

## 2024 App Round 1: Justin Wax

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### Louisiana Department of Education: A Call For Excellent Educators

Which award do you want to apply for?

Principal of the Year

The Louisiana Department of Education recognizes that great teachers and school leaders are critical to student success. Annually, the Department, in partnership with

Dream Teachers

and the

Louisiana Association of Principals

, honors the state's most exceptional educators through the Teacher and Principal of the Year programs.

The Louisiana Teacher and Principal of the Year awards programs provide an opportunity to acknowledge those educators who are making exceptional gains with students. Their commitment to student success exemplifies Louisiana's teaching profession.

**Criteria- An exemplary candidate for Teacher and Principal of the Year is one who:**

- Demonstrates **excellence and expertise** in the field, **guiding students** (and for principals, also teachers) of **all** backgrounds and abilities to **achieve success**.
- Demonstrates **leadership and innovation** in and outside of the school building walls and **helps students/teachers to excel**.
- **Builds collaborative relationships** with **colleagues, students and families** to create a **school environment** that is respectful, inclusive and **positively impacts** student growth and achievement.
- **Deliberately connects** the classroom/school to the **community** to positively **impact the students, school, and community**.
- Is **inspiring, compelling, professional**, and expresses themselves in an **engaging and clear way**, and demonstrates the ability to **connect with and represent** the state.

#### Resources

To access application resources and materials, visit the

Award's page Resource Library.

**Naming Convention** - When uploading documents within your application, please title each document using this naming convention:

TOY or POY, First and Last Name, Document Name. For example, "TOY-Mary-Smith\_Reflection Response Upload"

#### I. Basic Information

**First Name**

Justin

**Last Name**

Wax

**Title**

Mr.

**Phone number with area code (preferable cell). List phone number with hyphens. For example, 225-342-1234.**

[REDACTED]

**Does this phone number receive text messages?**

Yes

**Email Address**

[REDACTED]

**Division Level**

Middle School

If you serve students across multiple division levels, please check the box below.

How many years have you been the principal at this particular school? (enter numeric value, such as "6.")

4

How many total years total have you been a principal at any/all schools combined? (Enter a numeric value, such as "12.")

4

If you served in either of the following roles, please select the checkbox(es) and then add the number of years served for each role in the textbox(s) below.

Assistant Principal

Number of years served as Assistant Principal

5

Are you a member of the Louisiana Association of Principals? (Note: Membership is not a requirement for being named a state-level honoree. If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Joseph David at [joseph.david@laprincipals.org](mailto:joseph.david@laprincipals.org).)

Yes

**Professional Bio** Add your professional bio in the textbox below. Your Professional Bio should be written in third person. (250 words or less) Please follow the guidelines outlined [\[here\]](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17awwZvUuZgIN5coh3oo-M_DtpR8qrEJvU4FObe1zJyY/edit?usp=sharing)).

**Add Professional Bio Here**

Justin Wax is currently serving his fourth year as principal at Denham Springs Junior High in Denham Springs, Louisiana. Under Wax's leadership, the school is recognized for its excellence, including 2024 Top Gains Honoree and U.S. News and World Report's Best Middle Schools for 2024 and 2025.

Wax earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, minoring in Leadership Development from Louisiana State University, pursued his passion for education via alternative certification and obtained a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Southeastern Louisiana University.

A leader in student advocacy, Wax has taken innovative steps to address teen vaping, offering restorative justice vaping education alternatives to suspension and facilitating the installation of campus vape detection technology. His efforts include legislative involvement, speaking before the Louisiana House Judiciary, effectively advocating to raise the minimum age to purchase vaping products.

Dedicated to STEM education, Wax pioneers an aquaponics lab, providing hands-on opportunities to conserve endangered Louisiana plant species and teaching sustainable produce cultivation.

Wax is a member of Louisiana Association of Principals, and Vice President of the Livingston Parish Principals Association. Wax served four years as President of Mighty Moms, a nonprofit that "nurtures hungry students to success." Wax is a church deacon and married father of three.

Committed to equity, Wax partners with community leaders to eliminate student fees, ensuring access for his economically disadvantaged students. Wax currently supports a rapidly growing language learner population. His educational philosophy centers on fostering innovation, collaboration, and equity to prepare students for lifelong success.

**II. School Related Information**

**School "System/District" Name (please start typing). Select "Other" if your school system isn't listed.**

Livingston Parish

**If your school system/district was not listed above, please enter here**

**"School" Name (please start typing). School name is required. If your school is not listed, please proceed to enter name in next box.**

If your school is not listed, please enter the school name in the textbox below. Add full school name, such as "L.B. Landry Walker High School" and not "Landry Walker." You may find the full school name in the LA School and Center Finder List, see

here

**If your school is not listed above, please enter here**

Denham Springs Junior High School

**Number of students at the school:**

817

**Were you at a different school last year?**

No

**Grade(s) at Your Current School:**

Sixth, Seventh, Eighth

**School Website URL (optional)**

<https://sites.google.com/livingstonschools.net/dsjh/home>

**Current School Address**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**School Phone Number (including area code). List phone number with hyphens, such as 123-456-7890.**

[REDACTED]

**Region Number-** Click the Region List link to find the region number for your school system parish. If you are a charter/independent school, please select the parish where your school is located. For example, if your school is Lake Charles Charter, even though your school is not part of Calcasieu Parish, you would select region 5 as your school is located in the Calcasieu Parish "region." See [Region List Here.]

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LtUW52cn-8sz16CgEwIMTGvgjqRtGtGKL8YZGu7SBtY/edit?usp=sharing> )

**Check Your Region Number**

2

### **\*III. Media Related Information**

**Professional Facebook profile/name (optional)**

[REDACTED]

**Professional Instagram profile (optional)**

[REDACTED]

**Twitter handle (optional)**

**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)**

You can still count on me. If you ever counted on me to stay after the game to teach the team about character development, to drive a player home when parents couldn't make it to the game, to buy a player food when they didn't have any...you can always count on me.



Other Social Media Account (optional)

Personal Blog Site URL (optional)

Personal Website URL (optional)

#### IV. Awards/Leadership Roles

**List any national awards or recognition you've received (include year won)**

US News and World Reports: Best Middle Schools Award Recipient 2024, 2025  
RAND American School Leader Panel – 2022 – present  
National Honors Society Scholarship 2005  
Member of Alpha Lambda Delta Academic Honor Fraternity – 2006 - present  
Member of Sigma Iota Epsilon Business Honor Fraternity – 2008 – present

**List any state or local awards or recognition you've received (include year won)**

GOHSEP LSNSGP Grant Winner 2024  
Top Gains Honoree 2024  
Vice President Livingston Parish Principal's Association – 2024 - present  
President and Board Member Mighty Moms Nonprofit 2017- 2023 – President 2019-2023  
Chairman Feeding Young Minds School-Library-Food Pantry Partnership - 2017-2020  
Member of Louisiana Association of Principals – 2023 - present  
Capitol Soil Grant Winner - 2024  
Louisiana Master Gardner Grant Winner - 2023, 2024  
Momentum Constructors Award Recipient - 2024  
BRAC Externship Award Recipient: Pathways to Prosperity 2019  
Member of Louisiana Association of School Executives – 2016 – 2022  
Chairman Juban Parc Junior High Discipline Team - 2016-2019  
Denham Springs High School School Improvement Action Team - 2015  
Internet and Computing Core Digital Literacy Certification - 2010  
Microsoft Office Specialist Certification - 2010  
LSU Chancellor's Leadership Award 2005  
David Boyd Valedictorian Scholarship 2005  
Tops Tuition Plus (Honors) 2005  
Robert C. Byrd Scholarship 2005  
Kay Picou Memorial Scholarship 2005  
FCA/Michael Tessei Memorial Scholarship 2005  
Grady Hornsby Memorial Scholarship 2005  
Rotary Youth Leadership Award recipient 2004

**Has your work been published in journals or other juried and/or peer-review sources?**

Yes

**If "yes", please describe**

12 secret parent tricks to survive the start of school (2018, Livingston Parish News).  
Contributor: "Together, We Are Strong": A Qualitative Study of Happy, Enduring African American Marriages" (2008, National Council on Family Relations)  
Contributor "My Kids and Wife Have Been My Life Been My Life": Married African American Fathers Staying the Course (2010, BYU Scholars Archive).



## V. Education Information

What year did you receive your baccalaureate degree? Add degree conferral year, such as 2011, in the textbox below.  
2008

You may find that information in the Teach LA website  
here

Choose the highest degree you have earned.  
Masters

Did you attend an in-state or out-of-state institution for your undergraduate degree?  
In-state

Please select the institution you attended for your undergraduate degree.  
Louisiana State University

Did you attend an in-state or out-of-state institution for your masters degree?  
In-state

Please select the institution you attended for your masters degree.  
Southeastern Louisiana State

List your undergraduate major(s) in the textbox below.  
Business Administration: Management, (Minor: Leadership Development)

List your graduate major(s)/any additional major(s)/certification areas in the textbox below.  
Masters of Educational Leadership

## VI. Certifications

List where you completed your principal/educational leadership preparation program.  
Southeastern Louisiana University

**\*\*Do you hold a valid LA teaching certificate?\*\***

Upload the most recent version of your teaching/educational leadership certificate. Certificates may be found on the Teach LA website  
here

Certificate Upload

## VII. Written Reflection Response One

Describe how you engage students and teachers of all backgrounds and abilities in effective teaching and learning on a daily basis. In your response, discuss the deliberate actions you take that positively impact student and educator success, as well as what these actions reveal about your beliefs about leadership, teaching, and learning. (750 words or less)

**Add Reflection Response One Here:**

Relationships are foundational to effective learning, but as a newly appointed school leader, I made 29 hires my first year, and I knew none of my 850 students.

It takes time to build relationships, so I became intentional with my time, starting with my personal schedule, dedicating daily time to visit teachers. Conversations create transparency and inclusivity in decision-making. Daily eating lunch with different groups of teachers or students, I recruited stakeholders. I often ask stakeholders, "If you had a magic wand, how would you improve our school?" I grant every wish, but when someone has a

vision for greatness on our campus, I want to know about it. We formally and informally survey needs assessments all year. We invite parents to contribute, starting our first PTA in 2023. I collaborate in making sure needs are met and empower teachers to take ownership of instructional practices. When I eat lunch with students, I'm listening and capitalizing on their favorite aspects of our school, focusing on creating a supportive environment that fosters growth. I prioritize meeting students where they are academically, socially, and emotionally.

