

LOUISIANA STUDENTS *of the Year*

2025-2026 STUDENTS OF THE YEAR GUIDELINES

I. OVERVIEW

The Students of the Year Awards Program recognizes outstanding students who demonstrate excellence in all of the following areas:

★ leadership ★ service ★ citizenship ★ academic and/or career and technical achievement

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) sponsor this annual program, which is open to every Louisiana public and approved nonpublic school with students enrolled in the grade levels that correspond to the award categories. The overall honorees of the three categories are selected by a selection committee.

★ **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT OF THE YEAR:** one fifth-grade student

★ **MIDDLE/JR. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OF THE YEAR:** one eighth-grade student

★ **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OF THE YEAR:** one twelfth-grade student

Only students who are enrolled in the above grades are eligible to participate.

II. AWARDS

Twenty-four (24) finalists are recognized and three (3) overall State Students of the Year are named at a formal ceremony traditionally held in Baton Rouge. Invited guests include:

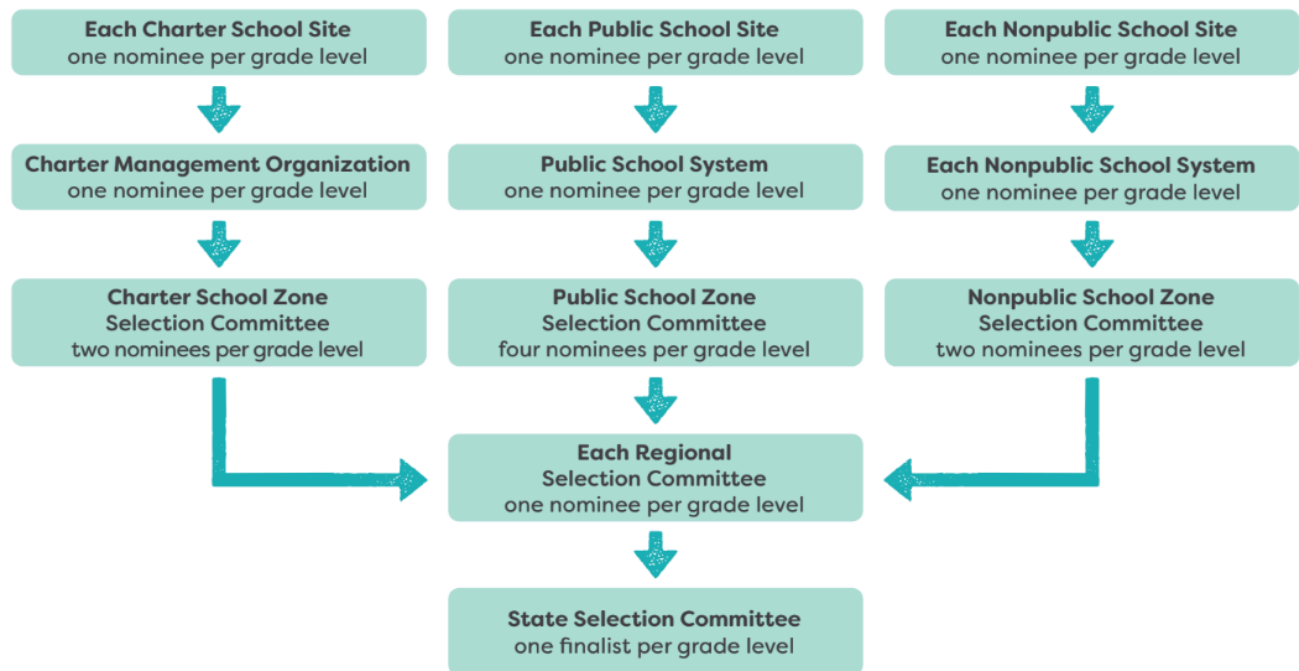
- Finalists and a designated number of guests
- School system leaders and principals
- State Superintendent of Education and Louisiana Department of Education Executive Team members
- BESE members
- Legislative Education Committee members
- Media representatives

Note: If circumstances prevent an in-person event, the LDOE may hold a virtual ceremony.

