

2026 School Health Service Provider of the Year

Exemplar Application: Mrs. Lacie Fontenot, M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist — Livingston Parish Schools

Candidate's Bio:

Exemplar response: Provide a professional biography written in **third person** and **no more than 300 words**.

Mrs. Lacie Fontenot has served as a speech-language pathologist with Livingston Parish Schools for more than 12 years. A graduate of Southeastern Louisiana University, where she earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in science, Fontenot holds Louisiana state certification and national certification through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

At the heart of Fontenot's work is a commitment to ensuring that every student has a voice and the confidence and support to use it. Through her expertise in diagnosing and treating speech and language disorders, she helps students strengthen their communication skills and participate more fully in school and beyond. She also extends that commitment well beyond her responsibilities as a speech-language pathologist.

At Live Oak Middle School, Fontenot leads efforts that address students' needs both inside and outside the classroom. She manages the school's self-sustained food pantry, providing weekend food bags for students experiencing food insecurity, and spearheads the school's Angel Tree project, helping ensure students in need experience the joy of the holiday season. She also manages the school's social media page, using it to celebrate students, staff, and the accomplishments taking place throughout the school community.

Fontenot is equally committed to supporting her colleagues and the profession. She mentors graduate students, shares her expertise with colleagues, and willingly steps forward wherever she can make a difference.

Through her expertise, compassion, and willingness to serve beyond her assigned role, Fontenot demonstrates that school health providers do more than deliver services — they help students find their voice, remove barriers to success, and feel seen, supported, and valued.

Written Reflection Questions:

In **500 words or less**, respond to each of the following prompts. Strong responses should include specific examples and evidence of impact. Focus not only on what you do, but on how your expertise, leadership, and actions have made a meaningful difference for students, families, colleagues, schools, and communities. Evidence may include outcomes, data, examples of change, stakeholder feedback, partnerships, or other indicators of impact.

1. Knowledge and Expertise in the Field

Prompt: Describe how you demonstrate excellence and expertise in your field of practice. Provide specific examples of how you apply your professional knowledge and skills to meet the health and wellness needs of students, collaborate with others to support student success, and provide high-quality health services in the school setting. What impact has your expertise and practice had on students, colleagues, your school, or the broader school community?

Exemplar Response:

For more than 12 years, I have served as a school-based speech-language pathologist, combining clinical expertise with a commitment to ensuring that every student has the ability to communicate, participate, and succeed. I earned both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Southeastern Louisiana University. I maintain Louisiana licensure through the Louisiana Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and the Certificate of Clinical Competence through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, reflecting my commitment to professional and ethical standards.

Throughout my career with Livingston Parish Public Schools, I have provided services across seven campuses and served students from third through twelfth grade. Working across diverse school settings and age groups has strengthened my ability to recognize how communication needs affect academic achievement, relationships, independence, behavior, and a student's ability to advocate for themselves.

My clinical expertise includes assessment and treatment of articulation, expressive and receptive language, fluency, and voice disorders. I have developed particular expertise in serving students with intellectual disabilities, autism, multiple disabilities, and complex communication needs. I use data to monitor progress and adjust intervention, connect therapy to classroom expectations and curriculum, and incorporate augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), functional communication, behavioral supports, and other individualized strategies when appropriate.

My practice is highly collaborative. I work alongside teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, related-service providers, and families to ensure that communication strategies extend beyond the therapy setting and into the environments where students learn, interact, and make decisions for themselves. By sharing strategies and helping others understand a student's communication needs, I strengthen the support surrounding the student rather than making therapy the sole source of intervention.

The impact of this expertise is seen when students who once struggled to express a need can communicate independently, participate more fully in classroom activities, interact with peers, and advocate for themselves. It is also seen when educators and families gain practical strategies that help a student communicate more successfully throughout the school day.

I believe communication is fundamental to both health and educational access. My goal is not simply to treat a communication disorder; it is to equip every student with a voice, the skills to use it, and the confidence to know that their voice matters.

2. Advocate for Student Health:

Prompt: Describe the exceptional ways you advocate for the health and well-being of students. Provide specific examples of how you identify and respond to student health needs, build relationships with students and families, address barriers to health services, or connect students and families with appropriate resources and support. What difference has your advocacy made for students, families, your school, or the broader community?

Exemplar Response:

I advocate for student health by looking beyond a student's clinical diagnosis to the barriers that may prevent that student from learning, participating, and thriving. As a speech-language pathologist, I understand that health and well-being extend beyond clinical services to include communication, basic needs, emotional well-being, dignity, and a student's ability to fully participate in school.

One of the clearest examples is my leadership of our school's self-sustained food pantry. I recognized that students experiencing food insecurity may struggle to focus, learn, and feel secure at school. I help ensure students have access to weekend food bags and hygiene essentials such as soap, deodorant, and toothbrushes. The pantry operates confidentially and without judgment, allowing students to receive needed support while preserving their dignity.

