



The Louisiana Department of Education is proud to announce the 2024 Early Childhood Teacher and Leader of the Year. These 10 teachers and leaders represent early childhood care and education sites across the state. This is the second year the LDOE has presented these awards, which are designed to honor the early education teachers and administrators who care for and educate infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

All Early Childhood Teacher and Leader of the Year finalists and semifinalists will be honored at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Cecil. J. Picard Educator Excellence Gala Celebration, which will be held at the World War II Museum in New Orleans. This exciting event is co-sponsored by [Dream Teachers](#).

*Congratulations to these outstanding educators and leaders!*

### 2024 EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER OF THE YEAR



*Phedra Jackson*

Lafourche Head Start, Lafourche Parish

**Ms. Phedra Jackson** has more than 10 years of experience working and serving children and families in Louisiana as an Early Childhood Educator. Phedra has a mission of inspiring a lifelong love of learning by creating lessons that are exciting, authentic, engaging, and relevant to the lives of her students. Phedra believes an excellent early childhood educator begins with commitment to the children that they are blessed to teach, and a commitment to the profession. Phedra has her Bachelor's degree and is currently working on her Master's degree while educating our youngest learners. Ms. Phedra is committed to Early Childhood education because she believes in the value of education, and wants to make a difference in children's lives. She also believes that this work is important because she knows that early life experiences are crucial to a child's development, and understands that she has an important responsibility to form those experiences into the most positive ones. She believes that an education will maximize the potential in every child.

### 2024 EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER OF THE YEAR



*Arielle Hughes*

Carousel Preschool, Jefferson Parish

**Mrs. Arielle Hughes** has over 10 years of combined experience in both leading and teaching in Early Learning centers and has a Master's degree. Arielle is committed to inspiring and empowering other current and future early childhood leaders, and to keep learning and developing individually. She believes in the value of community and prioritizes community building with other early educators and other stakeholders, as well as within the center she leads. It is important to Arielle that all families feel involved and trusting, and that the community allows opportunities for parent involvement, parent voice, and parent relationship-building with each other.



## 2024 EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS



**Elizabeth Berry**  
Rapides Parish



**Jennifer Cifelli**  
Rapides Parish



**LeighAnn LaCour**  
West Baton Rouge Parish



**Stephanie Eubanks**  
Caldwell Parish

## 2024 EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS



**Jamie Martin**  
Rapides Parish



**Megan Garretson**  
East Baton Rouge Parish



**Tara Emery**  
East Baton Rouge Parish



**Xavier Anderson**  
Iberville Parish