

# Application: 0000000094

Olivia Francois - leave@apsb.org  
2025-2026 New Teacher of the Year Application

## Summary

ID: 0000000094  
Last submitted: Jan 27 2025 07:23 AM (CST)

## Applicant Information

Completed - Jan 27 2025

## Form for "Applicant Information"

This is my form.

### Applicant Name

Olivia Francois

### Applicant School Name

Dutchtown High School

### Applicant School System

Ascension Public Schools

### Grade(s) Taught

10th

### Subject(s) Taught

Civics

**Certification Type/Number**

XXXXXXXXXX

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**Applicant Email Address**

[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX](#)

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**Applicant Phone Number**

XXX-XXX-XXXX

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**Bio:** Add your professional bio in the textbox below. Please follow the guidelines outlined below. (250 words or less) Please complete your professional biography in 3rd person, as it would appear in print. In your bio, please include the following items: 1. The grade level and subject you currently teach (TOYs) or the grades at your school (POYs) 2. The name of your school, including city and state 3. Degrees you hold include the institution where they were received (i.e., Bachelor of Science in Education from the Louisiana State University) In your bio, please follow the following style guidelines: 1. Spell out your degrees (i.e., Bachelor of Art not BA) 2. Only capitalize a subject area when it's a language (i.e., capitalize English but not calculus) 3. Use your first and last name in the first reference, but your last name only on second and subsequent references 4. Spell out all acronyms the first time they are used

Ms. Olivia Francois is a 10th-grade civics teacher at Dutchtown High School in Geismar, LA. She earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Political Science from Columbia University and a Master's of Education degree in Learning and Design from Vanderbilt University. While earning her master's degree, Francois was recognized with a Outstanding Professional Promise award for her leadership within her cohort as well as her critical and humanizing approach within her educational philosophy and capstone. Francois believes that all students have unique backgrounds and experiences that are vital to the learning environment and process; particularly, she believes in leveraging students' individual strengths with new knowledge, skills, and personal development to meet their full potential. Francois accomplishes this by promoting students' voices and choices through self-regulated learning and differentiated activities. As one of the Speech and Debate coaches, Francois implores students to dig deep in their interpretations for their performances to bring students the joy and satisfaction she experienced in high school as a competitor. Additionally, as a former Griffin herself, Francois supports the "Every Griffin" mentality wholeheartedly! Francois encourages the Griffins she teaches to lean into school spirit and make the most out of their high school experiences while shooting for the stars with their future plans. After all, the encouragement from her own teachers at Dutchtown is what led to her accomplishments and return to being a Griffin once again!

**Original Social Media Quote:** Add an original social media quote (that could be used in print) in the textbox below that captures the essence of you as an educator. (280 character limit)

I am meant for teaching and teaching is meant for me!

## Reflection Questions

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## Form for "Reflection Questions"

This is my form.

**Reflection Question 1** Add your response to the following prompt in the textbox below. Note- You may also submit supplemental materials to accompany your response in the last step in this application portal. (Documents may be in any format, such as a chart, news article, video, photos, etc.)

Why did you decide to become an educator? What impact have you had on students in your first few months in the classroom? In your response, provide specific examples of how you currently and will continue to meet Louisiana's educational priorities: (You may write about one or more priorities.)

- Ensure every student is on track to a professional career, college degree, or service
- Remove barriers and create equitable, inclusive learning experiences for all children
- Provide the highest quality teaching and learning environment
- Cultivate high-impact systems, structures, and partnerships
- Develop and retain a diverse, highly effective educator workforce (750 words or less)

