



Principal's Newsletter

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January 12, 2026

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Principal Strategy Spotlight

Dr. Anna Faye Caminita - 2026 High School Principal of the Year

Becoming Builders of Champions: A Call to Principals



My fellow principals,

I am honored to share my thoughts with fellow education leaders dedicated to shaping our students' futures. Every school leader carries an incredible responsibility, not only to administer and manage but also to lead and inspire. If we genuinely believe that students can rise to challenges, we must go beyond mere belief. We must actively create the conditions through courage and perseverance that allow them to succeed. To develop students into champions, principals must establish systems that support the whole child, cultivate safe and relationship-rich environments that foster resilience, and lead a school environment that prioritizes continuous learning for both students and teachers.

The foundation for student success begins with building systems that support the whole child through thoughtful, data-informed decision-making. Every summer, principals plan for the academic year ahead, which includes schedules, curriculum, and enrichment activities. Leadership emerges when we use data not only to organize but also to individualize. Comprehensive needs assessments grounded in attendance, discipline, subgroup performance, classroom data, and historical trends provide us with a complete picture of a child's growth. By analyzing both areas of need and strength, we can design supports that are responsive and intentional. Identifying trends and using success criteria to group students effectively personalizes interventions. Success criteria that students can use not only to assess their own work, but

also to provide feedback to a peer. Through this process, systems transform from mere structures into scaffolds for student achievement.

Alongside these systems, principals must cultivate safe, relationship-centered environments where students are encouraged to take academic risks and learn from their mistakes. Learning is not always comfortable, and perseverance does not come naturally to everyone. Think back to a time when you felt uncertain in a professional setting. Did you have the courage to speak up and seek clarification to understand the goals? Many of us listen quietly, hoping to derive meaning from context rather than revealing our vulnerability. Our students feel the same way. If a child fears being wrong more than they value being right, it is our job to build a classroom environment where failure is seen as part of the learning process. Compliance should not be the goal; connection should be. Champions are not created in silence; they are shaped in environments where they feel safe to try, fail, and try again.

Equally important is the need for school leaders to foster an environment of continuous learning, not just for students but also for teachers. A strong academic environment depends on educators' willingness to grow, reflect, and refine their practices. Principals must provide opportunities for professional learning that are embedded, ongoing, and grounded in evidence from student work—not just standardized test data. When we observe classroom interactions, analyze student thinking, and engage in instructional dialogue, we cultivate a school community where growth is valued and modeled at every level. By remaining learners ourselves, we make it safe for teachers to do the same. This model enables students to flourish in dynamic, evolving classrooms.

This belief in student potential is echoed by Rita Pierson, who said, "Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists they become the best that they can be." However, our responsibility does not end with being a champion; it extends to helping students become champions themselves. This involves teaching them to navigate challenges with courage, to seek support when needed, and to believe in their capacity to grow. These life lessons are not taught through lectures; they are learned through the systems we design, the relationships we build, and the environment we lead.

In every school and community, many students are waiting for someone to recognize their potential, challenge them to aim higher, and support them every step of the way. By implementing effective systems that support their individual journeys, fostering a classroom environment grounded in safety and mutual respect, and leading schools focused on continuous growth, we do more than improve performance. We elevate potential. We don't just prepare students for success; we prepare them to overcome obstacles and own their stories. That is how we build champions. That is how we elevate every child.

Announcements

New: Principal Webinar Series

The LDOE has developed a new series of webinars designed specifically to meet the needs of school leaders. The first webinar, "Supporting Implementation of HQIM in Classroom," will be held on **January 15, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.** In this webinar, principals will have the opportunity to hear about best practices for supporting teachers in implementing and using HQIM from the Academic Content team. What will make

this webinar different from other series on this topic is that after a short overview, principals will have the opportunity to break out into groups and have honest discussions based on their individual needs. This group will primarily rely on collaboration with other school leaders, but will also have LDOE support and guidance to help push the work further.