I also intentionally involve students with significant disabilities in organizing, stocking, and managing the pantry. Rather than simply receiving support, these students become active contributors to their school community. They practice communication, teamwork, responsibility, independence, and job-related skills while helping meet a real need. This approach has transformed a basic-needs initiative into an opportunity for meaningful participation and increased independence.

My advocacy also extends to students' emotional and behavioral well-being. Students frequently seek me out when they need a trusted adult to listen, problem-solve, or provide encouragement. I collaborate with teachers, administrators, and support staff to understand individual needs and develop strategies that help students communicate, self-advocate, regulate, and participate more successfully in school.

I also coordinate our Angel Tree program, connecting students experiencing financial hardship with Christmas gifts and essential items. By working with staff, families, and community partners, I help ensure students receive support discreetly and respectfully.

My advocacy has taught me that sometimes the most significant health barriers are the needs that exist outside a provider's traditional role. By recognizing those barriers and mobilizing people and resources to address them, I help students experience greater dignity, independence, belonging, and access to learning. My goal is always to make sure students are not defined by what they need, but empowered by the support they receive.

3. Professional Growth:

Prompt: Describe how you demonstrate leadership, initiative, and commitment to professional growth in your field. Provide specific examples of how you expand your knowledge and skills, share your expertise with colleagues, support the professional growth of others, contribute to professional learning, or advance practices that improve health services for students. How has your professional growth and leadership influenced others or contributed to positive change in your school, profession, or community?

Exemplar Response:

I believe professional leadership is measured not only by what we know, but by how we use our knowledge to strengthen others. Throughout my career, I have used my experience as a school-based speech-language pathologist to mentor colleagues, prepare future clinicians, strengthen professional practice, and promote the importance of school-based speech-language pathology.

I frequently support new speech-language pathologists as they transition into the profession. I share organizational systems, resources, templates, and practical strategies for managing caseloads, navigating school expectations, documenting services, planning therapy, and collaborating with teachers and families. I also serve as a trusted sounding board when new clinicians encounter challenges, helping them build confidence, solve problems, and develop practices they can carry forward independently.

I extend this commitment to future professionals through my work as a clinical supervisor for graduate speech-language clinicians. I provide hands-on guidance in assessment, documentation, intervention planning, collaboration, and school-based practice. I also help future clinicians understand that excellent school health services require more than clinical competence; they require collaboration, adaptability, advocacy, and a deep commitment to students.

My investment in the profession begins even earlier through career-day presentations and opportunities for high school and college students interested in healthcare to observe school-based speech-language pathology. These experiences introduce future professionals to a career they may not otherwise encounter and help them understand the connection between communication, healthcare, education, and student well-being.

Within my district, colleagues also seek my assistance with technology, data-management systems, troubleshooting, and documentation processes. I willingly share resources and problem-solving strategies because strengthening one provider ultimately strengthens the students that provider serves.

My professional growth has therefore become a way to create growth in others. Whether mentoring a new clinician, supervising a graduate student, introducing a student to the profession, or helping a colleague solve a challenge, I work to build a stronger, more knowledgeable, and more confident school health workforce. My goal is to leave the profession stronger than I found it — and to ensure that the students we serve benefit from that collective growth.

4. Health Program Growth

Prompt: Describe how you have contributed to the growth and improvement of health services within your school or school system. Provide specific examples of how you have identified needs, addressed barriers to healthcare, developed or improved systems and services, built partnerships, or created opportunities to expand access to and improve the delivery of health services. What measurable or meaningful impact have these efforts had on students, families, staff, or the school health program?

Exemplar Response:

I contribute to the growth of school health by identifying barriers that affect students' ability to access services and creating systems that connect students, families, educators, and community resources to the support they need. As a speech-language pathologist, I bring a communication-focused perspective to school health and help ensure that student needs are addressed as part of a broader system of support.

At my school, I serve on a school-based committee that identifies students who are struggling academically or are at risk. As part of this team, I provide screenings, interventions, and professional insight that help identify communication needs and determine appropriate supports. By bringing speech-language expertise into an early-identification process, I help students receive support before challenges become greater barriers to learning.

I also work directly with families and community members who have concerns about communication. I provide professional recommendations, explain available services, and help families navigate parish and state resources. For families who may not know where to begin, making the connection to an appropriate provider or service can be a critical first step toward accessing care.

I have also expanded the ways our school responds to basic health and wellness needs. Through the self-sustained food pantry I manage, students experiencing food insecurity can access weekend food and hygiene supplies. Students with significant disabilities participate in organizing and managing the pantry, turning a basic-needs program into an opportunity to develop communication, teamwork, responsibility, independence, and job-related skills. This model addresses an immediate student need while creating meaningful educational and vocational experiences.

I contribute to the long-term growth of school health by helping develop the professionals who will serve students in the future. As a clinical supervisor for graduate speech-language clinicians, I provide hands-on preparation in assessment, documentation, intervention planning, collaboration, and school-based practice. I also welcome high school and college students interested in healthcare to observe school-based speech-language pathology and participate in career-day presentations, helping expand awareness of the profession and strengthen the future workforce.

