the same as that used in the HS student dropout analysis, described in section 3.2.1.

¹⁷ We exclude students in grade levels 9 to 11 in the academic year 2023-24 academic year when we study HS graduation rates and other outcomes from the groups of interest, because their planned HS graduation date falls outside the study period.

Representativeness of linkable ECC student population. Findings from this report section relate only to Louisiana public HS students pursuing ECC at Louisiana public schools with matching information from LA FIRST DSA opt-in districts. This included 73 out of 164 LEAs that opted in as of September 25, 2025 (See Appendix Table A2 for the list of opt-in LEAs). The population of Louisiana public HS students enrolled in the academic years 2012-13 through 2023-24 with linkable data accounts for 64.6 percent of all HS students. As displayed in Table 3.2, the linkable sample tends to have a larger share of Black students and smaller shares of Hispanic and White students than all HS students. The proportion of gender groups is comparable between linkable and all HS student samples.

Table 3.2 Demographic characteristics for all HS students and linkable students

	HS students (%)	Linkable HS students (%)
Female	49.2	49.3
Male	50.7	50.6
Black	42.4	45.8
Hispanic	7.1	5.3
White	46.3	44.4
Other	4.1	4.5
Headcount	834,918	542,877

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of all HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Notably, this analysis does not capture ECC activities of students who attended Louisiana private high schools or college enrollment outcomes when HS students attended Louisiana private postsecondary institutions, because these students are not observed in current LA FIRST data. When exploring earnings outcomes of Louisiana ECC students, we observe only UI-covered wage earnings and cannot observe wages from those who crossed state borders for work or from work or income beyond UI covered employment.

4. Findings

4.1 Labor market outcomes of HS dropouts

4.1.1 Summary statistics

Completing high school is a significant milestone in an individual's life and can impact future career opportunities. For some students, this is an important marker in their educational progression, preparing them for post-secondary education. However, for many students, this represents a level of educational attainment that establishes an entry point into the labor market demonstrating competency for entry-level positions that offer more job stability and higher earnings potential than is typical for students who do not complete high school. To provide a baseline for understanding how education prepares students for the labor market, we evaluate the employment and wages of HS dropouts in Louisiana.

Breaking down our sample of HS dropouts by grade level at dropout (Table 4.1) and the academic cohort year at dropout (Table 4.2), we saw that the highest proportion of students in our sample dropped out in the 12th grade (31.5 percent) while the lowest proportion dropped out in the 11th grade (20.2 percent). The dropout shares were relatively high immediately following the 2019-20 academic year. This trend could likely be attributed to the COVID-19 phenomenon.

Table 4.1 HS dropout headcount and distribution by grade level

Grade level	Headcount	%
9	13,195	25.3
10	12,014	23.0
11	10,564	20.2
12	16,431	31.5
Total	52,204	100.0

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of all HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Table 4.2 HS dropout headcount by year and share of total

Academic year	Headcount	%
2014-15	6,307	12.1
2015-16	6,404	12.3
2016-17	5,646	10.8
2017-18	4,743	9.1
2018-19	4,981	9.5
2019-20	4,779	9.2
2020-21	7,164	13.7
2021-22	6,005	11.5
2022-23	6,175	11.8
Total	52,204	100.0

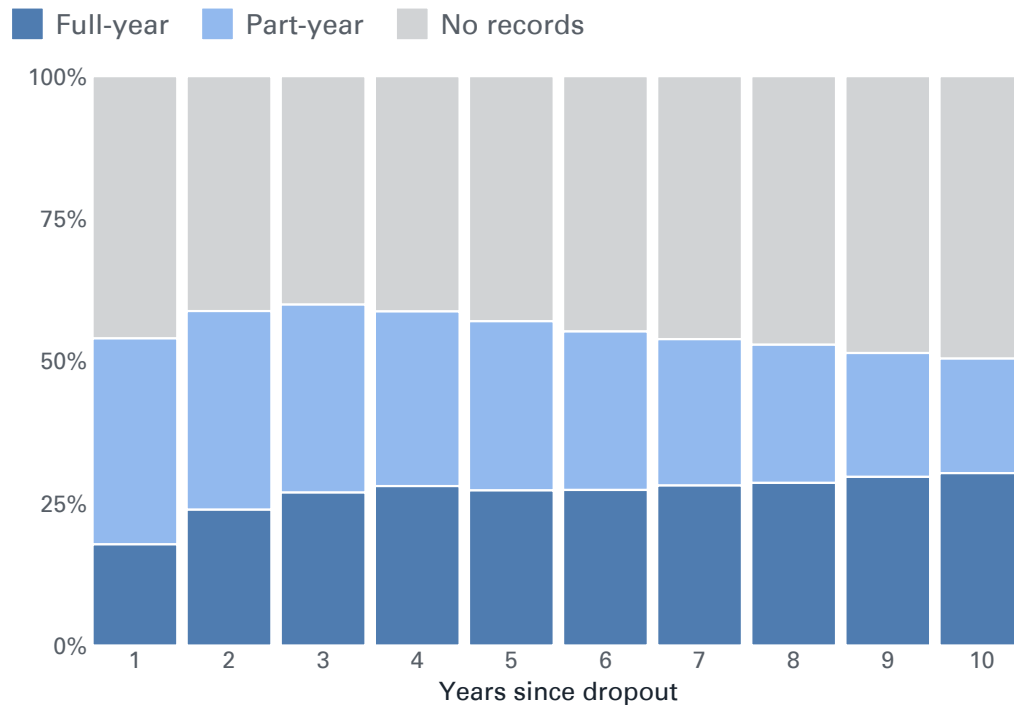
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of all HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23. HS dropout headcount of those last observed in the study period in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades that dropped out in the academic year. Share is calculated as the HS dropout headcount in an academic year by the total HS dropout headcount in all academic years.

4.1.2 Employment

In exploring how many quarters are worked each year since HS dropout (Figure 4.1), close to half of dropouts have no records of work across all years. When compared to full-year records, records pertaining to part-year work comprised of the second highest share of records in the initial years of dropout. After around seven years of dropout, the records with full-year employment overtake the share of part-year records. However, even 10 years after HS dropout, only 30.3 percent of HS dropouts were observed working full year in Louisiana covered employment.

Figure 4.1 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout

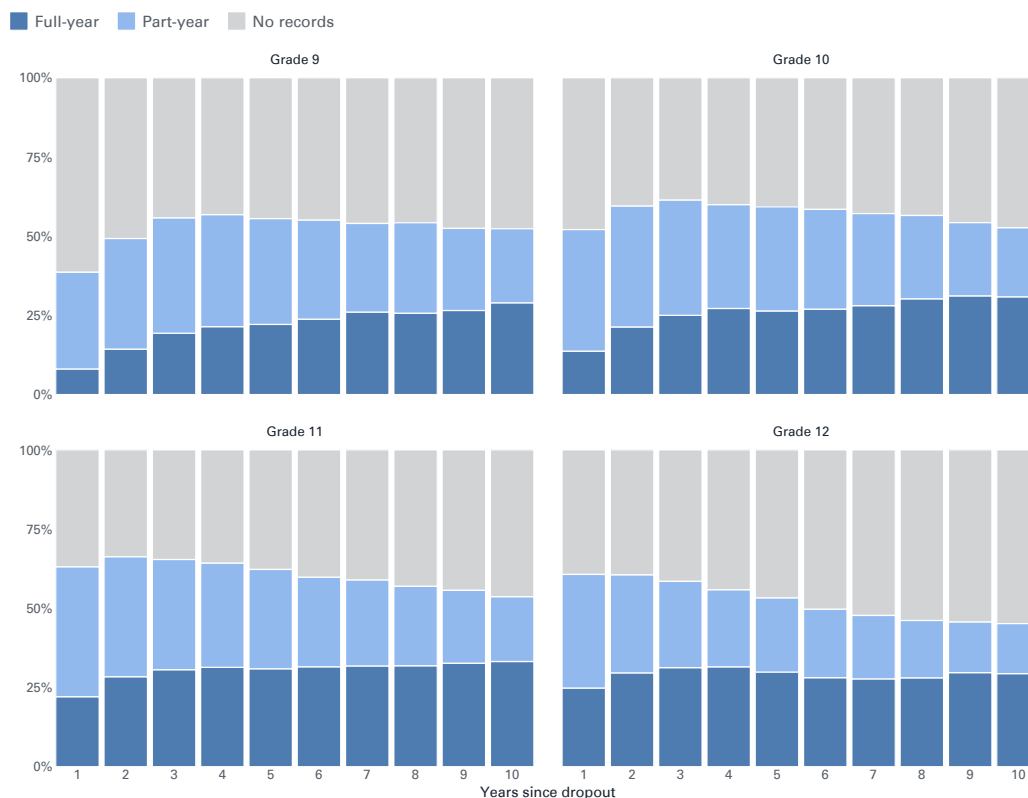


Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Figure 4.2 depicts the number of quarters worked after HS dropout by grade level at dropout (Figure 4.2). There exists some variation in the number of working quarters by grade of a dropout. For example, fewer 9th-grade dropouts worked the first year after dropping out, likely due to federal work restrictions limiting work during school hours for those aged less than 16.

Figure 4.2 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by dropout grade level



Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

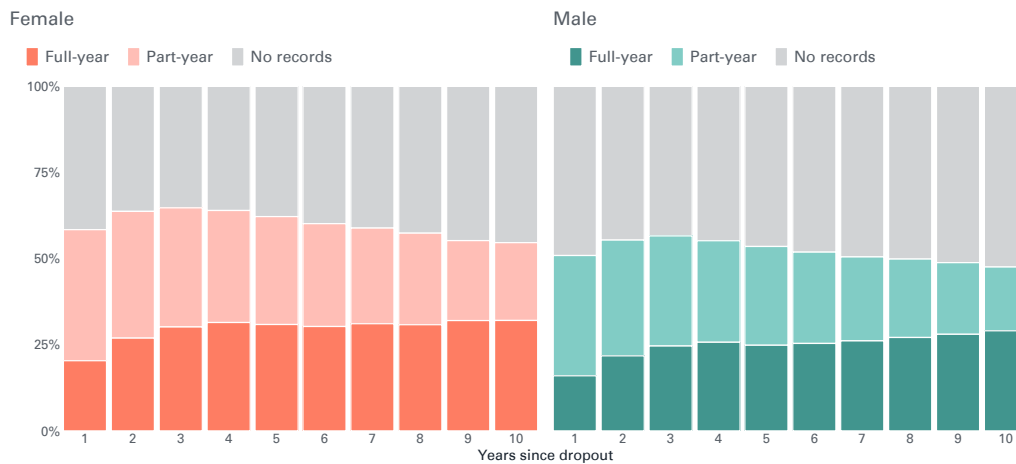
Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 to 2022-23.

For the grade 9 dropout cohort illustration, the second and third years after dropout represent a time where students progressing on-time through high school would reach an unrestricted working age of 16, and we see employment patterns expand to levels that are similar to 10th, 11th, and 12th grade HS dropouts in year 1 or 2 after HS dropout.

In general, the prevalence of work is higher immediately following dropout for those who stay in school longer, and there is a fairly consistent increase in full-year records for those who dropped out in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Among those who drop out in 12th grade, the share working full year remains fairly stable over time, and the share of those working only part of the year decreases, resulting in an overall decline in work.

We explore the employment status patterns of dropouts by gender in Figure 4.3 and race and ethnicity in Figure 4.4. Our analysis of employment by gender found more female HS dropouts linked to in-state work records in the years after dropout than male HS dropouts. Female dropouts also had a higher proportion of full-year records than males. Among different races and ethnicities, Black dropouts had the highest share of records indicating some work in Louisiana. The prevalence of full-year work is similar across race and ethnic groups, with a higher prevalence of work among Black HS dropouts overall, driven by larger shares of part-year work.

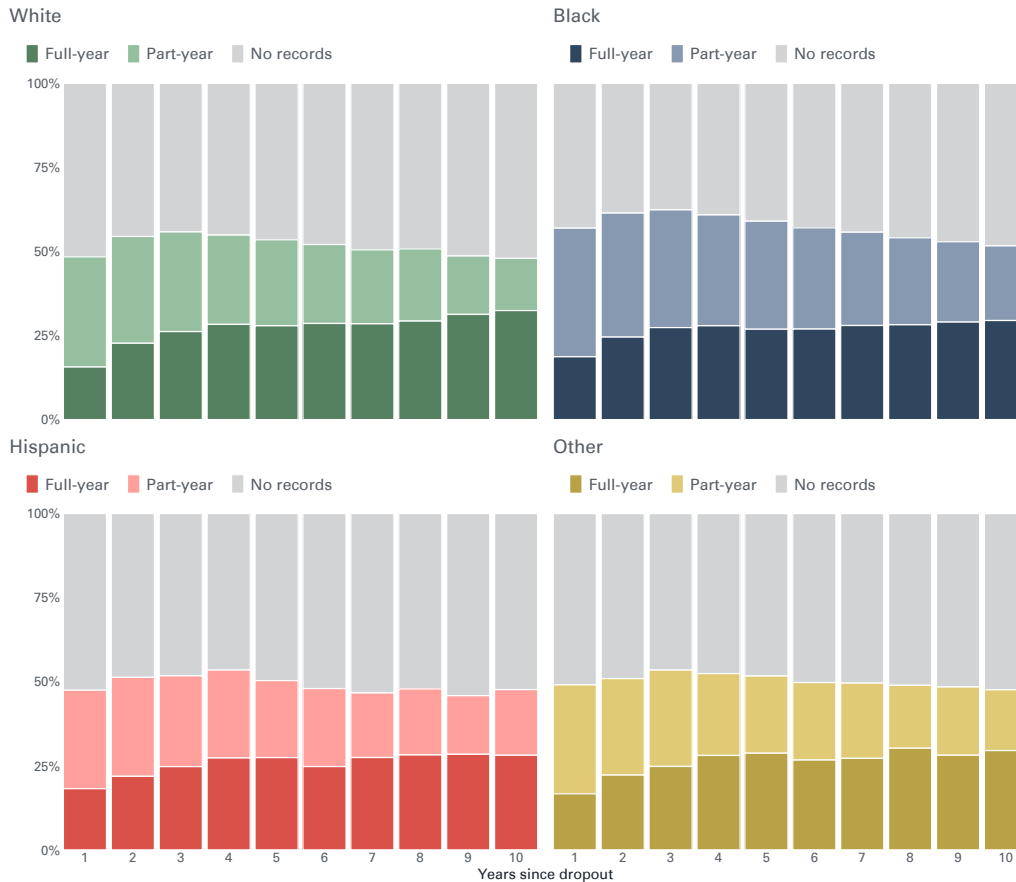
Figure 4.3 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by gender



Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 to 2022-23.

Figure 4.4 HS dropout student employment pattern after dropout by race and ethnicity

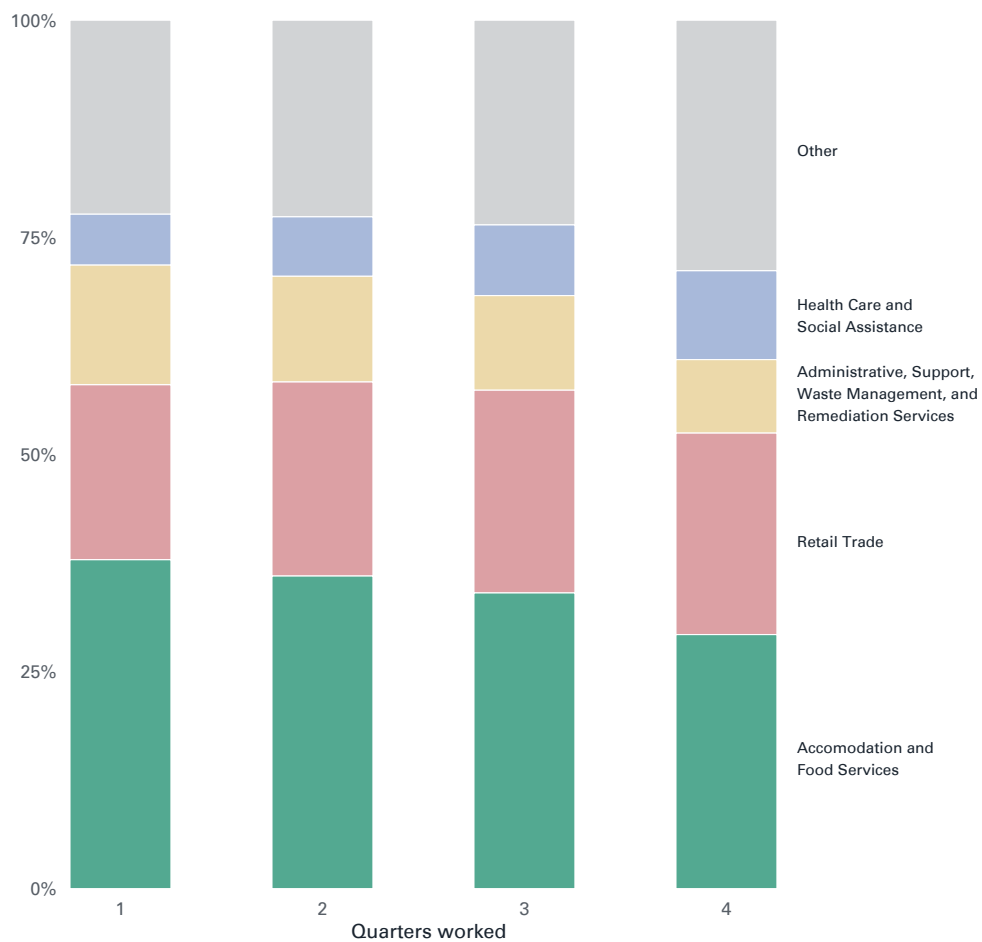


Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 to 2022-23.

Finally, we explore the employment status after high school dropout by working quarter and NAICS group (Figure 4.5). The data show that among Louisiana’s HS dropouts in the study period, Accommodation and Food Services is the industry sector linked to the highest share of records among individuals at all levels of work in the study period. We find that Accommodation and Food Services is a more common sector for part-year workers than full-year workers. Retail Trade was the second-most-common industry for Louisiana HS dropout students, with a more stable proportion across the employment patterns of Louisiana’s workers, both full-year and part-year (one, two, or three quarters) workers. Administrative, Support, Waste Management, Remediation Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance were the next-most-common industries supporting Louisiana HS dropout workers. Among those observed working more quarters of the year, higher shares are observed in Health Care and Social Assistance, suggesting that for those who can find employment in this sector it tends to be more stable.

