The Louisiana Department of Education is proud to announce the 2018 Teacher and Principal of the Year winners. These educators are making exceptional gains with students, pushing them to achieve at the highest levels in the state. Their commitment to student success exemplifies Louisiana’s teaching profession.

The Teacher and Principal of the Year semi-finalists, finalists, and Louisiana’s Milken Award winners were honored at the 11th Annual Cecil J. Picard Educator Excellence Awards Gala in partnership with Dream Teachers on Friday, July 28, 2017.

Congratulations to these outstanding educators!

**2018 OVERALL TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

Kimberly Eckert has been teaching in West Baton Rouge Parish for nine years. In addition to teaching English I at Brusly High School, she has also served as a special education inclusion teacher, a reading interventionist, speech teacher, mentor and master teacher, as well as an instructional coach. Eckert holds a Bachelor of Social Work, completed her teacher preparation program through LRCE and obtained a Master’s Degree in Special Education from Northwestern State University. In 2016, Kimberly was named as the Louisiana Association of Computer Using Educators (LACUE) Teacher of the Year for high schools. Previously, she won the same award for middle schools, and in 2013, Kimberly was selected as the West Baton Rouge Parish Middle School Teacher of the Year for work as a special education teacher. Kimberly has been awarded several grants to further educational initiatives, is a Kagan Scholarship winner, a Discovery Star Educator, and has had student work showcased on local TV stations in Baton Rouge. Kimberly has presented at local and state conferences and has had work featured in LACUE publications on integrating technology for struggling learners in a flipped classroom.

**2018 OVERALL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR**

Tommy Byler has been in the education field for 26 years and has served in various leadership capacities. He is a graduate of the University of Louisiana-Lafayette and received his Master's degree from the American College of Education. Currently, Tommy serves as the principal of North Vermilion High School, after previously serving as the school’s assistant principal, athletic director, and head football coach. Additionally, Byler held roles in the Louisiana High School Athletic Association and the Louisiana Association of Student Councils. Prior to his administrative term, Tommy taught Biology II - Anatomy and Physiology, Physical Science, and Algebra I. While teaching, Tommy was selected twice to represent his school as Teacher of the Year. Under Byler’s leadership as principal of North Vermillion High, the school has remained an A school, and the school’s school performance score rose from a 92.9 to 119.0 over three years. Tommy holds teachers and students to high standards, while supporting and empowering all to succeed.
2018 TEACHER DIVISION WINNERS

ROSEMARY GRIMM
Elementary – Bossier Parish

MARCY MAHLER
Middle – Lafourche Parish

ANGELINA DRAGO
High – Tangipahoa Parish

2018 PRINCIPAL DIVISION WINNERS

CLEO PERRY, JR.
Elementary – East Baton Rouge

BOBBYE DELANEY
Middle – Cameron Parish

DAVID GRAY
High – Union Parish

2018 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

LORRAINE FEDISON-WINDER
FirstLine Schools

BRENDA SIMMONS
Jackson Parish

SARAH GROS
Lafayette Parish

SARAH BUTLER
Rapides Parish

JOSHUA JOHN
St. Helena Parish

2018 PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

ELIZABETH CHATELAIN
Evangeline Parish

SHANNON FOOLES
Calcasieu Parish

TWAINNA CALHOUN
Ouachita Parish

SANDRA JONES
Richland Parish

SARAH ALLEN
St. Martin Parish
2018 TEACHER OF THE YEAR SEMI-FINALISTS

GRANT GUSSMAN
Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education

CHASITY HATSFELT
Allen Parish

MELISSA BLANCHARD
Assumption Parish

JENNIFER HEARD
Belle Chasse Academy

DONNA GRANGER
Cameron Parish

SHANDA BESSON
Central Community School District

ALEX BELL
Collegiate Academies

JOHN UNDERWOOD
East Baton Rouge Parish

BRITTANY SMITH
Edward Hynes Charter School

Mandi Keigley
Iberia Parish

LANA MYERS
Jefferson Davis Parish

TAMEKA STAR
Natchitoches Parish

INGRID RACHAL
Orleans Parish

JENNIFER BROCK
St. John the Baptist Parish

RACHEL WHITE
Webster Parish

2018 PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR SEMI-FINALISTS

MIA EDWARDS
Ascension Parish

ANGELA GREGOIRE
Assumption Parish

LAKEISHA REESE-PENN
City of Baker School District

ALLISON JUNOT
Iberville Parish

MICHAEL BECK
Jackson Parish

TAMARA WARNER
Jefferson Parish

JOHN MOUTON
Lafayette Parish

SHANNA STEED
Livingston Parish

DEWAYNE VINES
Rapides Parish

JULIE WAGUESPACK
St. James Parish

DAWN CHAISSON
St. Mary Parish

MARK TORBERT
Terrebonne Parish

RHONDA ROBERTS
Vernon Parish

LAREE TAYLOR
West Baton Rouge Parish

DEBORAH BRIAN
Zachary Community School District

2017 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD WINNERS

CATHERINE RANDALL
St. Bernard Parish

DEVON WILLIS-JONES
Iberia Parish