

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER & LEADER *of the Year*

The Louisiana Department of Education is proud to announce the 2025 Early Childhood Teacher and Leader of the Year. The 10 Teacher and Leader Finalists represent early childhood care and education sites across the state. This is the third 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 will be honored at the 18th 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!

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Nicole Williams

Carousel Preschool, Jefferson Parish

Nicole Williams has over 10 years of experience as an educator. Nicole believes that “as an educator, it is my mission to ensure each student entering my classroom is provided with high quality learning experiences by giving them what they need when and where they need it.” She also notes that “there is an internal, deep seeded motivation within me to give each of my students intentional learning experiences and to understand when it’s either time to try something else, gather more resources or learn something new. As a self-proclaimed advocate, I consider myself to be their voice when they can’t speak. I make it my business to pay close attention to the cues, the movement, and the actions, or lack thereof. Watching and being a part of the development of the whole child, then celebrating their achieved milestones and growth with them provides an indescribable fulfillment that drives me to do this work. I am passionate and committed to being an advocate for all children, a partner for families and a listening ear for fellow teachers. My longing to learn is immense, and I will always seek out opportunities to obtain and share new knowledge.”

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Rockeisha Walker

Bright Star Academy, Iberville Parish

Rockeisha Walker has over 10 years of experience leading early learning centers. Rockeisha believes that “excellence as an early childhood leader is enhanced by qualities like patience, adaptability, and a genuine passion for fostering children’s learning and development. Including creativity is vital, recognizing that each child is unique, and varied learning styles require innovative approaches to ensure effective education.” Rockeisha also notes that her “ability to create a positive and nurturing environment, tailored to individual needs, plays a crucial role in shaping young minds.”



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Julie Cook
East Baton Rouge Parish



Montrellani Gordon
East Baton Rouge Parish



Tasha Jones
Franklin Parish



Yashica Murphy
West Baton Rouge Parish

2025 EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS



Ashley Beal
East Baton Rouge Parish



Tiffany Comeaux
Vermillion Parish



Michelle Queen
Rapides Parish



Ava Hingle
Iberville Parish