I have spent all of my life in school but my time in the school house has gone beyond the 13 required years of elementary and secondary education; I actually grew up in schools. My mom is a well-respected educator and I spent my formative years watching her connect with students, decorate classrooms, and create lesson plans. So, it should come as no surprise that teaching has always been on my radar. As a little girl, I often pretended to have my own classroom, handing out blank loose leaf as worksheets to stuffed animals and dolls. In high school, I participated in the Student Teaching and Reaching (STAR) program in which I worked with Civics teachers at the middle and high school level, creating lessons and grading papers. I fell in love with what I was doing but in college, I tried to step away from education, deciding to study Political Science and heeding the advice of the many adults around me who always mentioned teaching not being 'enough' for me. And yet, no matter what I did, I found myself in positions that connected me to students. From Residential Life to being a college application mentor, my purpose revolved around supporting the growth of students of all backgrounds. Even in classes that seemingly had nothing to do with education as a concept, I found myself making connections — writing papers that questioned education in the United States or the importance of technical education in Korea. The summer before my senior year of college, I reflected on these experiences, realizing that it was time to face the music — education was my passion and there was no getting away from that fact. I knew I wanted to become an educator but was unsure in what capacity. This led me to a master's program at Vanderbilt University in which I studied students' perceived belonging in educational spaces through their physical movement within these spaces. Through this program and my research I was able to ask educational questions and discuss concepts that I never thought of before. I was in awe of my peers who had been or were planning to be classroom teachers; the way they thought of and described teaching as an art was something I had never been able to fully articulate before. It was their influence that led me back to Louisiana and Ascension Parish in pursuit of being a teacher. After my first few months as a teacher, I can confidently say that I have genuinely never been so intellectually stimulated or challenged in my life! I seek to be an effective teacher for every student which has pushed me to develop differentiated lessons and find ways to meet each student where they are, pushing them to meet self-set and teacher-set goals. I truly believe that to successfully move through the educational system they must be familiar

with the system and its patterns; by creating note-taking, test-taking, and reading analysis lessons that are built on the class material, each student is able to develop the skills necessary to do well in my class and beyond! As a result, my students are able to confidently take notes in class, analyze difficult passages, and notice the patterns in tests to support their learning achievements. These practical lessons in addition to the in-between-learning moments are what allow me to support a meaningful high school experience for every Griffin I encounter. Like most educators, I have always loved school (and still do), but this is not true for most students. I faced this reality in the first few weeks of being a teacher and have had to find new ways to get my students wanting to learn even if just a little bit. Connecting with students and using the 'young-teacher' status to my advantage has been what has worked for me. I get their jokes and internet references; I even make some of my own. Validating my students' individuality and humanity while establishing my own is what enforces our meaningful relationships and experiences at Dutchtown High. Even as I age out of young-teacher status I will continue to validate my students and uphold what it means to be the kind of teacher students remember.

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**Reflection Question 2** Add your response to the following prompt in the textbox below. You may also submit supplemental materials to accompany your response in the last step in this application portal. (Documents may be in any format, such as a chart, news article, video, photos, etc.)

There are many challenges to attracting students to pursue a career in education. How did your expectations of teaching align to the realities of teaching? What would you say to young people about why pursuing a career in education is a good choice? (750 words or less)

It is difficult to compare my 'expectation vs. reality' of teaching to that of other new teachers; fortunately (and unfortunately) I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of education since I was born. Due to this, I am unsure that any moment of the past few months has come as a complete shock to me. I understood the workload, administrative tasks and training, the relationships with students, the copier qualms, and so on. Nevertheless, there may be one thing that caught me slightly off guard: just how much I love my job. As a first year teacher, there are often questions about how you are faring. Have you cried yet? Are you overwhelmed? No one leads with - are you loving it? And yet I can confidently answer: surprisingly not, a bit, and more than anything. There are tough days, but those would happen at any job. Even on my rougher days, I am grateful to be interacting with my kids, teaching them, and learning from them. Many people are quick to write off teaching as a backup plan or the last resort for dreams that don't pan out, making famous the line "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach". However, unlike the George Bernard Shaw line, I believe there may be a better slogan to sum up the profession: not just anyone can, or should, become an educator. Teaching is a devalued career pursuit; the only way to improve its public perception and societal value, is to first convince educators themselves of their inherent value, skill, and success. This thinking creates the foundation for my pitch to potential educators – teaching is not for everyone but it should be for you. Teaching is everything you have heard it is – challenging, rewarding, exhausting– and so much more. As a potential educator, you are enticed with shaping young minds but it is less discussed how your own intellectual capabilities will soar. Education is a highly skilled career path, requiring educators to not only synthesize but put into practice the theories and philosophies of varied fields to serve the broadest clientele. These tasks are not for those 'who can't do'. In fact, the requirements of teachers are for those who do best. The job is not for everyone. But if you seek social connection, to support the development of others, and deep personal growth, education is the career path for you. If you are up for a challenge that is rewarding like no other in which you can see short and long term accomplishment, you are the type of person meant for teaching.

