

Louisiana Students of the Year Awards Program Guidelines for Selection of Candidates

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General Information

A. THE STUDENTS OF THE YEAR AWARDS PROGRAM:

The Students of the Year Awards Program is designed to recognize outstanding elementary, middle/junior high, and high school students. This program, patterned after The Teacher of the Year Awards Program, is an excellent opportunity to recognize from each school system those students who have demonstrated excellent academic achievement, leadership ability, and citizenship. The Students of the Year Awards Program is sponsored by the Louisiana State Superintendent through the State Department of Education and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

B. SELECTION PROCEDURES:

To recognize the many excellent students in Louisiana, the Student Achievement Selection Committee will choose state winners in the following categories:

1. Elementary Student of the Year
(Only students in the fifth grade are eligible.)
2. Middle/Junior High School Student of the Year
(Only students in the eighth grade are eligible.)
3. High School Student of the Year
(Only students in the twelfth grade are eligible.)

Every public and approved nonpublic school in the state with students enrolled in grades 5, 8, and 12 is invited to participate. Charter school students are eligible to participate as representatives of their school in the school system in which the charter school is located. Each public school system and nonpublic school participating in the program **shall establish written procedures** to determine the initial selection of the candidates for the program and procedures for resolving issues and disputes related to candidate selection. These procedures are to be consistently implemented throughout the school system at each school participating in the program. Prior to the selection at the school level, parents are to be notified of the program, the selection process, and school and system level procedures for resolving issues and disputes related to the selection of candidates.

C. PARISH/CITY SYSTEM SELECTION PROCEDURES:

The names of students selected at the school level are submitted to the parish or city system's Student Achievement Committee, which is to be appointed by the parish/city school superintendent. This committee should be comprised of the following:

1. One elementary teacher
2. One middle/junior high level teacher
3. One high school teacher
4. One central office administrator
5. Three community members representing business/industry, labor, and civic organizations

All committees are to include equitable representation from all ethnic and racial groups.

The function of this committee is to select from the established criteria, including application portfolios, a system candidate in each of the three categories: elementary, middle/junior high, and high school. The names of candidates from each parish/city system are submitted to the appropriate Regional Selection Committee Coordinator, along with supporting documents. **It is highly recommended that the school and parish committees conduct interviews and review writing samples, since these are components of the regional and state level programs.**

D. REGIONAL AND STATE SELECTION PROCEDURES:

Regional and State Student Achievement Selection Committees will include representatives from the following areas:

1. Elementary
 2. Middle/junior high
 3. High school
- School or central office administrators
Community members representing business/industry, labor, and civic organizations
Higher education

All committees are to include equitable representation from all ethnic and racial groups.

Steps in the Regional and State selection process:

1. Each of the six Regional Student Achievement Selection Committees selects one finalist in each of the three categories (elementary, middle/junior high, and high school), using the established criteria.
2. The three nominations from each Regional Student Achievement Selection Committee are forwarded to the State Student Achievement Selection Committee.
3. Regional candidates and their respective superintendents are notified on a confidential basis a few days in advance of the public announcement. Finalists and their families are notified in time to arrange to stay in Baton Rouge for the interview and writing sample.
4. In Baton Rouge, the State Student Achievement Selection Committee reviews the students' portfolios and writing samples and then conducts interviews of the candidates.
5. The State Student Achievement Selection Committee names a student of the year for each category.

AWARDS:

All regional candidates, their parents, the Governor, the State Superintendent of Education, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education members, Legislative Educational Committee Members, and the news media are invited to attend the Students of the Year Awards Ceremony, which is held in Baton Rouge. At that time, awards are presented to the eighteen (18) regional finalists and to the three (3) State Students of the Year.

Guidelines for Selecting Candidates

A. QUALIFICATIONS:

At a minimum, candidates for Students of the Year must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 on a four-point scale. The grade point average is calculated on semester grades in the following fashion:

Grade 5 Candidates: Grades 3, 4 and 5

Grade 8 Candidates: Grades 6, 7 and 8

Grade 12 Candidates: Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12

B. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Once school level candidates have been selected, it is the responsibility of the school building level committee to assist the candidate(s) in submitting an application portfolio of information to the local Student Achievement Selection Committee.

The candidate's academic portfolio will be used as part of the selection criteria by the local, regional, and state Student Achievement Selection Committees. The portfolio must include information that is relevant and pertinent to the areas listed below. Excessively decorated or over-sized portfolios are not encouraged. **The portfolio must be in a binder no larger than 8.5X11 and shall not exceed twenty-five (25) pages and should address only the items in the application. One page can be both back and front, and a sleeve with pages front and back counts as one page. Information submitted must be no smaller than 12 point font.** Points shall be deducted from the student's overall score if the portfolio exceeds twenty-five (25) pages or if documentation is presented in a font smaller than 12 point. **A copy of all supporting documents should be retained at the local level.**

The application portfolio includes the following:

1. Identification and Preliminary Information

A 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. (See attachment: **Application Portfolio**)

2. Biographical Sketch

Candidates at the school selection level must submit information about themselves in narrative form. This biographical sketch may serve as the writing sample at the school level. This sample, which may be typed or handwritten, accompanies the application form when it is submitted to the local Student Achievement Selection Committee. This initial writing sample includes 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. At the fifth grade level, teachers may wish to pose specific questions for the students to address.

3. Academic Achievement

A photocopy of the student's semester grades (cumulative card), **including current semester grades, appropriate report cards**, and/or high school transcripts, must accompany the application portfolio. Also, the most recent IOWA or LEAP 21 test scores are to be included. High School candidates should include their ACT, PSAT, SAT, or other test results.

4. Leadership, Activities, Recognitions, Service/Citizenship

Forms in the application portfolio are to be completed listing specific evidence of the student's leadership ability, participation in activities, citizenship and service involvement, and recognitions and awards. **The forms provided in the application for this purpose must be used for listing any awards/recognitions. The leadership section is to be completed by only 8th and 12th grade students.**

C. WRITING SAMPLES:

In addition to the initial writing sample (biographical narrative) submitted at the local level, the candidates will be asked to write a short composition (appropriate to their grade levels) at both the regional and state level programs. In reviewing the composition, the committee considers the following points:

1. Clarity and continuity of thought
2. Originality of ideas
3. Interest appeal
4. Use of words
5. Correctness of sentence structure
6. Correctness of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage

D. INTERVIEWS:

Candidates are to be interviewed by the Regional and State Achievement Committees **as a whole**. These interviews are structured around questions and topics appropriate

to the academic level of the students. The following are some factors that are considered during the interview:

1. Poise/confidence
2. Ability to relate his/her ideas
3. Fluency in speaking
4. Good voice projection
5. Clear focus on the topic
6. Use of facts to support a position
7. Flexibility in response to questions
8. Use of correct grammar
9. Relevance of answers or explanations
10. Appropriate body language and eye contact

E. EVALUATION:

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. A sample copy of the evaluation form to be used in the program is attached. The evaluation, which is enclosed, has been developed to give structure and consistency to the evaluations at the local, regional and state level.