Within my district, I also support colleagues with technology, data-management systems, documentation, and practical problem-solving. Sharing these resources and strategies strengthens the capacity of the existing workforce.

My goal is to make school health stronger at every level — by improving access for students and families, strengthening services and systems, developing professionals, and creating opportunities that respond to both immediate needs and long-term challenges.

5. Represents and Advances Their Profession:

Prompt: Describe how you represent and advance your profession within your school, school system, community, and/or state. Provide specific examples of how you build relationships with other health professionals and partners, communicate the value of your profession, share your expertise, participate in professional or community initiatives, or serve as an advocate or ambassador for school health services. How has your work strengthened awareness, collaboration, support, or opportunities for your profession and its role in student success?

Exemplar Response:

I represent and advance speech-language pathology by helping others understand that communication is not simply a clinical skill — it is fundamental to how students learn, participate, build relationships, and advocate for themselves. I work to make the role of school-based speech-language pathologists visible within the broader school health team and to demonstrate the value of coordinated, student-centered care.

Within Livingston Parish, I participate in regular meetings with fellow parish therapists where we share resources, strategies, challenges, and successes. These professional relationships create opportunities for collective problem-solving, strengthen consistency across schools, and allow us to learn from one another's experiences. I also pursue continuing education and professional learning that connects me with providers beyond my district and across the country. I bring new research, practices, and ideas back to my colleagues and students, helping ensure that our work continues to evolve.

I represent the profession within my school by collaborating with teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, families, and other support professionals. I help colleagues understand how communication needs can affect academic performance, behavior, relationships, and independence and provide practical strategies they can use beyond the therapy setting. These partnerships reinforce that speech-language services are not isolated from instruction or student well-being; they are part of the larger system that helps students succeed.

I also work to strengthen awareness of the profession beyond the school setting. Through career-day presentations and opportunities for high school and college students to observe school-based speech-language pathology, I introduce future professionals to a field that connects healthcare, education, communication, and student advocacy.

My service also allows me to represent school health in a broader way. Through initiatives such as our food pantry and partnerships with staff, families, and community members, I demonstrate that school health professionals can identify needs, connect resources, and create opportunities that extend beyond traditional clinical services.

I would be honored to represent Louisiana's school health providers because I believe our professions are strongest when we work together around a shared purpose: removing barriers so students can learn, participate, and thrive. As a speech-language pathologist, I carry a particularly powerful message — every student deserves a voice, and every student deserves someone willing to listen. Through my work, I strive to make that message visible in my school, my profession, and my community.

6. Exceptional Service and Impact:

Prompt: Provide additional evidence that demonstrates the significance, reach, or lasting impact of the candidate's work as a school health service provider. Consider examples that illustrate how the candidate has transformed a student's experience, addressed an important health need, improved access to services, strengthened health practices or systems, inspired others, or made a meaningful difference that extends beyond the expectations of their role.

Supplemental Materials (Optional)

- I. Supplemental materials may be submitted to support the written responses and provide additional evidence of the candidate's exceptional work. Materials may include charts, data, professional publications, news articles, videos, photographs, testimonials, or other relevant documentation.
- II. If submitting supplemental materials, provide a link to the folder below and clearly label each item to indicate the application question it supports.

Exemplar Response:

One of the most meaningful examples of my service is the school food pantry I organized and continue to manage at Live Oak Middle School. I recognized that food insecurity affects more than a student's access

to food; it can affect well-being, readiness to learn, confidence, and dignity. I wanted our response to meet an immediate need while also creating meaningful opportunities for students.

Using my expertise as a speech-language pathologist, I designed ways for students with significant physical, cognitive, and communication needs to actively participate in the pantry. I incorporated visual supports, picture communication cards, and individualized strategies so students — including students who use wheelchairs or specialized communication devices — could help sort, organize, stock, and manage donated items.

This transformed the pantry from a place where students simply received assistance into a hands-on environment where students could contribute to their school community. Students practice communication, teamwork, responsibility, independence, and job-related skills while helping meet a real need for their peers. Students who might otherwise have limited opportunities to take on meaningful responsibilities are given an authentic role in serving others.

The impact extends beyond the students directly involved. The pantry provides weekend food and hygiene supplies to students experiencing food insecurity while protecting their privacy and dignity. It also brings together school staff, families, and community partners around a shared commitment to meeting student needs.

What makes this work especially meaningful to me is seeing students move from being viewed primarily through the lens of what they need to being recognized for what they can contribute. A student using a communication device, a student navigating the school in a wheelchair, or a student with significant support needs can still organize supplies, complete a task, help a peer, and experience the pride that comes from making a difference.

This experience has reinforced what I believe about school health: exceptional service is not only about addressing a need — it is about creating opportunities for students to develop confidence, independence, purpose, and a sense of contribution. By combining my clinical expertise with a commitment to service, I have been able to turn a basic-needs initiative into a lasting opportunity for students to care for themselves, contribute to others, and lead.