

DEADLINE
DECEMBER 31, 2026

OKLAHOMA
TEACHER
of the **YEAR**
2027

APPLICATION PACKET
AND PROGRAM GUIDE



OKLAHOMA
Education



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

The Oklahoma Teacher of the Year (ToY) Program is conducted through the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Program is in conjunction with the National Teacher of the Year Program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Exceptional Oklahoma educators challenge, motivate, and inspire their students to do their best. Their classroom environment is exciting and engaging, and learning is continuous. They are respected by their peers, local school officials, parents, and students. Exceptional Oklahoma educators are caring and creative, seeking to enrich the lives of their students and build a better future for us all.

The enduring success of the program is due to the numerous businesses, associations, organizations, and universities that present tuition waivers, tickets to athletic events, classroom technologies, gift cards, cash awards, organization memberships, and the use of a new automobile.

You can honor classroom educators at the local level by participating in the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Program. This packet will guide you through the process.

SELECTION PROCESS

At the district level, the Teacher of the Year program is coordinated through the district superintendent. It is the responsibility of the district superintendent to make sure that every educator is allowed to participate in the recognition process. It is important to emphasize that the search is not for “the best teacher,” but for one who exemplifies the finest in the profession. Only **district-level Teachers of the Year** may apply for Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year.

CRITERIA

A candidate for Oklahoma Teacher of the Year is an educator in a state-approved or accredited school, pre-kindergarten through grade twelve, who is planning to continue in an active status. All Oklahoma Teacher of the Year honorees agree to participate in the national program sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The Oklahoma Teacher of the Year candidate has the respect and admiration of colleagues. Characteristics to describe these outstanding educators include:

1. Models excellence by guiding students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence.
2. Collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success.
3. Deliberately connects with the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large.
4. Demonstrates leadership and innovation that embodies lifelong learning inside and outside the classroom walls.
5. Communicates in an engaging and articulate way.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

DUTIES

1. Partner with the Oklahoma State Department of Education while serving as an ambassador for Oklahoma educators during a one-year sabbatical from the classroom.
2. Travel around Oklahoma speaking to educators, prospective educators, and community partners at conferences, trainings, and events.
3. Represent Oklahoma in the National Teacher of the Year program, including an in-depth application and out-of-state travel.

TIMELINE

- Friday, December 31, 2027, by 11:59 PM: Application Submission Deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- Late -February 2027: Applicants will be notified via phone if they have been selected as one of the 10 finalists.
- March 2027 (Date TBD): Public announcement of the 10 finalists.
- April 2027 (Date TBD): The State Selection Committee will interview the ten finalists and select the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year.
- May 2027 (Date TBD): The announcement of the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year will take place during a celebration honoring the ten finalists, past Oklahoma Teachers of the Year, and all District Teachers of the Year. Additional details will be forthcoming.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please read and follow these instructions carefully. Applications not completed as requested will not be accepted.

Teachers may choose one of the following application pathways:

1. **REDUCED application for recognition only** at the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year ceremony but **will not participate** in the competitive process (**Pages 6-8.**)
2. To be considered for the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Award you must complete and upload the **Full Application on pages 6-21.**

STEPS FOR FULL APPLICATION IN THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS

1. Complete the OKTOY Application Packet pages 6-21.
 - The **application must be downloaded** and edited on your desktop. **Do not attempt to edit the application in the online OKTOY Web App as your changes will not be saved.**
 - The application packet includes detailed information from your resume and six essay questions.
 - Essays must be typed within the space provided in the packet. Additional pages will not be accepted.
 - The packet must be printed and signed by your principal and superintendent before you upload it to the OKTOY Web App.
 - Application Packet should be titled using the district name and your last name in the following format: District_LastName_App.pdf
2. Gather your attachments.
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - Three (3) Letters of Recommendation, one (1) of which must be from a student's parent or guardian, colleague, administrator, or student. These letters should address why you should be the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. Each letter must be typed and no longer than one single-sided page.
 - Recommendation letters can be uploaded separately or combined into one PDF for upload.
 - These should be submitted as .pdf files and titled using the district name and your last name in the following format: District_LastName_Rec.pdf
 - Headshot
 - A high-resolution (300 dpi minimum) color digital photo of yourself suitable for publication and press release.
 - This should be submitted as a .jpeg file and titled using the district name and your last name in the following format: District_LastName_Photo.jpg
 - Complete the OKTOY Web App and upload your attachments.
 - Packet and attachments
 - Example:
 - Tulsa_Smith_App.pdf
 - Tulsa_Smith_Rec.pdf
 - Tulsa_Smith_Photo.jpg



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

STEPS FOR REDUCED APPLICATION

- For recognition only at the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year ceremony but not participate in the competitive process.

1. Complete the [OKTOY Web App](#) only. *No other documents need to be uploaded.*

If you have questions, please contact us, and we will gladly help you with the submission process. Please contact TeacheroftheYear@sde.ok.gov.

THE FULL APPLICATION CONTINUES ON PAGES 6-21.