Strong relationships motivate everyone to accomplish big goals together. I have galvanized teachers and students together towards meaningful fulfillment. "#ThreeYearsofAwesome" is our one pervading goal, providing opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds and abilities to combine learning with real-world applications to leave a legacy – in everything from symphonies to aerospace.

Accomplishing big goals requires powerful tools.

With teachers and students motivated, we ramped up the right supports. I conduct regular one-on-one teacher chats to align passions with innovation opportunities, building a culture of continuous improvement. Grouping at PLC days thoughtfully develops relationships. We conduct weekly two-on-one instructional coaching sessions, data digs, and routinely verify HQIM fidelity. I am an instructional leader, though modeling instructional strategies and mentoring aspiring administrators.

My belief is that leadership is not about authority but about empowering others to reach their full potential. My collaborative leadership style focuses on developing future leaders. I revived a defunct data team, and provide shadowing opportunities for aspiring leaders. I recognize the importance of soft skills and encourage staff to inject effective communication in all content areas.

Our work continues by developing gradebook-to-LEAP reliability indices. We use these indices to help ensure that teacher gradebooks align with the rigor of standards. Students take ownership of their education through goal-setting conferences, connecting classroom activities with their own dynamic achievement goals. These conferences provide a platform to reflect on academic progress, address challenges, and set actionable goals - improving student growth, while strengthening relationships between teachers and students.

I believe every student can learn; equity is a cornerstone of education. A second language learner myself, I communicate clearly with our nearly 150 non-native speaker families, and personally provide practical teacher development targeting our language learners.

One of my proudest achievements is eliminating financial barriers through partnerships with local organizations. By removing virtually all required fees we ensure that all students, regardless of background, have access to robust clubs and programs to explore interests from STEM to creative arts.

Our vaping cessation efforts have kept students in school. My initiatives include installing vape detectors, using restorative justice suspension alternatives, partnering with lawmakers to raise vaping age, and recruiting professional and local guest educators.

Funded by a 2024 GOHSEP grant, I improved safety with advanced security measures such as app-controlled badge entries. We became a 1:1 technology school in 2022, ensuring every student access. Classrooms now provide interactive learning with Newline panels, and digital hall passes streamline student engagement. Coupling integration of advanced STEM programs, these technology-driven solutions prepare students for the digital future, and provide teachers with cutting-edge enhancements to instruction.

I deliberately focus on personalizing student opportunities, supporting teachers as professionals, and developing a culture of belonging for student and teacher growth by cultivating relationships that show every student and educator is valued and supported. My work has inspired other school leaders, serving as a blueprint for community STEM partnerships, addressing health challenges, and leveraging relationships so every student can succeed.

Strong relationships fuel motivation. With clear goals, that energy can be focused to provide opportunity for everyone to accomplish greatness.

As a leader, I am driven by the belief that innovation, equity, and genuine collaboration can transform education. By fostering a culture of high expectations paired with robust support systems, I aim to empower every student and educator to succeed. Challenging the status quo, we have created an environment where students and teachers can excel and thrive.

**Reflection Response One- Optional file upload: (Use this feature if you wish to upload a document, video, photo, etc., to accompany your reflection response. Please label document accordingly, such as, "TOY\_Mary\_Smith\_ Reflection Response One."**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Article Wax Testifies at House Judiciary Committee.pdf

### **VIII. Written Reflection Response Two**

Describe specific ways in which you empower your students and teachers to form connections with the community. In your response, explain how these community connections dissolve classroom/school walls and impact student learning/success for all. (750 words or less)



**Add Reflection Response Two Here:**

At five years old, people would ask what I wanted to become - suggesting a fireman or a superhero. Smiling, I always replied, "a principal!" After majoring in business, my passion drove me back to education, to alternative certification, and back to my love for students.

Denham Springs Junior is a community school, a dynamic influencing every decision. To hold communities at arm's length is to lose one of education's greatest allies. Forming connections with the community isn't a singular event, it's an ongoing relationship, and when guest educators share the stage, students succeed.

We connect students to the community through experiential learning initiatives like our STEAM/Literacy nights. Combining a career fair with family nights, we invite guest educators to teach families how their careers require STEAM/Literacy. From bomb robots to college referees, students engage in hands-on experiences, instilling purpose into STEM learning.

This year our students participated in "The Amazing Shake," a national Ron Clark Academy contest encouraging students' soft skills. Students participated in mock job interviews, met local lawmakers, and navigated every day social challenges.

Recognizing the urgency of the teen vaping issue, I partnered with SADD, offering restorative justice opportunities through health and wellness classes. Education should always be leveraged, and this alternative to suspension, shifts the focus from punishment to educating toward healthier choices. These discussions equip students with tools to lead educational campaigns, empowering them to see themselves as change agents. I facilitated the installation of campus vape detectors to proactively address incidents, creating a safer, healthier school environment, and positioning Denham Springs Junior High as a model for schools facing similar challenges.

I also encourage teachers to initiate enrichment opportunities that align with their #JacketJoy, whether it's starting an LSU fan club, or hosting karaoke. By supporting teachers in pursuing their passions, students capitalize on partnerships with community stakeholders. This not only strengthens the school-community bond, but also inspires teachers to bring fresh, real-world perspectives into their classrooms. I believe every student should experience a sense of belonging within the school and the wider world. Although clubs are voluntary, we have 100% participation from our population of over 800 students. Through our clubs, we invite local professionals to mentor students and lead activities, like robotics workshops in the STEM Gym. We partner locally to enhance classroom resources, hosting guest speakers like a local food truck operator; I have also brought in national speakers to talk to students about climbing their Mount Everest or learning to social emotional skills. These connections help students pursue passions while creating lasting community ties.

This year marked the introduction of our first Project Lead the Way courses, supplementing our existing LSU STEM Partnership. Students learn about coding, aerospace and healthcare, gaining skills for the future.

Another key initiative has been the farm-to-table program. Students presented directly to the school board to secure approval to gain vendor approval to distribute their campus grown produce to the school cafeteria. This partnership teaches students about advocacy, teamwork, and the impact they can have on their school.

Today, the aquaponics lab continues to thrive, and we are expanding to local agricultural organizations, and collaboration with a New Orleans small business. Our horticulture classes have partnered with an engineer to provide naturally shaded outdoor classrooms, growing a roof of edible muscadines.

In 2022 we initiated a PTA, establishing an annual campus clean-up day, collecting critical stakeholder information, and maintaining a steady flow of feedback and support.

Connections can come from unexpected places. We participate in an annual uniform drive with a local brewery. We partner with a tattoo shop and the sheriff to provide Christmas gifts for economically disadvantaged students. A cooperative agreement with a church provides a professionally lighted stage for our talented theatre students. Our partnership with Mighty Moms stocks our Jacket Pantry, eradicating food insecurity and ensuring every child has the tools to succeed. These initiatives remind students that they are part of a larger network, inspiring students to give back.

Community connections profoundly impact student learning and success at DSJH. By exposing students to real-world collaboration with professionals, we improve academic outcomes (see student success data). Teachers also benefit from these partnerships, gaining access to untapped resources for innovative instruction.

Above all, these initiatives reflect my belief that education is not confined to a building. By empowering students and teachers to engage with the wider world, we dissolve the boundaries of the classroom and create meaningful opportunities that enhance learning, foster growth, and prepare students for success beyond our walls.

**Reflection Response Two- Optional file upload:** (Use this feature if you wish to upload a document, video, photo, etc., to accompany your reflection response. Please label document accordingly, such as, "TOY\_Mary\_Smith\_ Reflection Response Two")  
POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ WBRZ Interview on STEAM Night link to 37 second video.docx

## IX. Video Response

What work best describes you as a leader and/or an innovator? In your response, explain your role, the positive impact this work has made on teachers, students, and/or the education profession, and also share the status of this work today. (2 minutes or less)

Add the YouTube video URL in the space below.

**Add your YouTube video URL Here: (video should be 2 minutes or less)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzd4icIL4\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzd4icIL4_Y)

**Video Response- Optional file upload:** (Use this feature if you wish to upload a document, video, photo, etc., to accompany your video response. Please label document accordingly, such as, "TOY\_Mary\_Smith\_Video Response Upload")

## X. Education Issue

What is an education issue you are most passionate about? Add your response in the textbox below in five words or less, Ex: Student Voice and Empowerment

Removing Barriers, Connecting Resources, Empowering Success

**Education Issue- Optional file upload:** Use this feature if you want to upload an item, such as a photo, newspaper article, etc., which relates to your education issue topic/work. Please label document accordingly, such as, "TOY\_Mary\_Smith\_Education Issue Upload."  
POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Education Issue Upload.pdf

**Add a "Six Word Story" that captures the essence of you as an educator. For example, "He Is..because of what was," "Teaching Art is an Abstract Artform" and "I Teach So I Change Lives."**

Building Bridges, Streamlining Access, Empowering Futures.

## XI. Uploads

\*Note- To view uploads, select small yellow triangle next to the record title at the top of the page and select "preview form"

**When uploading documents within your application, please title each document using this naming convention:**

TOY or POY\_ First Name\_ Last Name\_ Document Name. For ex., "TOY\_Mary Smith\_Reflection Response Upload."