For questions, please contact exemplaryeducator@la.gov.

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III. OVERVIEW OF SELECTION PROCESS



IV. SELECTION COMMITTEES

All selection committees for schools, school systems, zones, regional, and state must have **at least three members per grade level**, and may include the following:

- grade-level appropriate teacher
- professional school counselor
- school or central office administrator
- community member
- career/technical instructor or supervisor (only grade 12)
- postsecondary personnel

V. SCHOOL AND SCHOOL SYSTEM LEVEL SELECTION PROCESS

Each school system participating in the Student of the Year Program submits a [School System Information Form](#) to the state coordinator. This form indicates the level of participation for the school system and identifies the [school system level coordinators](#) to serve as point(s) of contact. School systems are responsible for establishing and implementing a student nomination process consistently across the

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school system. Families are informed of this process before the school-level committee considers nominees. Students and families should be aware of the protocols for resolving potential disputes.

- [School-level coordinators](#) and school leaders will follow the process established by the school system and select honorees using the established criteria and rubrics. After nominees are selected, each school will submit one fifth, eighth, and/or twelfth-grade student to the school system for consideration.
- The [school system level coordinator\(s\)](#) appoints members to the school system selection committee(s) to select the school system-level honorees using the established criteria and rubrics. The school system level coordinator(s) will submit the portfolio(s) and required materials for the selected school system honoree(s) for grades 5, 8, and/or 12 into an online portal.
- In the event of a tie, please contact the State Coordinator regarding next steps.

Note: The LDOE recommends that school systems allow nominees to interview with a selection committee before selecting the school system's grade 5, grade 8, and/or grade 12 honorees.

ZONE SELECTION PROCEDURES

All school systems and nonpublic schools will submit the portfolio(s) for the school system honoree for grades 5, 8, and/or 12 into an online portal. The portfolios will be assigned to the public, charter, or nonpublic [Zone Coordinator](#) of the BESE district representing the school site of the nominee (based on the school type and site code.) See [Appendix A](#) for more information.

- Using the established rubric and criteria, the nonpublic and charter Zone Selection Committees will each submit two nominees per grade level, and the public school system Zone Selection Committee will submit four nominees per grade level to be considered in the regional selection process for the BESE district representing the school site of the nominee.

VI. REGIONAL SELECTION PROCEDURES

The portfolios will be assigned to the [Regional Coordinator](#) of the BESE district representing the school site of the nominee (based on the school type and site code.) See [Appendix A](#) for more information.

- Using the established rubric and criteria, the Regional Selection Committees will follow the regional selection process for each grade level to submit one honoree to be considered in the state-level selection process.

VII. STATE-LEVEL SELECTION PROCEDURES

The [State Coordinator](#) establishes the State-Level Review Committees for each grade level.



- The State-Level Selection Committees for each grade level reviews the applications, evaluates the writing samples, and interviews the finalists.
- The State-Level Selection Committee identifies the overall honoree for each grade level using the established rubrics and criteria.

Note: In the event of a tie at any level of the selection process, please contact the state coordinator.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

VII. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION

At minimum, Students of the Year nominees should have a cumulative grade point average of **3.1 on a four point scale** based on the grade levels listed below. The grade point average is calculated using semester grades:

- Grade 5 nominees: GPA in grades 3, 4, and the first grading period or semester of grade 5
- Grade 8 nominees: GPA in grades 6, 7, and the first grading period or semester of grade 8
- Grade 12 nominees: GPA in grades 9, 10, 11, and the first grading period or semester of grade 12

VIII. STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

SCHOOL SYSTEM-LEVEL SUBMISSIONS

The nominee's [application portfolio](#) is the basis for the selection process throughout the local, regional, and state levels. As such, the School System-level Selection Committee should ensure that the nominee's portfolios include all required application materials **without exceeding 50 electronic pages**. The portfolio requirements include the following:

