

LOUISIANA PRINCIPAL'S NEWSLETTER

A Resource to Inform and Celebrate
Louisiana's Building-Level Leaders

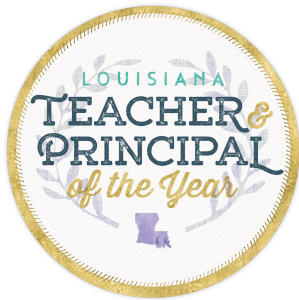
June 20, 2024

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PRINCIPAL CORNER

Celebrating the 2025 Principal of the Year Finalists



During the opening session of the 2024 Teacher Leader Summit, the Department was proud to announce the [2025 Teacher and Principal of the Year Finalists](#). These educators are making exceptional gains with students. Their commitment to student success exemplifies Louisiana's teaching profession.

These nine *2025 Principal of the Year Finalists*, along with all other state-level excellent educator honorees, will be honored at the *18th Annual Excellent Educators Awards Gala* that will be held at the World War II Museum on the evening of July 27, 2024. This exciting event is co-sponsored by *Dream Teachers*.

Below you will find the abbreviated bios for each of the *2025 Principal of the Year Finalists*.



S. Chad Schulz, Beauregard Parish

S. Chad Schulz is the principal of South Beauregard Elementary School in Longville, LA. Schulz received his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a Masters degree from McNeese State University. His focus on early literacy is a direct predictor of a student's success. Schulz's "big picture" vision remains while providing strategic skills and reinforcements so students have the foundation for their future.



Shonna Anderson, Calcasieu Parish

Dr. Shonna Anderson is the principal of Ray D. Molo Middle Magnet School in Lake Charles. Dr. Anderson attended McNeese State University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and a Master of Education in Computer Technology. She earned her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Her research work has been published in the Research Issues in Contemporary Education (RICE) Journal. Dr. Anderson promotes education equality and empowers students to discover their potential.



Brandon LaGroue, Central Community Schools

Brandon LaGroue is the principal of Central High School in Baton Rouge. He received his Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from Louisiana State University and his Master of Education in Administration from Lamar University. He founded CHS's Freshman Academy. CHS has maintained its "A" grade from the state, been named a Top Gains school multiple times, and was recently recognized by the Louisiana Department of Education as a Model School of Excellence.



Amanda LaFollette, DeSoto Parish

Amanda LaFollette is the principal of Mansfield Elementary School in Mansfield. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Master of Education from Northwestern State University, and has earned National Board Certification. LaFollette prioritizes relationships with students during her time in the classroom. She is a passionate educator who believes in serving the whole child and providing individualized support for students and staff to help them attain their goals. Under LaFollette's leadership, Mansfield Elementary School has been recognized as a Model of Excellence in Literacy Intervention.



Glenda Welch Baylis, FirstLine Schools

Glenda Baylis is the principal of Arthur Ashe Charter School in New Orleans. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and Master's Degree in Urban Education from Southern University in New Orleans. Glenda has demonstrated the ability to inspire, develop, and mentor. Her vision, passion, and dedication have contributed to the students and teachers consistently achieving some of the highest performance results in the city. Her belief that kids come first no matter what is the key to her success.



Amanda Austin, Iberville Parish

Dr. Amanda Austin is currently serving as the Director of the Iberville Math, Science, and Arts (MSA) Academy East in St. Gabriel. MSA Academy East is the magnet program of East Iberville High School. Dr. Austin has earned a Bachelor's in Sociology from Louisiana State University, a Master of Arts in Teaching from Louisiana College, an endorsement for Educational Leadership from McNeese State University, and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from Lamar University. Dr. Austin continuously strives to grow as an instructional leader and expects to lead her school to meet or exceed expectations. Through teamwork with all stakeholders, she believes that all students can and will succeed.



Decina Rodriguez, Lafourche Parish

Decina Rodriguez is the principal of Lockport Middle School in Lockport. Dr. Rodriguez earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Master of Administration and Supervision, and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Administration from Nicholls State University. Decina uses her “Build a Brand” motto to recruit and retain teachers. Early in her career, she realized the impact of school culture on academics. Rodriguez continues to set a path for continuous growth.



Michael Beck, Red River Parish

Michael Beck is the principal of Red River Elementary School in Coushatta. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Business Administration and obtained his Master of Education in Administration from Ashland University. His mission has been to transform school communities, change mindsets, and make "believers out of non-believers" in teaching and learning.