**Résumé (two pages or less) Include chronological list of workplaces with specific years at each site.**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Resume.pdf

**Student Success Data 1 (SLTs or other recent data) Include Year- Please ensure that the data submitted does not contain Student Personal Identifying Information (PII).**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Student Success Data 1 SLT SPS Growth 2023 2024.pdf

**Student Success Data 2 (SLTs or other recent data) Include Year- Please ensure that the data submitted does not contain Student Personal Identifying Information (PII).**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Student Success Data Continuous Subgroup Growth.pdf

**Letter of Recommendation #1:**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Letter of Recommendation

**Letter of Recommendation #2:**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Letter of Recommendation

**Letter of Recommendation #3:**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Letter of Recommendation



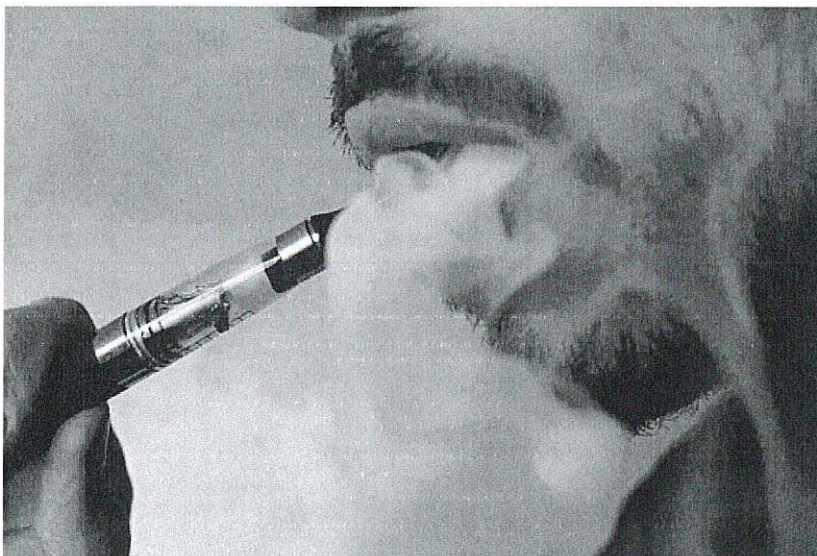


## The Louisiana House Judiciary raises the minimum age to purchase tobacco and vaping products to 21

Baton Rouge / [louisianaradionetwork.com](http://louisianaradionetwork.com)

Jeff Palermo

Apr 29, 2021 | 4:25 PM



[Lindsay Fox](#) / [CC](#)

A bill to raise the minimum age to purchase tobacco and vaping products in Louisiana from 18 to 21 passes in House Judiciary. School Assistant Principal Justin Wax says vaping among teens is an ever-growing issue.

"We recognize that this is a major epidemic and we're asking for help the students themselves are struggling with. Sometimes they don't know how to get away from it,"

Assistant Principal John Easterly testified that he handles cases where students are smoking cigarettes or using vaping products.

"From August to October 2018 we had more cases than we had school days in that period."

Bill author Denham Springs Representative Buddy Mincey says a survey across the state indicates students are using nicotine products at alarmingly young ages.

"It's in our junior highs, it's in our elementary schools, in part of the survey there they're starting in the middle of elementary school."

## Comments

### Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.



<https://www.wbrz.com/news/storm-station-meteorologist-balin-rogers-among-experts-at-denham-springs-junior-high-steam-night/>

ADVERTISEMENT

# Livingston schools partner with program to feed kids after school

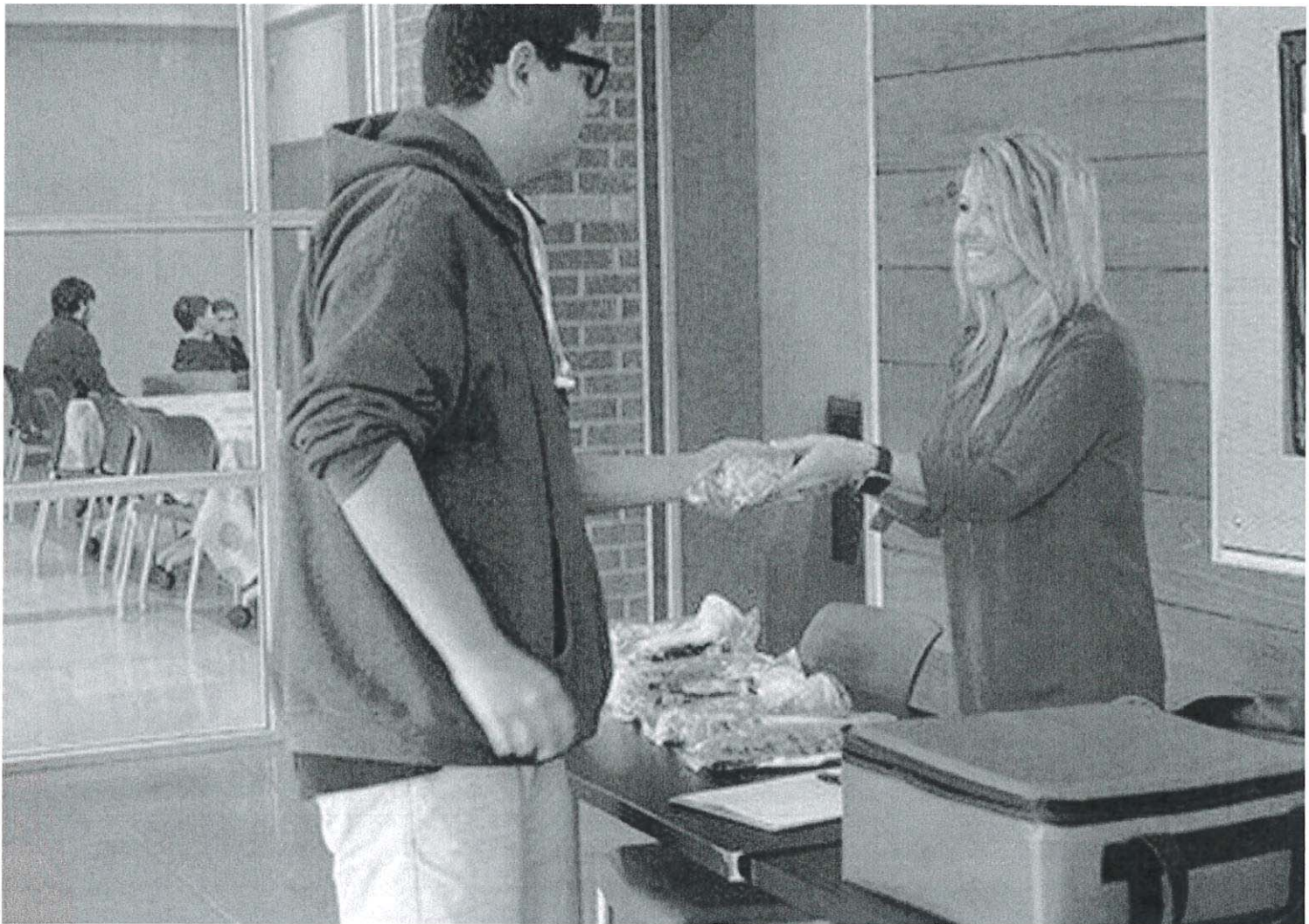


The Feeding Young Minds program provides snacks to students after school (Source: Livingston Parish Public Schools)

By Rachael Thomas

Updated: Mar 5, 2019 at 2:07 PM CST



[News](#) [Watch Live](#) [Video](#)

The Feeding Young Minds program provides snacks to students after school (Source: Livingston Parish Public Schools)

LIVINGSTON PARISH, LA (WAFB) - Leaders with Livingston Parish Public Schools are partnering with the Livingston Parish volunteer organization, to support an after school food program, called Feeding Young Minds.

The program was originally spearheaded by Mighty Moms over the summer to provide students with a free snack and drink or participate in educational programs.

"Our district is actively seeking ways to reach outside our schools, beyond our campus boundaries and into our community. Our goal is to ensure all our students have an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe environment. The Feeding Young Minds program provides resources to do just that," said Sommer Purvis, assistant director of child nutrition for the school system.

ADVERTISEMENT

The program expanded in February to include all five parish libraries and is expected to feed as many as 100 kids every week, largely due to funding through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which is managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



[News](#) [Watch Live](#) [Video](#)

- Watson Branch - 36581 Outback Rd., Watson: First and third Tuesdays, 4 to 5 p.m.
- Albany-Springfield Branch - 26941 Hwy. 43, Albany: First and third Wednesdays, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

South Branch -- 23477 La. Hwy. 444, French Settlement; in conjunction with other scheduled activities at the library. (Vol create a mobile unit to delivery snacks and educational materials to homes in the area because of the sprawling, rural na

## ADVERTISEMENT

Mighty Moms is always looking for more volunteers for the Feeding Young Minds program. They are currently specifical bus to be used to deliver food to homes in the southern part of the parish. Anyone interested in volunteering should cor email [info@mightymomsgo.org](mailto:info@mightymomsgo.org). More information can be found [here](#).

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**Nvidia's New Rival (Hint: It's Not AMZN)**

Will This Make the World's First Trillionaire?

Motley Fool | Sponsored

**Cardiologists: Add This 1 Thing To Your Coffee To Turn On Fat Burning Mode**

Try It Tonight!

Wellness Wisdom Hub | Sponsored

**The 1 Skin Cream Walmart Shoppers Are Snapping Up Quickly (Where To Buy It)**

Walmart shoppers are snapping up this new wrinkle cream and here's where to buy it

South Beach | Sponsored



# **Mr. Justin Wax**

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## **Academic Preparation and Education:**

**Graduate:** Southeastern Louisiana University, Graduated Dec. 2015, Masters of Educational Leadership (4.0 GPA)

**Continuing:** LRCE Teach Louisiana Consortium, Certificate Received May 2010 (184 SLLA)

**College:** Louisiana State University, Graduated Dec. 2008 (Cum Laude), Business Administration: Management, Minor: Leadership Development

**High School:** Denham Springs High School, Graduated 2005, Diploma (Valedictorian)

## **Work and Leadership Experience:**

**Principal:** Denham Springs Junior High, 2021-current

Wholeheartedly love and care for ~850 students. Recruit, retain, train, motivate, observe, and hire faculty/staff of 80. Set and achieve data-driven goals, foster shared achievement vision, promote a collaborative culture, professional growth, and a safe environment. Ensure instruction aligns with curriculum standards and drives student learning growth. Make data-informed decisions, and uphold professionalism. Manage resources effectively, cultivate leadership, and clearly communicate.

**Assistant Principal:** Denham Springs High School, 2019 to 2021

Develop and implement collegiate testing programs, develop career readiness testing programs, administer school discipline policy and procedures, lead SWAT Team and Discipline Team, conduct teacher observations, event management, manage digital media platforms, develop business partnerships, create and implement inaugural school branding plan.

**Principal, Summer School:** Juban Parc Junior High, 2017

Interview and hire teachers and paraprofessionals. Create daily bell schedules, duty posts, bus driver assignments, school food service implementation, and establish instructional and testing procedures. Communicate with other principals, parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders.

