



# EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER & LEADER of the Year

The Department is excited to announce the ten finalists for the **2026 Early Childhood Teacher and Leader of the Year award**. These ten finalists will participate in an interview process, and the overall Early Childhood Teacher of the Year honoree and the overall Early Childhood Leader of the Year honoree will be announced at the **19th Annual Excellent Educators Awards Gala** that will be held on the evening of **July 26th, 2025**. This exciting event is co-sponsored by [Dream Teachers](https://www.dreamteachers.com). Help us in congratulating these wonderful educators!

2026 Teacher of the Year Finalists		
Finalist Name	Parish	Site Name
Ana Qassem	Plaquemines	Belle Chasse Primary (Head Start)
Brooklynn Johnson-Botley	Allen	Kinder Head Start
Demika Gilmore	East Baton Rouge	LSU Early Childhood Education Lab Preschool
Shannon Catanzaro	Jefferson	Carousel Preschool
Sharekia Winn	Red River	Red River Head Start
2026 Leader of the Year Finalists		
Finalist Name	Parish	Site Name
Delishia Wilson	Tangipahoa	Building Blocks Early Learning Center
Devonda Warren	Tangipahoa	Explore and Learn Early Learning Center
Jennifer Stevenson	Washington	The Garden of Knowledge
Shannon Johns	Rapides	Cenla Christian Childcare Centers: Pineville, Kolin, AEX, Libuse, Winnfield, Woodworth
Dr. Sondra Washington	Iberville	Chiefcornerstone Daycare Center

For questions about the Early Childhood Teacher and Leader of the Year awards program, please contact [shallan.jones@la.gov](mailto:shallan.jones@la.gov).