Figure 4.5 HS dropout student employment pattern by quarters worked or full year annually and NAICS



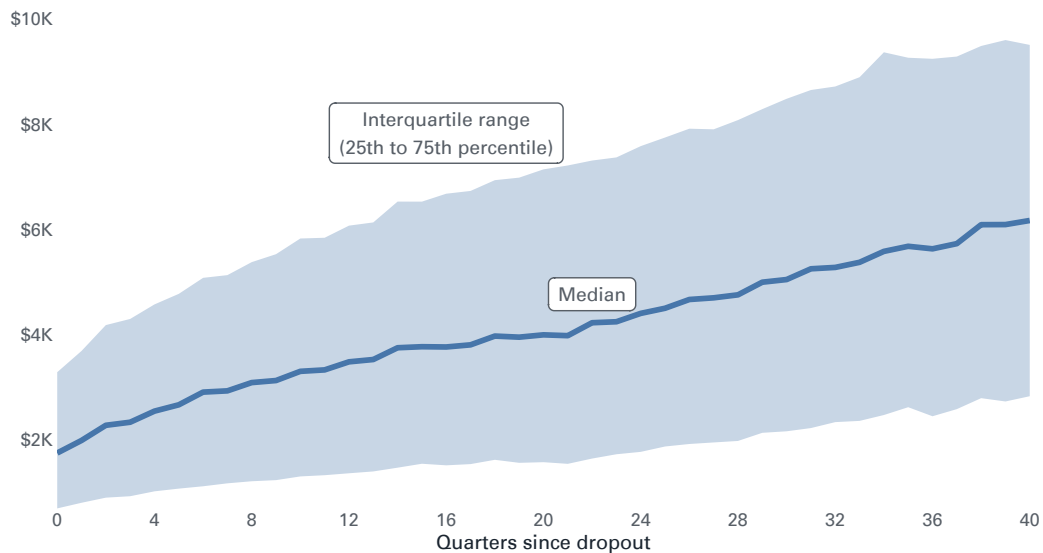
Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

4.1.3 Quarterly wages

After exploring the employment status of dropouts, we move on to their wages as a further exploration of work, which captures information about the quality of jobs and intensity of work. The trend in median quarterly wages since the quarter of dropout (Figure 4.6) shows a clear pattern of wage growth over time. Among those observed working, this is likely due to increases in work experience or skills gained over time.

Figure 4.6 Median quarterly wages and IQR trend after HS dropout

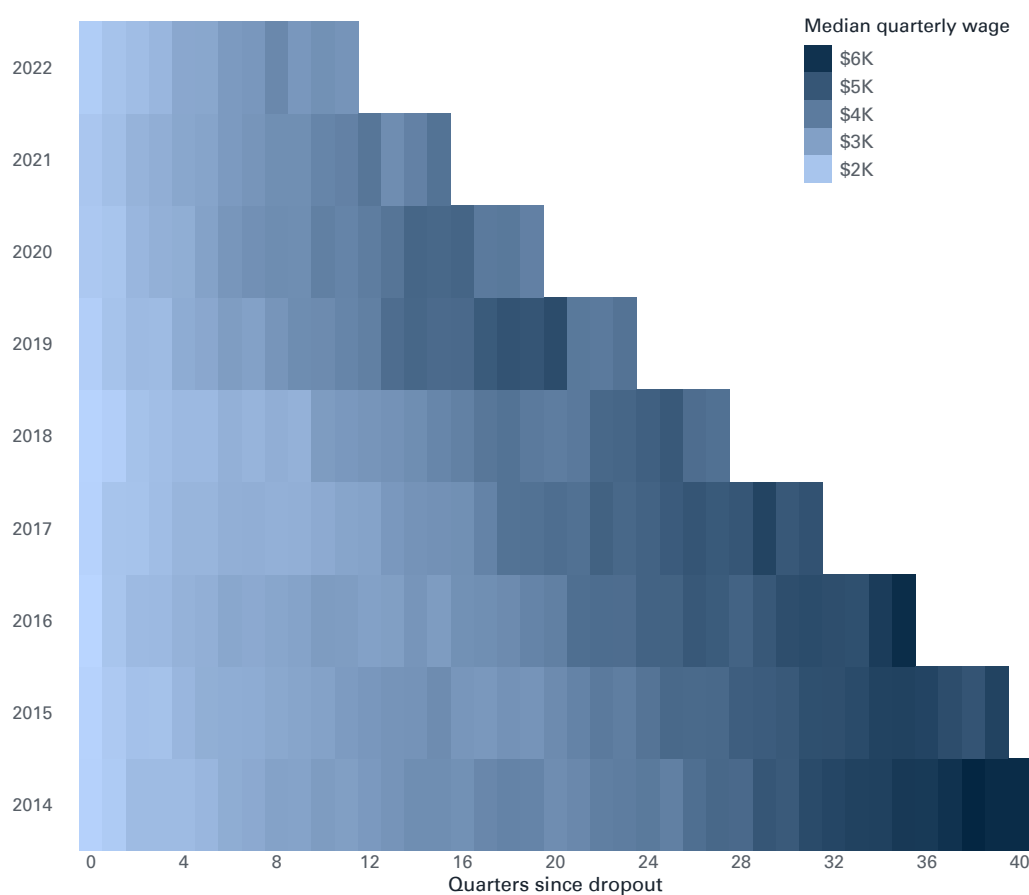


Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Breaking down the analysis by academic year of dropout (Figure 4.7), we find a similar trend of an increase in median quarterly wages over time, with the cohort-level analysis illustrating more directly the changes in earnings for a cohort of HS dropouts in the UI wage record.¹⁸ There is a pattern of higher earnings in early working quarters for workers in 2019 and beyond, likely driven by a broad-based labor shortages and an increase in wages for service jobs following the pandemic, but earnings over the final quarters for the 2019 and 2020 cohort in particular suggest that effect may have been short-lived. Even for those with as many as 10 years of experience, median quarterly wages remain low, in the \$6,000, or an annualized equivalent of \$24,000.

Figure 4.7 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout by dropout academic year



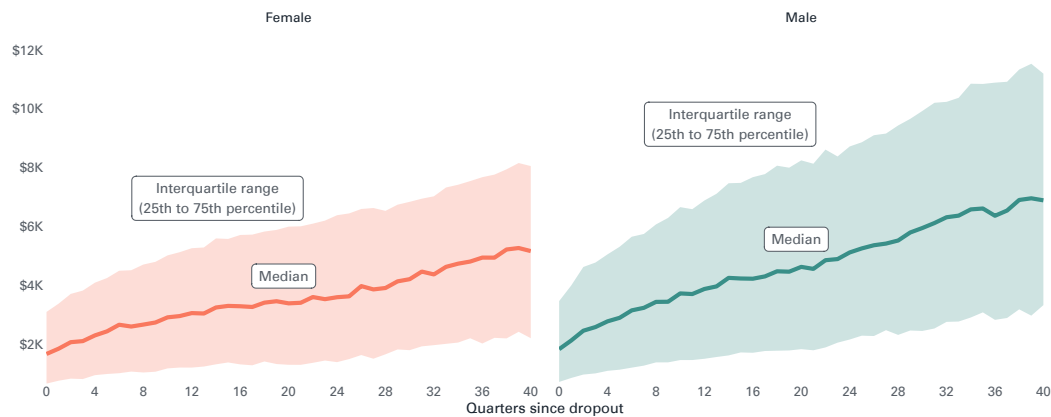
Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

¹⁸In Appendix D, Figure 1, we also look at the median annual wages for years since dropout by academic year. To calculate the annual wage since dropout year, we add the CPI adjusted quarterly wages within a year. Therefore, Year 1 is the sum of quarterly wages from 1 to 4 since dropout, Year 2 is the sum of quarters 5 to 8 since dropout, and so on.

Figure 4.8 illustrates median quarterly wages by gender over time, with both female and male dropouts exhibiting the general pattern of increased median wages over time. The increase was larger for male HS dropouts than for female HS dropouts.

Figure 4.8 Median quarterly wages and IQR trend after HS dropout by gender

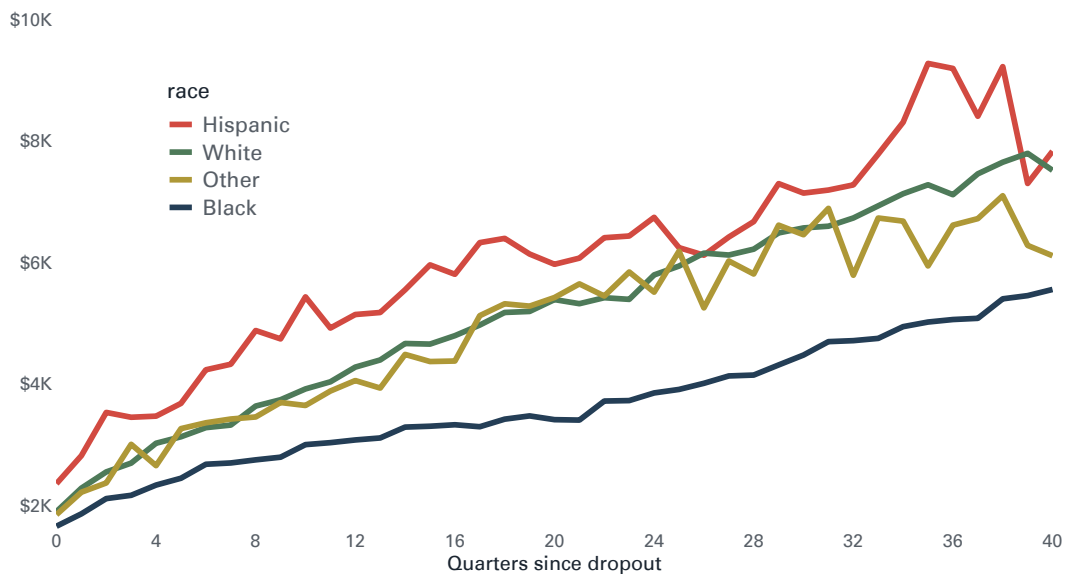


Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Figure 4.9 illustrates the median quarterly wages after HS dropout by race and ethnicity, with a similar trend across all race and ethnicity groups. Median quarterly wages for Black dropouts were the lowest for those just entering the labor market (i.e., zero quarters after dropout), and they increased at the lowest rate over time. Hispanic HS dropouts had the highest median wage just after dropout and a faster rate of growth. Together, these trends result in increasing differences across race and ethnicity groups over time.

Figure 4.9 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout by race and ethnicity

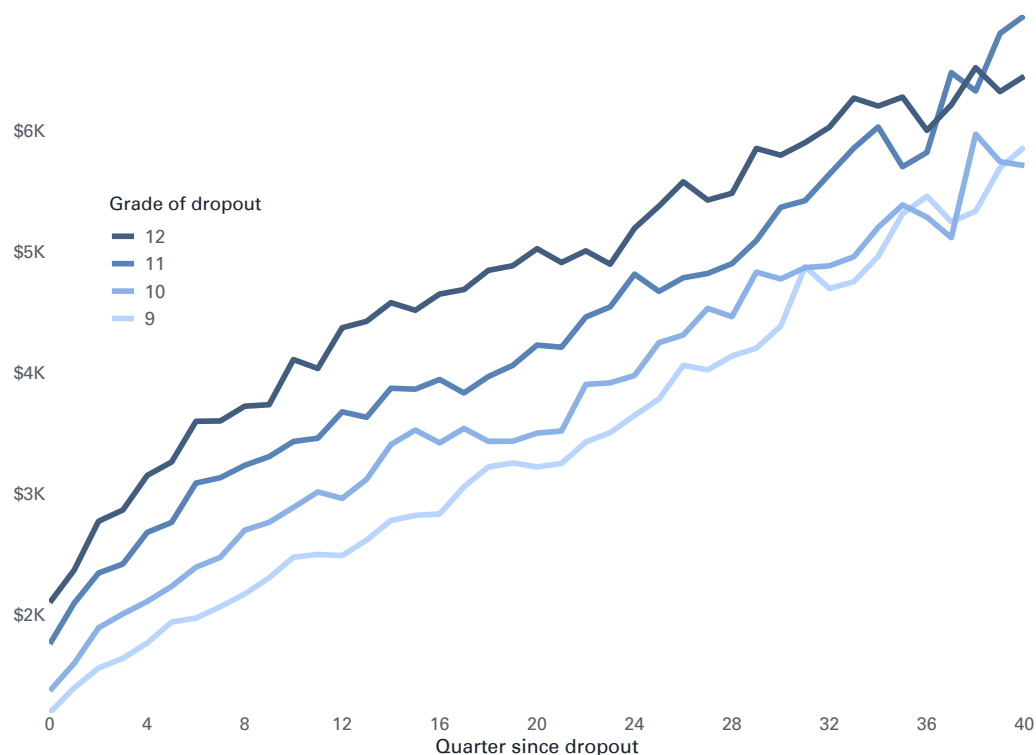


Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Figure 4.10 highlights the relationship between the dropout grade and median quarterly wages earned. As a general pattern, those who stay in school longer earn more than those who drop out earlier. Those who dropped out in the 12th grade start with the highest wages in the initial quarters, while those who dropped out in the 9th grade start with the lowest. All groups experienced similar wage growth over time, with those dropping out after more years of school experiencing slightly faster growth in early quarters. During the last quarters, the patterns by group are less clear, but as illustrated by Figure 4.7, only early cohorts have earnings beyond 32 quarters. This means that there could be cohort-specific effects that are creating this murky picture. These may include pandemic-related effects that disrupted patterns of earnings for all cohorts in recent years which are more visible during these quarters in the far right of the figure, because early cohorts include data from pre-pandemic and post-pandemic years.

Figure 4.10 Median quarterly wages after HS dropout, by dropout grade level



Source: Blanco Center Analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

4.2 Educational and labor market outcomes of ECC students

4.2.1 Summary statistics

We begin by presenting an overall summary of ECC activity participation among Louisiana public HS students. We divide this population into two groups to compare. First, we examine those in the linkable population, students for whom there was sufficient identifying information to link students' K-12 records to their activities at BOR institutions or Louisiana Works UI wage records. We compare what we know about the linkable population to the same characteristics in the unlinkable population. Comparing the two illustrates how similar or dissimilar the populations of students are among those whose outcomes we can observe in LA FIRST linked public postsecondary records and state wage records and those whose we cannot.

Table 4.3 examines the prevalence of ECC participation in the entire population ("HS student") and the division of the entire population into the linkable and unlinkable groups. For all HS students, we see that the largest share falls into the "No DE, AP, or IB HS credit" group, 67.5 percent. That share is slightly higher in the unlinkable population, suggesting that either access to or take-up of ECC is slightly lower among students in districts whose outcomes we cannot observe beyond HS due to LA FIRST data-sharing limitations. The unlinkable population has a smaller share of AP or IB HS credit and a slightly larger share of DE HS credit than the linkable population, suggesting that students in the districts whose outcomes we cannot observe beyond HS have participated less in the established college preparatory pathways (AP or IB) and are participating more in new college preparatory pathways in Louisiana (DE) than in the linkable sample. Overall, we see over 32 percent of students participating in DE, AP, or IB in HS, with slightly higher participation in the linkable population and slightly lower participation in the unlinkable population.

By necessity most of our analysis of ECC activity narrows our focus from the population of 834,918 unique students we observe participating in Louisiana public high schools in the study period to the 547,877 (65.6 percent of all public HS students) in linkable population, acknowledging that the linkable population appears to be slightly more integrated into ECC activity overall.

Table 4.3 ECC for all, linkable, and unlinkable Louisiana public HS student populations

Activity	HS students		Linkable		Unlinkable	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
DE HS credit	179,695	21.5	115,108	21.2	64,587	22.1
AP or IB HS credit	164,081	19.7	115,404	21.3	48,677	16.7
DE, AP, or IB HS credit	271,673	32.5	182,155	33.6	89,518	30.7
No DE, AP, or IB HS credit	563,245	67.5	360,722	66.5	202,523	69.4
All HS students	834,918	100	542,877	100	292,041	100

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Because we can observe students in the linkable sample longer along their educational and work trajectories, we reproduce Table 4.3 with an expansion to two other forms of ECC activity for the linkable population in Table 4.4: college course HS students, those students who were reported to BOR as HS students enrolled in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions; and college course only, students who enrolled in college coursework while enrolled in HS, but not through formal DE, AP, or IB arrangements. As expected, we see that the public college course HS students' share is 23.9 percent, slightly higher (+2.7 percentage points) than the share of K-12 reported DE HS credit (21.2 percent). This may reflect a slightly higher share of student attempts at DE coursework at BOR institutions than student completions reported to LDOE. The share of college course only is small (3.7 percent), representing 22,204 students in the study period. When we add these two categories of ECC activity to our consideration set, the share of students participating in any ECC rises from 33.6 percent (Table 4.3, Linkable population, DE, AP, or IB HS credit) to 37.7 percent (Table 4.4, Any-takers) and the share of nonparticipants falls from 66.6 percent (Table 4.3, Linkable population, No DE, AP, or IB...) to 62.3 percent (Table 4.4, Non-takers).

Table 4.4 ECC for linkable students

Activity	Headcount	%
DE HS credit	115,108	21.2
AP or IB HS credit	115,404	21.3
College course HS students	129,671	23.9
College course only	20,204	3.7
Any-takers	204,863	37.7
Non-takers	338,014	62.3
All linkable HS students	542,877	100

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Table 4.5 presents recent trends in student ECC participation in the study period. We begin by observing that the unique public HS student population has grown, but only very slowly, between academic years 2013-14 (202,329) and 2023-24 (206,424), representing total growth of 2.0 percent over 11 years. The size of the student body served in Louisiana public high schools fluctuated during that time, experiencing two peaks in 2016-17 (209,990) and 2020-21 (209,174) academic years. Over the same time, we observe fluctuations in DE and AP or IB HS credit, showing a general gradual growth trend in the share of students taking up ECC options from 16.4 percent in 2013-14 to 21.4 percent in 2023-24. This growth was driven by increases in the shares of students participating in AP or IB HS credit (9.6 percent in 2013-14 to 13.9 percent in 2023-24) and DE HS credit (10.2 percent in 2013-14 to 12.8 percent in 2023-24).

For the linkable population, we see consistent trends to what is seen in the entire public HS population; the linkable HS student population has also grown slightly overall as well, and at a slightly higher rate than the entire population (from a student population of 140,210 in 2013-14 to 143,804 in 2023-24, or 2.6 percent growth). The share of DE, AP, or IB HS credit grew from a slightly higher level than in the overall population at 16.7 percent in 2013-14 to 21.9 percent in 2023-24. In the linkable population, we see that growth is fueled by increases in AP or IB HS credit, which grew by 4.3 percentage points, and DE HS credit, which grew by 3.0 percentage points. More prominent in the linkable sample of DE HS credit and college course HS students is the “U-shaped” trend in participation rate in the study period, driven by a dip in DE HS credit in 2019-2021 (coinciding with COVID-19 response years) and recovery in 2021-2024.