Jennifer Wilbanks, Vernon Parish

Jennifer Wilbanks is the principal of Hicks High School in Leesville. She earned a Bachelor's degree in arts with a concentration in Health and Physical Education from Northwestern State University as well as a degree in educational leadership from the American College of Education. She has promised her students, faculty, and community to continue to grow in her knowledge of education and always strive to provide the very best opportunities for the students at Hicks High School.

LDOE CORNER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Teacher Leader Summit

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2024 Teacher Leader Summit a huge success. Session decks can be found in the public collection in the LDOE Professional Learning Platform (Canopy), [2024 Teacher Leader Summit](#).

Please email events@emergentmethod.com with questions.

School Support Institutes Registration

Registration is open until June 21 for [School Support Institutes](#) (SSI). In 2024-2025, new SSI learning will focus on building the instructional capacity of school-based instructional leadership teams by providing the most current and relevant professional learning to establish and maintain coherent, well-organized instructional programs that meet the diverse needs of all students. There will be three in-person half-day sessions in regional locations in Monroe, Shreveport, Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans and a final full-day session at 2025 Teacher Leader Summit.

Attendance at SSI is required for:

- 3-member leadership teams from CIR schools
- Site-level literacy teams from NEW sub grantee, Urgent Intervention Needed schools participating in the CLSD UIN grant and one system-level Literacy Coach Coordinator.

For session dates and venue locations please see the [School Support Institutes Overview](#), which can also be found on the [School Improvement](#) landing page.

Please contact schoolimprovementdivision@la.gov with questions.

RESOURCES

EDUCATOR TALENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The New Teacher Experience: Summer Kick Off

The LDOE will host a Summer Kick-Off for the New Teacher Experience on **July 24**, from 8 a.m -4 p.m. in Baton Rouge for 500 new teachers.

The goals of the event are to:

- Welcome teachers to the profession
- Understand the components of Louisiana's New Teacher Experience
- Engage in professional learning around topics relevant to new teachers
- Provide statewide networking opportunities for new teachers

The Summer Kick-Off will take place at the Lod Cook Alumni Center (3838 W. Lakeshore Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70802). [Registration](#) is now open and will close on **July 12** or when capacity is reached. School systems may register their new teachers or send the registration link to new teachers for them to self-register. School systems should share details about the event with their new teachers and ensure that they are able to attend prior to registering. This event is provided at no cost to systems; however, any travel costs may be covered by the school system. Registration includes lunch and a tote bag with lots of start-of-the-year goodies.

Please contact laurie.carlton@la.gov with questions.

ACADEMICS

MATH

Math Refresh Summer Webinar Series

The LDOE's math team is excited to offer the second year of the Math Refresh summer webinar series. Each webinar will focus on a specific topic designed to help impact math instruction. Session descriptions and registration information can be found in the [Math Refresh Summer Webinar Series flyer](#). Educators, including teachers and school leaders, should register to learn how to impact math instruction in the coming year. Participants will also explore newly released resources to support excellence in mathematics instruction. Register using your school or system email address.

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.

High School Numeracy Summer Webinar Serie

In support of Numeracy Professional learning, the LDOE math team is announcing the [High School Numeracy Webinar Series](#). This series will allow early access to the High School Numeracy professional learning course in Canopy and offer support from our partners at the Charles A. Dana Center. Educators, including teachers and school leaders, should register to learn more. Seats are reserved for Louisiana educators only. Register using your school or system email address.

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.

Act 260 Numeracy Training Updates

In accordance with Act 260, the LDOE has created a full suite of Numeracy Professional Learning courses for K-12 math teachers. The LDOE plans to release the first five modules for each Numeracy course this summer. For educators to access the courses within the Canopy Professional Learning Platform, superintendents must have opted-in through EdLink Security to grant all classroom teachers a role in Canopy.

Once this step is completed, teachers and staff should follow the steps below to create an EdLink Security account.

- Step 1: Create MyLa Credentials
- Step 2: Create EdLink User Profile

For answers to frequently asked questions, please refer to the Act 260 Guidance and Framing document on the Louisiana Math page.

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.