**Assistant Principal:** Juban Parc Junior High School, 2016 to 2019

Administer school discipline policy and procedures, lead Discipline Team and Crisis Management Team, facilities management, teacher observations, event management, supervise classified personnel and manage digital media platforms, including pioneering school info app.

**Administrative Intern:** Denham Springs High School, July 2015 to September 2016

Assistant to the Disciplinarian, approximately one hour per day. Conferencing with students, administering discipline, communicating to parents/law enforcement, and PowerSchool Data entry.

**Teacher/Coach:** Denham Springs High School, Jan 2009 to 2016

Full-time teacher, certified in Business and Social Studies. Subjects taught: Introduction to Business Computer Applications, Business Law, Civics, World Geography, Sociology, ACT Prep and American History. 5A varsity assistant football coach, defensive backs, (6 years). Full time varsity baseball assistant and freshman coach (4 years). Faculty Representative for soccer (3 years), tennis (1 year) and swimming (1 year).

**Sponsor:** Fellowship of Christian Athletes Sponsor, Jan 2009 to 2016. Approximately 200 members. Responsibilities include planning school and community events, coordinating weekly guest speakers, developing a faculty leadership team, and developing a student leadership team.

**Youth Pastor:** Lifepoint Church, Denham Springs, La, 2006 to 2009

Unpaid, 15 hours per week. Developing a mentor/leadership team, planning functions, activities and teaching weekly lessons for students. Speaker at weekly middle school FCA meetings.

**Substitute Teacher:** Livingston Parish Public Schools, La, 2006 to 2009

**Student Worker:** Louisiana State University, Human Ecology Department, 2005 to 2009

With Dr. Loren Marks, conducting research and publications on Black fatherhood, marriage and faith in families and have received scholarly credit for co-authored, peer-reviewed, published articles.



## **Language, Academics, Special Honors, Awards, Recognitions**

Language Learner - Fluent Spanish Speaker

Internet and Computing Core Digital Literacy Certification (IC<sup>3</sup>) - 2010

Microsoft Office Specialist - 2010

Member of Alpha Lambda Delta Academic Honor Fraternity – 2006 - present

Member of Sigma Iota Epsilon Business Honor Fraternity – 2008 – present

Member of Louisiana Association of School Executives – 2016 – 2022

Member of Louisiana Association of Principals – 2023 - present

Small Business Owner: JW Enterprises of Denham Springs – 2017 – present

2019 BRAC Externship Award Recipient: Pathways to Prosperity

RAND American School Leader Panel – 2022 – present

US News and World Reports: Best Middle Schools Award Recipient 2024, 2025

2024 GOHSEP LSNSGP Grant Winner

## **Volunteer Leadership Roles and Public Service**

Vice President Livingston Parish Principal's Association – 2023 - present

President and Board Member Mighty Moms Nonprofit – 2016- 2023 – (Board President 2019-2023)

Feeding Young Minds Chairperson (School-Library-Food Pantry Partnership) 2017-2020

Grace Covenant Church, Deacon/Percussionist/Member – 2018 – present

Education First Coordinator/Participant – 2015 – 2019

Nicaragua Humanitarian Trip Participant - 2016

DSHS School Improvement Action Team – 2015

DSHS Discipline Team – Positive Behavior Interventionist – 2011-2014; 2019-present

Mentor Teacher – 2015

SACS/AdvancED External Accreditation Observer – 2013 – 2016

Parish Proficiency Test Creator (Sociology) - 2013

Mission Intern to Costa Rica – Led teams on excursions and activities: summer 2011 and 2013

DSHS Emergency Response Team – AED and CPR First Responder

Media in the British Isles Study Abroad Participant - 2008

Baptist Collegiate Ministry Mexico Charity Trip Team Leader – 2005-2007 (3 one week trips)

Ecuador Humanitarian Aid Trip – 2005 (21 days)

Rotary Youth Leadership Award recipient - 2004

## **College Scholarships**

Tops Tuition Plus (Honors)

Robert C. Byrd Scholarship

National Honors Society Scholarship

Kay Picou Memorial Scholarship

FCA/Michael Tessei Memorial Scholarship

Grady Hornsby Memorial Scholarship

LSU Chancellor's Leadership Award

David Boyd Valedictorian Scholarship



December 27, 2024

Dear Members of the Principal of the Year Selection Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm and confidence that I can assure you that Mr. Justin Wax is the best candidate for Middle School Principal of the Year.

From the rapid integration of technology to the ever evolving demands of the 21st century, education is undergoing a great transformation. Effective school leadership today demands constant research and innovation. Having worked under a variety of school leaders over my fifteen years in education, Justin Wax is the first person that I believe is up to this challenge. Most principals establish their leadership and spend their tenure holding steady to the same strategies and policies. It is apparent that Mr. Wax's philosophy of leadership is anchored by an unwavering commitment to student and teacher success, but he is never inflexible or too rigid to embrace new opportunities for achievement. I have yet to meet an individual with a greater devotion to life-long learning. It is through this constant modeling of growth that his administrative colleagues, teachers, students, and community members are empowered to view success as continued progress. Under Mr. Wax's leadership, victory is not measured by a single spreadsheet, but instead by the enduring excellence of his school community.

On our campus when students are incentivized to meet behavioral or academic goals, he expertly utilizes the momentum of those victories to power the next objective. Most notably, these incentive programs illustrate Mr. Wax's understanding that growth can look very different from one student to the next. Success criteria on our campus is inclusive and designed to meet students where they are to stretch that growth throughout what he affectionately calls "three years of awesome." Mr. Wax also recognizes the challenges that our students show up with each day. He is not afraid to lobby the district and community for resources, technology, and staff to help our young people succeed in and out of the classroom.

Notably, the support system for our growing population of English Language Learners has quadrupled under his leadership. Additionally, he works closely with the Mighty Moms donation organization to ensure that our students facing food insecurity show up with a full belly ready to learn. Even the best principals often neglect the learning barriers that transcend the classroom walls. Veteran teachers alongside new hires and parents appreciate his authenticity and actionable approach to support. He goes beyond words of encouragement and provides real resources, guidance, and opportunities for professional collaboration. In humility and trust, he effectively delegates in order to utilize the strengths of his staff through committees and teacher-leader groups. In love and faith, he finds every opportunity for teachers and students to enjoy their time on campus. There is a genuine joy, professionalism, and respect that underscores his vision for the school.

Some leaders demand success, but real leaders facilitate it. Ultimately, Mr. Wax's tireless efforts to remove obstacles from students so that they can learn, and teachers so that they can teach will be the hallmark of his legacy.

[Redacted Signature Block]



January 10, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is [REDACTED], and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Mighty Moms in Livingston Parish, Louisiana. Mighty Moms is a nonprofit organization that works with Livingston Parish Public Schools to feed hungry children. I am excited and honored to write this letter of support for Justin Wax who is nominated for Louisiana's Principal of the Year.

First, let me say that Justin is one of a kind, and I am lucky to call him my friend. I've known Justin for more than 10 years in many capacities. Justin served on our Mighty Mom's Board of Directors as a member, Vice President and President. He served on our Board for more than 7 years and displayed leadership and compassion in every meeting and with every vote. His time serving with us at Mighty Moms wasn't always easy. An especially difficult time for our community was during the Pandemic and the hurricanes that followed shortly after. During these times, Justin sprang into action and pushed us to continue moving forward with feeding the hungry when everything was closed. Justin's vision and commitment are a few things that are evident when you take the time to get to know him. He loves our community. He loves the children in Livingston Parish and Denham Springs Junior High. While I am most familiar with his impact on Mighty Moms, Justin's reputation reveals he demonstrates these characteristics across all aspects of his life.

Justin is hardworking and generous and is often seen going above and beyond what most are doing. He is willing to share his time, knowledge, and resources without expecting anything in return. I've been fortunate to see this side of Justin in his role as part of Mighty Moms, as a church member, a community member, an educator and a friend.

I wholeheartedly believe Justin will continue pouring into the lives of his students and faculty as long as he is able. I highly recommend Justin for your consideration of Louisiana's Principal of the Year.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]





January 5, 2025

Principal of the Year Selection Committee:

I am honored to write this letter of support for Mr. Justin Wax as a candidate for the Louisiana principal of the year. As an educator at a local school and mother of a recent junior high student at Denham Springs Junior High, it is my pleasure to share my experience with you. I don't know all of Mr. Wax's accomplishments outside of my own experience, but our family is thrilled that our child had the opportunity to go through Denham Springs Junior High with Mr. Wax as principal.

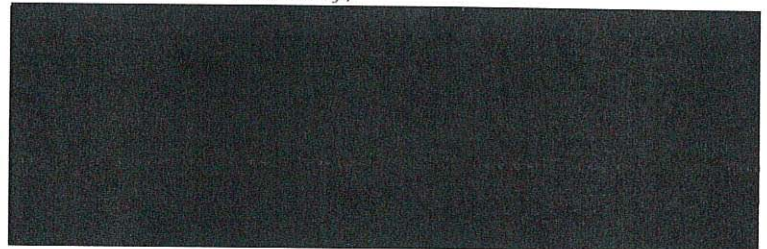
The slogan or theme of Denham Springs Junior High is "Three Years of Awesome" and indeed our experience from 2021-2024 was just that. Our adopted foster son came to us the very first week of school in sixth grade. What a time to transition to a new home and school. How scary! He was struggling in every way possible. The sixth-grade teachers, under the supervision of Mr. Wax, helped him to survive that year. The next year the seventh-grade teachers, again under the watchful eye of Mr. Wax, began to turn the tide of his life from one who was just surviving to one who was given new opportunities, experiences, and a chance to do things he had never done before. From the consistent and hard work of coaches, teachers, and administration, his life was changing. And then in eighth grade, he began to thrive. Under the eighth-grade teachers, and the oversight of Mr. Wax, a child's life was changed. He was able to participate in leadership opportunities such as Youth Legislature and compete in such activities as football and track.

What amazing thing for a child who came from severe trauma and abuse.

Because of the advanced classes offered in seventh and eighth grade, he was able to begin ninth grade in Honors and AP classes.

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. DSJH and Mr. Wax, along with his army of amazing teachers, are now all a part of our village. We truly believe that a loving, Godly home can afford a child so much in life. Well, a loving, stable, positive, and encouraging school can be a part of the "success village" as well. It takes a principal with vision, motivation, and great leadership and hiring skills to run a school in which a child can begin at rock bottom and come out on top. We are so thankful for all that our son experienced and learned at Denham Springs Junior High because Mr. Wax was the principal there.

