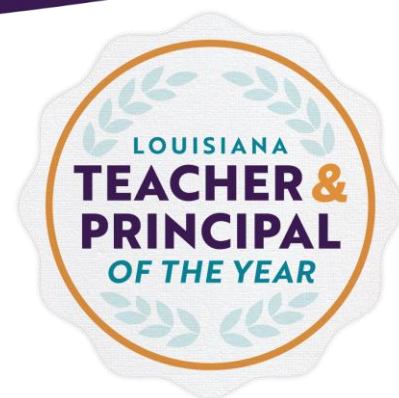




Teacher and Principal of the Year

2027 State-Level Honorees

The Louisiana Department of Education is proud to announce the 2027 Teacher and Principal of the Year state-level honorees. These educators are making exceptional gains with students, guiding them to achieve at the highest levels in the state. Their commitment to student success exemplifies Louisiana's teaching profession. All Teacher and Principal of the Year finalists and semifinalists were honored at the 20th Annual Cecil J. Picard Educator Excellence Gala, which was held at the World War II Museum in New Orleans. This exciting event was co-sponsored by [Dream Teachers](#).

Congratulations to these outstanding educators!

Alisha Butler, 2027 Louisiana Teacher of the Year

Alisha Butler believes the ultimate purpose of education is not simply to provide access, but to cultivate independence. As the English Dual Enrollment teacher and Intermediate Braille Instructor at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired (LSVI) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, she designs engaging, evidence-based learning experiences that empower students to become confident, capable, resilient, self-advocating learners prepared for college, careers, and life. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary English and Mathematics Education from Southeastern Louisiana University and a Master of Education in Educational Technology and Leadership from the University of Louisiana Monroe.

Beyond her classroom, Butler extends her impact across the school community as LSVI's K-12 instructional coach and interim technology coordinator, leading schoolwide initiatives that strengthen teaching and learning. She partners with educators to design accessible, high-quality instruction that equips students to navigate barriers while maintaining high expectations for every learner. When staffing needs arise, she willingly teaches additional content areas, including physical science, geometry, and middle school mathematics, ensuring students continue receiving rigorous, uninterrupted instruction.

A nationally certified Braille educator and Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, Butler is one of fewer than 500 educators nationwide to hold the National Certification in Unified English Braille. She has served on three Louisiana Department of Education LEAP review committees and contributes to national accessibility initiatives through ACT's TACs Engaged with Blind and Visually Impaired Learners project, strengthening accessible instructional and assessment practices across Louisiana and beyond.

Guided by the belief that every student deserves access to exceptional learning opportunities, Butler shares her expertise through professional learning, peer-reviewed publications, and presentations at state, national, and international conferences focused on Universal Design for Learning, accessible instructional design, and technology integration. As Louisiana's 2027 Teacher of the Year, Butler is

committed to inspiring educators to embrace lifelong learning, expand opportunities for all learners, and create classrooms where every student develops the confidence, skills, and independence to thrive long after leaving the classroom.

Lauren Rentrop, 2027 Louisiana Principal of the Year

Lauren Rentrop believes the ultimate purpose of school leadership is not simply to manage a school, but to empower people to achieve more than they thought possible. As principal of Patterson Junior High School in Patterson, Louisiana, she leads with visibility, service, and high expectations, believing that meaningful relationships, shared responsibility, and unwavering commitment create the conditions for students, educators, and schools to thrive. She earned both her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and Master of Education from Nicholls State University.

Since assuming leadership in 2019, Rentrop has transformed Patterson Junior High through a relentless focus on developing people, improving instruction, and fostering continuous improvement. When she became principal, the school had been identified as Urgent Intervention Required due to declining student performance. Under her leadership, Patterson Junior High has increased its School Performance Score by 18.1 points in six years, earned recognition as a Louisiana "comeback campus" for surpassing pre-pandemic achievement levels, and most recently became the highest-performing middle school in St. Mary Parish on the 2025 Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP).

Rentrop builds leadership capacity by coaching educators, creating opportunities for collaboration, and developing systems that empower teachers to strengthen their practice and students to achieve at high levels. She believes leadership means serving alongside others, building trust, celebrating success, making difficult decisions with integrity, and stepping into classrooms whenever students and teachers need support. Guided by the belief that every child deserves outstanding teaching and every educator deserves opportunities to grow, Rentrop builds meaningful partnerships with families, staff, and the community while creating systems that sustain excellence beyond any one leader.

As Louisiana's Principal of the Year, Rentrop is committed to inspiring current and future school leaders to lead with passion, guide with grace, and recognize that the greatest impact of leadership is measured not by the success of one leader, but by the educators developed, students empowered, and communities strengthened.

2027 Teacher of the Year Division-Level Honorees

- 2027 Louisiana Elementary School Teacher of the Year
 - Corey Elizabeth Gilfoil, West Feliciana Parish
- 2027 Louisiana Middle School Teacher of the Year
 - Bridget Zeringue, Iberville Parish
- 2027 Louisiana High School Teacher of the Year
 - Kathy Michelle Blaney, Rapides Parish

2027 Principal of the Year Division-Level Honorees

- 2027 Louisiana Elementary School Principal of the Year
 - Casey Cheramie, Lafourche Parish
- 2027 Louisiana Middle School Principal of the Year
 - Terez LeBlanc, Terrebonne Parish
- 2027 Louisiana High School Principal of the Year
 - Dr. Holly Franks Boffy, Lafayette Parish

2027 Teacher of the Year Finalists

- Monica Speyrer, Caddo Parish
- Hillary Severin, DeSoto Parish
- Alys LeBlanc, Lafayette Parish
- Hannah Smith, Plaquemines Parish
- Misleydis Almeida de la Cruz, West Baton Rouge Parish

2027 Principal of the Year Finalists

- Chuck Normand, Avoyelles Parish
- Alyshia Coulson, Bossier Parish
- Kalandra Watkins Loyd, Concordia Parish
- Doll Ann Johnson, Ouachita Parish
- Kandice Broussard, Vermilion Parish

2027 Teacher of the Year Semifinalists

- Kayla LeJeune, Allen Parish
- Melanie Leigh Machen, Bossier Parish
- Brilee Little, Cameron Parish
- Jennifer Woodard, Central Community School District
- Macy Garner, Claiborne Parish
- Huijing Yuan Yuan Laoshi, East Baton Rouge Parish
- Lauren Ortego, Evangeline Parish
- Samantha Lemoine, Grant Parish
- Brittany Delcambre, Iberia Parish
- Diana Price, LaSalle Parish
- Jonathan Parish, Natchitoches Parish
- Kenneth Brown, St. Bernard Parish
- Sonya George, Union Parish
- Amanda King, Vernon Parish
- Haley Odom, Zachary Community School District

2027 Principal of the Year Semifinalists

- Shelly Strother, Ascension Parish
- Melanie Bellamy, Assumption Parish

- Douglas Salvaterra, Bienville Parish
- Shannon Wall, Caddo Parish
- Angela Guillory, Calcasieu Parish
- Brian Anderson, DeSoto Parish
- Amy Gobert, Jefferson Davis Parish
- Lacey Holcomb, Lincoln Parish
- Wesley Howard, Livingston Parish
- Christy Dugas, Rapides Parish
- Lisa Perrin, St. Charles Parish
- April Guidry, St. Landry Parish
- Gina Ann Brown, St. Tammany Parish
- Sharess Every Baptiste, Tangipahoa Parish
- Jacquelyn Elizabeth White Bristow, West Feliciana Parish