



Carra “Beth” Melton

Enhance math fluency and improve the ability to solve word problems

Louisiana Public Interest Fellowship

In 2018, the Department, in partnership with the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, launched the inaugural Louisiana Teacher Public Interest Fellowship. The fellowship allows recipients to spend the upcoming school year advocating for a key education initiative of their choosing. These initiatives are aligned with the Department’s priorities. Recipients are chosen from the previous year’s Louisiana Teacher of the Year state-level honorees list. The fellowship is supported by a stipend from state funding, which offsets the costs of conducting the fellowship’s work.

“Our nation was built by people with the drive and courage to put their ideas into action. That’s what this award represents.” Dr. Cade Brumley, Louisiana State Superintendent of Education

Meet the 2026 Public Interest Fellow



Mrs. Carra “Beth” Melton is a third-grade teacher at Bayou Woods Elementary in Slidell, LA. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Horticulture from Southeastern Louisiana University. In May 2002, she earned her Alternative Certification from Southeastern Louisiana University. In 2024, she was selected as the District Elementary Teacher of the Year for St. Tammany Parish and then became one of 24 semifinalists for the 2026 Louisiana Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Melton is most passionate about creating a classroom learning environment where all students feel valued, respected, and included, regardless of their background or abilities. She also strives to build personal connections with each student – one way she does this is by having lunch with them. She also writes and mails letters and pictures to each of her students during the summer. Her passion for working

with students and adults of all ages and abilities, outside the classroom, shines through in her community service work. She is actively involved in Ainsley’s Angels of America, Camp Able Coast, and Buddy Ball. You’ll find her “lending her legs” on weekends running 5K’s, 10K’s, and half marathons with Ainsley’s Angels. You’ll also find her spending her Wednesday evenings coaching baseball or kickball with Buddy Ball or helping plan and organize summer camp and events throughout the year with Camp Able Coast. As part of her Louisiana State Math Fellowship, Mrs. Melton leads a Math Club for 1st–3rd-graders focused on building math fluency, confidence, and joy through hands-on problem solving, games, and family connections. The club’s mission is to make math engaging and accessible for every learner while strengthening home-school partnerships through take-home activities and parent workshops. Most recently, Mrs. Melton was honored to be nominated for the Athena Leadership Award, which recognizes women who inspire and uplift others through leadership, collaboration, and community impact.

The Initiative

Numbers are universal, but for many of our students, they are problematic, which is why my Fellowship Vision initiative focuses on enhancing math fluency and improving students' ability to solve word problems. This program aims to provide targeted training, engaging resources, and collaborative learning environments to foster mathematical understanding and application in real-world contexts. By emphasizing the development of both numerical skills and the cognitive processes involved in interpreting and solving word problems, this initiative seeks to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in mathematics and beyond.

Parental Involvement is not only the key to greater success in reading fluency but also essential to success in math fluency. Many of my past and current students have struggled with basic math confidence, calculations, and translating word problems into mathematical expressions. I have seen firsthand how this deficiency can lead to frustration, decreased confidence, and an aversion to math. Improving math fluency is essential for academic success, as it lays the foundation for more complex concepts and problem-solving skills in later years of schooling. Furthermore, proficiency in word problems is critical for applying math in everyday situations, such as budgeting, measuring, and planning. By addressing these challenges, the Fellowship Vision initiative will empower students to become confident mathematicians, capable of tackling not only 1-step but also 2-step word problems using all 4 operations with ease. This program can help bridge knowledge gaps, stimulate interest in mathematics, and promote critical thinking, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes and a stronger foundation for future learning.