**Reflection Question 3** Add your response to the following prompt in the textbox below. You may also submit supplemental materials to accompany your response in the last step in this application portal. (Documents may be in any format, such as a chart, news article, video, photos, etc.)

How do you ensure that you are continuously growing as an educator? Where do you want to be professionally in five years? Ten years? (750 words or less)

I vividly remember my freshman year convocation on my first night at Columbia University. I sat between my parents, idly listening to university leadership greet the new class of 2023. I will admit – I was not paying close attention; I was too nervous about my parents leaving and being alone in the big city. However, there was one piece of advice that slipped in through my inattentiveness. Dean James Valentini (Deantini) is notorious in the College for his motto. At nearly every Columbia College convocation and commencement, Deantini discusses the importance of Shunryu Suzuki's Beginner's Mind philosophy. In particular, he emphasizes that through this mentality anyone can achieve a level of openness and eagerness that will allow them to continuously develop while leaving behind preconceived notions and stagnation. While my mind raced that night, my ears caught Deantini quoting Suzuki, "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few." It often feels like second nature to rejoice in accomplishment and experience but this triumph can act as a double edged sword. In education, veteran teachers are revered; for them, classroom management is a breeze and lessons practically plan themselves. And yet, it is easy to become so comfortable in routine that you forget the excitement of learning new tricks to the trade. Comfort, however, does not negate growth and success; in fact, I would argue that comfort is the foundation of success in education but so too is challenge and excitement that is found with a beginner's mind. As a new teacher, this message never strays from my mind because I actually am the beginner. I do not struggle to use my beginner's mind currently because I cannot escape the status just yet. My beginner's mind is fueled with excitement of teaching as an art, a science, and a historical anthology. I am constantly learning from my peers and challenged by lesson planning, time restraints, the abundance of opportunity, my students, and so on. As a more seasoned teacher in five to ten years, I want to support other teachers as they seek to grow and develop. I hope to work with classroom educators while pursuing a doctoral degree, creating a reciprocal relationship in which we challenge each other to think more deeply about ourselves and our instructional strategies. In a perfect world, I would continue being in the classroom while pursuing my degree so that I could continue learning how to be a better educator. However, no matter what, I will seek out any and all opportunities to connect with students and support their journey to becoming who they want and are meant to be. Perhaps, through this I could even replicate Deantini's modus operandi and spread the message of the importance of the Beginner's Mind.

## Teaching Video and Lesson Plan

Completed - Jan 27 2025

## Form for "Teaching Video and Lesson Plan"

**TEACHING VIDEO/LESSON PLAN:** Add the YouTube video URL in the textbox below. Upload a copy of your lesson plan with your application in the last step in this application portal.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fczuq3IHCsI>

## Signatures/Approval

Completed - Jan 27 2025

### Form for "Signatures/Approval"

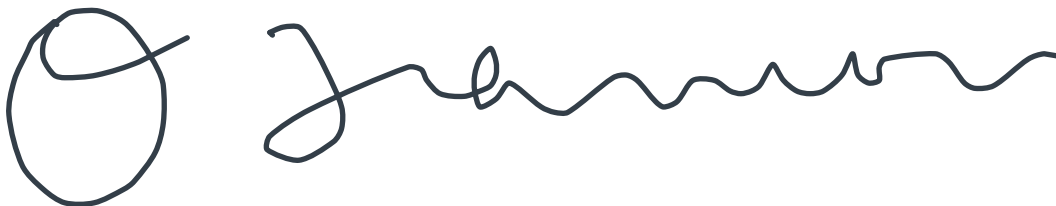
This is my form.