Table 4.5 ECC by academic year

Academic year	All HS students																	
	All HS students		DE HS credit		AP or IB HS credit		DE, AP, or IB HS credit		No DE, AP, or IB HS credit									
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%								
2013-2014	202,329	100	20,550	10.2	19,394	9.6	33,275	16.4	169,054	83.6								
2014-2015	203,330	100	18,928	9.3	23,020	11.3	35,020	17.2	168,310	82.8								
2015-2016	209,237	100	19,519	9.3	24,782	11.8	36,336	17.4	172,901	82.6								
2016-2017	209,990	100	19,704	9.4	27,311	13	38,260	18.2	171,730	81.8								
2017-2018	209,427	100	19,438	9.3	28,030	13.4	38,220	18.2	171,207	81.8								
2018-2019	208,690	100	17,803	8.5	29,088	13.9	38,251	18.3	170,439	81.7								
2019-2020	207,711	100	17,566	8.5	29,707	14.3	38,817	18.7	168,894	81.3								
2020-2021	209,174	100	17,013	8.1	28,733	13.7	37,126	17.7	172,048	82.3								
2021-2022	208,631	100	18,474	8.9	28,474	13.6	37,758	18.1	170,873	81.9								
2022-2023	208,547	100	22,906	11	28,846	13.8	41,098	19.7	167,449	80.3								
2023-2024	206,424	100	26,504	12.8	28,592	13.9	44,275	21.4	162,149	78.6								
	Linkable HS students																	
	All HS students		DE HS credit		AP or IB HS credit		DE, AP, or IB HS credit		No DE, AP, or IB HS credit		College course HS students		College course only		Any-takers		Non-takers	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
2013-2014	140,210	100	13,769	9.8	14,169	10.1	23,475	16.7	116,735	83.3	15,820	11.3	2,230	1.6	26,955	19.2	113,255	80.8
2014-2015	142,273	100	12,383	8.7	16,788	11.8	24,691	17.4	117,582	82.6	14,526	10.2	2,016	1.4	27,902	19.6	114,371	80.4
2015-2016	146,533	100	12,810	8.7	18,356	12.5	25,641	17.5	120,892	82.5	15,641	10.7	2,496	1.7	29,552	20.2	116,981	79.8
2016-2017	145,614	100	13,052	9	20,342	14	27,379	18.8	118,235	81.2	14,614	10	1,715	1.2	30,350	20.8	115,264	79.2
2017-2018	145,015	100	12,588	8.7	20,271	14	26,625	18.4	118,390	81.6	14,862	10.2	1,793	1.2	29,630	20.4	115,385	79.6
2018-2019	144,293	100	11,701	8.1	21,020	14.6	26,922	18.7	117,371	81.3	13,802	9.6	1,750	1.2	29,668	20.6	114,625	79.4
2019-2020	144,799	100	11,643	8	21,680	15	27,606	19.1	117,193	80.9	13,462	9.3	1,799	1.2	30,368	21	114,431	79
2020-2021	148,439	100	11,789	7.9	21,587	14.5	27,303	18.4	121,136	81.6	13,268	8.9	1,479	1	29,893	20.1	118,546	79.9
2021-2022	148,569	100	12,610	8.5	21,265	14.3	27,577	18.6	120,992	81.4	13,941	9.4	1,724	1.2	30,474	20.5	118,095	79.5
2022-2023	147,074	100	15,649	10.6	21,515	14.6	29,851	20.3	117,223	79.7	16,833	11.4	1,826	1.2	32,723	22.2	114,351	77.8
2023-2024	143,804	100	18,395	12.8	20,668	14.4	31,563	21.9	112,241	78.1	18,783	13.1	2,320	1.6	34,397	23.9	109,407	76.1

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2020-21 through 2023-24. Each student is counted each year they are observed in HS, resulting in multiple observations of a single student across years if students are associated with activities in more than one academic year.

While there are slightly more males than females in Louisiana public high schools in our study period (Table 4.6), we find that more females participate in ECC activities than males. Female students make up 58.8 percent of AP or IB HS credit and 57.3 percent of DE HS credit. In the linkable sample, where we can observe other types of ECC activities, we see that the female students also make up a larger share of college course HS students (56.0 percent). Of note is the reversal of that imbalance, with more male students (54.1 percent) among college course only students. As expected, when looking across all types of ECC female students represent a majority (55.6 percent) of students with any ECC activity. We investigated whether these patterns have changed in recent years, focusing on 2020-21 to 2023-24, and found consistent patterns by gender in recent years (See Table E1, Appendix E).

Table 4.6 Comparison of female gender composition of all HS students and ECC activity groups

	All HS students								
Gender	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)				
Female	49.2	57.3	58.8	57.1	45.4				
All students	834,918	179,695	164,081	271,673	563,245				
	Linkable HS students								
	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	College Course HS students (%)	College Course Only (%)	Any-takers (%)	Non-takers (%)
Female	49.3	57.0	58.5	56.8	45.5	56.0	45.9	55.6	45.5
All linkable HS students	542,877	115,108	115,404	182,155	360,722	129,671	20,204	204,863	338,014

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Table 4.7 explores the race and ethnicity of those participating in different ECC activities. In the study period, the largest race and ethnicity groups in the public HS student population shown in the top panel are White (46.3 percent) and Black (42.4 percent). Hispanic (7.1 percent) and Other (4.1 percent) make up the remainder. Among those with any K-12 based ECC activities an even larger share is White (55.1 percent) than in the overall HS student population (46.3 percent). Similarly, the percent of students with any K-12 based ECC activities that is from the Other group is slightly higher (5.3 percent) than in the overall HS population (4.1 percent). Among students with no observed K-12 based ECC activity, the Black (46.4 percent) and Hispanic (8.0 percent) proportions are higher than in the overall population of HS students, which are 42.4 percent Black and 7.1 percent Hispanic.

Table 4.7 Race and ethnicity composition of ECC activity groups

	All HS students								
Race and Ethnicity	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)				
Black	42.4	29.8	35.7	34.2	46.4				
Hispanic	7.1	4.6	6.0	5.3	8.0				
White	46.3	61.1	51.9	55.1	42.1				
Other	4.2	4.5	6.4	5.4	3.5				
All HS students	834,918	179,695	164,081	271,673	563,245				
	Linkable HS students								
Race and Ethnicity	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	College Course HS students (%)	College Course Only (%)	Any-takers (%)	Non-takers (%)
Black	45.8	33.6	39.1	37.8	49.9	36.0	49.8	39.2	49.8
Hispanic	5.3	4.5	5.5	5.0	5.4	4.2	3.8	4.9	5.5
White	44.4	56.8	48.3	51.2	41.0	54.8	42.4	50.2	40.9
Other	4.5	5.1	7.1	6.0	3.7	5.0	4.0	5.7	3.8
All linkable HS students	542,877	115,108	115,404	182,155	360,722	129,671	20,204	204,863	338,014

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24. Demographic characteristics recorded from first student enrollment. Other include American Indian, Alaska Pacific, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Asian, and multiple races. If a student had more than one value of race or ethnicity at first enrollment, student was grouped in Other.

The mix of race and ethnicity groups in the linkable sample is slightly different from the overall HS student population with Black students making up the largest group (45.8 percent) and White students making up the second largest group (44.4 percent). There is a slightly lower share of Hispanic students in the linkable population (5.3 percent) and a slightly higher share of students of Other than in the overall HS student population.

In the linkable population, we find results for DE and AP or IB HS credit that are fairly consistent with the overall population. DE HS credit, AP or IB HS credit, and college course HS students have a higher proportion of White students than the overall population of linkable students. College course only students have a higher share of Black students than the overall population of linkable students.

We explored these patterns of race and ethnicity in the recent years of 2020-21 to 2023-24 and compared them with the patterns presented above for the entire study period and found that differences between the share of Black and White students in DE, AP, or IB were lower in recent years, though Black students continue to represent a smaller share and White students continue to represent a larger share among students in DE, AP, or IB than in the total HS population.

Refer to Tables E2, Appendix E for further information on the combination of ECC activity groups and their race and ethnicity in the recent years 2020-21 to 2023-24. Tables E3 and E4, Appendix E show the ECC groups and composition of gender, race, and ethnicity for linkable HS students after applying restrictions of grade levels in academic year 2023-24.

4.2.2 High school graduation

Our first longitudinal measure of interest among students taking up ECC activity in Louisiana public high schools is the share who graduate from HS. We measure this in our sample of students from 2012-13 to 2023-24 for students observed as having enrolled in 12th grade by 2023-24. HS graduation is retrieved from LDOE data files. We report outcomes for the public HS student population, linkable population, and unlinkable population.

By ECC participation

Table 4.8 presents a comparison of public HS graduation by ECC activity among all HS students, linkable HS students, and unlinkable HS students for academic years 2012-13 through 2023-24. We present this comparison to explore any key differences between the population of students for whom we can analyze the full set of ECC activities (linkable) and those for whom we can only observe K-12 reported ECC activities (unlinkable).

Table 4.8 HS graduation by K-12 reported ECC for all, linkable, and unlinkable public HS students

Group	HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)
HS students	74.5	97.1	94.9	95.3	63.0
Linkable students	75.7	96.8	95.2	95.2	64.3
Unlinkable students	72.4	97.6	94.4	95.5	60.8

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: HS graduation percent equals the number of all HS graduates in the category divided by the number of all HS students in the category. Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Generally, we see only slight differences in HS completion outcomes for all students and students with observable ECC activities across the linkable and unlinkable student populations. The share of HS graduates is higher in the linkable (75.7 percent) than in the unlinkable population (72.4 percent). However, the shares graduating from HS among those with observable K-12 based ECC activity in the linkable and unlinkable populations are similar. HS graduation shares for AP or IB HS credit are similar for the linkable (95.2 percent) and unlinkable (94.4 percent) students. HS graduation shares for DE HS credit are also similar for linkable (96.8 percent) and unlinkable (97.6 percent) students. The linkable population has a slightly higher graduation share among students with no AP, IB or DE HS credit, than the unlinkable population. These findings suggest that our analysis, which hereafter focuses only on the linkable population, focuses on a part of the student population with slightly better HS graduation outcomes and will tend to positively bias our findings relative to what we might infer for all public HS students.

Another key finding that emerges in Table 4.8 across all three groups is how much higher HS graduation is for students in any of the ECC activity groups, in comparison to those with no ECC HS credit. Across all three population groupings, the HS graduates in ECC activity groups is well above 90 percent, the DE HS credit have a graduation share of 97.1 percent in the full sample, and AP or IB HS credit with 94.9 percent compared to students with no DE, AP or IB HS credit's graduation of 63.0 percent. This may reflect selection of the highest qualified students into DE, AP or IB, which is difficult to separate from the true impact of the programs. For example, Louisiana DE programs require HS students to meet certain eligibility and performance standards of the hosting postsecondary institution (BoR Academic Affairs Policy 2.22 Student Eligibility Requirements for Dual Enrollment 2019).

Table 4.9 begins our focus on linkable student data and summarizes estimated HS graduation across the full range of ECC groups. A majority of students in the linkable population (253,719 or 58.4 percent of linkable students) are not observed taking any ECC in HS (non-takers), and HS graduation for this group is notably low (63.1 percent). Those observed taking one or multiple forms of ECC (Any-takers) have high graduation shares, on average (93.4 percent). Within specific types of ECC, the highest graduation is among DE HS credit (96.8 percent), followed by AP or IB HS credit (95.2 percent), college course HS students (94.5 percent), and college course only (80.4 percent). See Table E5, Appendix E, for a table of HS graduation headcounts and shares for all public HS students, linkable, and unlinkable populations.

Table 4.9 HS graduation by ECC for linkable students

Group	Number of linkable HS students (A)	Number of HS graduates (B)	HS graduation (B/A*100) (%)
DE HS credit	104,832	101,473	96.8
AP or IB HS credit	99,769	94,929	95.2
College course HS students	118,600	112,036	94.5
College course only	18,127	14,569	80.4
Any-takers	180,469	168,636	93.4
Non-takers	253,719	159,984	63.1
All linkable HS students	434,188	328,620	75.7

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation and gender

Table 4.10 explores differences in HS graduation outcomes among ECC groups by gender. Overall, the female HS graduation share for linkable students is nearly 6.4 percentage points higher than the male graduation and the pattern of higher graduation for female students is found consistently across ECC groups. ECC participation is associated with smaller differences in graduation between female and male students. Knowing that more female students participate in ECC (Table 4.6), these data also suggest that participation in ECC plays an important role in explaining the overall difference between female and male students in HS graduation. We observe narrower differences by gender among students earning DE, AP or IB HS credits, while wider gender graduation gaps persist among college course only (3.1 percentage points).

Table 4.10 HS graduation by ECC and gender for linkable students

	Linkable HS students (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
DE HS credit	96.8	97.3	96.2
AP or IB HS credit	95.2	95.6	94.5
College course HS students	94.5	95.5	93.1
College course only	80.4	82.0	79.0
Any-takers	93.4	94.4	92.3
Non takers	63.1	65.3	61.2
All linkable HS students	75.7	78.9	72.5

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation and race and ethnicity

Table 4.11 explores group differences in HS graduation among ECC groups by student race and ethnicity. In general, White and Other students had higher HS graduation percent (78.1 and 78.8 percent), and their HS graduation is above the average for all linkable students (75.7 percent). Percentages for Black (73.4 percent) and Hispanic (72.5 percent) students are slightly below average. For students with any ECC activity, the White student graduation is slightly higher (+1.2 percentage points) than the already-high average for all linkable students (93.4 percent). Black student graduation is slightly lower (-1.7 percentage points) than the same average. Hispanic students in the linkable population with any ECC activity have HS graduation very near the overall average.

Table 4.11 HS graduation by ECC and race and ethnicity for linkable students

ECC groups	Linkable HS students (%)	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	Other (%)
DE HS credit	96.8	97.4	95.7	96.4	97.5
AP or IB HS credit	95.2	96.3	93.7	94.3	95.7
College course HS students	94.5	95.5	92.6	94.9	95.3
College course only	80.4	80.3	80.3	82.7	80.0
Any-takers	93.4	94.6	91.7	93.2	94.6
Non-takers	63.1	63.3	63.5	58.8	60.3
All linkable HS students	75.7	78.1	73.4	72.5	78.8

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Among non-takers, HS graduation is notably lower than for all linkable students, and comparable across racial or ethnic groups for the non-takers set of students. Notably, Hispanic students have HS graduation percent (58.8 percent) among non-takers that is lower than average.

4.2.3 Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment

Next, we examine enrollment patterns in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions after HS among students participating in ECC. We do this for linkable students by examining linkages of individual student records in LDOE K-12 files to students' enrollment records as reported by postsecondary institutions to the Louisiana BOR.

By ECC participation

Overall, we find that 47.1 percent of linkable students reappeared in state education records at a BOR postsecondary institution in the study period, as shown in Table 4.12. The enrollment rate (percentage of public postsecondary enrollment after HS) is the highest among DE HS credit (72.6 percent), followed by AP or IB HS credit (71.3 percent), and college course HS students (70.0 percent). College course only students have population-average enrollment rates, and non-takers have enrollment well below average (47.1 percent).

Table 4.12 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC for linkable students

Group	Number of linkable HS students (A)	Number of public college enrollees (B)	Public college enrollment (B/A*100) (%)
DE HS credit	104,634	75,948	72.6
AP or IB HS credit	99,481	70,905	71.3
College course HS students	118,600	82,973	70.0
College course only	18,041	8,175	45.3
Any-takers	179,989	120,538	67.0
Non-takers	253,027	83,502	33.0
All linkable HS students	433,016	204,040	47.1

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation and gender

In Table 4.13, we explore gender differences in public postsecondary enrollment rates for students with ECC. Overall, the enrollment rate for female students is 14.9 percentage points higher than for male students and the pattern of higher enrollment rates for female students is found consistently across ECC groups. Participation in DE, AP or IB, or college course HS students taking is associated with smaller differences in enrollment rates between female and male students while participation for college course taking only is associated with a larger difference in enrollment rate between female and male students. Knowing that more female students participate in ECC (Table 4.6), these data also suggest that participation in ECC plays an important role in explaining the overall difference between female and male students in the enrollment rate.

Table 4.13 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC and gender for linkable students

	Linkable HS students (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
DE HS credit	72.6	77.1	66.6
AP or IB HS credit	71.3	73.8	67.6
College course HS students	70.0	75.4	63.1
College course only	45.3	54.1	38.1
Any-takers	67.0	72.0	60.6
Non-takers	33.0	39.4	27.8
All linkable HS students	47.1	54.7	39.8

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation and race and ethnicity

Table 4.14 explores differences by race and ethnicity in public college enrollment rates after HS by ECC. Among all linkable students, White and Other students had higher enrollment rates (50.1 and 50.7 percent) than the average rate (47.1 percent), and Hispanic and Black students had lower-than-average enrollment rates. Within the broader pattern that any ECC participation is associated with a higher enrollment rate, we see that enrollment rate is higher, on average, for students of any race and ethnicity who participate in ECC with 70.6 percent of White students, 67.8 percent of Other students, 62.8 percent of Black students, and 61.2 percent of Hispanic students with any ECC enrolling.

This pattern of higher enrollment rates with differences by race and ethnicity is similar for students with DE, AP or IB HS credit and college course HS students. Among college course only students, enrollment rate is higher than among non-takers, but generally not as high as observed for students completing other types of ECC. However, a notable trend among college course only is that enrollment rate is highest among Black students (48.5 percent), followed by Other (46.0 percent), White (42.0 percent), and Hispanic (48.5 percent) students.

Table 4.14 Public postsecondary enrollment by ECC, race, and ethnicity for linkable students

ECC groups	All linkable HS students (%)	White (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	Other (%)
DE HS credit	72.6	75.7	67.9	65.9	73.1
AP or IB HS credit	71.3	76.5	66.0	64.7	69.4
College course HS students	70.0	73.4	65.0	65.6	69.9
College course only	45.3	42.0	48.5	42.1	46.0
Any-takers	67.0	70.6	62.8	61.2	67.8
Non-takers	33.0	31.8	34.8	26.3	30.6
All linkable HS students	47.1	50.1	44.6	40.1	50.7

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

First public college program pursued by ECC participation

To understand patterns of degree program enrollments for students with ECC who enroll in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions, we present the share of college enrollees in each ECC category who enrolled in and first pursued an associate degree, bachelor's degree, non-degree-seeking, or other credential programs. Table 4.12 shows that just under half of linkable students (47.1 percent) enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution.

Table 4.15 focuses only on that subset of students who enroll in postsecondary institutions and explores the highest program level they first pursued at their first public enrollment. Over half of linkable students who matriculated enrolled in a bachelor's degree program (57.4 percent) as their first postsecondary degree program, followed by a large share who first enrolled in an associate degree program (31.0 percent). For any ECC students, there is a much higher percentage enrolling in bachelor's degree programs (70.7 percent) and lower percentage enrolling in associate degree programs (20.9 percent). Among non-takers, the point of entry into college education is more evenly spread among enrollments within bachelor's degree programs (38.2 percent), associate degree programs (45.5 percent), and substantive and notable enrollments in other credentials (12.9 percent), and non-degree-seeking (3.5 percent) programs. The ECC categories with the largest share of students enrolling in bachelor's degrees were AP or IB HS credit (77.4 percent), DE HS credit (74.5 percent), and college course HS students (71.7 percent).

