

LOUISIANA

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT

Employee

The Louisiana Department of Education recognizes that outstanding school support staff are critical to school success. Through the [Outstanding School Support Employee Award program](#), the Department recognizes and celebrates some of the state's most exceptional teacher aides, paraprofessionals, school bus drivers, food service workers, clerical workers, custodial/maintenance workers, or any other school support employee classification. This program provides an opportunity to acknowledge those support staff employees who are playing an integral role in school and student success.

Congratulations to these outstanding educators!

2024 OUTSTANDING SCHOOL SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OVERALL WINNER



Eric Mendel

Paraprofessional • Bains Elementary
West Feliciana Parish School Board

Eric Mendel is an approachable and caring paraprofessional at Bains Elementary School in St. Francisville, LA. Mr. Mendel teaches a leadership ancillary and Spanish class. He has provided resources, brought animals, shared pictures and stories from his personal travels, making the curriculum come to life. Outside of the classroom, he takes every opportunity possible to instill respect and manners in all our students at Bains Elementary. There is no better person to teach service than Mr. Mendel because of the many ways that he models services on a daily basis. In an effort to help more, Mr. Mendel earned his CDL so he could help with bus routes, drive field trips, and assist with field day transportation. Every morning, he drives a bus route before class and in the afternoons, he drives a bus route after his classes. He sets up for school events, removes any animals/critters from unwanted places as he is an animal lover, and helps grade levels with projects. He even dressed up as Sasquatch to bring the first-grade curriculum to life as students read Big Foot Cinderella!

Students love the challenge of learning a foreign language because Mr. Mendel makes the class interesting and engaging. He has also integrated teaching third grade students Cursive during ancillary to lift the load off the homeroom teachers that are trying to get every minute out of their class time. All of these things fall well outside of his job description and have required hours of planning outside of his classroom duties.

He is also a leader outside of school and has been a Boy Scout leader in our community for many years. He uses these experiences to build relationships with students and share his adventures with students when it's relevant. Every challenge he faces is met with a calm, professional response and we are grateful to have him as part of the team!

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2024 DIVISION-LEVEL HONOREES

ELEMENTARY HONOREES



Maria Yaraure-Reyes
Lafayette Parish School System

Maria Yaraure-Reyes is an English as Second Language paraprofessional and Spanish translator at Katharine Drexel Elementary in Lafayette, LA. Her smile and compassionate heart spreads positivity throughout campus daily. She is knowledgeable about the students she works with across all grade levels and advocates for them to ensure they are ready to learn and receive appropriate support to be successful. Through her native language she has established relationships with the parents of these students, communicating important information about school activities, academics, behaviors and the well being of their child that would otherwise get lost in translation. She selflessly devotes her personal time to assist new families in the area with information and translation to ease the burden of moving to a new country.



Malcolm Gay
Ouachita Parish School Board

Malcolm Gay is an exceptional paraprofessional who works with students who have severe behavioral and academic needs at George Welch Elementary School in West Monroe, Louisiana. His consistent, calm composure is contagious. He has taught these students so much about manners, showing respect to others, patience, self-control, and social skills. Although Malcolm's job is to work with special needs children, he doesn't stop there! He possesses such a giving nature and goes out of his way to help others. He happily volunteered to be the king for Kindergarten's King and Queen Day, served as an United Way Representative, and participates in the Northeast Louisiana Christmas Celebration as a choir member every year. Whether it is an encouraging word or help with classwork, he makes a positive impact on everyone he meets.



Consuello Nicole Sylve
Plaquemines Parish
School Board

Consuello Nicole Sylve is a loyal, personable, and hardworking custodian at Belle Chasse Elementary School in Belle Chasse, LA. With her expertise and enthusiasm, she leads her staff with grace and efficiency and the results of that leadership style is reflective of the sparkling floors and cleanliness of the school. She is one of those special employees that is so hard to find. She is the first one to arrive on campus and the last to leave. She gave herself a duty post in the morning and stands in the Pre-K and Kindergarten hall to greet students by name, help them find their way, and help the teachers with those students having a bad day.