**Principal/School Leader Name**

XXXXXXXXXXXX

#### Applicant Signature

Signing here indicates that your supervisor supports the submission of your application and all information presented in this application is true.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Francois". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "O" and a long, wavy line extending to the right.

## Consent forms, Lesson plan, and additional documents

Completed - Jan 27 2025

[NTOY Olivia Francois Lesson Materials 2](#)

Filename: NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Lesson\_Materials\_2.pdf Size: 41.8 kB

[NTOY Olivia Francois Lesson Materials](#)

Filename: NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Lesson\_Materials.pdf Size: 30.2 kB

[NTOY Olivia Francois Letter of Rec 1](#)

Filename: NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Letter\_of\_Rec\_1.pdf Size: 78.7 kB

[NTOY Olivia Francois Letter of Rec 3](#)



**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Letter\_of\_Rec\_3.pdf **Size:** 30.8 kB

## **[NTOY Olivia Francois Letter of Rec 2](#)**

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Letter\_of\_Rec\_2.pdf **Size:** 61.7 kB

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Resume.pdf **Size:**

49.9 kB

92.0 kB

## **[NTOY Olivia Francois Candidate Consent](#)**

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Candidate\_Consent.pdf **Size:** 3.1 MB

## **[NTOY Olivia Francois Slides - Google Docs](#)**

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Slides\_-\_Google\_Docs.pdf **Size:** 1.7 MB

## **[NTOY Olivia Francois Student Consents](#)**

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Student\_Consents.pdf **Size:** 20.9 MB

## **[NTOY Olivia Francois Lesson Plans](#)**

**Filename:** NTOY\_Olivia\_Francois\_Lesson\_Plans.pdf **Size:** 24.0 MB

Goal Setting Chart – Students have been working on these intermittently throughout the past two months

Learning Target	Slides that connect to this content	How do you feel about this content? (Completely, somewhat, or not at all confident)	Do you think you need to improve your understanding?
I can describe the documents and ideas that influenced the framers of the US government.			
I can identify and differentiate between different types of government.			
I can describe the historical events that led to the creation of the US government.			
I can describe the three branches of government and their interactions.			
I can describe elections in the US including their types and processes.			
I can describe political ideologies, political parties, and other political organizations in the US.			
I can analyze primary and secondary sources and apply this analysis to my writing.			
I can describe the role of citizens in government.			
I can describe US domestic policy and its impacts on citizens.			
I can describe the history of US foreign policy, including how the president influences this policy.			
I can outline the development of civil rights and liberties in			

the US.			
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Where am I going?	
My Goal:	
Where am I now?	
What do I already know well?	What do I need to learn better?
How will I close the gap?	
What I will do:	
When I will do it:	
With help from:	
Using these materials:	

Study Plan – Students utilized the chart above to create the study plan below right before the lesson segment in the video

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In-Class Instructions:

1. Based on your review of the goal setting chart - decide which learning targets you want to work on before the LEAP.
  - a. “What do I know well? What do I need to work on?”
2. Then make a day-by-day plan to work on these
  - a. “What will I realistically accomplish?”

What Learning Targets do I think I need to focus on?	
Which LTs did Ms. Francois say I should work on?	
Wednesday	What will I study? (LTs) How will I study? For how long will I study?
Thursday	What will I study? (LTs) How will I study? For how long will I study?
Friday	What will I study? (LTs) How will I study? For how long will I study?
Saturday	What will I study? (LTs) How will I study? For how long will I study?
Sunday	What will I study? (LTs) How will I study? For how long will I study?

