

# Principal Development Affinity Cohorts Overview

## Teaching & Learning/Educator Talent and Workforce Development/Leader Development

A Component of the Principal Aspiring for Career Excellence (PACE) Banner.

[Register to Participate in our 2026-2027 Affinity Cohorts](#)

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## PACE Overview

Currently, the LDOE offers a robust set of resources and supports designed to meet the needs of aspiring and early-career principals. Additionally, principals who have reached a certain level of success are encouraged to serve as mentors and role models for aspiring and novice leaders. Yet, the vast majority of school leaders in Louisiana do not fit into any of these categories (aspiring, novice, or publicly recognized as “successful.”)

To address this gap in support, the LDOE has created the Principals Aspiring for Career Excellence banner, designed to provide additional opportunities for leaders to grow their skills and knowledge to benefit schools and students. The available avenues for support to school leaders under this banner comprise four distinct pillars: Principal Newsletters, Quarterly Webinars, Site Visits, and Affinity Cohorts. These options are available to all leaders within Louisiana, regardless of tenure, and any leader interested in participating in one of these program components can register using the [Principal Development Opportunities Landing Page](#).

## Mission and Vision of all PACE Programs

### Vision

Every student, teacher, school, and community deserves an educational leader who is highly competent, capable, and determined to provide an education focused on high-quality instruction, safety, and strong, effective management.

### Mission

School leadership faces many challenges in its needs and functions, but all school leaders aim to improve student achievement across all benchmark measures, both internally and externally to the state. The Principals Aspiring for Career Excellence program aims to support the individual needs of school leaders across Louisiana by providing consistent, focused leadership development. The program defines, models, and clearly communicates effective leadership practices while offering meaningful opportunities for

personal growth aligned with the needs of students, teachers, schools, and communities. In this way, the LDOE supports all in achieving the success they so richly deserve.

## Affinity Cohorts Overview

The LDOE has developed a cohort-based leadership support model designed to meet the needs of active school administrators. This support is designed to improve how school leaders lead, helping them move from reactive decision-making to proactive planning while building community with fellow administrators in a role that can feel isolating.

Participants pay a low-cost (\$500) fee to attend five virtual leadership support sessions over several months. Through these sessions, participants will enhance their leadership skills by clearly defining their strengths, what matters most to them, and how they lead, so they can make more confident decisions, build stronger teams, and drive meaningful, lasting improvement in their schools.

This program creates a structured, high-trust space where principals come together as a community to work on the real challenges of leadership and learn from one another. Through these sessions, principal participants will strengthen core practices, learn to manage their time intentionally, develop skills to delegate more effectively, build strong staff relationships intentionally, and deliver clear, supportive feedback.

Principals interested in participating in our Principal Development Affinity Cohorts [should register as soon as possible](#). Cohort applications close on July 13, 2026, or whenever all cohorts are filled, whichever comes first.

## More Information about Affinity Cohorts

The LDOE will run two separate cohort types. Type 1: Leadership Affinity Cohorts is for any acting principal. Type 2: Mentor Principal Cohort is only for principals who have been previously selected to serve as a member of the LDOE's [Mentor Principal Corps](#).

### Principal's Leadership Affinity Cohorts

The LDOE's Principal Leadership Affinity Cohorts is open to 60 acting principals within Louisiana. Principals accepted into one of four cohorts will have the option to select their preferred cycle, with both starting in September. Participants will be grouped using various criteria, including, but not limited to: current system, geographical location, grade band served, and/or length of time as principals. The purpose is to provide optimal groupings for principals to collaborate as they are guided through the program's topics.

These topics include:

- Harness Your Strengths
  - Understand how your natural strengths shape how you lead, decide, and communicate.
  - Learn how to use those strengths intentionally so they work for you and your team.
- Maximize Your Time
  - Identify the patterns that keep principals stuck in a constant state of urgency.

