When registering they are school conversation. facilitates able would they use and competent a College early have said. "We's all students," McDaniel said. However, they are urged to co-enroll in a nearby university community college or technical college to earn higher-level credits while still in high school. Students in either core can enroll in training that leads to industry certification for specialized jobs.

Choosing a career focus
In either graduation path, "students are urged to have a career or academic endorsement," they are working on. McDaniel said. "And they are urged to co-enroll in a nearby university community college or technical college to earn higher-level credits while still in high school.

Students in either core can enroll in training that leads to industry certification for specialized jobs. The first two years of high school will be the same for all students as they get the same English, math, science, social studies and additional courses. As they approach their junior year, "it's really about doing some serious thinking and soul searching," Mouton said. "They've got to be constantly reflecting on what's best for them."

College courses early
When they are registering for 11th grade, students will be given the opportunity to decide, in consultation with school advisors and their parents, whether they want to continue on the Core 4 path toward college or begin focusing more on a career with or without a two-year or four-year college degree. In the Core 4 plan, students are expected to be co-enrolled in college courses that count toward college credits, as well as high school courses. The curriculum allows room for specialization in a number of fields.

In the Louisiana Core, students could be co-enrolled in community or technical college courses that earn credits. By the time they graduate, they could have a two-year associate degree and industry certification for employment as well as a high school diploma. "There's the ability to expand the ability to be successful in both venues," Mouton said. "We'll be trying to give them support and recommendations but students need to think 'What's best for me?' They're not trapped into a schedule.

Students register for the first day of school at Carencro High School on Friday. Incoming freshmen will have new challenges this year with a tougher curriculum requirements that took full force this year.

"We're hoping as the bar is raised, particularly in math, which we see as a gateway course to college, students will meet that challenge." — Sally Clausen, Commissioner of Higher Education

Mouton said the program emphasizes that every job is important. As an example, she said that when a patient goes to a doctor, there are as many as 15 people, including the receptionist, clerks, lab technicians and analysts, who all must do their jobs well for the doctor to succeed.

Instructional changes
The new curriculum also requires a different way of teaching, said Mouton, who still considers herself a high school teacher. Teachers are to engage students more in learning and discussions of the subject matter, rather than lecturing to them.

That type of instruction was thought to be only applicable to gifted and talented students," she said. "Now we find it is applicable to all students. "All students can be held to high expectations," Mouton said. "We as teachers have to be competent and prepared and able to facilitate conversations.
We’re guiding the learning. The kids are begging for this. They want to see the relevance of what they are learning, and how it will affect their futures.

Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen said that research has shown “the more we expect from students, the more they seem to produce. We’re hoping as the bar is raised, particularly in math, which we see as a gateway course to college, students will meet that challenge. The chance of success in a college classroom increases and the chances of campuses retaining students are increased.”

Engaging students

All freshman students will take Algebra I this year and, for the first time, will have to take an end-of-course test to see how much they learned. They do not have to pass the test to pass the course but BESE is still debating how to utilize the results in the future. Currently it’s up to school districts to decide what they want to do with the test results.

One of the original goals of high school redesign was to eliminate what was known as “the wasted year” — a senior year when students had only one to three courses to complete to graduate, so they did as little as possible.

Adding an additional required course, raising the minimum graduation total to 24 units instead of the 23 currently required, won’t necessarily do that, Mouton said. But the types of courses being offered and the way they’re to be taught, along with the opportunity to earn college credits or job training while still in high school, could entice students to take more than the minimum.

Implementing the new policy requires more of school systems, but Lloyd Dressell of the Louisiana School Boards Association said no system has complained to the association. “So I assume they’re meeting all the obligations,” like hiring additional math teachers.

But it’s early in the school year and schools are just now beginning to “get into the nuts and bolts” of the program, he said. “Sometimes programs need to be gotten into.”