Overarching Fellowship Goals

- Collaborate with stakeholders to design and assemble kits, develop a system for the most effective distribution in schools and libraries, and advertise on social media to reach stakeholders
- Establish a peer tutoring program where students can help each other, enhancing their understanding and building confidence, and hold monthly workshops for more fluent students to share strategies within their peer tutoring groups
- Host workshops to inform parents on how they can support their children's math learning at home, including games and strategies
- Organize a math fair that showcases students' projects and their progress in fluency and word-problem solving throughout the year

Structure

Internal Team Members and Fellowship Role

- Carra "Beth" Melton, 3rd-grade Teacher
 - Public Interest Fellow
- Frank Jabbia, St. Tammany Schools Superintendent
 - District-level support and Guidance throughout the Fellowship year
- Dr. Melissa Langois, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
 - District-level support and Guidance throughout the Fellowship year
- Jackie Jenkins, Director of Instruction (PK-6)
 - District-level support and guidance
- Rebecca Birkett, K-3 Curriculum
 - District-level support and materials
 - Budget assistance
 - Community Events Support
 - Math Fair
- Kacey Cummings, K-3 Curriculum Specialist
 - District-level support and materials
 - TLS presentation assistance/support

- Community Events Support
 - Math Fair assistance/guidance
- Alexander Howard, Principal
 - School-level guidance and support during the Fellowship year
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Events Support
 - Saturday Tutoring assistance
 - Math Fair assistance/guidance
- Tayler Conway, Assistant Principal
 - School-level support team
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Saturday tutoring assistance
 - Edited Math with Melton flyers
 - Math Fair assistance/guidance
- D'Andrea Green, 3rd-grade Teacher
 - Math Club Teacher
 - School-level support team
 - Community Events assistance
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Math Fair assistance
- Cori Montz, 3rd-grade Teacher
 - Math Club Teacher
 - School-level support team
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Math Fair assistance
- Crystal Ducote, Bookkeeper
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Budget and ordering
 - School-level support
- Lindsey Lord, Gifted Teacher, Bayou Woods and Carolyn Park Middle School
 - School-level support team
 - Saturday tutoring assistance/teacher
 - Math Fair Coordinator/Assistance with Opening and Closing
- Marilyn Thomas, 2nd-grade teacher, Abney Elementary
 - Saturday Tutoring teacher
 - Community Events assistance
- Kioka Ardoin, 2nd-grade teacher
 - Saturday Tutoring teacher
- Yohanna Baptiste, kindergarten teacher
 - Saturday Tutoring teacher
- Rachel Morgan, Students with Exceptionalities (SWE) resource teacher
 - Math Club Teacher (as needed)
 - Saturday Tutoring teacher
- Lindsay Savoy, Kindergarten teacher
 - Math Club Teacher (as needed)
- Christen Populus, Kindergarten teacher
 - Math Club Teacher (as needed)
- Melanie Thigpen, Pre-K teacher
 - Math Club Teacher (as needed)
- Briana Stein, 2nd-grade teacher
 - Community Events assistance
- Amber Peytavin, 1st-grade teacher
 - Community Events assistance

- Etienne Wooten-Jones, Secretary
 - Math Kit Building Team
- Julie Lodriguss, Librarian
 - Math Kit Building Team
- Katherine Lemons, Teacher
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Event assistance
- Macayla Bennett, Teacher
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Events assistance
- Sandra Breener, Teacher
 - Math Kit Building Team
- Stacey Crochet, Tutor/Retired Teacher
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Math Fair assistance
- Margaret Deane, Volunteer/Retired Teacher
 - Math Kit Building Team
- Ron Fogarty, Custodian
 - Math Kit Building Team
- Cicely Jacob, Instructional Coach
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Events Support
- Shawnika Lewis, Instructional Coach
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Events assistance
- Amy Spain, Instructional Coach
 - Math Kit Building Team
 - Community Events assistance
 - Math Fair assistance
- Geraldine Winzy-Retired Teacher/Substitute
 - School-level support
 - Math Fair assistance
- Anna Aleman, Parent Volunteer
 - Math Fair assistance
 - Math Club Volunteer (as needed)
- School Custodians-Terra Branch, Mariell Chattman, Tasadia Foster, Kyle Ledet, Ron Fogarty, Stephanie Roy
 - School-level support with packages received throughout the Fellowship year
 - Math Fair support
- Terri Prevost and Gary Silva, School Board Accountants
 - Budget
- Rhett Sharp and Grant Yenni, ED MM Production Specialists
 - Production of [Math with Melton Video](#), Madisonville Public Library
 - Production of [Math Fair Video](#), Bayou Woods Elementary