Table 4.15 First program level pursued at first public college enrollment for public college enrollees by ECC for linkable students

ECC groups	Associate degree (%)	Bachelor's degree (%)	Non-degree-seeking (%)	Other credentials (%)
DE HS credit	18.2	74.5	2.5	4.9
AP or IB HS credit	16.5	77.4	2.6	3.5
College course HS students	19.5	71.7	2.8	6.0
College course only	37.4	40.4	5.4	16.8
Any-takers	20.9	70.7	2.7	5.7
Non-takers	45.5	38.2	3.5	12.9
All linkable HS students	31.0	57.4	3.0	8.6

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24. Other credentials include post-associate, diploma, post-baccalaureate certificate, master's, doctorate, professional, educational specialist, graduate certificate, and two-year certificate.

Duration between leaving HS and first college enrollment by ECC participation

We observe students’ enrollment in a Louisiana public college for a minimum of one year to a maximum of 12 years after HS graduation or departure depending on the academic year a student completed HS. Note that our duration measure uses a different, longer observed measurement time frame for the pooled cohorts of students than what is used in the LDOE college enrollment report. Our measure also observes only student enrollment at public postsecondary institutions in Louisiana. In contrast, the LDOE college enrollment report measures the percent of May public HS graduates enrolling in public, private, or out-of-state colleges and universities by the end of October of the fall after HS graduation. Table 4.16 provides estimates of the mean duration, in months, between HS graduation and first college enrollment at a Louisiana public postsecondary institution for linkable students who enrolled in public colleges or universities. For these students, the mean duration to first enrollment was 8.8 months. For any ECC takers who enrolled, the mean duration was between six and seven months, a shorter time than the average. The mean duration to enrollment is longer for non-takers (12.2 months) and college course only (9.4 months). We observe the shortest average durations among DE HS credit (5.8 months), followed by college course HS students and AP or IB HS credit (6.1 months).

Table 4.16 Mean duration (in months) between HS and first postsecondary enrollment by ECC for linkable students

ECC participation status	Mean duration to first enrollment (Months)
DE HS credit	5.8
AP or IB HS credit	6.1
College course HS students	6.1
College course only	9.4
Any-takers	6.5
Non-takers	12.2
All linkable HS students	8.8

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data
Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

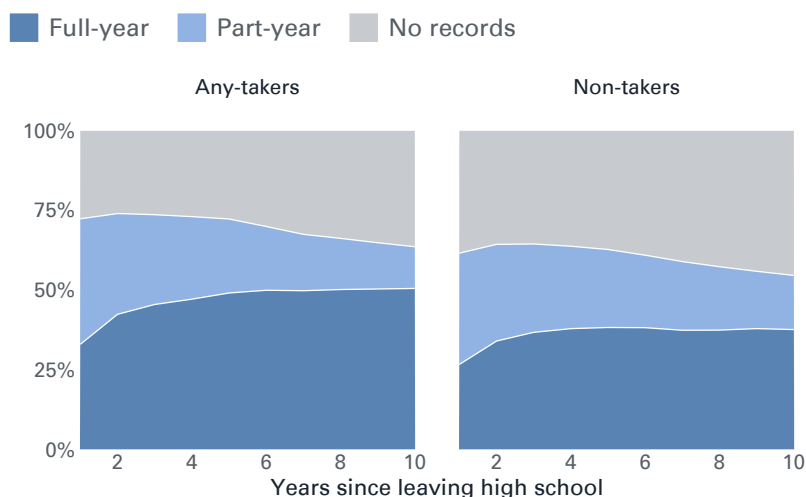
4.2.4 Employment

Here, we present an exploration of annual employment status after HS over time by ECC group for linkable students. We report the share of people who have no record of UI-covered wages, those who worked part-year (one, two, three quarters), or those who worked four quarters (full-year). We also provide subgroup analyses by HS graduation status, public college matriculation status, gender, race, and ethnicity.

By ECC participation

Figure 4.11 shows the employment status after HS for any ECC takers and non-takers over time. Compared with non-takers, any ECC takers were more likely to work after HS. The share of any-takers working per year was 72.2 percent in the first year after HS and fluctuated slightly around this level over the first six years, dropping to 63.5 percent in year 10. We observed similar trends for non-takers, but with a smaller share observed in the wage records in year one (61.5 percent), decreasing to 54.5 percent by year 10.

Figure 4.11 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

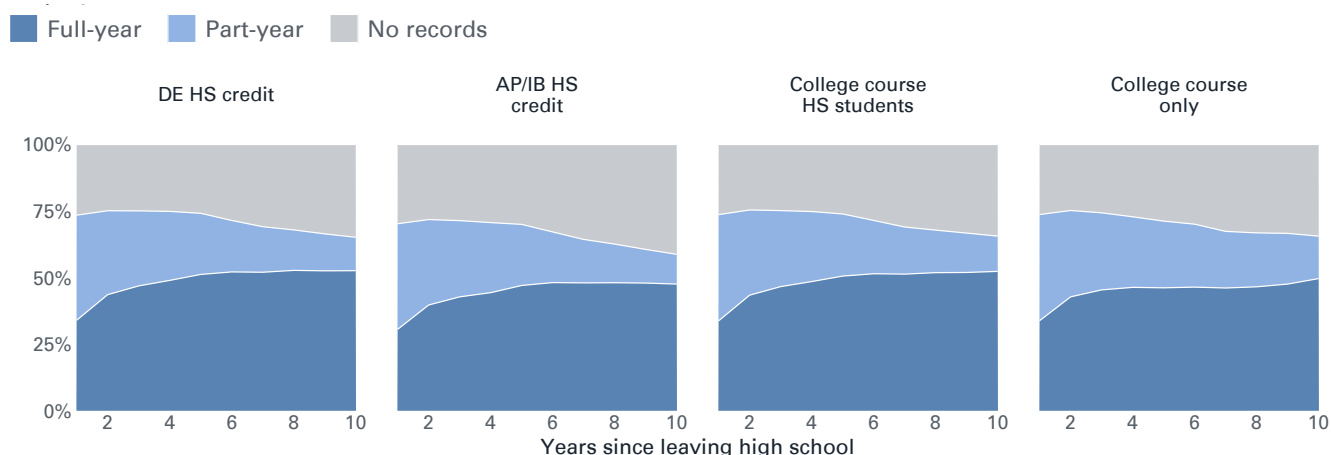
Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

The share of non-takers working full year was notably lower than for any-takers. The percentage of non-takers working full year started at 26.6 percent in the first year after HS and peaked at 38.2 percent in year five, followed by a decline to 37.5 percent in year 10. For any-takers, the share of people working full year was larger in year one at 32.9 percent, peaking at 50.4 percent in year 10.

Figure 4.12 shows a more detailed breakout of employment after HS for linkable students participating in different ECC activities. Among any ECC takers, the share of people working at least one quarter (working part year and full year) is comparable among DE HS credit, college course HS students, and college course only and is slightly lower for AP or IB HS credit. The percentage of AP or IB HS credit working each year started at 70.2 percent in year one, then peaked at 71.8 percent in year two, and declined to approximately 60 percent in year 10.

The share of AP or IB HS credit and college course only working full year was lower than for DE HS credit and college course HS students for the study period. Slightly more than 30 percent of AP or IB HS credit worked full year in year one, with observed Louisiana work rates increasing to 47.6 percent in year 10. Just under 34 percent of college course only worked full year in year one, with observed Louisiana work rates increasing to 49.7 percent in year 10. The share of people working full year increased more substantially, from 34 to 52.6 percent for DE HS credit, and from 33.8 to 52.3 percent for college course HS students during the same period.

Figure 4.12 Employment status after HS by ECC group for linkable students



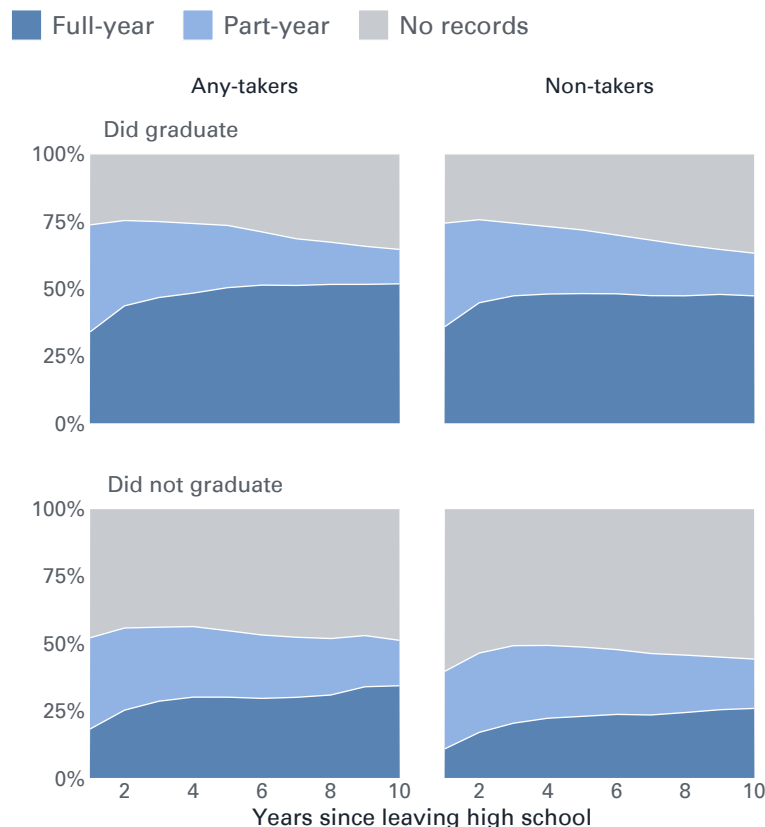
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Employment is based on primary region of wage earning two years after completion.

By ECC participation and HS graduation status

Turning to employment status by ECC and HS graduation, Figure 4.13 shows 10 years of employment after HS for any-takers and non-takers broken out between those who graduated HS and those who did not. The shares of people working after leaving HS were often comparable for any-takers and non-takers with a HS diploma or equivalency throughout the period. For example, the percentage working at least one quarter accounted for 73.6 percent for any-takers in year one, compared to 74.3 percent for non-takers and decreased to 64.5 percent for any-takers and 63.1 percent for non-takers in year 10. The shares of full-year employees for any-takers and non-takers with a HS diploma or equivalency are similar in the first several years (for example, 33.9 percent for any-takers and 35.8 percent for non-takers in year one), but over time we observe slightly higher shares of UI employment for any-takers than non-takers (for example, 51.7 percent for any-takers and 47.3 percent for non-takers in year 10).

Figure 4.13 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and HS graduation for linkable students



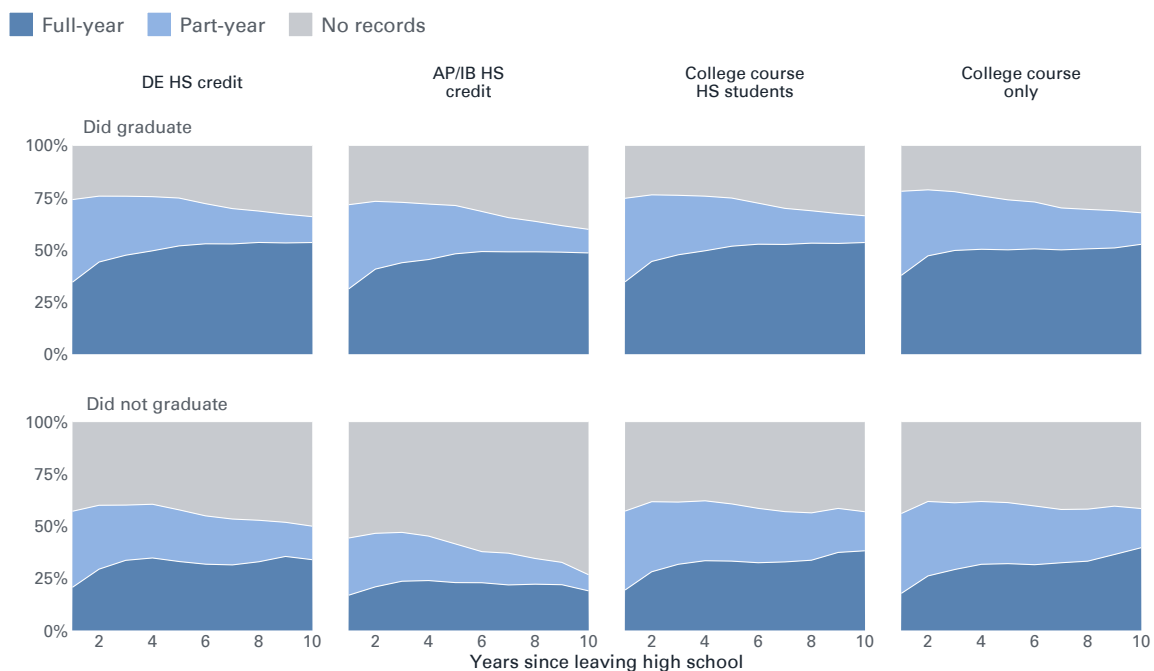
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

The pattern changes in two notable ways for students not graduating from HS. First of all, the overall pattern indicates much lower levels of work for those without a record of public HS diploma or equivalency, consistent with general findings on HS dropouts earlier in the report. Second, there is a larger difference between any-takers and non-takers within the no HS completion group with any-takers considerably more likely to work and work full year than non-takers throughout the period. Among those who did not graduate HS, in year one, over half of any-takers worked, compared to approximately 40 percent for non-takers. The share of working people increased over time for both groups, and any-takers consistently had higher shares observed in UI covered work than non-takers. Similarly, the percentage of full-year any-takers increased from 18.2 percent in year one to 34.2 percent in year 10, and from only 10.8 to 25.8 percent for non-takers in the same period. In sum, while employment is less common among those who did not graduate HS, ECC participation within that group is associated with notable improvements in employment.

A more detailed summary of employment by ECC type and HS graduation status is displayed in Figure 4.14. In year one, about 40 percent of ECC groups graduating from HS worked part year; the share decreased substantially to 11.3 percent for AP or IB HS credit, 12.4 percent for DE HS credit, 12.8 percent for college course HS students, and 15.1 percent for college course only in year 10. This coincides with the trend that as time goes on, more and more ECC taker groups are found in full-year employment. We observe the lowest share of people working full year for AP or IB HS credit throughout the period.

Figure 4.14 Employment status after HS by ECC group and HS graduation status for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

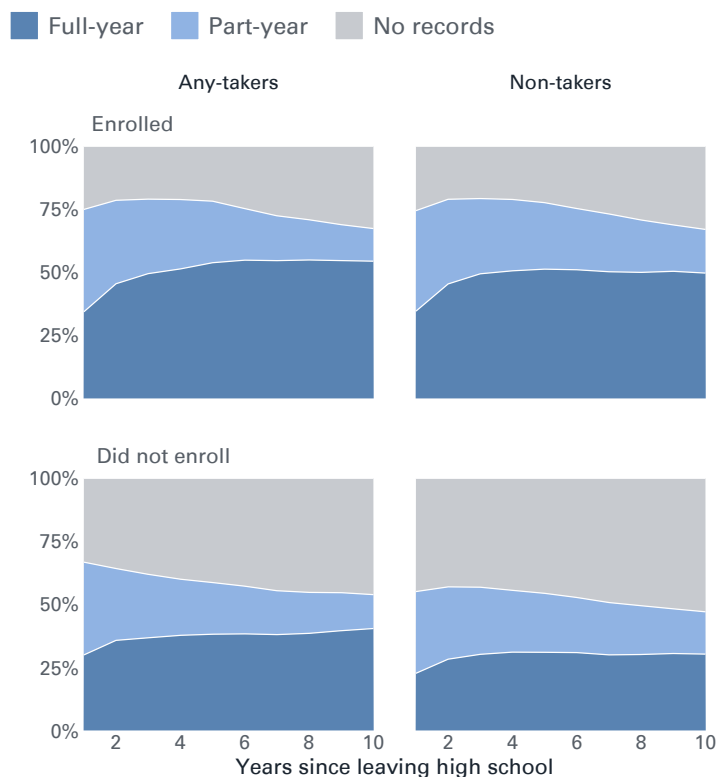
Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Aside from lower overall levels of employment for people not graduating from HS, the patterns across ECC activities were mostly consistent with those observed for the HS graduating students with more pronounced differences in the percentage of people working (both part year and full year) between AP or IB HS credit and others. The lower levels of work for those with AP or IB HS credit, but not observed graduating HS in Louisiana may also be influenced by students moving out of state.

By ECC participation and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment

We present employment status after HS of any-takers and non-takers broken out by Louisiana public college enrollment in Figure 4.15. Among those who enrolled in a postsecondary institution, we observe comparable shares of people working at least one quarter (combination of working part year and full year) between any-takers and non-takers. Additionally, the share working increased in the first few years after HS, followed by a drop in those observed working in subsequent years. For example, around 74 percent of any-takers and non-takers with public college enrollment worked in year one, that share increased to approximately 79 percent in year four, then dropped to around 67 percent in year 10. In the same period, the share of any-takers who enrolled in public postsecondary and worked full year started exceeding the share of non-takers who enrolled in public college and worked full year in year three, implying that any-takers were more likely to work full year than part year in the long term. Between years three and 10, the shares of full year workers increased from 49.5 to 54.4 percent for any-takers, and 49.4 to 49.7 percent for non-takers.

Figure 4.15 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

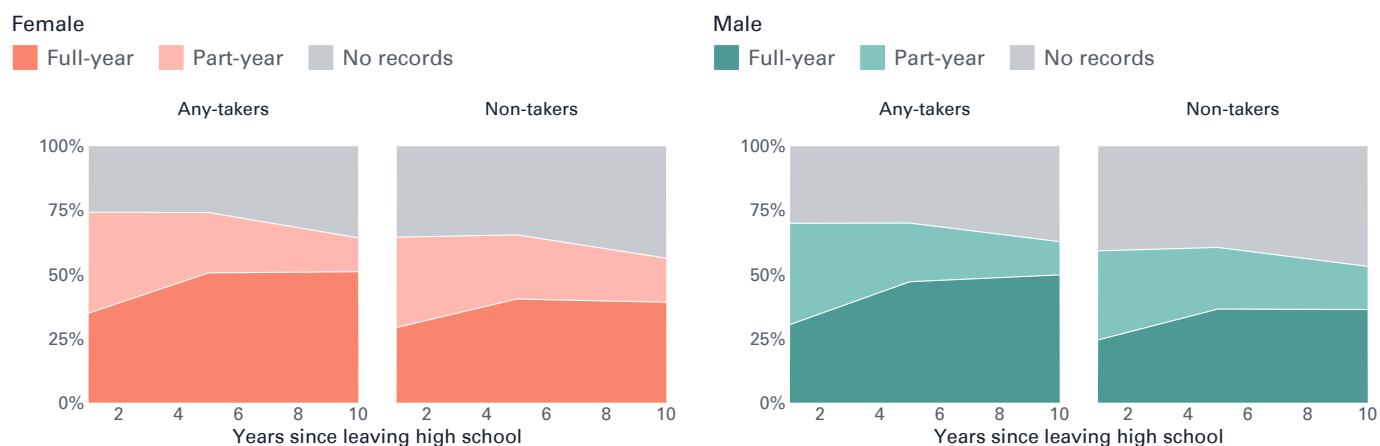
Among people without public college enrollment, we observe higher shares of any-takers working full year than non-takers. The differences in the percentage of people working full year of any-takers versus non-takers were +7.2 percentage points in year one and +10.1 percentage points in year 10.

