



The Principal Achievement Award for Outstanding Leadership was established in 1988 to recognize exemplary principals for their contributions to their schools and communities. The program honors principals who have spearheaded initiatives to increase student performance and promote safe learning environments, often through establishing partnerships with parents and community members.

As you consider nominations, please include high-performing, effective leaders from a variety of school environments. Leaders representing charter schools, Blue Ribbon schools, Title I schools and traditional public schools are eligible.

The Florida Department of Education 2026 Principal of the Year
Timeline for Selection

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|--------------------------------|--|
| September 2025 | Applications are distributed to superintendents, other eligible institutions and program coordinators. |
| December 8, 2025 | Applications must be submitted online at 2026 Florida Principal of the Year . |
| January - February 2026 | The 2026 Florida Principal of the Year finalists are identified by state selection committee. |
| March - April 2026 | The Commissioner of Education announces the 2026 Florida Principal of the Year. |

Each district and/or participating institution may nominate one principal. Only the district superintendent or school director may submit the nomination. Personnel who are eligible for the Teacher of the Year; administrative personnel as defined in Section 1012.01(3)(a)-(b), F.S.; or contract employees are not eligible.

Based upon availability of funds, the Florida Department of Education presents monetary awards to the Florida Principal of the Year, each state finalist and each District Principal of the Year.

Nomination Procedures

- Prior to **December 8, 2025**, participating districts and institutions must select a candidate who will represent the district or institution as the Principal of the Year. The method and materials used to select the candidate may vary according to the district.
- The online Principal of the Year Application must be submitted no later than **December 8, 2025**.
- **All** documentation will be submitted as part of the **online application**.

Submission Procedures

Application Checklist:

The application is comprised of the following:

- ☐ Superintendent Nomination Letter
- ☐ Resume
- ☐ Writing Prompt Responses
- ☐ Letters of Recommendation
- ☐ [W-9 Form](#)
- ☐ Professional headshot

Note: Before completing the online application, please gather the components listed above.

Guidelines for Submission

Superintendent Nomination Letter:

A nomination letter from the district superintendent verifying that the nominee has been selected as the District Principal of the Year will be uploaded into the online application. Please name this file *"District Name, Nominee Last Name, Superintendent Nomination Letter."*

Resume:

Nominee's **resume** must be typed in no less than a 10-point font, with a minimum of one-inch margins and a two-page maximum. Please name this file *"District Name, Nominee Last Name, Resume."* The resume will be uploaded into the online application.

Writing Prompt Responses:

Nominee's responses to the four writing prompts will be entered into the online application. We recommend that the nominee draft the responses prior to beginning the online application.

Writing Prompts:

1. What is the story of your school and what role have you played in that story? *(250 word limit)*
2. Describe the strongest objectively verifiable evidence available that illustrates your success at achieving meaningful learning outcomes for **all** students at your school. Using data,

formal/informal and short/long term, how are students at your school performing when they leave versus when they entered? (500 word limit)

3. A teacher leader is someone who positively impacts student outcomes in classrooms beyond their own. Describe how you have developed teacher leaders at your school. Please include evidence of student impact. (500 word limit)
4. Describe a project or initiative you have been involved in which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, how did you involve others and where is this project today? Please include evidence of student impact. (500 word limit)

Letters of Recommendation:

Two letters of recommendation, no more than one page each, must be provided. *One letter of recommendation must be from the nominee's supervisor;* the other letter may be from a teacher, parent, student, colleague, administrator or civic or community leader. Letters must provide specific examples of the nominee's contributions to his/her school and district and be distinct in content. No more than two recommendation letters will be accepted. Please name these files "*District Name, Nominee Last Name, Letter of Recommendation 1*" and "*District Name, Nominee Last Name, Letter of Recommendation 2*." The two letters of recommendation will be uploaded into the online application.

W-9 Form:

Each district nominee must complete and submit the **Florida Substitute Form W-9** online at <https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com/>. Please name this file "*District Name, Nominee Last Name, W-9*." ***Paper copies will not be accepted.***

- One of the following confirmations **must** be included:
 - Confirmation page indicating the 10-step process has been completed; or
 - Print screen page of the W-9 Form with the Florida State Seal.
- For additional support, please contact the Department of Financial Services at 850-413-3089.
- The confirmation page will be uploaded into the online application.

Professional Headshot:

A professional headshot of the nominee must be included as a JPEG file, 1000x1025 pixel minimum. The nominee's headshot will be uploaded into the online application. Please name this file "*District Name, Nominee Last Name, Headshot*."

Online Application Submission

Please have the following components prepared:

- ☐ Superintendent Nomination Letter
- ☐ Resume
- ☐ Writing Prompt Responses
- ☐ Letters of Recommendation

- ☐ [W-9 Form](#)
- ☐ Professional headshot

Once the components listed above are prepared, please access the online application at [2026 Florida Principal of the Year](#).

The Florida Department of Education's selection committee will consider and review only the required materials, thus additional materials shall not be submitted with the application.

Please contact the Department via email at edrecognition@fldoe.org with any questions regarding the nomination process.

Applications must be received by **December 8, 2025**, in order to be considered by the selection committee. **Applications submitted after this date will not be considered.**

Principal of the Year Rating Form

Nominee Name: _____ District: _____

The rating scale is as follows:

- 0 – Shows no evidence of the indicator
- 1 – Shows little evidence of the indicator
- 2 – Shows adequate evidence of the indicator
- 3 – Shows more than adequate evidence of the indicator
- 4 – Shows exemplary evidence of the indicator

Application Component	Rating
Resume (<i>two-page maximum</i>) • Complete work history including dates of employment and descriptions of responsibilities and accomplishments • Past achievements including academic, professional or personal • School or community involvement, leadership or volunteer experience	
Writing Prompt 1 (<i>250 word limit</i>) • Description of the story of the school and the role the nominee has played in that story	
Writing Prompt 2 (<i>500 word limit</i>) • Description with objectively verifiable evidence that demonstrates success at achieving meaningful learning outcomes for all students • Includes formal/informal and short-/long-term data that demonstrates learning growth during students' time at the school, specifically addressing the students' performance when they left the school versus when they entered	
Writing Prompt 3 (<i>500 word limit</i>) • Description of how the nominee has developed teacher leaders at their school • Includes evidence of student impact	
Writing Prompt 4 (<i>500 word limit</i>) • Description of a project or initiative the nominee has been involved in which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture • Identifies their role, how they involved others and where the project is today • Includes evidence of student impact	
Letters of Recommendation (<i>two letters, one page each</i>) • Provide specific examples of the nominee's contributions to his/her school and district • Letters are distinct in content • One letter of recommendation is from the nominee's supervisor	
Quality of Nominee • Nominee demonstrates leadership that motivates and impacts students, staff and the community • Nominee displays educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of leadership excellence for the profession such as committees, mentoring, professional publications and presentations • Consider overall quality including page limits/specifications, grammar and spelling organization of application	