Sincerely,





Attachment: POY\_Justin\_Wax\_-Headshot.jpg

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Attachment: POY\_Justin\_Wax\_-\_Photo-With-Students.jpg







LIVINGSTON PARISH  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 3, 2025

To whom it may concern:

It is with pleasure that I write this letter to recommend Mr. Justin Wax to be recognized as the Louisiana Teacher of the Year. During the four years that I have served as his supervisor, I have observed particular assets and philosophies that set Mr. Wax apart from others. His skills and ideas are reflected in the actions and outcomes of the students and staff at Denham Springs Junior High. He is especially talented at identifying specific needs of the students on his campus, planning and executing plans and programs to address those needs, and monitoring the effectiveness of his plans through data. Additionally, Mr. Wax understands the value of quality instructors and has focused unique efforts on establishing and advertising a positive atmosphere to assist with his challenge of recruiting and retaining staff.

Denham Springs Junior High currently has one of the largest EL populations in our district. Mr. Wax uses his personal skills and understanding of language acquisition to maximize the effectiveness of the growth of those students on his campus. He is consistently an advocate for this group of students and has worked directly with the EL Director to design and refine instructional models that were executed in his school and others within our district.

Historically, building and maintaining a strong instructional staff might not have been noteworthy in our district as it tended to be rich with high quality applicants; however, numerous factors have caused our pool of potential hires to shrink dramatically. Mr. Wax is a leader in both recruiting and retaining talented educators. Through ambitious and ongoing strategies, he has attracted a strong staff and maintains a healthy network of potential talent for future needs. Meanwhile, he and his staff prioritize making Denham Springs Junior High a school where a teacher feels supported in their classroom while being provided the opportunity to grow professionally. Additionally, much effort is given to celebrating the successes and the displaying the happiness through social media posts.

Much more could be detailed about the academic and social achievements of the students at Denham Springs Junior High and the role that Mr. Justin Wax has played, but his work with the EL population and building an incredibly strong staff stand out as two of his most important accomplishments. Mr. Wax is widely known throughout our district as someone that is a visionary with the courage to introduce strategies outside the ones historically incorporated in our district. Mr. Wax deserves the recognition of Principal of the Year for Louisiana for the accomplishments already experienced, but it would benefit our state to have his influence and experience not only acknowledged, but put on display as a model for others.

CHRISTOPHER J. BROWN, Principal



# Livingston Parish educators give back to Harvey-affected peers

September 10, 2017 10:26 PM in Community By: Taylor Evans

Share:



LIVINGSTON PARISH - Teachers, faculty and staff from Livingston Parish schools are some of the latest to give back to their peers affected by Hurricane Harvey.

The schools collected donations for faculty and students in and around the Houston area.

"Our schools just wanted to give back," Southside Jr. High principal Wes Partin said. "We can remember when the flood took place, how many people affected our lives."

Partin met the principal of Humble Middle School in Texas a year ago at a conference. Since then, the two have kept in touch and when the disaster struck the Lone Star State, the light bulb went off.

"We would have a jeans day where all the kids were collecting money," Juban Park Jr. High assistant principal Justin Wax said. "A student would give his one dollar for lunch money because he wanted to be a part of it."

Partin, Wax and principal of Denham Springs Jr. High Bryan Wax headed west to deliver a truck loaded with supplies. When they arrived in the devastated city, they helped thousands of survivors.

"I think there were about 6,000 people that showed up [to receive items]," Bryan Wax said. "We were able to impact and help out a lot of kids and people there."

## Trending News

Family scared for their safety after son's accused killer let out on bond  
IDEA Bridge and Innovation closing at end of school year

While in Humble, the three educators also helped gut homes. They say that kind of support goes a long way after a tragedy like Harvey.

Link to Video of Community STEAM Night at DSJH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oacrn9lxxMQ>



## 2024 App Round 3: 78008523

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### 2026 Teacher/Principal of the Year Finalist Tasks

**Which are you- Teacher of the Year or Principal of the Year?**

Principal of the Year Finalist

**School System Name**

Livingston Parish Public Schools

### Written Response Prompt

**As the 2026 Louisiana Teacher or Principal of the Year, serving as the ambassador of education for Louisiana, you have been asked to give a speech to an audience of education stakeholders (Teachers will be addressing teachers and principals will be addressing principals.) What is your message? Please add your speech below.**

**Add your written response here.**

#ThreeYearsofAwesome: Building a Magnetic School Culture

After the previous principal resigned, I was selected as the third principal in three years. The school was 100% free/reduced lunch with a large, growing language learner population. By the end of my second calendar year as principal I had incurred 80 vacancies.

We had to brand a magnetic culture to attract quality educators and have a community believe in us. To counter negative memories parents had of their middle school years, we adopted one phrase encapsulating student experience: #ThreeYearsOfAwesome. For you, maybe it's four-years-of-awesome, or K-12-of-awesome, but an attractive culture is foundational for success.

#ThreeYearsofAwesome is building a magnetic culture, starting with people who love students. Seek educators who love students, because educators who love students educate for life. Knowing that that life isn't standardized we teach learners to think, lead, and care. Serving the whole child serves the whole community. Loving educators connect school to home, classroom to community, becoming more than educators, we become change agents for the world around us.

#ThreeYearsofAwesome is fueled by passionate people. Take practical steps to listen to stakeholder motivations. Eat lunch with students, stand at teacher bus duty, and remember, being the boss doesn't make you right. #ThreeYearsofAwesome is fragile, requiring constant maintenance to keep culture fresh.

I had a substitute teacher who was hoping for a university ag center job. Turns out he's trilingual, an expert in soil microbiology, and wildly passionate about growing plants hydroponically using fish waste.

I hired him to co-found our Aquaponics program. We didn't just launch a cool program, we aligned the motivations of one educator with community interests. Educators don't require extrinsic motivation to pursue their passions.

#ThreeYearsofAwesome removes barriers. When we eliminate obstacles, labels, limitations - we unlock greatness already inside our students and teachers. Equity is built, not wished for. You're not just a principal, you're a civic leader. Speak up. Show up. Advocate for students and teachers beyond your school walls.

Principals should find invisible walls and recruit partners to tear them down. While discussing our school's leaky roof with a local company, the owner mentioned his neighbor couldn't afford PE uniforms, offering to buy hers. Seeing firsthand the important work we do, he pledged a company sponsorship purchasing uniforms for every student in need.

We all have countless community resources, and when schools invests in our community, those resources have a way of connecting to campus. We don't require identical organizational visions. Serving kids is a universal language, crossing party lines, religious denominations and cultural barriers. #ThreeYearsOfAwesome is rooted in relationships. Some resources are financial, but most are business owners, experts, or just parents willing to take an afternoon off to volunteer. Don't be afraid to ask for help; don't be afraid to be told no. Equity is hard work. It's not a wishful buzzword. Equity is an action.

#ThreeYearsofAwesome invests in growth, then leaders get out of the way. Great leadership is about empowering others, not just holding authority.

Growth starts where comfort ends. I was excited when my family moved to a new neighborhood into a house with Camellia bushes. I nurtured them for years. It would bloom a little and grow some, but it wasn't healthy. A friend advised pruning. Reluctantly, I eventually did. To my relief, it's healthier than ever.

Mentoring teachers and future leaders sometimes feels like cutting back parts of ourselves, but courageously pruning the familiar creates room for ourselves, and others, for healthy growth. Relinquishing ownership and pruning our responsibilities isn't loss, it's leadership.

Lead the way. Then step aside. Our position provides the power, and heavy responsibility, of developing leadership in others, exponentially multiplying our impact.

#ThreeYearsofAwesome means leaders own the outcomes. There is no singular formula for school leadership. Every leader must be true to themselves. When we are true to ourselves, school culture is uniquely ours, and as leaders, we must own those outcomes.

School culture can, and should look different today than it did 20 years ago, 10 years ago, even 1 year ago. Principals must remain students, always learning and growing. When the foundation and values of a school community are to love and empower people, we will always build a culture of awesome.

Principals, we are writing a new story for Louisiana education. Each of you holds the pen, so write boldly. Write with purpose. And know that your leadership has the potential to write Three Years of Awesome into the life stories of the future leaders and innovators of Louisiana.

### Additional Uploads

**Written Response Upload- You may submit additional artifacts that support your response. (Optional)**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Three Years of Awesome on Social Media.docx

**Professional Bio** Add your professional bio in the textbox below. You may use the same bio you submitted in your initial application. Your professional bio should be written in third person. (250 words or less) Please follow the guidelines outlined

here

### Round 2 Bio

#### Add Bio Here

Justin Wax is currently serving his fourth year as principal at Denham Springs Junior High in Denham Springs, Louisiana. Under Wax's leadership, the school is recognized for excellence, including 2024 Top Gains Honoree and U.S. News and World Report's Best Middle Schools for 2024 and 2025.

Wax earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, minoring in Leadership Development from Louisiana State University, pursued his passion for education via alternative certification and obtained a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Southeastern Louisiana University.

A leader in student advocacy, Wax has taken innovative steps to address teen vaping, offering restorative justice vaping education alternatives to suspension and facilitating the installation of campus vape detection technology. His efforts include legislative involvement, speaking before the Louisiana House Judiciary, effectively advocating to raise the minimum age to purchase vaping products.

Dedicated to STEM education, Wax pioneers an aquaponics lab, providing hands-on opportunities to conserve endangered Louisiana plant species and teaching sustainable produce cultivation.

Wax is a member of Louisiana Association of Principals, and Vice President of the Livingston Parish Principals Association. Wax served four years as President of Mighty Moms, a nonprofit that "nurtures hungry students to success." Wax is a church deacon and married father of three.

Committed to equity, Wax partners with community leaders to eliminate student fees, ensuring access for his economically disadvantaged students. Wax currently supports a rapidly growing language learner population. His educational philosophy centers around #ThreeYearsOfAwesome, fostering innovation and community collaboration to prepare students for lifelong success.

**Optional Upload-** If you would like to include any additional item(s) to accompany your application, such as a video, newspaper article, etc., please upload below.



**Optional Upload 1**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Award Wax Recognized By Council for Exceptional Children.pdf

**Optional Upload 2**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Photos of Community Connections.pdf

**Candidate Consent** Please review the terms in the candidate consent form and check the appropriate box below. You may view the consent form [here](#)- [here](#).