Figure 4.15 also indicates the higher observed work and full-year work for college enrollees than non-enrollees; and this pattern is consistent for both any-takers and non-takers. For instance, the share of full-year workers was 53.8 percent for any-takers with college enrollment in year five, compared to 38.2 percent for same ECC group without college enrollment.

By ECC participation and gender

Turning to employment after HS for any-takers and non-takers by gender, shown in Figure 4.16, two broad patterns stand out. Following the general trends noted previously, the percentage of any-takers working part year and full year was always higher than that of non-takers for both females and males for the first 10 years after HS. Second, females were more likely to have observed in-state work than males, although the shares of people working decreased over time for both gender subgroups. The shares of female any-takers with observed work was 4.3 percentage points higher than the male shares in the same ECC groups in year one, and this gap shrank to 1.5 percentage points in year 10. Otherwise, patterns of work over time were similar across the two groups.

Figure 4.16 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students



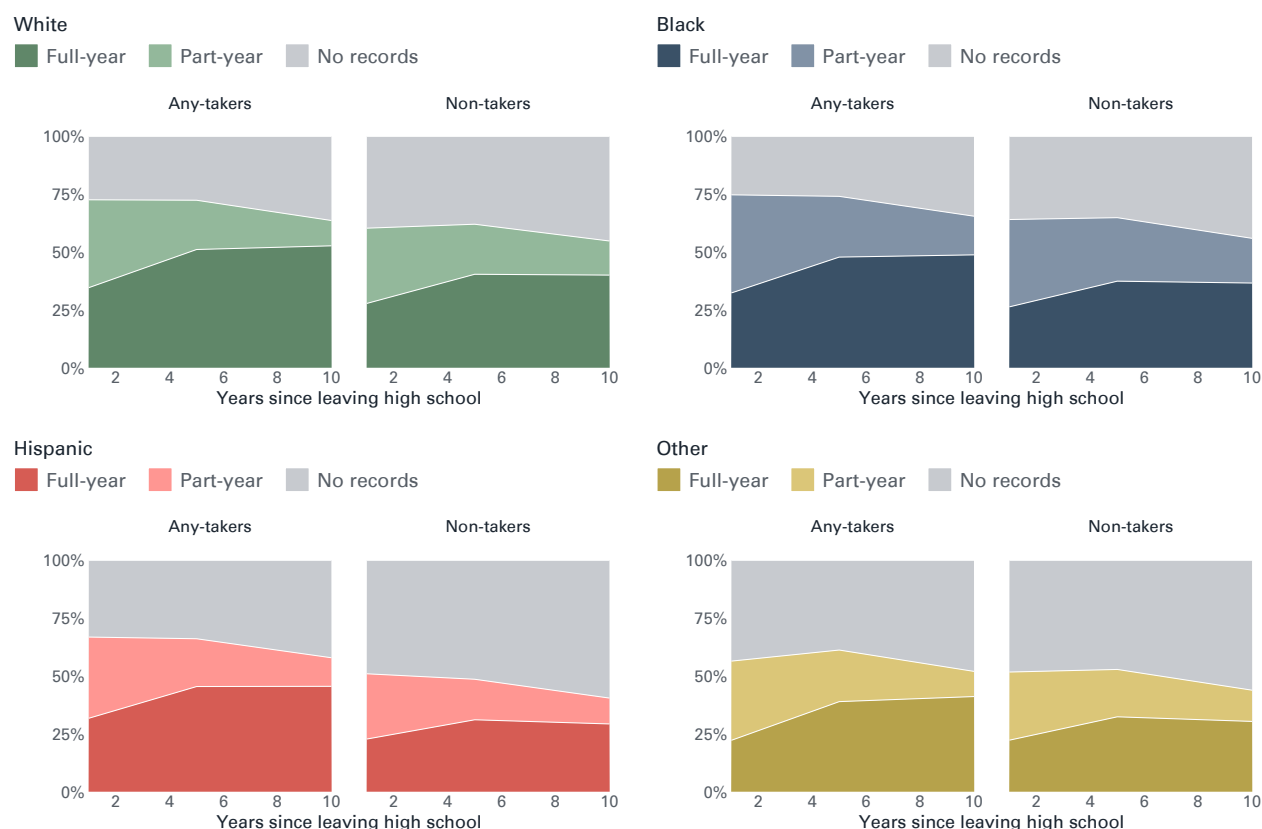
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation, race, and ethnicity

This section turns the focus to differences in employment by ECC activity group across different race and ethnicity groups. As seen in Figure 4.17, the general trends for each racial and ethnic group generally follow the patterns observed for all students with any-takers and non-takers experiencing an upward trend in full-year work, but a downward trend in part-year work leading to an overall pattern of decline in the share of working people observed working in-state over time. Figure 4.17 also reveals larger shares of any-takers working full year than non-takers, a finding which is consistent across all racial and ethnic subgroups analyzed.

Figure 4.17 Employment status after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Among racial and ethnic subgroups, White any-takers and non-takers saw the highest shares of full-year work (40.0 percent for any-takers and 52.7 percent for non-takers in year 10) while Black any-takers and non-takers saw highest shares of people working when considering both full-year or part-year work. The percentage of any-takers working either part-year or full-year ranged from 65.5 to 77.3 percent for Black students during 10 years after HS.

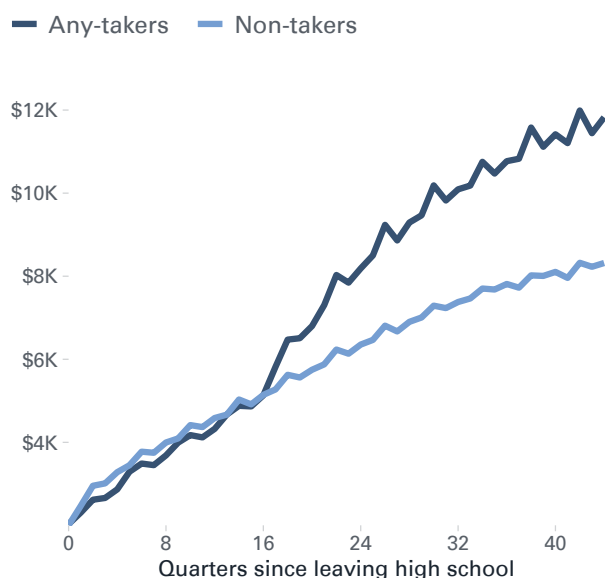
4.2.5 Quarterly wages

This section focuses on analyzing median quarterly wages by ECC group for the linkable student population. We also provide some subgroup analyses by HS graduation status, Louisiana public college matriculation, gender, race, and ethnicity. Median quarterly wages are rounded to the nearest 10 dollars, CPI-adjusted, and presented in 2025Q2 dollars.

By ECC participation

Figure 4.18 presents median quarterly wages for any takers and non-takers, beginning the quarter students left or graduated from HS. Overall, both any-takers and non-takers experienced wage growth throughout the study period, with substantial changes in wage trends among groups starting roughly four years after HS. In the first 16 quarters (i.e., the first four years), which correspond closely to a period of time when many takers are enrolled in college, there are small differences between the two groups in quarterly wages with any-takers having slightly lower median wages. For example, median quarterly wages were \$5,140 for non-takers and \$5,130 for any-takers in quarter 16. After quarter 16, median quarterly wages of any-takers begin exceeding those of non-takers, and the gap between the two groups widens in the long term. In quarter 17, any-takers earned a median wage of \$5,820, \$550 higher than non-takers. In quarter 44 (or roughly 11 years after HS), any-takers reached median quarterly wages of \$11,820, \$3,500 higher than non-takers' quarterly earnings.

Figure 4.18 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status for linkable students

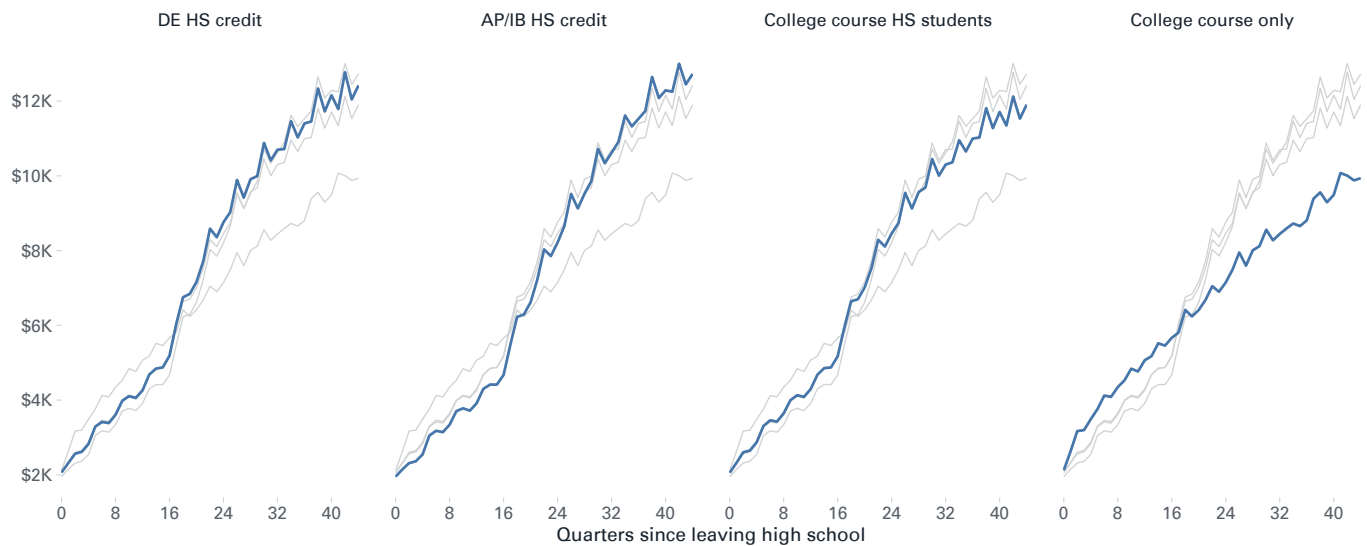


Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Figure 4.19 shows the trends in median quarterly wages for people participating in different ECC activities. For DE HS credit, AP or IB HS credit, and college course HS students, the trend is very similar to the overall trend for ECC with slower growth between quarters zero and 16 followed by more rapid growth beyond four years. The exception is college course only students, who earned slightly higher median wages in the early years but saw no noticeable acceleration in growth after four years leading to lower wages in the long run than other ECC groups. The accelerated growth after four years for DE HS credit, AP or IB HS credit, and college course HS students suggests that the median student may have been enrolled in college during the first four years after HS. On the other hand, the pattern of median wages for college course only suggests that the median employed individual did not have a postsecondary education experience that had a large discrete impact on earnings. Over the life course, as students approach 10 years after HS, we see the long-term benefits of earning credits of DE, AP, or IB courses during HS revealed in higher median wages for these groups.

Figure 4.19 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group for linkable students



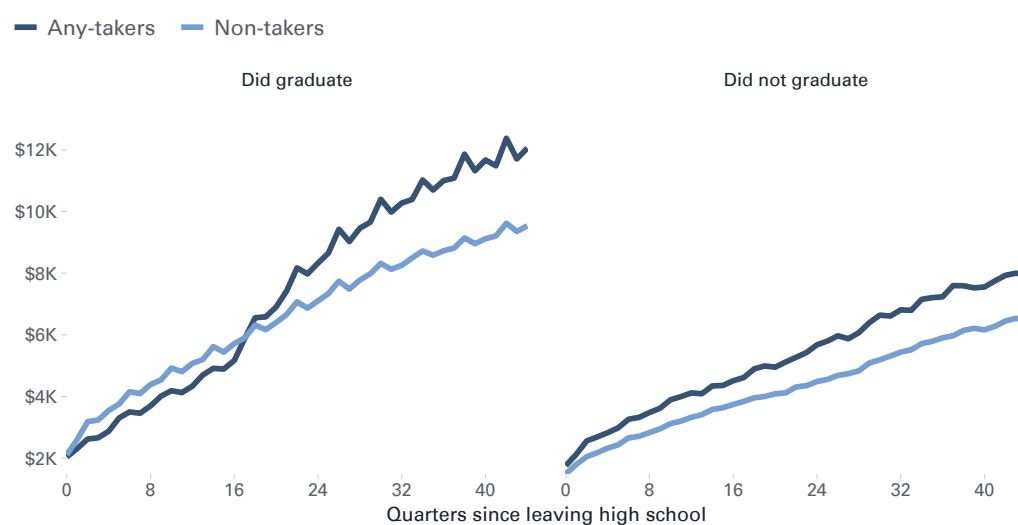
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

By ECC participation and HS graduation status

Now we turn to median quarterly wages for any-takers and non-takers by HS graduation status, displayed in Figure 4.20. The left panel indicates median quarterly wages for those who graduated from HS; the right panel shows median quarterly wages for those who did not graduate from HS by ECC participation status. For non-graduates, median quarterly wages of any-takers were higher than non-takers throughout the period, showing that the positive correlation between ECC activities and higher short- and long-term earnings holds even for students with no record of HS completion. The median wage for any-takers started at \$1,760 in quarter zero, compared to a slightly lower wage of \$1,490 for non-takers. Both any-takers and non-takers saw an increase in median quarterly wages to \$7,960 and \$6,470 in quarter 44, respectively.

Figure 4.20 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and HS graduation status for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

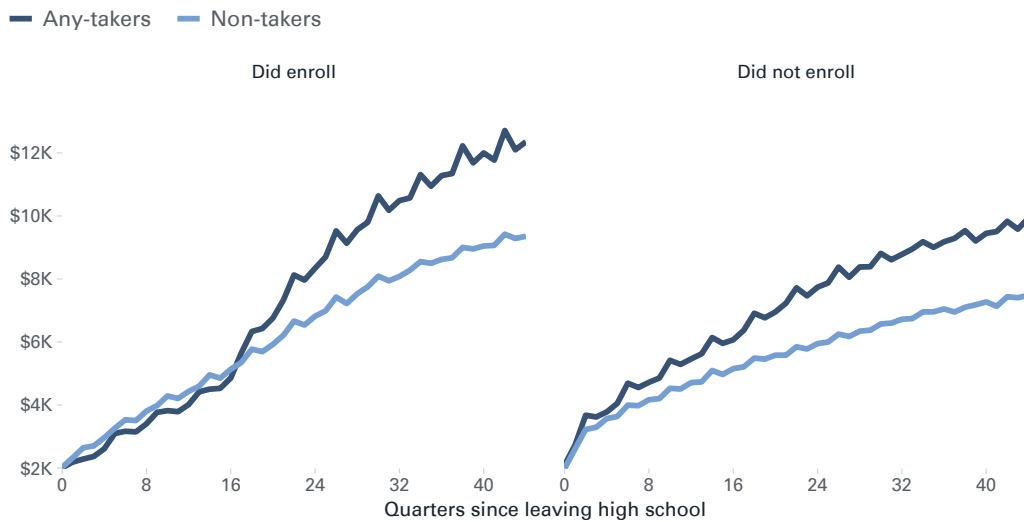
Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

As a group, HS graduates experienced higher median wages following the general pattern noted previously for the median ECC student who is likely to enroll in college. In quarter zero, non-takers earned marginally more than any-takers (\$2,110 versus \$2,040); however, any-takers' median quarterly wages surpassed non-takers' in quarter 18 (4.5 years after HS), and the difference between any-takers and non-takers grew over time. In quarter 44, any-takers earned \$12,050 in median quarterly wages, \$2,520 higher than non-takers.

By ECC participation and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status

In comparing wages between any-takers and non-takers without Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment by ECC activity, shown in the right panel of Figure 4.21, any-takers always have higher median quarterly wages than non-takers. However, we observe the consistent trend of higher median earnings for any-takers only after quarter 16 for those enrolled in public postsecondary in the left panel of Figure 4.21 aligning with the college-going pattern discussed previously. It is important to note that this summary does not illustrate a wide array of student experiences including short-term credentials, associate, or advanced degrees, but highlights the experience of the median earner, which appears to align closely with four years of postsecondary enrollment. For people without public postsecondary enrollment, both any-takers and non-takers earned around \$2,000 in quarter zero; the wages increased to \$9,930 for any-takers and \$7,480 for non-takers in quarter 44. For people with public postsecondary enrollment, non-takers and any-takers also started at just over \$2,000 in quarter zero; and their wages increased to \$5,650 for any-takers and \$5,350 for non-takers in quarter 17, a \$300 wage difference. The wage difference of any-takers relative to non-takers for students with public postsecondary enrollment widened by 10 times to \$3,000 by quarter 44.

Figure 4.21 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status for linkable students



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

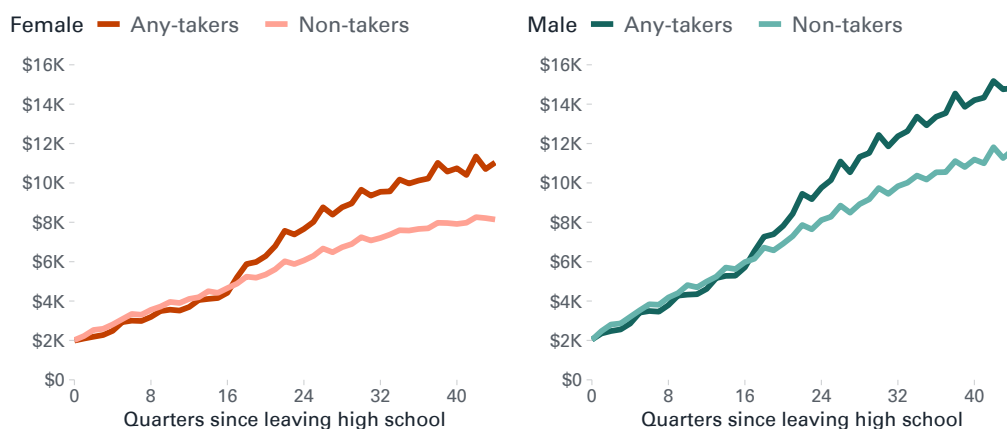
By ECC participation, gender, and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status

We explore how median quarterly wages differ by ECC groups and gender in this section. First, we focus on people enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions. Then, we explore the wage trajectories of people **not enrolling** in public colleges and universities in Louisiana.

Louisiana public postsecondary enrollees

Figure 4.22 displays median quarterly wages for any-takers and non-takers by gender for people enrolling in Louisiana’s public colleges and universities. Consistent with the trends in the above figures, median quarterly wages for both females and males increased over time, with higher wages for any-takers than for non-takers after about four years. Both female any-takers and non-takers had a median quarterly wage of around \$2,000 in quarter zero; and female any-takers experienced a large wage growth to \$5,210 in quarter 17 and to \$11,030 in quarter 44, compared to \$4,880 and \$8,140 for female non-takers at the same points of time.

