

# RECOGNIZING INSPIRING SCHOOL EMPLOYEES (RISE) AWARD

State Implementation Toolkit



This state implementation toolkit includes an award fact sheet, sample newsletter item, press release, letter of invitation, and social media. It also includes a nomination form, scoring rubric, and award criteria to aid states in soliciting and selecting nominations to the U.S. Department of Education.

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## Fact Sheet

The Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award honors classified school employees who provide exemplary service to students<sup>1</sup>. A classified school employee is defined as an employee of a state or any political subdivision of a state, or an employee of a nonprofit entity, who works in any grade from pre-kindergarten through high school in any of the following occupational specialties: paraprofessional, clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, and skilled trades.

The U.S. Department of Education invites the governor of each state and the chief executive of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Outlying Areas to nominate up to two classified school employees by November 1 annually. The Secretary of Education will select a single classified school employee from among the nominees to receive the RISE Award by the following spring. The Department will recognize the honoree and communicate his or her story in order to inspire excellence and innovative practices among classified school employees.

Governors' offices determine their state-specific process for selecting up to two nominees. They may consider applications or nominations submitted by local educational agencies, school administrators, professional associations, labor organizations, educational service agencies, nonprofit entities, private schools and their representatives, parents and students, and any other groups they deem appropriate.

States must document nominees' performance in the following areas in the Nominee Submission Form, including signatures from the applicable school, school district, and state officials. Nominees must, at a minimum, demonstrate excellence in the following areas: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work); (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools. They may wish to cite testimony from letters of recommendation.

States are encouraged to make every effort to ensure that a diverse range of individuals, representative of the different categories of classified employees and serving distinct student populations, are considered for nomination. They are also encouraged to build upon existing state classified school employee recognition programs or to develop new ones, where they do not exist, in order to broaden recognition of classified school employees.

Gubernatorial staff and state education agency personnel may contact RISE director [frances.hopkins@ed.gov](mailto:frances.hopkins@ed.gov) or [rise@ed.gov](mailto:rise@ed.gov) with any implementation questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Law No: 116-13



## Sample Newsletter Item

The [Recognizing Inspiring School Employees \(RISE\) Award](#) is a federal award passed by Congress and overseen by the U.S. Department of Education. It is intended to honor and promote classified school employees who provide exemplary service. The U.S. Department of Education invites the governor of each state and the chief executive of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Outlying Areas to nominate up to two classified school employees by November 1 annually beginning in 2020. Governors' offices determine their process for selecting up to two nominees. Nominees must demonstrate excellence in: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work); (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools. The Department will recognize the honoree and communicate the single national selectee's story in order to inspire excellence among classified school employees. States are also encouraged to recognize their nominees and finalists. The deadline to submit a nomination to [your state] is [date]. Find applications and more information here [\[link\]](#).



## Sample Letter inviting Nominations/ Applications

Dear Stakeholder/ District Official:

I write with some exciting news. In 2019, Congress passed and the U.S. Department of Education will now oversee a new recognition award recognizing classified school employees. The [Recognizing Inspiring School Employees \(RISE\) Award](#) intended to honor and promote classified school employees who provide exemplary service to students.

Our [office/agency] has a critical role in implementing this award. Annually, it may nominate up to two classified school employees to the U.S. Department of Education by November 1. In [state name], you can nominate someone here [link] by [date].

Nominees must demonstrate excellence in: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work); (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools.

The U.S. Department of Education will recognize the honoree and communicate the single national selectee's story in order to inspire excellence and innovative practices among classified school employees and within schools. [Your state] will also honor the selectees and finalists and communicate their good work.

You can find more information about the award [link] and contact [name of program lead for state] at [email] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Governor's Office or State Education Agency Official



## Sample Press Release

### Governor's Office or State Education Agency

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date

**Contact:** Press Office

Phone or Email

### **[Your Governor's Office or State Education Agency] Opens 2022-2023 RISE Award Competition**

Today [your governor's office or state education agency] opened the 2022-2023 application period for the [state name] [Recognizing Inspiring School Employees \(RISE\) Award](#). The award, passed by Congress in 2019 and overseen by the U.S. Department of Education, honors classified school employees who provide exemplary service.

[Quote from senior official]

For the purposes of the award, a classified school employee is defined as an employee of a state or any political subdivision of a state, or an employee of a nonprofit entity, who works in any grade from pre-kindergarten through high school in any of the following occupational specialties: paraprofessional, clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, and skilled trades.

Nominees must demonstrate excellence in the following areas: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work); (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools. They may wish to cite testimony from letters of recommendation.

Individuals, local educational agencies, school administrators, professional associations, labor organizations, educational service agencies, nonprofit entities, private schools and their representatives, parents and students, and other groups may nominate [link] by [deadline in your state].

The top two applicants in [your state] will be nominated to the U.S. Department of Education by November 1. The U.S. Secretary of Education will select a single classified school employee from among the nominees to receive the RISE Award in the spring. Your [governor's office or state education agency] will honor nominees and finalists. In addition, the U.S. Department will recognize the honoree and communicate his or her story in order to inspire excellence among classified school employees.