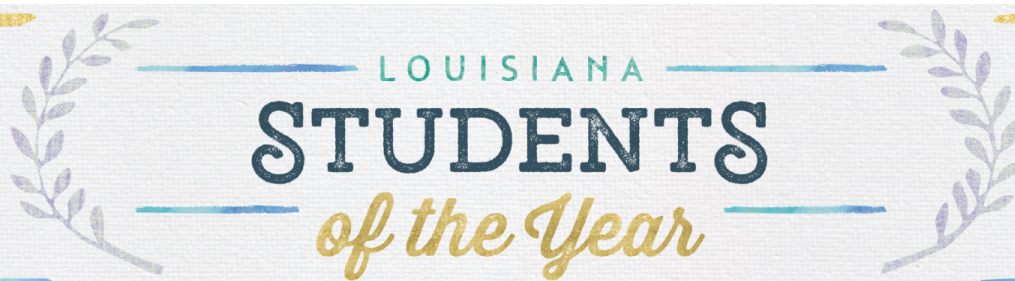
- LDOE application form
- Academic records
- Autobiographical sketch
- Leadership, service, citizenship and awards forms
- Additional artifacts
- Student photo ([Suggested Photo Guidelines](#))

Nominees may use the [Portfolio Checklist](#) to assist with preparing the materials needed for the portfolio.

See [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#) for detailed requirements.

APPENDIX A. BESE REGION ASSIGNMENT GUIDANCE

Application materials and the online application portal will be sent to the Zone Coordinator corresponding to the BESE Region for the school site of the nominee as well as the type of school system (public,



nonpublic or charter). Each zone will have three student selection committees: one for public, one for nonpublic and one for charter, with grade levels having separate committees.

Traditional public school systems may submit one public school nominee and one charter school nominee. Charter school management organizations may submit one nominee corresponding to the Charter Zone Selection Committee for the BESE District of the school site of the nominee.

BESE REGION INFORMATION

All BESE Region assignments are based on the public, nonpublic, or charter [school site](#) of the nominee.

- **Region 1-District 1-Paul Hollis**
 - Jefferson, Orleans, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa
- **Region 2-District 2-Dr. Sharon Latten Clark**
 - Assumption, Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist
- **Region 3-District 3-Sandy Holloway**
 - Assumption, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafourche, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Terrebonne
- **Region 4-District 4-Stacey Melerine**
 - Allen, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, DeSoto, Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Vernon, Webster, Winn
- **Region 5-District 5-Lance Harris**
 - Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, City of Monroe, Claiborne, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Grant, Jackson, LaSalle, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Rapides, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll
- **Region 6-District 6-Ronnie Morris**
 - Ascension, Central Community Schools, East Baton Rouge, LSU University Laboratory School, Livingston, Tangipahoa, Zachary Community School District
- **Region 7-District 7-Kevin Berken**
 - Acadia, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, St. Landry, Vermilion
- **Region 8-District 8-Preston Castille**
 - Ascension, City of Baker, City of Bogalusa, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Iberville, Lafayette, Pointe Coupee, Southern University Laboratory School, St. Helena, St. Landry, St. Martin, Tangipahoa, Washington, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana

APPENDIX B. PORTFOLIO SUBMISSIONS

School/School System Level: School-level [portfolio submissions](#) may be completed electronically or by print, and an **electronic copy** should be sent to the **school system-level coordinator**. School system coordinators must ensure all required documents are included in the online portal. The initial electronic **portfolio should not exceed fifty (50) pages**, should address only the items in the application, and must



be **submitted as a PDF**. Information submitted must be no smaller than an **11-point font** (Public Sans font preferred). A copy of all supporting documents should be retained at the local level.

Note- Video portfolio submissions and zipped folders are not allowed, as it is difficult for the review committee members to access and identify the required criteria.

State/Regional/Zone Levels: School systems should assist with the uploading of information into the online portal by the specified deadline. Zone Coordinators will submit the regional nomination forms to the state coordinator. Once the finalist for a grade level has been selected, Regional Coordinators will submit the finalist nomination forms to the State Coordinator.