Figure 4.22 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

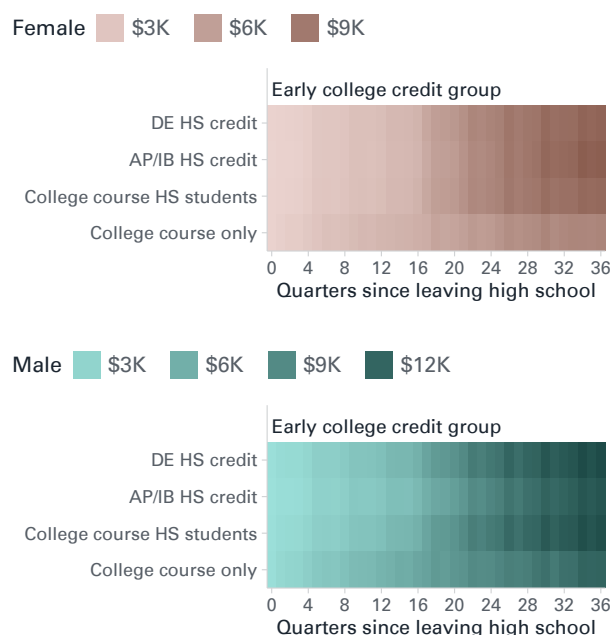
Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Among males, any-takers also earned more than non-takers four years after HS, and at higher wage levels than females. In quarter 44, the median quarterly wage was \$14,820 for male any-takers, and \$11,670 for male non-takers.

In addition, the gender difference was more pronounced for any-takers than non-takers due to faster relative growth for male any-takers. When comparing male versus female, the gender wage difference was in the range of \$50 to \$4,050 for any takers and \$10 to \$3,550 for non-takers in the study period up to 11 years after HS.

Among people in different ECC activities, shown in Figure 4.23, DE, AP or IB HS credit, and college course HS students have the highest median earnings among females, with median wage growth from \$2,000 in quarter zero to \$11,570 in quarter 44 for female DE HS credit, compared to from \$1,960 to \$12,070 for female AP or IB HS credit, and from \$2,000 to 11,160 for female college course HS students. The median wages of these ECC groups are higher than those in the college course only group, which increased from \$2,010 to \$8,330 in the same time window.

Figure 4.23 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group and gender for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

For males, DE HS credit and college course HS students had the highest median quarterly wages. Male DE HS credit earned \$2,080 in quarter zero and saw wage growth to \$15,630 in quarter 44; these numbers are \$2,070 and \$15,150 for male college course HS students. College course only students and AP or IB HS credit students also earned around \$2,000 in quarter zero, but their median wage growth was lower in quarter 44, \$13,310 and \$14,750 respectively.

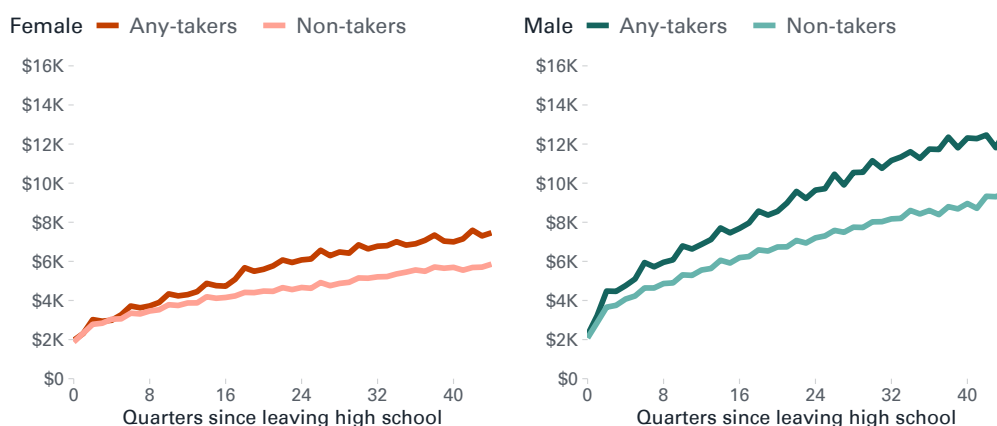
The data summarized in Figure 4.23 also indicate that males tend to have higher median quarterly wages than females within the same ECC group, and the gender wage gap was more pronounced among students joining ECC activities other than AP or IB HS credit. For example, in quarter zero the difference in median wages between male and female college course only was \$120, favoring males, and this gap increased to \$4,980 in quarter 44. For students with DE HS credit or official college enrollment, differences favoring males from range from \$70-80 to \$4,000 in the same

period. AP or IB HS credit saw the smallest growth in the difference between males and females, from \$20 to \$2,680 between quarters zero and 44. These differences by type of ECC may be related to the type courses associated with different modes of ECC and how those courses influence choice of postsecondary program or occupation, which are both known to exhibit large differences by gender.

Louisiana public postsecondary non-enrollees

Figure 4.24 displays median quarterly wages by gender, but for people not enrolling in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution. There is still a clear trend indicating higher wages for any-takers than non-takers, though for those with no public postsecondary enrollment those differences start as early as two quarters after HS. Among females, any-takers had a quarterly wage of \$3,020 in quarter two, \$240 higher than female non-takers; and the difference expanded to \$1,600 in quarter 44. A similar pattern exists for males, but with larger gaps between any-takers and non-takers, \$820 in quarter two and \$3,190 in quarter 44.

Figure 4.24 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status and gender for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



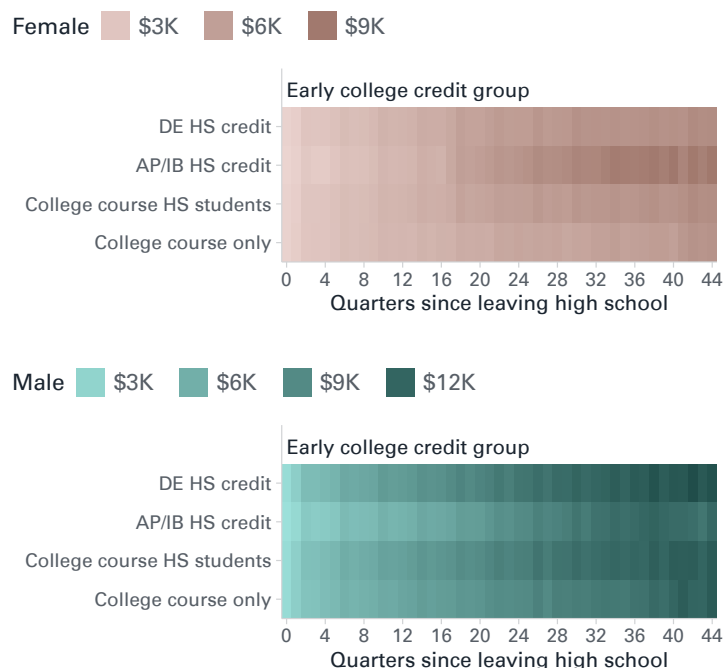
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Figure 4.25 indicates the median quarterly wages by ECC group and gender for students who did not enroll in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions. In general, AP or IB HS credit students are the top earners among females in the long term. Among females, AP or IB HS credit students earned a median of \$1,850 in quarter zero and saw median earnings grow to \$6,020 in quarter 18 when their median wages exceeded that of other groups. Female AP or IB HS credit students with no Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment continued to see rapid growth in wages reaching \$9,040 in quarter 44. Because AP and IB courses are strongly aligned with college preparatory high school curricula, this pattern of high earnings in later years (notably, beyond the first four years after HS) may indicate that a sizeable portion of these students had some postsecondary enrollment at a private institution, or out of state, before joining the workforce in Louisiana.

Among male students not enrolling in public postsecondary institutions, those with DE HS credit or college course HS students are observed with higher median earnings than AP or IB HS credit or college course only students. Students with DE HS credit, in particular, have the highest median earnings, suggesting that even without public postsecondary enrollment, students with that type of ECC fare particularly well in the labor market.

Figure 4.25 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC group and gender for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Higher wages for males than females are consistent across non-enrollees in the same ECC groups, suggesting that gender wage differences persist across all educational trajectories studied here. Notably, the gender wage difference is smallest for AP or IB HS credit students without Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment. However, the clear differences in relative earnings by type of ECC for females and males suggests that the skills or knowledge developed through particular ECC pathways may play an important role in preparing students for work in specific occupations and variation in the participation of female and male students in these different pathways may be an important area for future study.

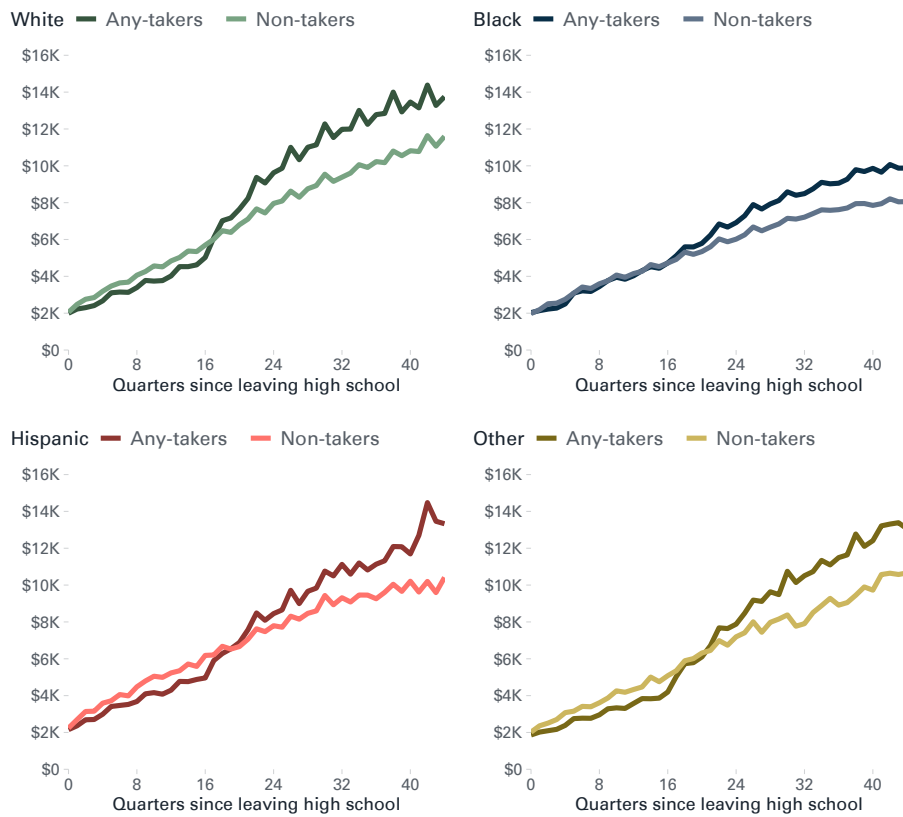
By ECC participation, race and ethnicity, and Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment status

Here again, we first examine median quarterly wages by ECC group and by race and ethnicity among Louisiana public college enrollees, and then among non-enrollees.

Louisiana public postsecondary enrollees

Figure 4.26 illustrates median earnings for individuals with and without ECC by race and ethnicity among students with Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment. The general pattern noted previously of higher median earnings for those with any ECC who enroll in Louisiana public colleges holds for all racial or ethnic subgroups, though the timing and size of that difference varies across groups. When analyzing median earnings, the influence of postsecondary enrollment is also visible. As noted in Section 4.2.3, a majority any-takers within each racial and ethnic group from the linkable data enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution and the earnings trajectory for most groups mimics a pattern noted earlier with median wages of any-takers slightly lower than median wages for non-takers in the first four years, but median earnings for any-takers growing much more rapidly beyond that point. The pattern for Black individuals is notably different with lower overall levels of wages, but also a much slower rate of growth for those with any ECC activities. Black any-takers earned \$9,880 in quarter 44, \$3,870 lower than White, \$3,450 lower than Hispanic, and \$3,170 lower than other races in the same ECC group.

Figure 4.26 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



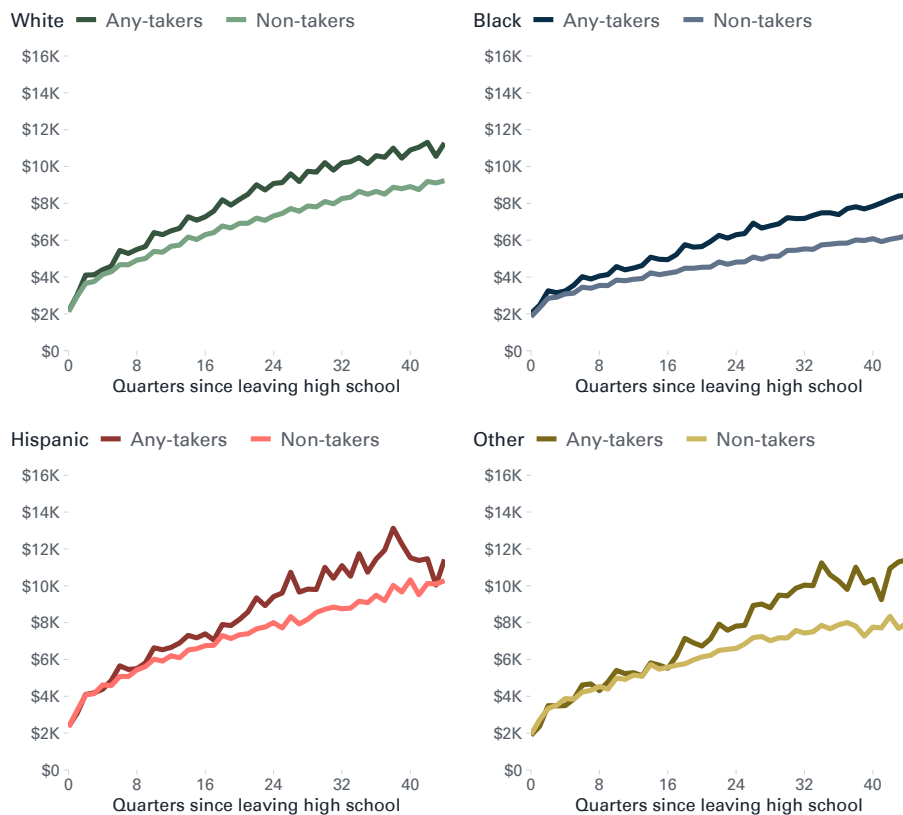
Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

Louisiana public postsecondary non-enrollees

Figure 4.27 illustrates median quarterly wages of any-takers and non-takers by race and ethnicity for students with no observed Louisiana public postsecondary enrollment. Overall, patterns are consistent with those noted above that any-takers generally had higher median quarterly wages than non-takers in the short-term and long-term for all groups with White and Black students with ECC experiencing a more notable advantage in early years.

Figure 4.27 Median quarterly wages after HS by ECC participation status, race, and ethnicity for linkable students not enrolling in Louisiana public postsecondary institutions



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.

5. Summary and Future Directions

This report uses descriptive analyses to study the employment outcomes of Louisiana public HS dropouts and the educational and employment outcomes of students who take ECC credits.

HS dropout summary

Our findings suggest that many HS dropouts stay disconnected from Louisiana employment, and those who do connect to employment experience slow wage growth. Even after as much as 10 years after HS dropout, the median quarterly wages of HS dropout workers remained in the range of \$6,000 quarterly (~\$24,000 full year). Yet, outcomes for those dropping out of HS differed by group: female and Black students were more likely to successfully connect to in-state employment than other groups; however, they also experienced the lowest wages and the slowest wage growth after HS dropout. Younger dropouts (9th graders) had lower rates of employment in the initial periods of dropping out, likely due to federal work restrictions for younger age individuals, but their employment rates catch up to those who dropped out in later grades as soon as they qualify for more work. We found some evidence that each additional year or grade level of HS completed prior to dropout was associated with higher earnings.

ECC outcomes summary

Our findings show a consistent pattern of positive outcomes for those with ECC activities, including DE, AP, and IB. Our analysis shows that ECC students in Louisiana public high schools were more likely to graduate HS, enroll in public postsecondary education in the state, were more likely to be employed in Louisiana, and had higher long-term median earnings than those not participating in ECC activities. Subgroup analysis showed that this pattern of positive outcomes held regardless of HS graduation status, postsecondary enrollment, gender, and race or ethnicity, though the magnitude of differences does vary for some groups.

Our findings show important associations between ECC and educational and employment outcomes, but they are descriptive, not causal. While the evidence points to the benefits of HS completion and ECC in Louisiana, there is a need for more careful causal study of effectiveness of these educational pathways and underlying mechanisms that influence outcomes. It is possible that the enrollment requirements of DE programs may draw in students who would have performed better in HS, postsecondary, and work than students even without DE; and we are most interested in the effects of DE programs on students' later outcomes, which is an area for future work. Our analysis also measures outcomes for students participating in other ECC activities providing a baseline picture of how outcomes differ for students participating in AP or IB courses, as well as students taking courses through one of Louisiana's public postsecondary institutions, whether it is part of a formal DE program or not. Differences in gender, race, and ethnicity

composition among ECC activity groups invite further exploration of access to and take-up of ECC options for student subgroups.

As the state pursues the expansion of access and encourages the take-up of ECC among more Louisiana HS students, it will be important to explore further how access to DE or other ECC activities benefits students. Understanding how students combine ECC and career readiness options like IBCs, and how these combinations affect student futures, is another area for future research.

2027 focus

Our future work will continue to leverage linked agency data to study educational and employment outcomes in Louisiana. House Resolution 17 of the 2026 Louisiana Legislature will focus our attention on Louisiana’s Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a merit-based financial aid program offered to Louisiana HS students who matriculate to a Louisiana public postsecondary institution or qualified school. With a specific focus on student pathways to and through college supported by TOPS during a course of study and on to Louisiana work, we will work in collaboration with Board of Regents, Louisiana Works, and Louisiana Economic Development, and other stakeholders to fulfill the mandates of the law through the 2027 *Launch Louisiana* report.