External Team Members and Fellowship Role

- Jennifer Mayer, Children's Services Coordinator, St. Tammany Parish Library
 - Library-Parent Student Workshops
- Tanya DiMaggio, Assistant Director of Support Services, St. Tammany Parish Library
 - Library-Parent Student Workshops
- Children's Librarians of St. Tammany Parish-Parent Student Workshops
 - Covington Branch - Jess Troske
 - Mandeville Branch - Sydney Neeley

- Causeway Branch - Tracey Angerdina
- Madisonville Branch - Eugenie Brignac
- Slidell Branch - Barbara Vidacovich and Cathy Badon (her assistant)
- South Slidell - Erika Dawson
- Lacombe Branch - Rhonda Spiess
- Kaylin Coleman, Director of Education & Programming, Children's Museum of St. Tammany Parish
 - Parent Student Workshops hosted at the museum

Budget

Teacher Stipends and Benefits – \$11,775.59

- Teacher stipends were provided for work completed outside of regular contract hours to support family engagement, student learning, and community outreach. These activities included parent involvement nights, public library math events, after-school Math Club sessions, Saturday tutoring, math kit assembly, and other fellowship-related responsibilities.
- Math Club and Saturday Tutoring: Teachers were compensated at \$30 per hour plus benefits.
- Math Kit Assembly and Community Events: Teachers were compensated at \$20 per hour plus benefits.

Math Kits – \$28,434.45

- Funding was used to design, purchase, assemble, and distribute comprehensive math kits for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Each kit was designed to strengthen math fluency, number sense, and problem-solving skills while providing families with resources to support learning at home.

Materials Included:

- Addition/Subtraction Flash Cards, Multiplication/Division Flash Cards, Number Cards, Counters, Student Notebook, Pencils, Stamp Markers, 100 Charts, Dice, Place Value Strips, Multiplying Fractions Cards, Multiplication Charts, 12-inch LCD Writing Boards, High-Quality Zipper Pouches for storage.
- Email mathwithmelton2025@gmail.com for the full list of materials for the math kits.

Total Math Kits Distributed: 780

- Kindergarten–1st Grade Kits: **205**
- 2nd-grade Kits: **221**
- 3rd-grade Kits: **207**
- 4th–5th Grade Kits: **147**

These kits were distributed through schools, public libraries, community events, and family engagement nights, extending math learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Math Fair and Educational Games – \$3,200.00

Funding supported the culminating Math Fair event and the purchase of reusable educational games designed to promote student engagement and mathematical thinking.

Items purchased included:

- Spinning Wheels, Plinko Boards, Dart Boards, Bowling Sets, Connect Four Games, Dice, cards, decorations, materials needed for each game, card games, posters, T-shirts, and refreshments.

Math Fair to showcase student learning and provide hands-on mathematical experiences. These materials were also used during the second half of the year to help Math Club students become

confident leaders with each game, so they could showcase their learning during the Math Fair Event. The games will continue to be used for future family math nights, school events, intervention activities, and student enrichment opportunities.

Extended Learning Opportunities – \$2,567.00

Funding was used to provide additional learning opportunities and instructional resources for students in Pre-K through 3rd-grade.

Purchases included:

- Educational board games to reinforce mathematical concepts through hands-on, collaborative learning experiences
- Math manipulatives to support instruction in number sense, operations, place value, problem-solving, and mathematical reasoning
- Summer math workbooks for Kindergarten through 3rd-grade students to encourage continued learning and help prevent summer learning loss

These resources were used to enhance classroom instruction, provide engaging learning experiences, and support students in developing confidence and fluency in mathematics both during and beyond the school day.