**Checkbox**

I consent to the terms in the form.

**Student Consent** Student consent forms are needed for each student included in your state-level application, such as in photos, videos, etc.

Link to Student Consent Forms: [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/awards/student-consent-form.docx?sfvrsn=98d9911f\\_4](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/awards/student-consent-form.docx?sfvrsn=98d9911f_4)

**Are there any new students that were not included in the previous round?**

No

**If you would like to include a note/message, please enter here.**

Dear Selection Committee,

I am humbled and honored to represent the full spectrum of education through my own family—one brother's children who attend private school in New Orleans, my other brother's kids who are homeschooled in the Baton Rouge suburbs, and my own children who are part of the rural public school district in which I serve. Together, they reflect the diverse educational paths families take across Louisiana, and I'm committed to advocating for quality and opportunity for all students, regardless of their background or setting. - Justin R. Wax

**2024 App Round 1**

Justin Wax

**2024 App Round 3: File Attachments**

**Written Response Upload-** You may submit additional artifacts that support your response. (Optional)

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Three Years of Awesome on Social Media.docx

**Optional Upload 1**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Award Wax Recognized By Council for Exceptional Children.pdf

**Optional Upload 2**

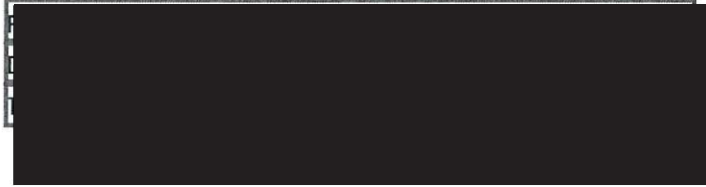
POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Photos of Community Connections.pdf

Three years of awesome is a movement that can be replicated by teachers and leaders everywhere. Don't take my word on it, here's what social media has to say about building a magnetic culture!

[https://youtu.be/kaBSi-adXdQ?si=bPaRSfTzQ\\_my4O9T](https://youtu.be/kaBSi-adXdQ?si=bPaRSfTzQ_my4O9T)



## Happy Teacher Appreciation Week! You've Been Recognized!



Hello Justin,

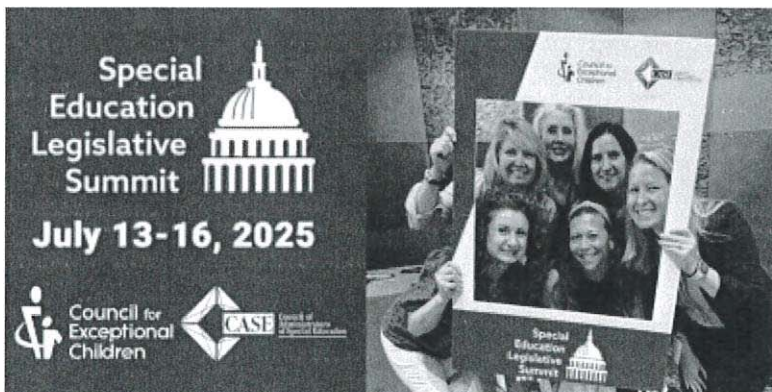
Happy Teacher Appreciation Week! Special education professionals rely on principals' and administrators' support to advocate for and support them and their students daily. We asked our members and community to recognize administrators who enhance their lives and make an impact. You were recognized by two of your staff members and CEC wanted to share:

"He deserves recognition for his unwavering support, especially for the SPED Department. He listens, finds solutions, and follows through, creating a culture of respect and empowerment. His dedication benefits both teachers and students, and we are truly grateful for all he does."

"He is carrying and always checks in on all his teachers to make sure they are doing ok. He make sure he listens to the students and let them know that they have a voice."

Thank you so much for everything you do! We appreciate your hard work and dedication to your teachers, staff, students, and community. We hope your school year ends on a high note!

With gratitude and thanks,



**A** professional association of educators who believe in high-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities.



# **CONNECTING THE SCHOOL TO THE COMMUNITY**

**JUSTIN R. WAX  
PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR**

# **A Picture Worth A Thousand Words**

**The following  
pictures are a  
few examples of  
connecting  
community to  
the school.**

Local

coffee

truck

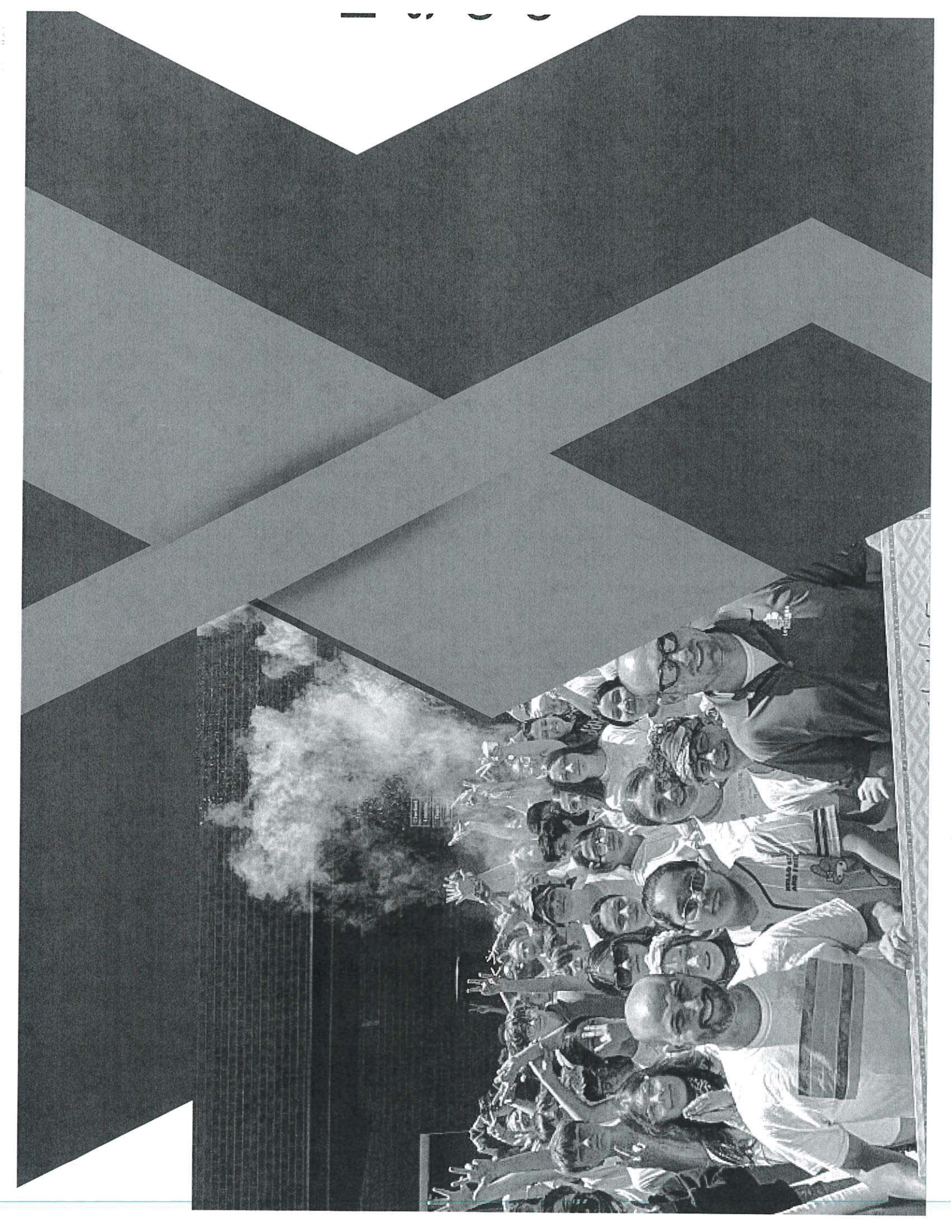
provides



Our outdoor spaces are coming to life! Thank you to The ( for the new outdoor teaching by space! #JacketLegacy #G  
\*Featured class/Photo cred: Mrs. Belgard