REDUCED APPLICATION IS COMPLETED ON THE [OKTOY WEB APP](#).

Applications must be submitted through the OKTOY Web App by 11:59 PM on Thursday, December 31, 2026. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted. Please do not include additional materials beyond those listed above.



Please Note:

You will need to provide your school and home Congressional District information in the OKTOY Application. [Click here](#) to find your district(s).



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name:

Current Grade Level(s) Taught:

Current Subject(s) Taught:

Total Years of Teaching Experience:

Languages other than English Spoken Fluently:

National Board Certification(s) Achieved or in Progress:

SCHOOL INFORMATION

School District:

School Name:

School Size:

District Size:



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM *cont.*

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

List all below with the most recent first.

EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

College or University	Dates Attended	Degree Earned (i.e B.A. in Math)

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

School District	Position Held	Dates



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS - include offices held and/or other relevant activities

Membership	Position Held	Dates

LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING - include leadership in the training of future teachers

Title	Position Held	Dates

AWARDS AND OTHER RECOGNITION OF TEACHING

Title	Dates



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

AI Use Attestation

I affirm that all ideas, reflections, and written responses contained in this application represent my own original work. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used only for minor editing, grammar correction, or formatting assistance. No AI system was used to generate, create, or substantially develop the content, concepts, or examples presented herein.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM *cont.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Share the experiences, people, and moments that led you into teaching, and describe the contributions you are most proud of throughout your career.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY **cont.**

Share the experiences, people, and moments that led you into teaching, and describe the contributions you are most proud of throughout your career.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM *cont.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

Tell us what you believe about teaching and what defines an exceptional educator. Explain how those beliefs influence the way you teach and the moments in your work that feel most rewarding.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING **cont.**

Tell us what you believe about teaching and what defines an exceptional educator. Explain how those beliefs influence the way you teach and the moments in your work that feel most rewarding.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

EDUCATION ISSUES AND TRENDS

What do you consider to be the major public education issues we face today? Address them in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

EDUCATION ISSUES AND TRENDS **cont.**

What do you consider to be the major public education issues we face today? Address them in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM *cont.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Share the ways you have invested in the teaching profession- through your actions, leadership, or relationships- and explain how those efforts have made the path clearer or more supportive for teachers starting out.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION **cont.**

Share the ways you have invested in the teaching profession- through your actions, leadership, or relationships- and explain how those efforts have made the path clearer or more supportive for teachers starting out.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Describe your commitment to your community through service-oriented activities, including volunteer work, civic responsibilities, and other group activities.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

As the Teacher of the Year, you will serve as a spokesperson and representative for teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the public?



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM *cont.*

ESSAY QUESTIONS - Limit all following responses to the spaces provided.

SHARE A LESSON

Think of a lesson or unit that feels 'most like you' as a teacher. Share how you connected with every student, what they gained from the experience, and how your teaching philosophy came to life in the way you taught it.



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SIGNATURES

APPLICANT

In submitting this form, I agree to allow the information herein to be used during the selection process for the 2027 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. The information will only be accessed by necessary Oklahoma State Department of Education staff and selection committee members.

I understand that the information in this application will be held securely and not distributed to third parties. Additionally, information about the person named Oklahoma Teacher of the Year will not be released until after the state has made an official announcement identifying the candidate as the state's Teacher of the Year.

I hereby give my permission that any or all the attached materials (other than home address and phone number) may be shared with persons interested in promoting the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year program.

I also acknowledge that if selected as the 2027 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, I will be released from classroom responsibilities during the 2027-28 school year to fulfill the obligations of the role.

Applicant Name

Applicant Signature

Date

PRINCIPAL

The above Application Candidate submits this application with my approval.

I acknowledge that if the candidate is selected as the 2027 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, ***the school district will release this individual from classroom responsibilities during the 2027-28 school year to fulfill the obligations of the role.***

Principal Name

Principal Signature

Date

Principal Email

Principal Phone



OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM **cont.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SIGNATURES

SUPERINTENDENT

The above Application Candidate submits this application with my approval.

I acknowledge that if the candidate is selected as the 2027 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, the school district will release this individual from classroom responsibilities during the 2027-28 school year to fulfill the obligations of the role.

I hereby assure that the above Application Candidate is a full-time classroom teacher without administrative duties who expects to continue in an active teaching position in the above School during the 2027-28 school year.

I understand that if our local teacher of the year is selected to be a finalist, they will be required to submit via video in their classroom.

I understand that if our local teacher of the year is selected to be a finalist, they will be required to attend interview sessions with the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Selection Committee to be held in Oklahoma City.

In addition, I understand that Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year will also be Oklahoma's Ambassador of Teaching. As Ambassador, the teacher will share their knowledge and resources with educators around the state.

Finally, I understand that the State Legislature has funded the Oklahoma Ambassador of Teaching position to provide for a full-time certified teacher in the classroom of Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year during the year of release.

Superintendent Name

Superintendent Signature

Date

Superintendent Email

Superintendent Phone