Webinar Date and Time: **January 15, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.**

Webinar Link: <https://ldoe.zoom.us/j/95815056755?pwd=UJMhjwTm4f19dwbvDEREcvDuwalblo.1>

Meeting ID#: 958 1505 6755

Passcode: 983914

Webinar Phone Number: +1 312 626 6799 US or +1 346 248 7799 US

2025-2026 Graduate Diploma and Seal Orders

Please use the [Diploma and Seal Order Form](#) to submit an order for 2025-2026 graduates. All diploma requests must be submitted through the electronic form by **February 6, 2026**. Only one form should be completed for each school system. The LDOE will cover the costs for the initial order and distribution.

Please contact jenny.moran2@la.gov with questions.

Resources

Literacy

K-2 Knowledge Unit and Lesson Preparation Protocols

New K-2 Knowledge [Unit](#) and [Lesson](#) Preparation Protocols are now available to support high-quality, knowledge-building instruction. The protocols provide a clear process for preparing units and lessons using HQIM and include a two-phase lesson preparation structure that builds readiness and deepens teacher expertise over time. These tools help ensure intentional, text-based instruction that supports vocabulary, language development, and comprehension.

Please contact louisianaliteracy@la.gov with questions.

K-2 Skills Unit and Lesson Preparation Protocols

New K-2 Skills [Unit](#) and [Lesson](#) Preparation Protocols are now available to support high-quality foundational skills instruction. The protocols provide a clear process for preparing units and lessons using HQIM and include a two-phase lesson preparation structure that builds readiness and deepens teacher expertise over time. These tools help ensure systematic, explicit instruction aligned to student needs.

System and school leaders are encouraged to explore implementation of the K-2 Knowledge and Skills Unit and Lesson Preparation resources within ILT and Teacher Collaboration structures.

Please contact louisianaliteracy@la.gov with questions.

Grade 3 Instructional Preparation and Tiered Support Course

The LDOE has released a new Grade 3 Instructional Preparation and Tiered Support Course to strengthen planning and instructional decision-making in Grade 3 ELA. A total of six modules will be available within this self-paced course, guiding teachers through lesson preparation, assessment data analysis, and intervention to ensure instruction meets the needs of all learners. The course can be found on the [Louisiana Professional Learning Platform](#) with the course code 15E4719D.

Please contact louisianaliteracy@la.gov with questions.

3-12 Literacy Extension in ELA

A new [Literacy Extension Guidance document](#) for grades 3-12 is now available. This resource supports teachers in planning intentional extensions during core instruction and intervention blocks for students who have already met proficiency. It provides practical ways to deepen learning within existing HQIM lessons while keeping lesson learning objectives constant.

Please contact louisianaliteracy@la.gov with questions.

ELA

ELA Guidebooks 3-5 (2022) Unit Update

The publisher of The Birchbark House made updates to the text, including character names and some words in the text written in the Ojibwe language. The LDOE is aware of these updates and is developing a version of the unit that aligns with the updated text. After the new unit content is posted, both the current and updated versions of the unit will remain on the [Louisiana Curriculum Hub](#), ensuring teachers can access the version of the unit that aligns with their text.

Future LDOE communications will include additional information regarding unit access and materials for the updated version of the unit.

Please contact elaguidebooks@la.gov with questions.

Numeracy

Math Leader Community of Practice

The LDOE, in partnership with the Charles A. Dana Center, is launching a [Community of Practice for Math Leaders](#) to strengthen math teaching and coaching across Louisiana. Through this initiative, participants will connect and collaborate with math leaders from across the state, sharing best practices and coaching strategies for implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) more effectively in their work.

Beginning in January 2026, participants will meet virtually for two hours each month and will conclude their experience with a special session at the [2026 Teacher Leader Summit](#). The [Community of Practice for Math Leaders](#) includes more information, including access to the interest form.

Please contact math@la.gov with questions.

Louisiana Achievement in Numeracy Act (LANE)

Per [Act 260 \(2023\)](#) and [Act 353 of 2025 \(LANE\)](#), all K-8 math teachers must complete an LDOE-approved numeracy course. School and system leaders must collect proof of completion from all new hires teaching these grades. An optional numeracy course for high school math teachers is also available.