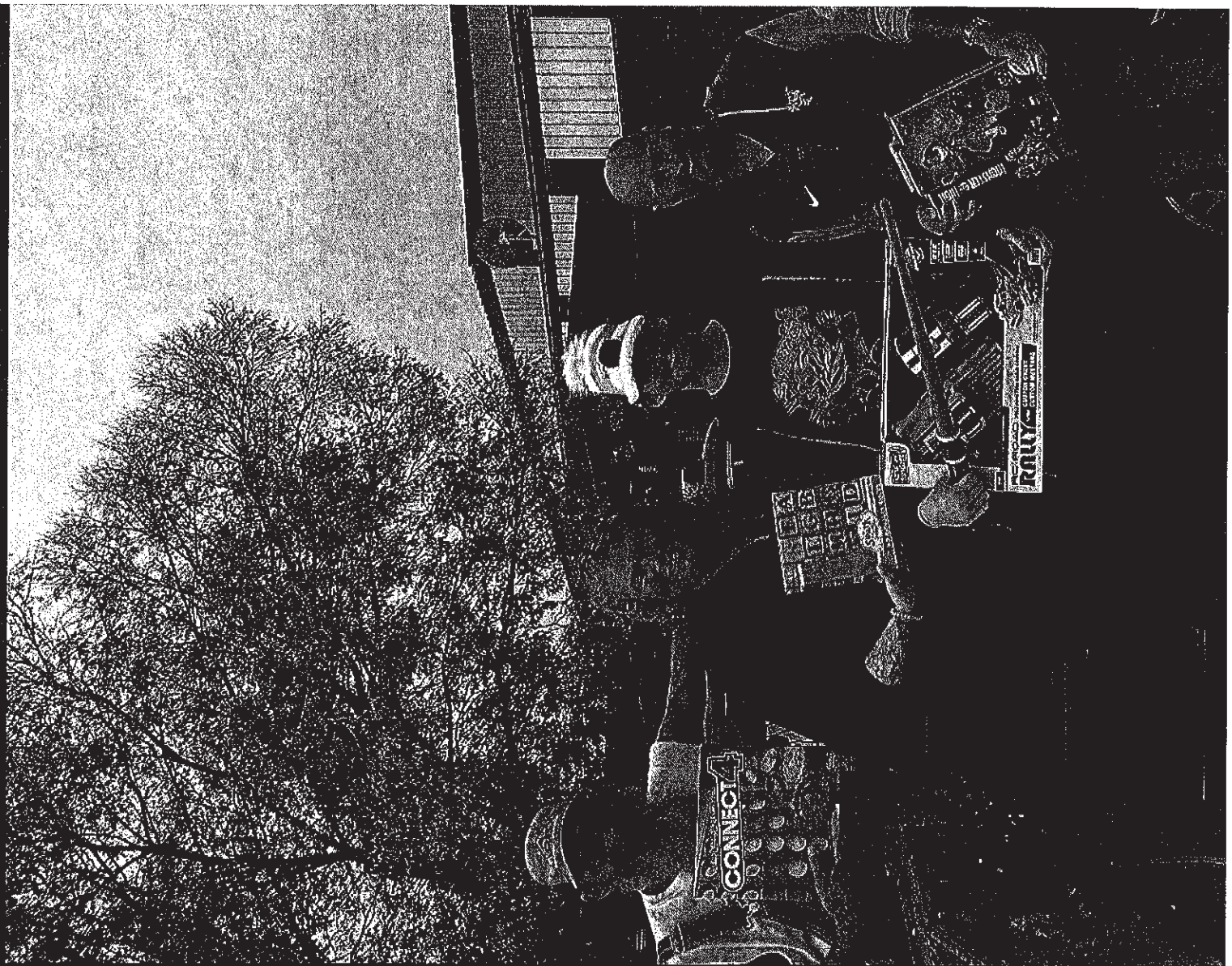






Hot Wheels Club partnered with local cc enthusiasts to host a car show on campus.











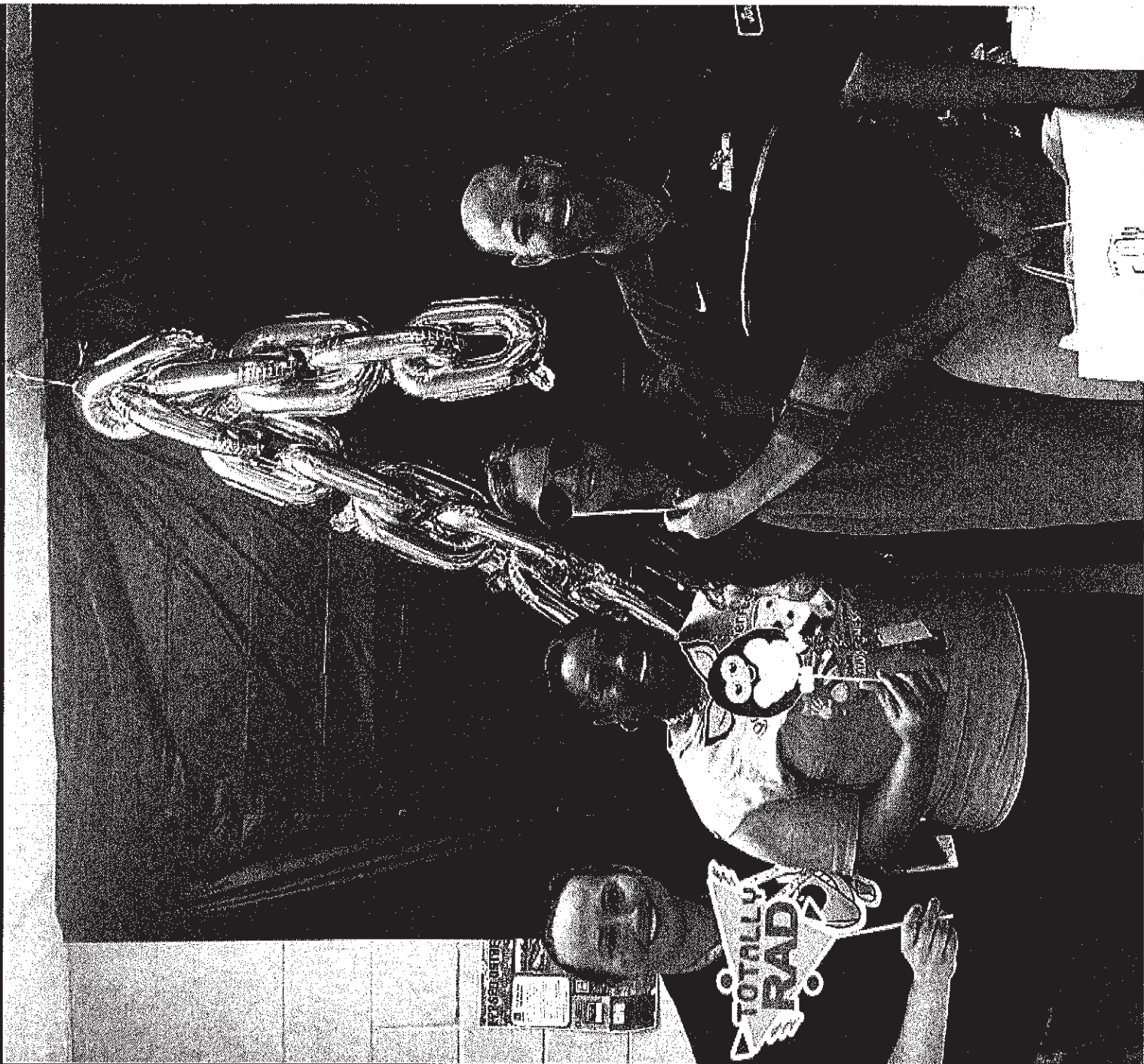


# PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME



2019-2020 PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME VIDEO







**COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS  
POSITIVELY  
IMPACT THE  
STUDENTS,  
SCHOOL, AND  
COMMUNITY AT**



**\*\*Teacher/Principal of the Year Semifinalist Application\*\***

**\*\*Which are you- Teacher of the Year or Principal of the Year?\*\***

Principal of the Year candidate

**\*\*By the end of day on Tuesday, March 26, please complete all tasks and submit.**

**Written Response**

**Written Response One**

Teacher and Principal of the Year Prompt: How do you teach and support students to persevere in the face of challenges, underscoring the importance of bouncing back from difficulties? In your response, include how you draw on your own experiences to teach resilience. (maximum of 750 words)

**Add your written response in the textbox below. (750 words or less)**

Education is about leading with vision, teaching with purpose, and supporting the whole person – both student and educator – to become their best self.

To truly impact the student, I have ingrained a school culture that supports the whole person, rather than treating social-emotional learning as standalone programs.

We promote healthy risk-taking in a safe environment to teach perseverance. We want everyone to take appropriate risks, believing we can all grow by failing forward. Fostering a growth mindset encourages everyone to see challenges as learning opportunities.

In 2015 I was in a tragic boating accident. Through this experience I came to believe that unforeseen obstacles aren't failures, but require a growth mindset. This painful paradigm shift drove me to seek opportunities for impact in administration. My experience grounds me in every student and teacher interaction. Through my own trauma recovery, I learned the impact of a network of educators. These experiences equipped me with the ability to empathize with students and teachers experiencing pain and loss.

We build resilient students and educators who endure through difficulties, leading to improved academic outcomes. We prepare everyone for inevitable future challenges by teaching them healthy ways to manage stress, frustration, and disappointment.

Through dozens of humanitarian projects, I have provided essential resources and supported communities both internationally and locally. I serve as director of an organization providing mentorship and education to single parents after serving four years as president of a nonprofit that "nurtures hungry students to success." While everyone's own experiences with hardship are unique, my experiences foster a deep understanding of the importance of educating the whole person with empathy.

We develop students and teachers as practical leaders. Our student ambassadors deliver developmental lessons to peers during campus goal-setting sessions. Our Instructional Leadership Team is systematically testing leaders who understand character building, confidence, and the ability to guide others through difficulties.

Through lunch-and-learns and assemblies, we partner with community resources to educate the whole student, while protecting the integrity of instructional time. We created a soft skills competition, requiring students to exercise resilience in commonplace situations ranging from navigating complex social scenarios, to showcasing interview skills. Culminating with a luncheon, I provided direct feedback about student conversational skills.

Student of the year finalists selected important issues and proposed solutions. One legacy project proposal advocated for students battling anxiety. Myself and our guidance counselors coached a student through her legacy project, earning a \$1000 Teen Mental Health grant award from the Joe Burrow Foundation. This grant will help students develop coping strategies that improve mental health.

Genuine listening and impactful discourse take time. Focusing on student development, we had to take practical steps to provide leaders with time to be accessible. We implemented a data tracking time management program to ensure our focus remains on target.

I also automated our positive behavior system. Teachers digitally submit positive referrals, initiating immediate parent notification and student rewards. By frequently incorporating counselor meetings into the discipline office, we encourage positive relationships and conflict resolution. We

take the time to listen to students, highlighting responsible decision-making. We hold our students, and educators, to high standards because we love them. Clear expectations empower everyone to make constructive choices with well understood consequences.

Our restorative approach to discipline teaches students personal responsibility. We support learning from mistakes, maintaining healthy relationships, and resolving conflict. This applies to both students and teachers. Discipline commonly incorporates opportunities for an apology between two parties, often initiated by students themselves. Our school app features a conflict interview form, constructively guiding parents through conversations to support a child. Parents can also use our app to contact a counselor. Additionally, stakeholders use our school app to submit anonymous tips, which automates streamlined support. We support the whole family unit because I believe that reinforcing emotional literacy in families is key to closing the circle of support around students.

Our family nights transformed from standardized testing assemblies into career exploration family nights. We place these culturally responsive practices at a premium. We value integrating diverse backgrounds and experiences to create an inclusive learning environment; we believe students can't be what they can't see.

Education with real impact requires leadership with heart. We live out our examples to demonstrate social-emotional skills; I want good teachers and students on my campus, but off campus we want them to be good people. I focus on the whole person by showing empathy, respecting diverse perspectives, and teaching interpersonal skills to help students and teachers build foundations for success.

### Video Response

Please respond to the prompt below. The video should not exceed one minute and 30 seconds. After recording the video, put into a YouTube link and add the link in the textbox below.

Teacher and Principal of the Year Prompt: What education issue are you most passionate about? In your response, tell why this issue is important to you, as well as describe any work you've done to address this issue and how this work embodies you as an educator, as well as future work you hope to accomplish. Include evidence of the impact of this work to support your response.