Student Incentives and Recognition – \$3,155.00

Student incentives were provided throughout the year to motivate participation, celebrate achievement, and build confidence in mathematics.

Incentives included:

- Math Club T-shirts, 100% Club T-shirts for students mastering:
 - Addition and Subtraction Facts (2nd-grade)
 - Multiplication and Division Facts (3rd-grade)
- Math Club Snacks (October–May)
- Student Awards and Certificates, End-of-Year Math Club Celebration, Recognition Events for High-Achieving Math Students, Goal-Based Incentives Awarded at Various Milestones

These incentives helped foster a positive math culture while encouraging perseverance, growth, and achievement.

Printing Services – \$867.96

Printing services were used to create instructional materials and family resources included in math kits and distributed during events.

Materials printed included:

- “What’s in My Kit?” Guides (K–5), RDW (Read, Draw, Write) Checklists, RDW Problem-Solving Booklets, “Math on the Go” Game Resources, Family Support Materials and Event Handouts
- Addition and Subtraction Fluency Booklets, Multiplication and Division Fluency Booklets, Word Problem Practice Booklets

These resources provided students and families with structured opportunities to practice mathematical skills at home.

Budget Total:

Category	Amount
Teacher Stipends	\$11, 775.59
Math Kits	\$28,434.45
Math Fair and Educational Games	\$3,200.00

Extended Learning Opportunities	\$2,567.00
Student Incentives and Recognitions	\$3,155.00
Printing Services	\$867.96
Total:	\$50,000.00

Phase One (July - December)

Goals

- Develop curriculum materials for fluency bags, workshops, and word problem strategy guides
- Recruit volunteers (students) for the peer tutoring program and design training materials
- Plan parent workshop content and logistics
- Recruit and begin an after-school math club for 1st-3rd-grade students
- Start ordering materials for math kits. Math Club starts
- Assemble Math kits
- Start Parent-Student workshops

Key Actions

- July
 - Meeting with St. Tammany Parish School System and Louisiana Department of Education representatives to discuss fellowship year
 - Kit collaboration meeting to review K-3rd-grade Math Kit Materials
- August-September
 - Administer the Read, Draw, Write (RDW) pre-assessment for K-3rd-grade students at Bayou Woods Elementary
- September
 - Math club recruitment and send home permission slips for Math Club
 - Parent-student workshop collaboration meeting
- October
 - Begin Math Club
 - Create and distribute a flyer for events at libraries
- November
 - Assemble math Kits
 - Family Night Event-Math Club students led math fluency stations
 - Parent-student workshop held at the Slidell branch library,
 - Parent-student workshop held at Pontchartrain branch library
- December
 - Parent-student workshop held at the Mandeville branch library
 - Parent-student workshop held at the Covington branch library

Phase One Accomplishments

- Successfully launched an after-school Math Club serving 1st through 3rd-grade students
- Developed grade-level math kits focused on fluency and problem-solving strategies
- Established partnerships with St. Tammany Parish Library branches to host family workshops
- Assembled a team of teachers and volunteers to assemble math kits for kindergarten through 5th-grade students
- Began distribution of family math kits and parent resources
- Conducted initial community outreach through social media, flyers, and school communications

Phase Two (January-March)

Goals

- Continue parent-student math workshops at local libraries and community sites
- Strengthen students' math fluency, confidence, and word-problem solving through the Math Club
- Provide families with hands-on math kits and strategies to support learning at home
- Collect feedback and monitor student growth through participation, reflection, and fluency progress
- Collaborate with school staff and volunteers to provide Saturday math tutoring sessions that support 3rd-grade students in developing math fluency, Read-Draw-Write problem-solving skills, and mathematical confidence