School systems contacts received the course codes, so teachers can access courses through the 2025-2026 school year. For more information, see the [Guidance and Framing](#) document on the [Louisiana Math web page](#). Systems should actively support teachers in meeting these requirements.

Please contact math@la.gov with questions.

Diverse Learners

Talented Evaluator Training

The Division of Diverse Learners will provide virtual trainings to support districts in implementing high-quality Talented Program services.

- **Tuesday, January 20: Talented Art Program Screening/Evaluation Protocol Training for Pupil Appraisal (8:00-10:00 am)**
 - This session will provide an overview of appraisal team responsibilities within the district, including the screening process, as well as the planning and preparation for the evaluation process. Each appraisal team member should also attend the content-specific trainings below for oversight purposes.
- **Wednesday, January 21: Talented Art State Evaluation**
 - Potential evaluators will immerse themselves in the process of administering the Talented Art State Evaluation with fidelity, including the **Art Recognition/Judgment Test, Drawing Test**, and the use of scoring rubrics to evaluate student performance and artistic understanding.
 - **Evaluators: 8:00-12:00**
 - **Appraisal: 8:45-12:00** (Note: Appraisal staff should join at 8:45, as the content prior to that time is evaluator-specific and covered in the appraisal protocol training.)
- **Thursday, January 22: Talented Theatre State Evaluation**
 - Potential evaluators will immerse themselves in the process of administering the Talented Theatre State Evaluation with fidelity, including the **monologue for grades 4-12, the interview, and the improvisation components, as well as using** scoring rubrics to evaluate dramatic interpretation, creativity, and performance skills.
 - **Evaluators: 8:00-12:00**
 - **Appraisal: 8:45-12:00** (same note as above)
- **Friday, Jan. 23: Talented Music State Evaluation**
 - Potential evaluators will immerse themselves in the process of administering the Talented Music State Evaluation with fidelity, including the **Aural Perception Test, Audition, and Sight Reading/Pitch Matching** components, as well as the use of scoring rubrics to evaluate musical proficiency and artistry.

- **Evaluators: 8:00–12:00**
- **Appraisal: 8:45–12:00** (same note as above)

Those interested in becoming a talented evaluator should email their resume to Carolyn.Wilkinson@la.gov.

Please contact diverselearnersupport@la.gov with questions.

Computer Science and STEM

Ignite Initiative: Computer Science for K-5 Teachers

The Ignite Initiative offers 24 hours of no-cost teacher training in computational thinking, block programming, and cyber safety. The training prepares K-5 teachers to integrate computer science education experiences into existing instruction. Cohorts are currently enrolling and are available in virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats. Interested teachers may register using the [Ignite Initiative website](#).

Please contact STEM@la.gov with questions.

Educator Recognition

Educator Opportunities

Teacher/Principal of the Year and New Teacher of the Year Application Online Portals Are Due in January

The online portals for coordinators and state-level applicants for Teacher/Principal of the Year and New Teacher of the Year are now open. All application materials and links to the online portals are available on the [Staff and Educator Awards](#) page.

All school systems are encouraged to:

- Select one honoree per elementary, middle, and high school division level as their local level honorees for the following:
 - Teacher of the Year
 - Principal of the Year
 - New Teacher of the Year (with less than one year of teaching experience)
- Submit these selections to the state-level process.

Application Deadlines

- Teacher/Principal of the Year applications due **January 14**.
- New Teacher of the Year applications due **January 21**.

The dates and times of future webinars are listed in the [Zoom Details for Candidates and Stakeholders](#) document.

Please contact excellenteducators@la.gov with questions about Teacher/Principal of the Year, and laurie.carlton@la.gov with questions about New Teacher of the Year.

Principal Newsletter Signup

Do you have a colleague who would benefit from receiving this newsletter? Forward this copy and encourage them to [subscribe](#) to receive our next monthly newsletter.

Principals for Principals Newsletter

The LDOE has released a new monthly newsletter designed to meet the practical needs of principals. Please visit the [LDOE's Principal Development Opportunities](#) landing page to read previous and current entries.