



Los Angeles County Office of Education Teachers of the Year Program 2025-2026 Information & Application Instructions

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has proudly served as the sponsoring organization of the **Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year Program**—an honors competition and awards luncheon that spotlights excellence in public education. LACOE’s program, the largest in the state, is part of the California and National Teacher of the Year programs.

Each year, LACOE presents an awards luncheon to recognize all district-level Teachers of the Year (TOY). During this luncheon, LACOE announces up to 16 teachers as the Los Angeles County titleholders, who will automatically qualify for the state competition, with a chance to participate in the national competitions. LACOE encourages all Los Angeles County public school districts to participate. Program information, the application and complete instructions are available on the Teachers of the Year website at <https://www.lacoe.edu/toy>

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

To be eligible for the Los Angeles County & California TOY Program, applicants must be:

1. Fully credentialed teachers currently employed to teach any pre-kindergarten through grade twelve curriculum to children or adults.
2. Employed full-time in L.A. County public schools.
3. Teachers who have been in the classroom for more than **eight years** at the time of the application submission.
4. Applicants may be assigned some administrative responsibilities but for whom teaching students is the primary responsibility.



5. Teachers who are available to fulfill ambassadorial duties during the year of service and be supported by their employer.

Applicants must:

- Have been named as a finalist in their District competition.
- Have demonstrated leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning.
- Have expressed themselves in an engaging and articulate way.

Applicants in the county program may be selected as a California Teacher of the Year. Due to that possibility, all applicants should be prepared to fulfill the responsibilities of representing the teaching profession in a variety of settings and assisting their teaching colleagues in a variety of ways. Teachers selected as state winners may be called away from their classroom 30 or more instructional days during their title year.

TOY 2025-2026 TIMELINE:

Monday, April 14, 2025	TOY Application VIRTUAL Workshop
Thursday, May 1, 2025	TOY Application VIRTUAL Workshop
★ Sunday, June 1, 2025 by 11:59 PM	DEADLINE to submit 2025-2026 California Teachers of the Year Application to LACOE
June 3-8, 2025	Selection Committee #1 reviews written application materials
June 16, 2025	25 semifinalists are selected and notified of interview schedule
June 23 & 24, 2025	Selection Committee #2 conducts interviews with semifinalists
July 9, 2025	Deadline for LACOE to submit the TOY Applications to the State
Friday, September 19, 2025	L.A County TOY Awards Luncheon and Announcement

NOMINATION ALLOWANCES:

Each LA County public school district may establish its own internal process for selecting one exemplary teacher to compete in the program. All school districts (except Los Angeles Unified School District) are allowed **one nominee**. Los Angeles Unified School District is allowed up to five nominees due to the size of the district.

AWARDS BANQUET:

All district-level Teachers of the Year are invited to attend the awards luncheon on Friday, September 19, 2025. The winners of the Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year competition will be publicly announced at the luncheon. Family members, parents, friends, students, former students, district representatives and news media are invited to attend the celebration.



OPT OUT POLICY:

District Teachers of the Year who want to opt out of the county-level competition and still be honored at the awards luncheon may submit an opt-out application. The application can be found on www.lacoe.edu/toy or by clicking on the link below. The Opt-Out Application must be submitted by **Friday, June 20, 2025 by 11:59pm.**

OPT-OUT APPLICATION: <https://forms.gle/9kx5zi86pTsQr4PT8>

STATE PROGRAM:

The “Sweet 16” TOYs will have their applications sent to the State TOY committee for review. The LACOE Public Affairs & Communications Division will make all arrangements to send the applications of the county winners to the CDE by its deadline.

The selection takes place in the following phases:

- Review of the applications from all county TOYs
- On-site classroom visit for county TOYs who move on as first round semi-finalists
- County TOYs who are selected as finalists are interviewed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), or their designee.
- The 5 California TOYs are selected

To evaluate the applications, the CDE convenes a selection committee consisting of administrators, representatives from professional organizations and teachers. Committee members identify the applications that best address characteristics of excellent teaching.