PORTFOLIO APPLICATION GUIDANCE

IDENTIFICATION AND PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

The basic data sheet must be completed and attached to the application portfolio. **Parents must sign an authorization for release of pertinent information relative to the program and the [Student Media Consent form](#).** School system coordinators will enter/upload application information into the online portal.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nominees must submit information about themselves in narrative form. This autobiographical sketch provides additional information about the nominee, but it is not scored as a writing sample. This sample, which may be typed or handwritten, accompanies the application form when it is submitted to the local student selection committee. This initial writing sample should include information such as family history, interests, career aspirations, etc. The students should be encouraged to address at least three or more issues that are important to them and that have had an influence on their lives.

ACADEMIC RECORDS

A photocopy of the student's academic and attendance record, report cards, and/or high school/college transcripts reflecting academic performance in all previous years and including the first semester grades of the current grade level **must** accompany the application portfolio. Grade 5 portfolios should include grades 3-5. Grade 8 should include grades 6-8. Grade 12 should include grades 9-12 and Carnegie units earned prior to grade 9.

Also, scores for all statewide or non-public school annual assessments taken before the current school year are to be included. **If grades/scores are unavailable, please include an explanation of why they are not accessible.**

Nominees should include their AP, CLEP, ACT, PSAT, SAT, WorkKeys scores, high school Jump Start certifications, TOPS-aligned dual enrollment coursework, TOPS/TOPS Tech eligibility status, work-based experience documentation from employer, Associate's Degree coursework/status, and/or other pertinent academic test results.



Note- It is recommended that the pertinent academic records and scoring information should be clearly visible and highlighted to assist with selection committees when completing their reviews.

LEADERSHIP, ACTIVITIES, RECOGNITIONS, SERVICE/CITIZENSHIP

All sections are to be completed by all students and should include information regarding school, church, and/or community. Forms provided in the application are to be completed listing specific evidence of the student's leadership ability, participation in school and community activities, citizenship and service involvement, high school pathways accomplishments, work-based learning experiences/honors and recognitions and awards. The tables in the form may have rows inserted or deleted as needed for completing the information.

ADDITIONAL ARTIFACTS

Nominees may include additional artifacts that support the criteria. These items may include letters of recommendations, newspaper clippings, and/or photos. However, photos submitted may only show the nominee if they have submitted a [state media consent form](#). Identifying features of other students in pictures must be covered/obscured as they have not submitted a [state media consent form](#).

APPENDIX C. WRITING SAMPLE & INTERVIEW

WRITING SAMPLES

In addition to the autobiographical sketch students include in their application portfolios, each school system-level honoree will write a short essay to be reviewed during the zone and regional processes. An additional essay will be submitted for the state review process. The state coordinator will issue the writing topics to the school systems with nominees. **School system-level coordinators will ensure all IEP and 504 accommodations are followed.**

School system level coordinators will submit an electronic version of the essay into the portal per the guidelines provided. In reviewing the composition, the committee considers the following points:

- Clarity and continuity of thought
- Originality of ideas
- Interest/appeal
- Use of words
- Correctness of sentence structure
- Correctness of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and usage

INTERVIEWS

It is recommended that school systems give nominees an opportunity to interview with a selection committee prior to submitting their application for the zone selection process. Students will be interviewed by a selection panel at the regional and state levels. These interviews are structured around questions and topics appropriate to the academic level of the students. The state will provide the



interview questions for the regional and state levels. The following are some factors that are considered during the interview by the selection committee:

- Poise/confidence
- Ability to relate his/her ideas
- Engaging speaker
- Good voice projection
- Clear focus on the topic
- Use of facts to support a position
- Flexibility in response to questions
- Use of correct grammar
- Relevance of answers or explanations
- Appropriate body language and eye contact

APPENDIX D. SCORING RUBRICS

EVALUATION FORMS

Students are evaluated on all three components: the application portfolio, the writing sample, and the interview. The organization, format, writing sample topics, and questions used in the interviews will be consistent across all regions. These forms have been developed to give structure and consistency to the evaluations at all levels of the selection process.

- Portfolio Rubrics
 - [Grade 5](#)
 - [Grade 8](#)
 - [Grade 12](#)
- [Interview Rubric \(All Grades\)](#)
- [Essay Rubric \(All Grades\)](#)

QUESTIONS

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding Students of the Year, please contact exemplaryeducator@la.gov.