COMPUTER SCIENCE AND STEM

STEM Renaissance

[STEM 9-12 Pathways](#) are experiencing a new and revised structure beginning with the freshmen class entering the 2024-2025 school year. The new STEM Pathway structure will offer:

- students more course choice options to meet requirements,
- an expanded opportunity for students to attain Industry Based Credentials, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment credit at the Silver STEM Seal earners,
- a content-focused approach to course organization which yields five targeted paths of study, and
- an additional science or math course offering for Gold STEM Seal earners.

The new STEM Pathways briefs, a webinar, and counselor resources are available on the [STEM](#) web page.

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.

EDTECH

Kami Regional Tour

The LDOE will also host six regional face-to-face professional learning opportunities July 24-26. Sessions

will be offered in the following locations:

- July 24 - Calcasieu Parish
- July 24 - Lafayette Parish
- July 25 - Bossier Parish
- July 26 - Jefferson Parish
- July 26 - Lincoln Parish
- July 26 - East Baton Rouge Parish

Mark your calendars and [register](#) today!

Please contact digitallearning@la.gov with questions.

LITERACY

Summer Literacy Regional Tour

Our literacy and ELA teams are hitting the road for their 3rd annual summer literacy tour. These professional learning workshops are open to all teacher and school and system leaders. Registration is now open and space is limited. Reserve your spots by viewing our [schedule and sessions](#) and scheduling for your desired location and date.

The schedule is as follows: Baton Rouge on June 21, West Monroe on July 8, Bossier City on July 9, and Alexandria on July 11.

Please contact louisianaliteracy@la.gov with questions.

DIVERSE LEARNERS

POSTPONED - See the Sound-Visual Phonics Training Opportunity

The Visual Phonics trainings that were previously scheduled for June 18 and 19 and July 24 and 25 have been postponed. Please check the weekly newsletter and office hours in the fall for updated training dates.

Please contact diverselearnersupport@la.gov or lavisualphonics@gmail.com with any questions.

PRINCIPAL NEWSLETTER SIGNUP

Do you have a colleague who would benefit from receiving this newsletter? Forward this copy and encourage them to [subscribe](#) to receive our next monthly newsletter.

PRINCIPAL APPRECIATION

If you have an extraordinary building-level leader you would like to recommend to be highlighted in future newsletters, please submit information about the outstanding leader using the [LDOE Principal's Newsletter Leader Spotlight Nomination Form](#). This note of appreciation will be included in our next monthly newsletter.

Emily Dawkins, Delta Charter Junior High/HighSchool, Delta Charter MST

"Emily has done an amazing job. Her love not only for DC, but for the students and teachers is shown on

a daily basis. Creating an atmosphere of safety, learning, and support are her main focus everyday. We have shown growth in relationships as well as academics.” *submitted by Shannon Doughty*

Holly George, Bossier Schools Virtual Learning, Bossier Parish

“Mrs. George can put a positive spin on every issue that may arise. She supports her teachers and students in such a manner to assist them in reaching their personal and educational goals.” *submitted by Gail Rittenberry*

James Jackson, Port Allen High, West Baton Rouge Parish

“Mr. Jackson is a relentless force of positivity for all students at Port Allen High. He is an excellent motivator and through his interpersonal skills he gets the most out of each student.” *submitted by William B. Cox*

Rick Warren, Houghton Middle School, Bossier Parish

“Mr. Warren creates meaningful relationships with all students at HMS and sets a good role model for the students at our school.” *submitted by Ashley Sanchez*

Stephanie Goudeau, Slaughter Community Charter School, East Feliciana Parish

“Dr. Goudeau creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment at SCCS where students feel valued, safe, and motivated to succeed. She also has a profound impact on our teachers offering guidance, feedback, and resources to help them excel in their roles.” *submitted by Peggy Reno*

Gerod Macon, T.H.Harris Middle School, Jefferson Parish

“Dr. Macon has made the school a better place to work and learn. He has made a positive difference in the atmosphere of our school.” *submitted by Anna Schembra*

DATES TO CONSIDER FOR BUILDING-LEVEL LEADERS

Important Dates	
School Support Institutes registration ends	June 21
Louisiana Literacy Regional Summer Tour: Baton Rouge	June 21
Exploring the Math Leader Toolkit Webinar	June 24
Louisiana Literacy Regional Summer Tour: West Monroe	July 8
Louisiana Literacy Regional Summer Tour: Bossier City	July 9
Louisiana Literacy Regional Summer Tour: Alexandria	July 11
New Teacher Experience Registration ends	July 12