References

- An, Brian P. 2013. "The Influence of Dual Enrollment on Academic Performance and College Readiness: Differences by Socioeconomic Status." *Research in Higher Education* 54 (4): 407–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-012-9278-z>.
- Benner, Aprile D., and Sandra Graham. 2009. "The Transition to High School as a Developmental Process Among Multiethnic Urban Youth." *Child Development* 80 (2): 356–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01265.x>.
- Bergeron, Liz. 2015. "Diploma Programme Students' Enrollment and Outcomes at US Postsecondary Institutions 2008–2014 (2015)." International Baccalaureate®. <https://www.ibo.org/research/outcomes-research/diploma-studies/diploma-programme-students-enrollment-and-outcomes-at-us-postsecondary-institutions-20082014-2015/>.
- Blankenberger, Bob, Eric Lichtenberger, and M. Allison Witt. 2017. "Dual Credit, College Type, and Enhanced Degree Attainment." *Educational Researcher* 46 (5): 259–63. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17718796>.
- BoR Academic Affairs Policy 2.22 Student Eligibility Requirements for Dual Enrollment, AA 2.22 (2019). <https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AA2-22-Dual-Enrollment-Dec-11-BOR-Approved-2019.pdf>.
- Buckley, Pamela B., Philip Pendergast, Kristin Klopfenstein, Kim Poast, and Lauren Ramsay. 2022. "Does Dual Enrollment Improve Progression through College and Earnings and Do Outcomes Differ by Sociodemographic Characteristics or Achievement Levels? A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Colorado Students." *The High School Journal* 105 (3): 217–42. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2022.0006>.
- Campbell, Colin. 2015. "The Socioeconomic Consequences of Dropping out of High School: Evidence from an Analysis of Siblings." *Social Science Research* 51 (May): 108–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.12.011>.
- Card, David. 1999. "The Causal Effect of Education on Earnings." In *Handbook of Labor Economics*, vol. 3. Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4463\(99\)03011-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1573-4463(99)03011-4).
- Clark, Damon, and Paco Martorell. 2014. "The Signaling Value of a High School Diploma." *Journal of Political Economy* 122 (2): 282–318. <https://doi.org/10.1086/675238>.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2025. "Education Pays." Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>.
- College Board. n.d.-a. "Advanced Placement® (AP) – College Board." Accessed January 29, 2026. <https://ap.collegeboard.org/>.
- College Board. n.d.-b. "AP Program Results: Class of 2024 – Reports | College Board." Accessed January 29, 2026. <https://reports.collegeboard.org/ap-program-results/class-of-2024>.
- Culbertson, Shelly, Matthew Baird, and Julia Kaufman. 2019. Raising the Bar for Graduation Pathways to College and Work Early Signals on How Louisiana's Education Policy Strategies Are Affecting College and Career Readiness. RAND. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2300/RR2303z4/RAND_RR2303z4.pdf.

- DeBaun, Bill. 2025. "Louisiana Board Rescinds State's Universal FAFSA Policy." [https://ncan.org/Web/News/Louisiana Board Rescinds States Universal FAFSA Policy.aspx](https://ncan.org/Web/News/Louisiana%20Board%20Rescinds%20States%20Universal%20FAFSA%20Policy.aspx).
- Dhaliwal, Navi, Jamilah, Sayeeda, Griffin, McKenna, et al. 2025. Do Dual Enrollment Students Realize Better Long-Run Earnings? Variations in Financial Outcomes Among Key Student Groups. <https://doi.org/10.26300/AE9Y-XN57>.
- Giani, Matthew, Celeste Alexander, and Pedro Reyes. 2014. "Exploring Variation in the Impact of Dual-Credit Coursework on Postsecondary Outcomes: A Quasi-Experimental Analysis of Texas Students." *The High School Journal* 97 (4): 200–218.
- Habans, Robert, Jenna Losh, Rachel Veron, and Stephen Barnes. 2025. Louisiana's Employment Outcomes. University of Louisiana Lafayette Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Public Policy Center. <https://blancocenter.louisiana.edu/sites/blancocenter/files/Blanco%20Center%20-%20LA%20First%20-%20Louisiana%E2%80%99s%20Employment%20Outcomes.pdf>.
- Heckman, James J., and Yona Rubinstein. 2001. "The Importance of Noncognitive Skills: Lessons from the GED Testing Program." *American Economic Review* 91 (2): 145–49. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.91.2.145>.
- High School Redesign Commission Report. 2006. Louisiana's High Schools Being Redesigned with the Future in Mind. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495407.pdf>.
- Holliday, Matthew R., Adriana Cimetta, Christina A. Cutshaw, David Yaden, and Ronald W. Marx. 2014. "Protective Factors for School Readiness Among Children in Poverty." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* (JESPAR) 19 (3–4): 125–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2014.971692>.
- Hughes, Katherine L., Olga Rodríguez, Linsey Edwards, and Clive Belfield. 2012. "Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment: Reaching Underachieving and Underrepresented Students With Career-Focused Programs." *Community College Research Center*. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/broadening-benefits-dual-enrollment.html>.
- Irwin et al. 2024. Report on the Condition of Education 2024. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2024/2024144.pdf>.
- Jepsen, Christopher, Peter Mueser, and Kenneth Troske. 2016. "Labor Market Returns to the GED Using Regression Discontinuity Analysis." *Journal of Political Economy* 124 (3): 621–49. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1086/686245>.
- Kremer, Kristen P. 2022. "Predictors of College Success Outcomes in Emerging Adults: The Role of High School Dual Enrollment Courses." *Emerging Adulthood* 10 (1): 188–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820916639>.
- L.a. Legis. Act 128, S.B. 243, 2019 Regular Session, <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1143725>.
- L.a. Legis. Act 209, H.B. 333, 2022 Regular Session, <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1286773>.
- L.a. Legis. Act 257, S.B.316, 2009 Regular Session. <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=668017>.
- La. Legis. Act 246, S.B. 259, 2009 Regular Session. <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=667968>.
- L.a. Legis. Act 533, S.B. 50, 2022 Regular Session, <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1289685>.

- L.a. Legis. Act 635, H.B. 762, 2024 Regular Session, <https://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1382364>.
- L.a. Legis. Act 643, H.B. 944, 2014 Regular Sessions, <https://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=914212>.
- Lee, Jungmin, Frank Fernandez, Hyun Kyoung Ro, and Hongwook Suh. 2022. "Does Dual Enrollment Influence High School Graduation, College Enrollment, Choice, and Persistence?" *Research in Higher Education* 63 (5): 825–48. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-021-09667-3>.
- Lemieux, Thomas. 2006. "The 'Mincer Equation' Thirty Years After Schooling, Experience, and Earnings." In *Jacob Mincer A Pioneer of Modern Labor Economics*, edited by Shoshana Grossbard. Kluwer Academic Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-29175-X_11.
- Louisiana Believes. 2017. Louisiana's Elementary & Secondary Education Plan Pursuant to the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/lacsa2017pdf-98768.pdf>.
- Louisiana Board of Regent. n.d. "Reshaping Louisiana's Dual Enrollment Policies and Practices to Increase Access and Equity." <https://sheeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/LADualEnrollment.pdf>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-a "Fast Forward Reimagining the High School Experience." Accessed May 28, 2026 <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/ccr/fast-forward>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-b "School, School System, and Early Childhood Performance." Accessed May 28, 2026 <https://doe.louisiana.gov/data-and-reports/performance-scores>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-c *Grow. Achieve. Thrive. Louisiana's Revised Accountability System*. Accessed May 27, 2026. <https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/newsroom/grow-achieve-thrive.pdf>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-d. "Advanced Placement." Default. Accessed January 29, 2026. <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/ccr/advanced-placement>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-e. "AP Toolkit: General Information." Accessed April 16, 2026. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/teaching/ap-gen-info-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=7746991f_2.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-f. "What is Course Choice?". Accessed March 18, 2026. <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/ccr/course-choice-program>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-g. "AP Test Subgroup Data: 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 School System Level Counts and Percentages of Students." <https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/ccr/advanced-placement>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-h. "International Baccalaureate." Accessed January 30, 2026. <https://doe.louisiana.gov/families-and-students/preparing-to-graduate/international-baccalaureate>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. n.d.-i. "Students Can Earn Free College Credit in High School." Accessed February 10, 2026. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/advanced-placement/early-college-credit-opportunity.pdf?sfvrsn=a506618_0.
- Louisiana Department of Education. 2006. *Louisiana's High Schools: Being Redesigned with the Future in Mind*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3A%22Louisiana+Department+of+Education%22&ff1=eduHigh+Schools&id=ED495407>.

- Louisiana Department of Education. 2019. Jump Start 2.0 Draft Blueprint. <https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/jumpstart/2019-jump-start-2-0-blueprint.pdf>.
- Louisiana Dual Enrollment. n.d. "Front Page." Accessed February 11, 2026. <https://ladualenrollment.com/>.
- Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force. 2021. "Louisiana Dual Enrollment 2021 Annual Report".
- Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force. 2023. "Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2023 Report". <https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-DE-Annual-Report.pdf>.
- Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force. 2024. Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force 2024 Report. <https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024-DE-Annual-Report.pdf>.
- Louisiana Dual Enrollment Task Force. 2025. "Louisiana Dual Enrollment 2025 Report". <https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/documents/2025-DE-Report.pdf>.
- Louisiana Senate. 2009. "Final Edition of 2009 Regular Session Legislative Highlights." <https://senate.la.gov/SessionInfo/Highlights/2009.pdf>.
- Mazrekaj, Deni, Kristof De Witte, and Sarah Vansteenkiste. 2019. "Labour Market Consequences of a High School Diploma." *Applied Economics* 51 (21): 2313–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2018.1543939>.
- Mincer, Jacob A. 1974. "Schooling and Earnings." In *Schooling, Experience, and Earnings*. NBER. <https://www.nber.org/books-and-chapters/schooling-experience-and-earnings/schooling-and-earnings>.
- Oreopoulos, Philip. 2007. "Do Dropouts Drop out Too Soon? Wealth, Health and Happiness from Compulsory Schooling." *Journal of Public Economics* 91 (11): 2213–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2007.02.002>.
- Oreopoulos, Philip, and Uros Petronijevic. 2013. Making College Worth It: A Review of Research on the Returns to Higher Education. No. W19053. National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w19053>.
- Organization International Baccalaureate. 2024. "The International Baccalaureate in the United States: Growth, Access and Outcomes (2024)." International Baccalaureate®, July 15. <https://www.ibo.org/research/outcomes-research/continuum-studies/the-international-baccalaureate-in-the-united-states-growth-access-and-outcomes-2024/>.
- Organization International Baccalaureate. 2025. "IB Launches Early Access Pilot Programme in Louisiana." International Baccalaureate®, January 20. <https://www.ibo.org/news/news-about-the-ib/ib-launches-early-access-pilot-programme-in-louisiana/>.
- Organization International Baccalaureate. n.d.-a. "Education Programmes." International Baccalaureate®. Accessed January 30, 2026. <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/>.
- Organization International Baccalaureate. n.d.-b. "UNITED STATES." International Baccalaureate®. Accessed January 30, 2026. <https://www.ibo.org/country/US/>.
- Owen, Stephanie. 2025. "The Advanced Placement Program and Educational Inequality." *Education Finance and Policy* 20 (1): 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00424.

- Pane, John F., Daniel F. McCaffrey, Nidhi Kalra, and Annie J. Zhou. 2008. "Effects of Student Displacement in Louisiana During the First Academic Year After the Hurricanes of 2005." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* (JESPAR) 13 (2–3): 168–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824660802350169>.
- Pierson, Ashley, Michelle Hodara, and Jonathan Luke. 2017. Earning College Credits in High School: Options, Participation, and Outcomes for Oregon Students.
- Pretlow, Josh, and Heather D. Wathington. 2014. "Expanding Dual Enrollment: Increasing Postsecondary Access for All?" *Community College Review* 42 (1): 41–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552113509664>.
- Radunzel, Justine, Julie Noble, and Sue Wheeler. 2014. "Dual-Credit/Dual-Enrollment Coursework and Long-Term College Success in Texas. Issue Brief." In ACT, Inc. ACT, Inc. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED580007>.
- Rowley, Karen, Robert Scott, and Alison Neustrom. 2011. A Future at Risk: Meeting the Challenge of Louisiana's High School Dropout Problem. The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana. <https://parlouisiana.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/A-Future-at-Risk-Meeting-the-Challenge-of-Louisianas-High-School-Dropout-Problem.pdf>.
- Schulkind, Lisa, and Danielle H. Sandler. 2019. "The Timing of Teenage Births: Estimating the Effect on High School Graduation and Later-Life Outcomes." *Demography* 56 (1): 345–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0748-6>.
- Seidman, E., J. L. Aber, L. Allen, and S. E. French. 1996. "The Impact of the Transition to High School on the Self-System and Perceived Social Context of Poor Urban Youth." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 24 (4): 489–515. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02506794>.
- Sharma, Himani, Truc Bui, Rachel Veron, and Stephen Barnes. 2025. Launch Louisiana. University of Louisiana at Lafayette. <https://blancocenter.louisiana.edu/research>.
- Struhl, Ben, and Joel Vargas. 2012. Taking College Courses in High School: A Strategy Guide for College Readiness--The College Outcomes of Dual Enrollment in Texas. *Jobs for the Future*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED537253>.
- Sum et al. 2009. The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School. Northeastern University. <https://repository.library.northeastern.edu/files/neu:376322>.
- Tyler, John, and John Willett. 2000. "Estimating the Labor Market Signaling Value of the GED." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115 (February): 431–68. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355300554818>.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. n.d.-a. "Wage Records Program." Accessed May 28, 2026. <https://www.bls.gov/wrp/overview.htm>.
- U.S. Congress. 2002. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001., Pub. L. 107-110 (2001). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/house-bill/1>.
- Valletta, Robert G. 2018. "Recent Flattening in the Higher Education Wage Premium: Polarization, Skill Downgrading, or Both?" In *Education, Skills, and Technical Change: Implications for Future US GDP Growth*. University of Chicago Press. <https://www.nber.org/books-and-chapters/education-skills-and-technical-change-implications-future-us-gdp-growth/recent-flattening-higher-education-wage-premium-polarization-skill-downgrading-or-both>.

- Villarreal, Michael U. 2018. The Impact of Dual Credit as a School District Policy on Secondary and Postsecondary Student Outcomes. Policy Brief. *Texas Education Research Center*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED612365>.
- Wang, Xueli, Hsun-yu Chan, L. Allen Phelps, and Janet I. Washbon. 2015. "Fuel for Success: Academic Momentum as a Mediator Between Dual Enrollment and Educational Outcomes of Two-Year Technical College Students." *Community College Review* 43 (2): 165–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552115569846>.
- Wyatt, Jeffrey N., Brian F. Patterson, and F. Tony Di Giacomo. 2015. A Comparison of the College Outcomes of AP® and Dual Enrollment Students. Research Report 2015-3. *College Board*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562578>.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table A1 Margins of error for ACS 2024 1-year estimates of share of population and population ages 18-24 years old with less than high school educational attainment (Figure 2.2)

State	Margin of Error for share of population 18-24 years old with less than high school as educational attainment (%)	Margin of Error for population less than 18-24 years old
Alabama	±0.9	±6,891
Alaska	±2.5	±2,504
Arizona	±0.9	±3,555
Arkansas	±1.2	±5,333
California	±0.3	±5,026
Colorado	±0.9	±4,171
Connecticut	±0.9	±2,873
DC	±1.9	±676
Delaware	±2.4	±1,711
Florida	±0.6	±8,750
Georgia	±0.7	±9,705
Hawaii	±1.5	±2,167
Idaho	±1.6	±2,983
Illinois	±0.6	±4,325
Indiana	±0.9	±5,589
Iowa	±1.0	±3,742
Kansas	±1.2	±3,900
Kentucky	±1.0	±4,232
Louisiana	±1.1	±6,900
Maine	±1.5	±2,133
Maryland	±0.9	±3,680
Massachusetts	±0.7	±2,951
Michigan	±0.7	±4,495
Minnesota	±0.8	±4,739
Mississippi	±1.1	±7,079
Missouri	±0.8	±5,885
Montana	±2.4	±2,715
Nebraska	±1.2	±2,814

Nevada	±1.4	±2,500
New Hampshire	±1.5	±1,847
New Jersey	±0.7	±3,668
New Mexico	±1.9	±4,168
New York	±0.5	±4,194
North Carolina	±0.7	±9,785
North Dakota	±1.7	±3,415
Ohio	±0.6	±5,370
Oklahoma	±0.8	±3,129
Oregon	±1.4	±3,607
Pennsylvania	±0.5	±5,366
Rhode Island	±2.2	±1,472
South Carolina	±0.9	±6,176
South Dakota	±2.3	±2,539
Tennessee	±0.8	±5,052
Texas	±0.4	±11,147
Utah	±1.0	±3,552
Vermont	±2.3	±1,935
Virginia	±0.5	±7,937
Washington	±0.8	±4,581
West Virginia	±1.5	±3,025
Wisconsin	±0.7	±3,671
Wyoming	±2.7	±2,456
Wyoming	±2.7	±2,456

Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024

Note: Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The value shown here is the 90 percent margin of error. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value. In addition to sampling variability, the ACS estimates are subject to nonsampling errors (for a discussion of nonsampling variability, see ACS Technical Documentation). The effect of a nonsampling error is not represented in these tables.

Table A2 Local Education Agencies opted into the LA FIRST-LDOE data sharing agreement as of September 25, 2025

Sponsor code	Local Education Agency
002	Allen Parish
003	Ascension Parish
006	Beauregard Parish
009	Caddo Parish
010	Calcasieu Parish
012	Cameron Parish
017	East Baton Rouge Parish
019	East Feliciana Parish
022	Grant Parish
023	Iberia Parish
024	Iberville Parish
025	Jackson Parish
026	Jefferson Parish
027	Jefferson Davis Parish
028	Lafayette Parish
029	Lafourche Parish
031	Lincoln Parish
034	Morehouse Parish
036	Orleans Parish Board School
037	Ouachita Parish
038	Plaquemines Parish
040	Rapides Parish
041	Red River Parish
042	Richland Parish
043	Sabine Parish
045	St. Charles Parish
048	St. John the Baptist Parish
050	St. Martin Parish
051	St. Mary Parish
053	Tangipahoa Parish
054	Tensas Parish
055	Terrebonne Parish
056	Union Parish
057	Vermilion Parish
058	Vernon Parish
061	West Baton Rouge Parish
062	West Carroll Parish
063	West Feliciana Parish
064	Winn Parish
066	City of Bogalusa School District
067	Zachary Community School District
069	Central Community School District
101	Special School District

329	V. B. Glencoe Charter School
340	The MAX Charter School
346	Lake Charles Charter Academy Foundation, Inc.
347	Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans
348	New Orleans Military & Maritime Academy
360	Educator for Quality Alternatives
363	Crescent City Schools
368	Morris Jeff Community School
369	ReNEW-Reinventing Education Inc.
382	Collegiate Academies
395	Algiers Charter Schools Association
399	FirstLine Schools, INC.
3C1	Thrive Academy
3D1	Vermilion Charter Foundation, Inc
W31	Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School for Sci/Tech (Friends of the King)
W3B	Iberville Charter Academy
W4B	Lake Charles College Prep
W6B	Acadiana Renaissance Charter Academy
W7B	Lafayette Charter Foundation
WBA	Einstein Charter School at Village De L'Est
WBB	Benjamin Franklin High School
WBM	Sarah Towles Reed High School
WBN	Einstein Charter Middle School at Sarah Towles Reed
WBO	Einstein Charter at Sherwood Forest
WBQ	New Harmony High Institute
WBR	Athlos Academy of Jefferson Parish
WBU	Walter L. Cohen High School
WC2	Opportunities Academy
WJ5	Collegiate Baton Rouge
WZZ	Northshore Charter School

Source: Louisiana Department of Education communication to Blanco Public Policy Center

Table A3 BOR postsecondary degree level rank order from the lowest to highest

Order	Degree Level
1	Non-Degree Seeking Student
2	Career Tech 1-8cr
3	Career Tech 9+ cr
4	Certificate 1 Year
5	Certificate 2 Year
6	Diploma
7	Associate
8	Post-Associate
9	Undergraduate Certificate (Upper Level)
10	Baccalaureate
11	Post-Bachelors
12	Graduate Certificate
13	Masters
14	Post-Masters
15	Specialist
16	Doctoral
17	Post-Doctoral
18	Professional
19	Post-Professional

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents email April 25th, 2025

Appendix B – Definitions

Dual Enrollment (DE)

Source: Louisiana Dual Enrollment (<https://ladualenrollment.com/>); Board of Regents (https://www.laregents.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AA-2.22-Dual-Enrollment-with-new-modality_6.14.23.pdf)

In Louisiana, dual enrollment refers to a student enrolled in both high school and college at the same time. In addition, students earn credit(s) on both high school and college transcripts for the same course (Louisiana dual enrollment).