## Some Social Media Ideas

### Facebook

The purpose of the Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award is to recognize the excellence exhibited by education support professionals. [Your governors' office or state agency name] invites the public to nominate here by [date you choose]. [state submission link] #RISEAward @ED.gov

Then RISE Award recognizes education support professionals including clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, skilled trades, and paraprofessionals. Nominate an education hero today! [state submission link] #RISEAward @ED.gov

Governors' offices determine their process for selecting up to two nominees to the U.S. Department of Education for the Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award. They may consider applications or nominations submitted by local educational agencies, school administrators, professional associations, labor organizations, educational service agencies, nonprofit entities, private schools and their representatives, parents and students, and any other groups they deem appropriate. The U.S. Department of Education selects one national RISE Awardee. [state submission link] #RISEAward @ED.gov

RISE Award nominees are education support professionals who demonstrate excellence in: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work); (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools. Nominate an unsung education hero today! [state submission link] #RISEAward @ED.gov

What do RISE Awardees receive? In [your state name], we will recognize classified school employees. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education will announce the honoree and present the individual with an award in the spring. [state submission link] @ED.gov

Reviewers Wanted! The RISE Award [your state name] review will take place during [timeframe]. For this purpose, [your state name] seeks experts in the following areas to help identify excellence in education support professionals: clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, skilled trades, and paraprofessionals to help rate submissions. Up to two nominees will be sent to the U.S. Department of Education for consideration in the national award. Send your email of interest in reviewing to [your email] today!

### Twitter

The Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award honors and promotes the excellence exhibited by classified school employees. Nominate someone in your district today! [state submission link] #RISEAward @usedgov



RISE Award nominees demonstrate excellence in: (A) Work performance; (B) School and community involvement; (C) Leadership and commitment; (D) Local support; (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image. [state submission link] #RISEAward @usedgov

Nominate an unsung education hero for the 2024 RISE Award. Custodians, nutrition workers, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, skilled trades, and other classified positions all eligible. [Link to state form.]

Reviewers Wanted! The RISE Award [your state] review will take place during [timeframe]. [Your state] seeks classified school employee experts. Send your email of interest in reviewing to [email] today!



## Nominee Submission Form

[Sample provided for sense of content requested only. Submissions are online]

### Background

The purpose of the Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award is to recognize and promote the commitment and excellence exhibited by full- or part-time classified school employees who provide exemplary service to students in pre-kindergarten through high school.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) invites the governor of each state and the chief executive of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Outlying Areas to nominate up to two classified school employees by November 1 annually. The Secretary of Education will select a single classified school employee to receive the RISE Award for that school year in the spring. The Department will communicate the selectee's story in order to inspire other innovative practices and excellence among classified school employees.

Governors shall consider nominations submitted by local educational agencies, school administrators, professional associations, labor organizations, educational service agencies, nonprofit entities, parents, and students, and any other groups they deem appropriate.

### Contact Information

Governor's Office Nominating Official:

Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):      First Name:      Last Name:      Position:      Email:  
Phone:

How did this nominee come to your attention?

Employee Nominated:

Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):      First Name:      Last Name:      Position:      Email:  
Phone:      (Contact information is used only to notify selectee)

Entity that Employs Nominee:

Name:      Address:      City:      State:      Zip:      Twitter:      Facebook:

Institution's Top Official: Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):      First Name:      Last Name:  
Position (Principal/ Head of School):      Email:      Phone:

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<sup>2</sup> A classified school employee is an employee of a state or any political subdivision of a state, or an employee of a nonprofit entity, who works in any grade from pre-kindergarten through high school in any of the following occupational specialties: paraprofessional, clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, and skilled trades. The terms used have the meaning given the terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).





(If Applicable)

School district or equivalent:

Superintendent: Title (Mr./Ms./Mrs./ Dr.):

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

### Institutional Information

Employer type:

Multiple institutions

Early Learning

Elementary

Middle

High

Public

Charter

Magnet

Non-Public

Urban

Rural

Suburban

Demographics of school(s) where nominee serves:

Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible:

Student Population Ethnicity/ Race by Category:

Limited English Proficient:

Special Education:

Total Enrolled:

### Documentation (Limit to 3 pages)

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Describe how this nominee demonstrates excellence in (250 words maximum each section):

(A) Work performance

(B) School and community involvement

(C) Leadership and commitment

(D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work)

(E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools

(F) Any other areas the state deems exceptional and pertinent to the RISE Award

### Certifications

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#### School and District Certifications

The signatures of the school principal and district superintendent (or equivalents) at which the nominee works on the next page certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's compliance with the following requirements is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. In no case is a private school required to make any certification with regard to the public school district in which it is located.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades early learning to 12.
2. Neither the nominated public school nor its public school district is refusing the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district wide compliance review.
3. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the public school district concluding that the nominated public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan to remedy the violation.



4. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the public school or the public school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
5. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the public school or public school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or public school district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal, Superintendent, or Appropriate Supervisor's Signature – intent is to make sure school district is in the loop)

**Governor's Office Signature**

I have reviewed the information in this application and certify to the best of my knowledge that the school meets the provisions above.