Objective #1: Describe and analyze unfamiliar sources and connect them to concepts covered in class

Instructions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read/view and analyze your source. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is there a title?</li> <li>b. Is there a date?</li> <li>c. What words/images are on the source?</li> <li>d. What are the most important sections of the image?</li> <li>e. Even if I don't know the specific topic being covered, how can I make connections to things I have learned?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Share with your group what you have learned and fill in the chart below. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What theme/message does my source show? How do I know this?</li> <li>b. What concepts have we covered in class that helped me figure out the message?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Compare your sources and discuss what theme all of your sources cover. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What do all the sources have in common?</li> <li>b. How are they different?</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Then create an argument using your sources! <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do these sources use a positive or negative lens to describe the topic?</li> <li>b. Do the sources show a change over time?</li> <li>c. How can each source be used to support the claim?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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Source 1 Description:	
Source 2 Description:	
Source 3 Description:	
Overall Concept Covered in all Sources:	
Connections to Class Material:	
What claim can you make about the concept using these sources: (i.e. Civil Rights in the United States have been greatly protected over time.)	
Describe how each source supports this claim:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>

## **Letter Of Recommendation: Olivia Francios**

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with much enthusiasm that the Civics department at Dutchtown High School recommends Ms. Olivia Francois as the New Teacher of the Year. Ms. Francios has been a team player since the first day that we met her. All of us remember our first day of being a teacher. Walking into a brand new school and having to introduce yourself to people that you have never met before can be extremely intimidating. From the moment she arrived, she could not wait to introduce herself to us and instantly tried to get to know more about us.

Throughout her time with us, she has consistently offered us a fresh perspective regarding methods of instruction within our PLCs. For example, we struggled in creating an interesting way to teach about the different types of elections. Ms. Francois suggested connecting recall elections to impeachment, a topic we had previously discussed earlier in the semester. By doing this, we are able to introduce a new topic and connect it to prior ideas that we have covered, which will give students a better chance of retaining the information. In the end, the students were able to link the different types of elections to basic Civics principles such as separation of powers and popular sovereignty. She has created challenging yet fair common assessments for our students to use. Being able to offer this insight has been a tremendous help, especially since Civics is transitioning to be a LEAP tested subject.

Lastly, Olivia demonstrates classroom management skills that are among the best at our school. It can often be a challenge to adhere to our schools policy for dress code and also maintain a positive relationship with the students. Many students may feel targeted due to the confrontational nature of enforcing dress code. Ms. Francois handles this task like a pro. She knows exactly how to hold her students accountable while maintaining the positive relationship that so many of our students need. Her students often say that she has made an indelible mark in their educational journeys. In only four months on the job, Ms. Francois has shown the wisdom of a fifteen year veteran of teaching. We are proud to call her a colleague and know that she has a bright future ahead in the field of education. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the Civics teachers within our department:.

Sincerely,

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To Whom it May Concern:

I am Kristen Higdon, a teacher at Dutchtown High School, and I am writing to you in support of Olivia Francois as your New Teacher of the Year. I have had the pleasure of supporting Olivia since August as her Leadership Team support person. Upon observing her, one would never know that she was a first year teacher. She, of course, displays qualities of a good teacher as she is organized, efficient and compassionate. However, there is a unique quality to her instruction that one doesn't always find in teachers, especially a first-year teacher.

Olivia has an innate ability to plan lessons and activities that not only engage her students but also keep the class' end objective in mind. She is constantly having them self reflect all while doing her own reflection as a teacher. She is not afraid to go back to the drawing board, so to speak, to tweak or rearrange a plan or method if it is not reaping the most benefits for her students.

The timidity that is often seen in first year teachers is hard to find in her planning and instruction. In fact, she relishes in the notion of students going beyond the lesson and pushing their thinking to a new level. Olivia encourages creativity and individualism all while preparing students for the civics state test at the end of the semester. I have been constantly impressed with her ability to meet students' needs all while creating rigorous and creative lessons that make me want to be a student in her class or implement them in my own classroom.

As an alumna of Dutchtown High School, Olivia has embraced the spirit and culture here by getting involved in various clubs and activities. She is a sponsor for the Speech and Debate club as well as often gets involved in other social events on campus. Her love of being a Griffin emanates beyond the walls of her classroom through her willingness to help her students as well as her colleagues.

I could not be more excited to see where Olivia's career takes her. She embodies what the New Teacher of the Year honor represents, and you could not find a more deserving candidate.

Sincerely,