**Add your Youtube video link in the textbox.**

<https://youtu.be/LlhvWsF19Ao>

**Video Response Upload (optional)**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Social Media Post Poem You Can Still Count on Me Additional Upload.docx

### Additional Uploads

If you would like to upload any additional items to your application you may do so below. This is optional. Examples could include newspaper articles, photos, videos, awards, etc.

**Additional Upload 1 (optional)**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Yellow Jacket Buzz Bloopers Additional Upload.docx

**Additional Upload 2 (optional)**

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Student Created School Journal 2.pdf

### Social Media and Bio

**Professional Bio** Add your professional bio in the textbox below. You may use the same bio you submitted in your initial application. Your professional bio should be written in third person. (250 words or less) Please follow the guidelines outlined

here

**2024 App Round 1- You may search by name for the bio you submitted in Round 1.**

Justin Wax



### Professional Bio textbox

Justin Wax is currently serving his fourth year as principal at Denham Springs Junior High in Denham Springs, Louisiana. Under Wax's leadership, the school is recognized for its excellence, including 2024 Top Gains Honoree and U.S. News and World Report's Best Middle Schools for 2024 and 2025.

Wax earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, minoring in Leadership Development from Louisiana State University, pursued his passion for education via alternative certification and obtained a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Southeastern Louisiana University.

A leader in student advocacy, Wax has taken innovative steps to address teen vaping, offering restorative justice vaping education alternatives to suspension and facilitating the installation of campus vape detection technology. His efforts include legislative involvement, speaking before the Louisiana House Judiciary, effectively advocating to raise the minimum age to purchase vaping products.

Dedicated to STEM education, Wax pioneers an aquaponics lab, providing hands-on opportunities to conserve endangered Louisiana plant species and teaching sustainable produce cultivation.

Wax is a member of Louisiana Association of Principals, and Vice President of the Livingston Parish Principals Association. Wax served four years as President of Mighty Moms, a nonprofit that "nurtures hungry students to success." Wax is a church deacon and married father of three.

Committed to equity, Wax partners with community leaders to eliminate student fees, ensuring access for his economically disadvantaged students. Wax currently supports a rapidly growing language learner population. His educational philosophy centers on fostering innovation, collaboration, and equity to prepare students for lifelong success.

**Your six word story will be used with various graphics and comms. If you would like to update your original six word story, please add it below.**

Building Bridges, Streamlining Access, Empowering Futures

### Photo Uploads

Please upload a headshot and a photo of you participating in your favorite past-time/hobby. Be sure and follow the photo guidelines outlined [here](#)

#### Headshot

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Livingston\_Headshot.jpg

#### Hobby Photo

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Hobby Photo.jpg

**Candidate Consent** With your consent, your photos and/or videos could be used in media (such as on the Dept.'s or Dream Teacher's social media accounts), as well as shared with others (such as your fellow semifinalists), to celebrate you as a state-level honoree. Please check the appropriate box to indicate if you consent or not. You may view the consent form [here](#)- [here](#).

**Please check the appropriate box below.**

I agree to the terms in the consent form.

**Student Consent** If students are included in your application, you must have a consent form on file. If you obtained a consent for a student in your initial application and still have on file, you do not need to get a new consent form. Student consent forms are needed for each student included in your state-level application, such as in photos, videos, etc.

Link to Student Consent Forms: [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/awards/student-consent-form.docx?sfvrsn=98d9911f\\_4](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/awards/student-consent-form.docx?sfvrsn=98d9911f_4)

**Are there any new students that were not included in the previous round?**


No

### Additional Information

**Your current phone number (Preferably cell, with area code. Please list with hyphens, such as, 225-342-7695.)**



Your email address.



School mailing address



Your name as you'd like to see it in print on a certificate (include Dr., Ms., etc., if you like.)



Name Pronunciation – Please add a note for pronouncing your name (if needed) in the textbox below. Examples include- Francois ('franz-swah); Hebert (A-Bear); Soileau (swah-'low), etc.

Teachers- What grade(s) do you teach this year?

Teachers- What subject(s) do you teach this year?

Principals- What grade(s) do you serve as the school leader this year?

I serve Sixth, Seventh, Eighth grades at Denham Springs Junior High.

If you know you will serve in a different role next year, please add role in the textbox below.

n/a

If you'd like to include a note, please add here.

Dear Selection Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to build collaborative relationships with this amazing cohort, and to work together to continue to propel our state forward! I'm excited to celebrate the success of these semifinalists, and eager to continue to develop leaders at every level of education for success beyond the classroom. - Justin R. Wax

## 2024 App Round 2: File Attachments

### Video Response Upload (optional)

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Social Media Post Poem You Can Still Count on Me Additional Upload.docx

### Additional Upload 1 (optional)

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Yellow Jacket Buzz Bloopers Additional Upload.docx

### Additional Upload 2 (optional)

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Student Created School Journal 2.pdf

### Headshot

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_Livingston\_Headshot.jpg

### Hobby Photo

POY\_Justin\_Wax\_ Hobby Photo.jpg



Below is a poem I wrote and posted following a failed local tax proposal for teacher pay raises. With schools facing walk outs, I was empathetic that my teachers were hurting, but I knew our community needed reassurance that we remained committed to our students.

**My employees had perfect attendance the following day.**



Justin Wax

March 26, 2023 · 🌐

...

You can still count on me.

If you ever counted on me to stay after the game to teach the team about character development, to drive a player home when parents couldn't make it to the game, to buy a player food when they didn't have any, if you ever counted on me to be the coach they needed, you can still count on me.

If you ever counted on me to arrive early for free tutoring, to send home an unsolicited encouraging note home, if I inspired students by one lesson to become the person they are today, if you ever counted on me to be the teacher they needed, you can still count on me.

If you ever counted on me to talk to your child about life choices, to buy underwear for a student whose parent can't afford it, to write a letter of recommendation, to break the news that a loved one passed away, if you counted on me to be a school administrator, you can still count on me.

If you counted on me to take that suicide prevention call at 8pm, to hand out weekend food to impoverished kids on Friday afternoon, to make sure the online interpersonal conflict got resolved, if you ever counted on me like that, you can still count on me.

If you ever counted on a me to wait for the late parent to pick up, stay late to help find a missing sweater, or go on a weekend field trip, if you ever counted on me to be there for your student, you can still count on me.

If you ever counted on a me to bring someone a paper towel to wipe vomit off themselves, to open the school at 5am to become a polling site, or to joke with students, not just push a broom, if you counted on me to do the not work glamorous part, you can still count on me.

The previous generation counted on someone to be there, this generation can count on me.

You can always count on me.



31 comments 26 shares

👍 Like

💬 Comment

📧 Send

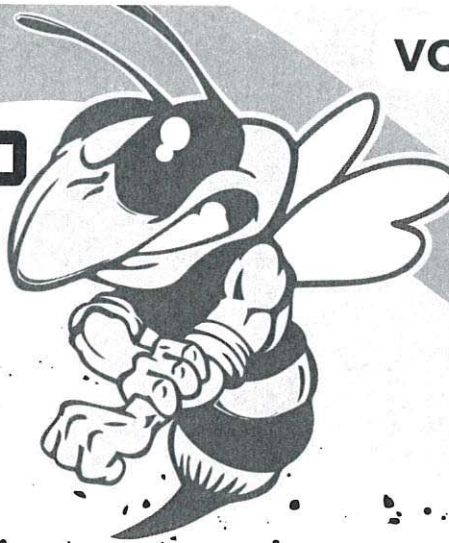
➦ Share

Our students showcase our campus culture in a weekly news broadcast called "The Yellow Jacket Buzz" recorded and published by Denham Springs Junior High students. Attached are outtakes from times Mr. Wax has been featured in various newscasts.

<https://youtu.be/s8u56vBZjIM>



# JACKET JOURNAL



Principal Wax, flavor innovator, seen here adding his milk to his cornbread in the cafeteria

## ██████████ and ██████████ Sit Down with Our Fearless Leader: Principal Wax

Denham Springs Junior High is big on the saying, "Jacket Legacy," but what does it mean? We questioned this topic for days on end until we found the one person who knows it best: Mr. Wax! He has very strong views, but no one could have guessed how deep his views are on "The Jacket Legacy". When asked "What does the Jacket Legacy mean to you?" He responded with "Jacket legacy is being able to do things that you can point to, to make an impact on generations to come. Denham Springs is a huge community and not just a school." He also stated, "leave it better than you found it."

We all know that there are quite a few Waxes in Denham, but just how many have been in the education system specifically? Well, when asked that question, Mr. Wax responded with, "My mom and dad were both educators and started in 1972 and then the former principal's dad also began as a football coach around 1970. Our counselor, Mrs. Lee, is also a Wax." Mr. Wax's dad was a teacher, and he was also a very big influence on Mr. Wax's life. When we questioned him about, "**Which Wax do you look up to the most?**" he obviously responded with his very own father. With most of Mr. Wax's family being in the education field it was probable he would follow in their footsteps, and that is exactly what he did!

As our principal (even though he is a newbie) he obviously has dreams for his Jacket Legacy at DSJH. When asked how would accomplish those dreams he responded with a surprising answer of, "It's not, it's not going to be me." Mr. Wax said. "The only way that you can have a legacy that impacts our community is through generations. The question is... what things can we leave our kids, and our children's children? It's not something I can do, it's what we all can do as faculty. We are always one generation away from stopping."

With all the talk of generations, we asked Mr. Wax, "**Where do you see yourself, the school, and the next generation of DSJH students?**" He answered with, "I would love to see students who are 7th and 8th graders now, excited to come back and visit us. People who are freshman in college or seniors in high school, I would like to see those people have a love and affection for this school. A childlike and innocent emotion for this school. I want people to look back and remember the sparkle of learning." It looks like we have a task on our hands.

Returning to Wax name legacy, we asked who Principal Wax's favorite Wax is. He answered with, "In general I'm gonna have to say my wife, because if not I may get in trouble."

Almost every morning Mr. Wax says an inspirational quote over the intercom. My all time favorite one is from my grandma, and she said: "You're never fully dressed until you put on a smile."

Mr. Wax wants us to carry on the Jacket Legacy. We are the generations to come and just like he said, **we need to leave it better than we found it.**



now you are  
done! the final  
look should  
look like this!