DE Eligibility

There are two kinds of DE courses: academic and technical. Each has different eligibility requirements.

“For academic courses:

- A minimum 2.5 cumulative high school GPA, as determined by your high school, AND
- Subject-specific demonstration of readiness in Mathematics (for mathematics and science courses) or English (for English, foreign language, history, social science, humanities, or arts survey courses) through either:
 - Subject-specific minimum scores on any assessment listed in Academic Affairs Policy 2.22 OR
 - Counselor recommendation based on overall student performance and grade trends in the subject

“For technical courses:

- Ages 15 and up (younger by exception)
- Good standing in high school
- Meets general college admission requirements
- Safety standards, if needed

According to BOR, the enrollment of a high school student in a college course for which dual credit (both college and high school credit) is attempted, is recorded on the student’s secondary record and may be recorded on the student’s postsecondary academic record. A college course offered for dual enrollment may be taught onsite at the postsecondary institution, onsite at the high school, online, or in a hybrid fashion, utilizing a traditional or choice credit modality. Postsecondary institutions must comply with all accreditation requirements for awarding credit.”

Advanced Placement (AP)

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, (<https://doe.louisiana.gov/school-system-leaders/ccr/advanced-placement>)

“Advanced Placement courses offer students the opportunity to earn college credit by taking rigorous courses in high school. Students who demonstrate mastery of the material on a national standardized end-of-course exam – a score of 3 or higher

out of 5 – may be eligible for college credit for the course. “Research suggests that students who complete AP coursework are:

- Better prepared for college-level work
- Stand-outs in the college admissions process
- More likely to continue beyond their freshman year in college
- More likely to graduate within 4-5 years
- More competitive in qualifying for scholarships

“With AP, students can get a feel for the rigors of college level studies while they still have the support of a high school environment. When students take AP courses, they demonstrate to college admission officers that they have sought out an educational experience that will prepare them for success in college and beyond.

“Performing well on an AP Exam means more than just the successful completion of a course. Research consistently shows that students who score a 3 or higher typically earn higher GPAs in college and have higher graduation rates.”

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, {<https://doe.louisiana.gov/families-and-students/preparing-to-graduate/international-baccalaureate>}

“The International Baccalaureate® program offers rigorous educational options to students ages 3 to 19. The program aims to develop inquiring and knowledgeable young people. By taking International Baccalaureate® courses, students can earn college credit while still in high school.

“The International Baccalaureate® works in four areas:

- Development of curriculum
- Assessment of students
- Training and professional development of students
- Authorization and evaluation of schools

“Students must enroll in a full-time International Baccalaureate® program with six courses, including language arts, math, social sciences, experimental sciences, and foreign languages. Students that score a 4 or higher on a scale of 1 to 7 on the standardized end-of-course exams earn college credit.

“The new cohort graduation index recognizes an IB® exam score of 4 or higher as the highest level of achievement earned by a cohort graduate. Each student with at least one IB® exam score of 4 or higher will earn the maximum 150 points toward the graduation index. Students who take an IB® course and earn a 1, 2, or 3 on an IB® exam will receive 110 points toward the graduation index.

Programs are developed by International Baccalaureate®, a not-for-profit educational foundation that operates around the globe.”

Appendix C – Technical Appendix

1. Identifying high school students dropping out between 2014-15 and 2022-23 academic years

To identify HS dropout students, we use student enrollment records from the academic years 2012-2013 to 2023-2024 for grades 9, 10, 11, or 12. From this group, we remove student records for those who attained a HS diploma or GED at any time during HS and students who were reported as being dead or incapacitated at any time during HS. Then, we further create a category of students who were recorded as “transfers.” The “transfers” category includes any student who had the following exit reason codes the last time they appeared in the LDOE student enrollment records: transferring out of state or country, transferring to correctional institution/ state custody at ages under/above 17, transferring to non-public school, transferring to home schooling, transferring to regular non-public schools, transferring to adult education, disaster exit, and transferring to LEA monitored adult education & GED. We then drop records of those who had an exit reason code pertaining to a “transfer” category the last time they appeared as a HS enrollee. We define our remaining sample of as our “potential dropout sample.”

We then proceed to assign the dropout dates to the potential dropout sample. We divide our potential dropout sample into three categories. First, if we observe an exit date from the last time a student shows up, the exit date becomes the dropout date. Second, we assign the academic year’s final school date as the dropout date if we do not observe an exit date the last time a student shows up (we always observe an entry date), as this observation implies that this student enrolled for the entire academic year. Finally, if the last exit date and entry dates are the same for a student, we rely on the previous enrollment observations to identify the dropout date (according to the explanation from LDOE, when the entry date equals the exit date, it means “no show” with zero attendance days). We consider all enrollment observations of this student except for the no-show record, and the dropout date is the latest ending date of the academic year if the student has positive attendance days. For example, if one student has a no-show record in academic year 2018-19, and has observations in the years 2017-18, 2016-17, etc., we pick the latest ending date of the academic year 2017-18 as the dropout date, as long as this student has positive attendance days in the academic year 2017-18.¹⁹ We also observe that some students only have no-show records during high school with no previous records. We drop these students from our analysis. We also drop students that we could not assign a dropout date.²⁰

¹⁹ Please note that if we observe a student with a no-show record for the last time in year 2018-19, there might be other records in the year 2018-19 (with entry date before the entry date of “no show” record) and attendance days were positive. This case is possible if a student moved from school A to B in the beginning of the academic year 2018-19. School A expected this student to be back in the academic year 2018-19, but the student didn’t show up, and that could potentially create a no-show record in school A in the academic year 2018-19. School B has an enrollment record of this student with positive attendance days in the same academic year because the student moved to this school. In this case, the dropout date will be the ending date of the 2018-19 academic year at school B.

²⁰ There is a very small number of observations where the exit date is before the entry date. To fix this error, the exit date is identified by adding the number of aggregated enrollment days to the entry date.

2. Identifying DE HS credit students

We used K-12 student transcript records to select all students with positive DE credits using CourseTypeCd and CreditEarnedCd fields between the 2012-13 and 2023-24 academic years. Then, we identify the HS population of these credit-earners using LDOE enrollment files (were enrolled in 9, 10, 11, or 12 grades) between the 2012-13 and 2023-24 academic years).¹⁹ DE HS credit students consist of HS students earning positive HS credits of a DE course taught by public high schools or public or private higher education institutions in Louisiana. If a HS student earned a DE course credit before HS, this person is also flagged as a DE HS credit student. DE HS credit students do not necessarily earn early college credits because students earn those credits through a final course grade. We do not include course grades in our analysis, choosing instead to analyze a broader set of students pursuing and completing ECC courses rather than only those students who earn college credit in the DE category.

3. Identifying AP or IB HS credit students

We used K-12 student transcript records to select all students with positive AP or IB credits. We only flagged students as “AP or IB HS credit students” if they earned positive credits of AP or IB courses before or during HS between the 2012-13 and 2023-24 academic years. AP or IB HS credit students do not necessarily earn early college credits. Students need to score equal to or above the threshold score on an AP or IB exam to earn early college credits; this analysis includes students pursuing and completing AP or IB courses rather than only those earning college credits through AP or IB test scores. It is possible that a student can participate in DE and AP or IB.

4. Identifying college course HS students

To identify a college course HS student, we used the SSPS enrollment file from BOR to extract students enrolled in Louisiana public higher education institutions that are reported in BOR data to be HS students between the 2008-09 and the 2024-25 academic years.²⁰ Afterward, we merged the BOR data file with linkable LDOE HS enrollment data between the 2012-13 and 2023-24 academic years. Students with at least one BOR enrollment before the month-year they left or graduated from HS are flagged as college course HS students. Students with all BOR enrollment records after the month they left HS, were not flagged as college course HS students for purposes of measuring ECC. Please refer to section 6 of this Appendix for further information on how we identified college enrollment during or after HS. It is noted that public college course takers are those enrolled in Louisiana public colleges and universities during HS regardless of whether they completed the courses they were enrolled in. Additionally, this group might overlap with DE and AP or IB HS credit students.

5. Identifying college course only students

To identify this group, we use LDOE enrollment files for HS students between the 2012-13 and 2023-24 academic years and identify each student's first entry date and leaving date in HS. For HS graduates, the dates leaving HS are the first dates they earned their HS diploma or equivalency. If students did not earn a diploma or equivalency, we assign the last date they appeared in the LDOE enrollment records as the date they left HS using the same logic we used to identify dropout dates.²¹ Then, we merge this data file with transcript files from LDOE to identify only those LDOE enrolled students who were not recorded as receiving DE, AP, or IB credit. Next, we merge these student observations with BOR enrollment files (SSPS files) for students with linkable information to identify students enrolled at a BOR institution while enrolled in HS but not recorded by LDOE as a DE, AP, or IB credit student. Please refer to section 6 of this Appendix for further information on how we identified college enrollment during or after HS.

6. Identifying college enrollment during or after high school

To identify college enrollment recorded by BOR during or after HS, we compare the time of college enrollment in each degree level (from BOR) and the time students enrolled in HS (from LDOE).

LDOE enrollment files provide the dates when students first showed up in HS and the dates they left HS. The HS leaving date is the date students earned their HS diploma or equivalency (if they graduated from high school) or the date when students showed up for the last time in their HS (if they did not graduate from high school). We employ a similar method to identify dropout dates to extract the last date students enrolled in high school. Then, we identify the calendar months and years when students were enrolled in their high school based on high school starting and leaving dates.

²¹ We used ExitDt to identify the date students earned a high school diploma or GED or the date they were last enrolled in the LDOE enrollment record if they did not earn a diploma or GED.

BOR reported the academic semester or term and academic year for each college enrollment. We identify the calendar month and year of each college enrollment in the following table. According to Table C1, for example, the summer semester or term in academic year 2015-16 started in June 2015.

Table C1 First calendar months of academic semesters or terms

Academic semester or term	The first calendar month
Summer	June
Fall	August
Winter	December
Spring	January
Summer intersession	July
Fall/Winter intersession	December
Spring intersession /others	May

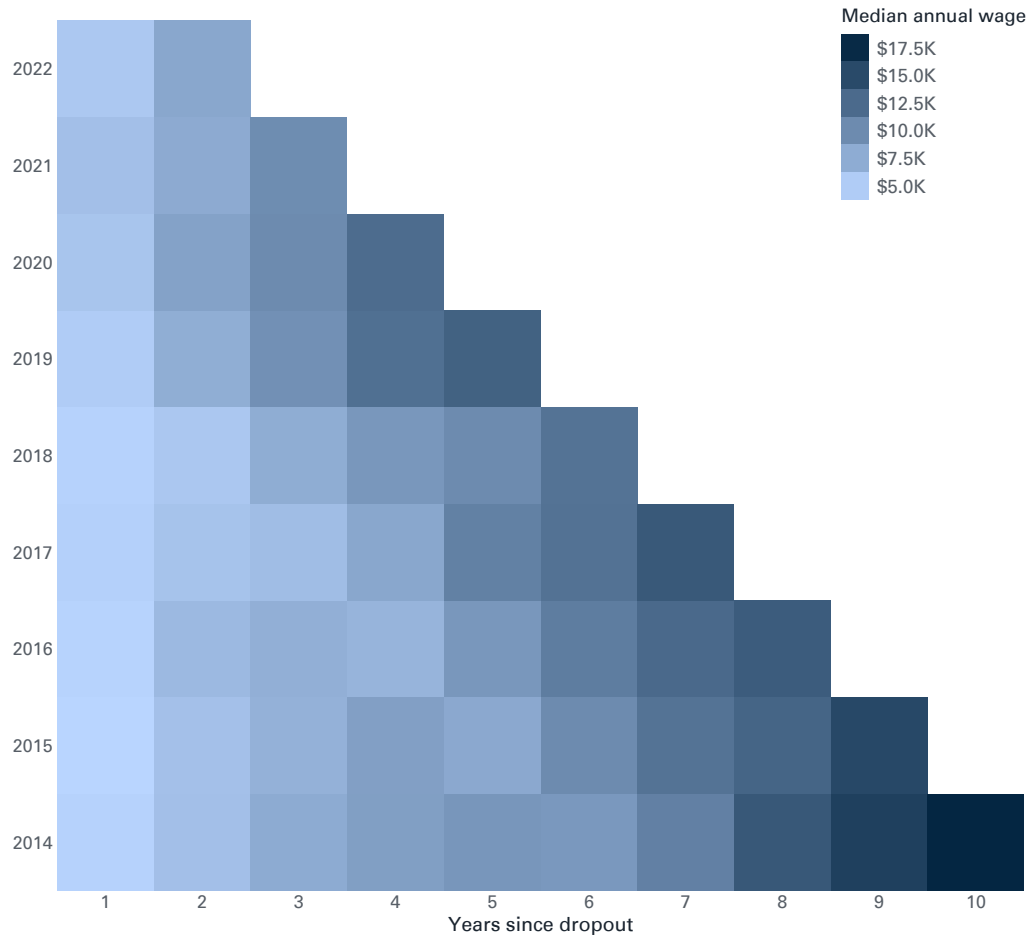
The last step is to check whether the calendar month and year of college enrollment is also within the time students are enrolled in HS.

College enrollment during HS is indicated if the first month and year of a college enrollment spell is in the same or after the first month and year a student is enrolled in HS and before the month and year a student left HS.

College enrollment after HS is indicated if the first month and year of a college enrollment spell is in the same month or after the month and year a student left HS.

Appendix D

Figure D1 Annual wages of high school dropouts by dropout academic year



Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis of linkable HS dropout students from 2014-15 through 2022-23.

Appendix E

Table E1 Comparison of female gender composition of all and linkable HS students and ECC group in recent years 2020-21 to 2023-24

	All public HS students								
Gender	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)				
Female	49.1	58.1	58.0	57.3	45.9				
All HS students	380,105	20,018	39,723	106,605	273,500				
	Linkable HS students								
	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	College course HS students (%)	College course only (%)	Any-takers (%)	Non-takers (%)
Female	49.3	57.8	57.6	57.2	46.2	57.2	47.0	56.3	46.1
All linkable HS students	265,132	14,210	29,738	76,181	188,951	48,746	6,623	83,733	181,399

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2020-21 through 2023-24.

Table E2 Comparison of race and ethnicity composition of all and linkable HS students and ECC group in recent years 2020-21 and 2023-24

	All public HS students								
Race and ethnicity	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)				
Black	42.0	31.2	36.3	35.5	44.6				
Hispanic	9.1	5.6	7.0	6.9	9.9				
White	44.2	58.1	49.2	51.6	41.4				
Other	4.6	5.1	7.5	6.0	4.1				
All HS students	380,105	20,018	39,723	106,605	273,500				
	All linkable public HS students								
	All HS students (%)	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	No DE, AP, or IB HS credit (%)	College Course HS students (%)	College Course Only (%)	Any-takers (%)	Non-takers (%)
Black	45.3	36.4	39.9	39.1	47.8	36.7	52.2	40.2	47.7
Hispanic	6.5	5.3	6.1	6.4	6.5	5.7	5.4	6.3	6.5
White	43.2	52.8	45.8	47.9	41.4	52.0	38.4	47.1	41.5
Other	5.0	5.5	8.2	6.6	4.3	5.6	4.0	6.4	4.3
All linkable HS students	265,132	14,210	29,738	76,181	188,951	48,746	6,623	83,733	181,399

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2020-21 through 2023-24. Demographic characteristics recorded from first student enrollment using LDOE enrollment files from 2012-13 through 2023-24. Other include American Indian, Alaska Pacific, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Asian, and multiple races. If a student had more than one value of race or ethnicity at first enrollment, student was grouped in Other.

Table E3 ECC group of linkable students

Activity	Headcount	%
DE HS credit	104,832	24.1
AP or IB HS credit	99,769	23.0
College course HS students	118,600	27.3
College course only	18,127	4.2
Any-takers	180,469	41.6
Non-takers	253,719	58.4
All linkable HS students	434,188	100.0

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable public HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24 , excluding students in grades 9-11 in academic year 2023-24.

Table E4 Comparison of gender, race, and ethnicity composition for all linkable students by ECC group

	DE HS credit (%)	AP or IB HS credit (%)	College course HS students (%)	College course only (%)	Any-takers (%)	Non-takers (%)	All linkable HS students (%)
Female	57.0	58.9	55.9	45.0	55.6	44.9	49.3
Black	32.8	39.1	35.1	48.6	38.7	51.1	46.0
Hispanic	4.2	5.2	4.0	3.6	4.6	4.9	4.8
White	58.0	48.7	55.9	43.8	51.2	40.6	45.0
Other	5.0	7.0	5.0	4.0	5.5	3.4	4.2
Headcount	104,832	99,769	118,600	18,127	180,469	253,719	434,188

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes linkable public HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24, except students in grades 9-11 in academic year 2023-24.

Table E5 HS graduation by ECC for all, linkable, and unlinkable public HS students

Group	Number of HS graduates (A)	Number of all HS students (B)	HS graduation percent (A/B*100) (%)
All HS students			
DE HS credit	160,344	165,179	97.07
AP or IB HS credit	135,284	142,498	94.94
DE, AP, or IB HS credit	229,657	240,893	95.34
No DE, AP, or IB HS credit	274,998	436,499	63.00
All HS students	504,655	677,392	74.50
All linkable HS students			
DE HS credit	101,473	104,832	96.80
AP or IB HS credit	94,929	99,769	95.15
DE, AP, or IB HS credit	152,364	160,003	95.23
No DE, AP, or IB HS credit	176,256	274,185	64.28
College course HS students	112,036	118,600	94.47
College course only	14,569	18,127	80.37
Any-takers	168,636	180,469	93.44
Non-takers	159,984	253,719	63.06
All linkable HS students	328,620	434,188	75.69
All unlinkable HS students			
DE HS credit	58,871	60,347	97.55
AP or IB HS credit	40,355	42,729	94.44
DE, AP, or IB HS credit	77,293	80,890	95.55
No DE, AP, or IB HS credit	98,742	162,314	60.83
All unlinkable HS students	176,035	243,204	72.38

Source: Blanco Center analysis of LA FIRST data

Note: Analysis includes HS student totals from 2012-13 through 2023-24.