Key Actions

- January
 - Parent-student workshop held at the South Slidell Library
 - Continued weekly Math Club meetings focused on fluency games, RDW strategies, and problem-solving
- February
 - Parent-student workshop held at the Madisonville Library
 - Channel 13 filmed the [Math with Melton](#) event at Madisonville Library
 - Collaborated with the St. Tammany Children's Museum to host family math engagement events designed to provide students and families with hands-on opportunities to explore mathematics in meaningful and engaging ways
 - Offered Saturday math tutoring sessions (February and March) available to all third-grade students. Students were invited to attend any or all sessions based on their schedules and needs. These sessions provided targeted support for math fluency, Read-Draw-Write problem-solving, and overall mathematical confidence
- March
 - Parent-student workshop held at Lacombe Library
 - Parent-student workshop held at Bonne Ecole PTA event
 - Math Club students continued preparing to lead activities for the culminating Math Fair

Phase Two Accomplishments

- Continued the distribution of math fluency and problem-solving kits to students and families
- Strengthened partnerships with the St. Tammany Parish Library System and community organizations
- Continued weekly Math Club meetings focused on fluency, confidence, collaboration, and problem-solving
- Collaborated with school staff and volunteers to host Saturday math tutoring sessions during February and March that were open to all third-grade students. Students were invited to attend any or all sessions offered, providing additional opportunities to strengthen math fluency, develop Read-Draw-Write problem-solving strategies, and build mathematical confidence
- Established a partnership with the St. Tammany Children's Museum to expand family math engagement opportunities
- Provided students with leadership opportunities through peer collaboration and mentoring.
- Increased family involvement by providing strategies and resources to support math learning at home
- Continued preparations for the culminating Math Fair through student leadership development and activity planning

Phase Three (April-May)

Goals

- Complete final community events and math kit distributions
- Host a culminating Math Fair to showcase student growth, leadership, fluency, and confidence
- Invite stakeholders to the Math Fair.
- Celebrate student progress and the fellowship's impact on families, students, and the school community

Key Actions

- April
 - Continued Math Club activities and preparation for the Math Fair
 - Email Math Fair invitation to Stakeholders
 - Students practiced leading math fluency stations and explaining strategies to others
- May
 - Math kits distributed at Mayfield Elementary Jazz Fest
 - Culminating Math Fair held at Bayou Woods Elementary
 - Channel 13 filmed the [Math Fair](#)
 - Math Club students served as leaders and facilitators for hands-on math stations
 - Students were recognized for their progress, confidence, and achievement in math fluency
 - Distributed K-3rd grade math workbooks to continue summer learning

Phase Three Accomplishments

- Successfully hosted the culminating Math Fair at Bayou Woods Elementary, showcasing student learning, leadership, and mathematical thinking
- Empowered Math Club students to serve as leaders by facilitating interactive math stations for their peers, visitors, and invited Stakeholders
- Distributed additional math fluency and problem-solving kits at community events, bringing the total number of kits distributed to 780
- Celebrated student achievement through incentives, recognition events, and opportunities to showcase their growth and confidence in mathematics
- Strengthened home-school partnerships by providing families with summer learning resources and activities to support continued math learning beyond the fellowship year
- Increased student confidence and fluency through consistent participation in Math Club, family workshops, Saturday tutoring and hands-on mathematical experiences
- Expanded community awareness of the importance of math fluency and problem-solving through partnerships with schools, libraries, families, and community stakeholders

Overall Fellowship Outcomes

- Distributed 780 math fluency and problem-solving kits to students and families across St. Tammany Parish
- Hosted multiple parent-student workshops at public libraries and community events throughout the parish
- Established and maintained an after-school Math Club, October-May, for 1st through 3rd-grade students, focused on fluency, confidence, and problem-solving
- Engaged students in peer leadership opportunities through Math Club and the schoolwide Math Fair
- Strengthened home-school partnerships by equipping families with games, strategies, and resources to support math learning at home

- Increased student confidence and enthusiasm toward mathematics through hands-on, collaborative learning experiences

Impact on Students and Families

One of the most meaningful outcomes of this fellowship was witnessing students develop confidence in their mathematical abilities. Students who were initially hesitant to participate in math discussions became active problem solvers and leaders. Through games, peer collaboration, and hands-on activities, students learned that mathematics can be engaging, achievable, and enjoyable. Math was made fun!