- Protect time for the leadership work that actually moves your school forward.
- Diligently Delegate
  - Clarify what truly belongs to you and what should be owned by others.
  - Build a team that shares responsibility for results, not just tasks.
- Deepening Relationships
  - Strengthen trust and connection with teachers, staff, and leadership teams.
  - Use everyday leadership moments to build stronger alignment and partnership.
- Give Feedback Effectively
  - Deliver clear, direct feedback while maintaining trust and respect.
  - Turn difficult conversations into opportunities for growth and accountability.

When participants enroll, they can select one of two cycles. Each cycle has predetermined meeting dates, listed below. When making selections, please choose your preferred cycle; however, since these cohorts are based on other factors, preferred cycles are not guaranteed.

| Principal Cohorts 1 & 2       | Principal Cohorts 3 & 4       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Meeting 1: September 11, 2026 | Meeting 1: September 23, 2026 |
| Meeting 2: October 23, 2026   | Meeting 2: November 6, 2026   |
| Meeting 3: December 4, 2026   | Meeting 3: December 11, 2026  |
| Meeting 4: January 15, 2027   | Meeting 4: January 22, 2027   |
| Meeting 5: February 26, 2027  | Meeting 5: March 5, 2027      |

Principals interested in participating in these cohorts should sign up as soon as possible. Space is limited to 15 principals per cohort, and the registration link will close once capacity is reached.

## Mentor Principal Cohorts

Members of the LDOE's [Mentor Principal Corps](#) will also have the opportunity to participate in a cohort designed specifically for their needs as mentors. While the topics and components of this cohort are similar to those of our Principal Cohort, additional focus will be placed on mentoring peer principals. Only one section of this cohort is available, so interested principals are encouraged to register as soon as possible.

The topics in this session include:

- Harness Your Strengths
  - Help mentors recognize how their CliftonStrengths influence their leadership, decisions, and reactions under pressure.

- Support mentors in coaching mentees to identify and intentionally apply their strengths using strengths-based questions.
- Maximize Your Time
  - Help mentors recognize the patterns that keep leaders stuck in a sense of urgency and pulled away from their priorities.
  - Support mentors in helping mentees clarify priorities and align their time with their most important leadership work.
- Diligently Delegate
  - Assist mentors in examining where leaders tend to hold onto work that should belong to others.
  - Support mentors in guiding mentees to shift ownership and build shared responsibility within their teams.
- Deepening Relationships
  - Support mentors in strengthening their awareness of how trust, communication, and emotional intelligence shape leadership relationships.
  - Support mentors in helping mentees reflect on their interactions and strengthen trust with their teams.
- Give Feedback Effectively
  - Help mentors build confidence in delivering clear, direct feedback while maintaining trust.
  - Support mentors in guiding mentees through the process of preparing for and having effective feedback conversations.

| Mentor Principal Session Cohort Dates |
|---------------------------------------|
| Meeting 1: September 11, 2026         |
| Meeting 2: October 23, 2026           |
| Meeting 3: December 4, 2026           |
| Meeting 4: January 15, 2027           |
| Meeting 5: February 26, 2027          |

## In Summary

The Affinity Cohorts component of the Principals Aspiring for Career Excellence banner was created by the Louisiana Department of Education to provide high-trust peer meetings that support all principals in developing their leadership skills. Principals who participate in these cohorts will meet 5 times over several months to discuss topics such as harnessing personal strengths, maximizing time, delegating, deepening relationships with staff, and giving feedback effectively. Principals interested in participating in

these cohorts are encouraged to register promptly to secure a spot, as the registration link will close once each cohort reaches capacity.

Principals interested in participating in our Principal Development Affinity Cohorts [should register as soon as possible](#). Cohort applications close on July 13, 2026, or whenever capacity is reached.

Any questions about principal affinity cohorts should be directed to [LouisianaLeaders@la.gov](mailto:LouisianaLeaders@la.gov).