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2024 DIVISION-LEVEL HONOREES

MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOREES



Carlton Hardy

Caddo Parish School Board

Carlton Hardy is a security coordinator at Caddo Middle Career & Technology School in Shreveport, LA. Mr. Hardy's contributions to the school encompass not only the crucial role he plays in safety and security but also his efforts in building a supportive community and being a reliable team player. His ability to detect and address potential threats promptly is a testament to his attentiveness, exemplifying his commitment to safeguarding the school. Beyond his security duties, he is a volunteer football coach, actively participates in events like Teacher Appreciation Week and Boss' Day and annually organizes a breakfast for Veterans. His impact resonates through the gratitude of coworkers, the camaraderie among staff, and the positive influence he exerts on students, making him an invaluable asset to the school.



Neil Perry

Jefferson Parish Schools

Neil Perry is the head custodian at Marrero Middle School in Marrero, LA. He is fair, level-headed and consistent. He speaks to the students with respect on a daily basis and goes out of his way to make sure the teachers have all they need to be successful. He also helps the custodial staff find solutions to issues that arise so that everyone can feel heard and successful. From coming to school in the wee hours of the morning to make sure that any trash collected on the fence link is clear to staying after school to attend functions for teachers, Mr. Perry does it all. He was able to create a partnership with Hand on Nola and they will be building the special needs students and outdoor play area. They will also build a garden and vegetable beds for the Leader in Me program and a book nook wall for the library.



Ashley Guzzardo

Livingston Parish School Board

Ashley Guzzardo is a paraprofessional at North Corbin High School in Walker LA. Her ability to identify a need in students is her gift. She has a keen sense for identifying those students who don't speak up for themselves, and she doesn't stop there. She establishes relationships with some of the most neglected students and has provided resources and welfare checks. One specific example that stands out is when she and administration made home visits to check on a student. Mrs. Ashley provided meals, crockpots, and refrigeration for his home. She even taught him recipes using the crockpot so he could provide when the surrounding adults could not. Mrs. Ashley is compassionate and empathetic and always puts the needs of others before herself.

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2024 DIVISION-LEVEL HONOREES

HIGH SCHOOL HONOREES



Leo Brown
East Feliciana Parish
School Board

Leo Brown is an attentive, courteous bus driver at East Feliciana High School in Jackson, Louisiana. He effectively communicates student expectations for riding the bus and letting them know it is for their safety; therefore, he has little to no behavior problems. He also encourages them to excel academically by offering incentives for kids when they make good grades or improve their behavior. His work ethic is outstanding and he follows all policies of the school board and helps other bus drivers follow them as well. East Feliciana Public Schools is very lucky to have Mr. Brown as part of the family.



Tonya Soileau
Jefferson Parish Schools

Tonya Soileau is a secretary at Pine Prairie High School in Pine Prairie, LA. She always projects a heartfelt, cheerful attitude; and demonstrates remarkable patience when dealing with any crisis. She supports all athletic activities, serves as a cheer sponsor, runs the clock for basketball, and operates the scorebook for softball games. Ms. Soileau is also active in community engagement and is involved in singing in the choir at her church and is a mission coordinator. She consistently displays qualities of initiative, conscientiousness, and professionalism as a secretarial giant who is committed to helping students improve their self-esteem and acquire academic excellence in her cherished role.



Deidra Reed
Jefferson Davis Parish
School Board

Deidra Reed is a dedicated and detail oriented secretary at Jennings High School in Jennings, LA. She consistently goes above and beyond, making a meaningful difference in the lives of those around her. Her presence exudes warmth and reassurance and ensures an environment where students, faculty, staff and stakeholders feel supported and valued. She is the coordinator for the Jennings High School Fair Queens Pageant and also assists with many school-sponsored events on her own time such as Open House, Graduation, Awards Day, and Homecoming celebrations. She is a quiet, resilient warrior.