Families shared that they appreciated the opportunity to learn alongside their children and expressed gratitude for receiving resources they could use immediately at home. Many parents stated they didn't realize how simple math games could be to help their kids at home. Parent workshops provided practical strategies to strengthen the connection between school and home and to help families feel more confident in supporting math learning.

Community Impact

This fellowship expanded mathematics learning beyond the walls of Bayou Woods Elementary. Through partnerships with libraries, community organizations, the children's museum and local schools, students and families throughout St. Tammany Parish gained access to high-quality math resources and learning opportunities. The fellowship demonstrated how meaningful community partnerships can increase educational access and create lasting support systems for students and families.

In addition, fellowship resources and information were shared during a presentation at the 2026 Teacher Leader Summit. Through this session, educators were introduced to materials and instructional strategies designed to strengthen mathematics teaching and learning, equipping them to positively impact student achievement in their classrooms and school communities.

In Conclusion

Through this fellowship, I was able to bring mathematics beyond the classroom and into homes, libraries, community events, and community partnerships throughout St. Tammany Parish. By providing take-home math kits, hosting parent-student workshops, leading an after-school Math Club, Saturday tutoring, collaborating with the St. Tammany Children's Museum, and organizing a schoolwide Math Fair, this initiative helped students build fluency, confidence, and joy in mathematics.

Throughout the fellowship year, 780 math kits were distributed to students and families, providing hands-on resources that encouraged mathematical thinking and family engagement beyond the school day. These efforts strengthened home-school partnerships and equipped families with practical strategies to support math learning at home.

One of the most meaningful outcomes of this fellowship was seeing students develop confidence in their mathematical abilities. Students who were once hesitant to participate in math discussions became leaders, problem solvers, and facilitators who shared their mathematical thinking with peers, families, and visitors. Through games, collaboration, and hands-on learning experiences, students discovered that mathematics can be engaging, achievable, and enjoyable.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have served as a Louisiana Public Interest Fellow and to have used this work to make mathematics more engaging, accessible, and empowering for students. The impact of this fellowship will continue long after the fellowship year ends through the resources, relationships, and confidence that were built along the way. I'm excited to continue to see the impact continue.

Future Impact and Sustainability

The work of this fellowship will continue beyond the fellowship year through the resources, partnerships, and programs established during its implementation. The math kits, games, and instructional materials developed through this initiative will remain available to support students and families in the years to come. Additionally, before school let out, summer math workbooks were provided to all kindergarten through third-grade students to help them continue sharpening their math skills during the summer months and reduce learning loss between school years.

The after-school Math Club model and family engagement activities have created a framework that can be replicated and expanded in future years. Future opportunities may include hosting a school-wide Math Fair as a family engagement night, where students and families can participate in hands-on math activities, games, and problem-solving challenges together. Partnerships with the St. Tammany Parish Library System, the St. Tammany Children's Museum, schools, and community organizations have opened doors for continued collaboration and outreach opportunities.

Most importantly, the fellowship has helped foster a culture where students view themselves as capable mathematicians. By building confidence, fluency, and problem-solving skills, students are better prepared for future academic success and lifelong learning.

As I move forward, I plan to continue advocating for meaningful family engagement, hands-on learning experiences, and equitable access to high-quality mathematics resources. The lessons learned and relationships formed through this fellowship will continue to influence my work and expand opportunities for students throughout our community, making math fun for everyone.

Contact Information

- Carra “Beth” Melton, 2025 Louisiana Public Interest Fellow
- Email: mathwithmelton2025@gmail.com
- School System: [St. Tammany Parish School System](#)
- School Name: [Bayou Woods Elementary School](#)