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Nominating Authority's Signature)



## Criteria

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award is to recognize and promote the commitment and excellence exhibited by full- or part-time classified school employees who provide exemplary service to students in pre-kindergarten through high school.<sup>3</sup>

### **Timeframe**

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) invites the governor of each state and the chief executive of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Outlying Areas to nominate up to two classified school employees by November 1. The Secretary of Education will select a single classified school employee to receive the RISE Award by May 31<sup>st</sup>. The Department will communicate the selectee's story in order to inspire other innovative practices and excellence among classified school employees.

### **Eligibility**

Governors shall consider nominations submitted by local educational agencies, school administrators, professional associations, labor organizations, educational service agencies, nonprofit entities, private schools and their representatives, parents and students, and any other groups they deem appropriate.

### **Submissions**

Governors shall document nominees' performance in the following areas in the Nominee Submission Form by November 1, including signatures from the applicable school, school district, and state officials indicated in the form. They may wish to cite testimony from letters of recommendation.

### ***Selection Criteria:***

Nominees must, at a minimum, demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

- (A) Work performance
- (B) School and community involvement
- (C) Leadership and commitment
- (D) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work)
- (E) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools

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<sup>3</sup> A classified school employee is an employee of a state or any political subdivision of a state, or an employee of a nonprofit entity, who works in any grade from pre-kindergarten through high school in any of the following occupational specialties: paraprofessional, clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, security services, health and student services, technical services, and skilled trades. The terms used have the meaning given the terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).



Governors are also invited to document any additional areas that make the nominee worthy of this award. They are encouraged to make every effort to ensure that a diverse range of individuals, representative of the different categories of classified employees and serving distinct student populations, are considered for nomination.

### **Recognition**

Governors are invited to recognize their nominees in every classified employee category, as they deem appropriate, at the state level. In addition, the Department will announce the national honoree and present the individual with a plaque by May 31<sup>st</sup>. The award conveys no federal funding to the honoree or related entities.

### **Technical Assistance**

The RISE Award program director will provide ongoing communications to governors' offices and/or designated state program contacts any necessary technical assistance.

### **Statutory Authority**

The Secretary of Education is responsible for administering the RISE Award, which is authorized under Public Law No. 116-13.



**Applicant Rating Form (Sample; not required)**

Reviewer: Please rate the RISE Award nomination materials provided out of 100.

<b>Documentation</b>	<b>Thoroughness of Response (10)</b>	<b>Quality of Supporting Evidence (10)</b>	<b>Total (20)</b>
(1) Work performance			
(2) School and community involvement			
(3) Leadership and Commitment			
(4) Local support (from co-workers, school administrators, community members, etc., who speak to the nominee's exemplary work)			
(5) Enhancement of classified school employees' image in the community and schools			
(6) Any other areas the state deems exceptional and pertinent to the RISE Award (Extra Credit Max 4 total)			(out 4)

Notes:



## Rating Scale

90-100 = Excellent response

- clearly addressed all five areas in an organized way
- provided numerous relevant examples and details about the employee's unique characteristics and practices
- thoroughly stated why the employee would be an excellent choice for the award
- the local support for the employee was convincing and enthusiastic

80-90 = Very good response

- responses addressed four of the five areas in an organized way
- provided several examples and details about the employee's unique characteristics and practices
- clearly stated why the principal would be a very good choice for the award
- the local support for the employee was clear and solid

70-80 = Satisfactory/average response

- addressed three of the five areas and most information is relevant
- provided a few examples and details about the employee's unique characteristics and practices
- briefly stated why the employee would be a good choice for the award
- the local support for the employee was adequate and general

60-70 = Fair/weak response

- addressed two of the five areas; not all information was relevant
- provided general statements with few examples or details about the employee's unique characteristics and practices
- did not state why the employee would be a good choice for the award
- the local support for the employee was limited, incidental, or confusing

<60 = Inadequate or minimal response

- addressed only one of the areas; much of the information is not pertinent
- provided general statements with no examples or details about the employee's unique characteristics and practices
- did not state why the employee would be a good choice for the award
- the local support for the employee was insufficient

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### For office use only

**Nominee's Total Points (Overall)** (*maximum = 104 points*):

**Ranking:**



### Submission Procedure

- 1) State program lead goes to [nomination form](#) and creates profile. If the state program lead has a profile already, s/he may login using the existing account information.
- 2) State program lead creates a nomination application.
- 3) State program lead completes contact and institutional information, as well as documentation in each of the six areas.
- 4) Each state may nominate up to two individual nominees, creating two applications in the system.
- 5) State program lead sends certification request to supervisor.
- 6) State program lead submits by Nov. 1. **NO EXCEPTIONS**
- 7) State program lead submits headshot/photo of each nominee after application submission to RISE Director [frances.hopkins@ed.gov](mailto:frances.hopkins@ed.gov) by December 1<sup>st</sup>
- 8) ED selects one national honoree and Secretary announces by May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 9) All states are encouraged to recognize their finalists and runners-up, by bestowing state-specific titles. Other ideas include receptions, banquets, ceremonies, virtual events; online profiles, videos, blogs, and press releases; plaques, letters, and certificates.