On-site Classroom Visit:

The CA TOY Program travels to perform on-site classroom observations of finalists in the fall. If you receive an on-site classroom visit, the LACOE Events Coordinator will contact you and your principal to make all arrangements necessary for the visit. The visit is confidential and NO one should know that the CDE is present.

From the On-site Classroom Visit, selected candidates advance to the final phase where they are interviewed by the SSPI, or their designee. In the interview, candidates are evaluated for their ability to discuss current educational issues, which will be part of their role as ambassadors for the teaching profession.

From the Interview, teachers are named by the SSPI as CA TOYs to represent the teaching profession throughout the state of California. Of these teachers, one is selected to serve as the state's representative to the National Teacher of the Year Program. All decisions are final.



Teachers selected as state winners will serve from January to December for their years of service and may be called away from their classroom 30 or more instructional days over a period of three to five years, and several days in the following years.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

Applicants for the 2025-2026 Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year program need to complete both an **online application** and a separate **written component**. The written components of the application will need to be completed on a separate *Microsoft word document (.doc)* and emailed to the LACOE Events Coordinator – [Naime Laskar](#).

LINK for Online Application: <https://forms.gle/vwyfVbczUbFhB3TGA>

Applicants are encouraged to complete their application in a manner in which the content:

- Puts the reader in the classroom and allows the reader to easily visualize the classroom setting and the teacher as the instructional leader, leaving the reader wanting to know more through providing ample classroom examples.
- Conveys depth of content knowledge and how to deliver it creatively and in a differentiated fashion to engage students and influence student learning as reflected in their measurable achievements.
- Reflects the teacher's personal journey and shows the teacher's influence beyond the classroom and into their school community.
- Maintains a student-centered perspective as the applicant weaves in numerous examples of student engagement.
- Inspires through their commitment as a lifelong learner who models dedication to continued learning.
- Focuses on building relationships that transform and empower students, parents, and community.
- Reflects the teacher's dedication to the belief that all children can achieve.

Required Format of Written Components

Failure to observe the formatting requirements may result in disqualification. Please proofread the application carefully. The written application components must be in the required format:

- Must be submitted as a Microsoft Word doc file using:
 - 12-point
 - Arial font
 - Single-Spaced



- Must have margins set at 1 inch on all sides (top, left, right, and bottom). Do not use compressed type.
- Should have a title at the top of each page.
- Each page should be numbered at the bottom right hand corner of the page.
- Each written section should include page breaks so that each component has its own page(s).
- For each written component, include the name of the component followed by the requirement. Do NOT include the requirement description. Each component has its own word or page maximum. The name of the component will not count towards the requirement word count.
- Provide the word count in parenthesis after the name of the component.
- The written component should not exceed **23 pages** total
- Should not have track changes or any editing markings.

Required Components for a Complete Application

Failure to include the required components may result in disqualification. Applicants must include each of the required components to submit a complete application:

- **Application Information** (Online form)
- **School Information** (Online form)
- **District Information** (Online form)
- **Cover Page** (Not to exceed one pages)
- **Introductory Letter** (Not to exceed 750)
- **Professional Biography** (Not to exceed 750 words)
- **Professional Resume** (Not to exceed two pages)
- **Each Essay is NOT TO EXCEED 750 WORDS**
 - **Essay 1 – Philosophy of Teaching**
 - **Essay 2 – School Culture**
 - **Essay 3 – School Community Involvement**
 - **Essay 4 – Education Issues and Trends**
 - **Essay 5 – State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Initiatives**
 - Select ONLY 1 or 2 of the initiatives
 - **Essay 6 – National Teacher of the Year**
- **Letter of Recommendation 1** (Not to exceed one page)
- **Letter of Recommendation 2** (Not to exceed one page)
- **Letter of Recommendation 3** (Not to exceed one page)
- **2 Professional Headshots** (on a separate page)
- **Introductory Video** (Not to exceed 3 minutes)



The written component documentation should be named as follows: County Name, District Name, followed by Nominee First Name and Last Name. (Do not include the words county or school district.) *For example: Los Angeles Burbank Unified Jane Doe.* Include the documentation name on the cover page.

Prior to submitting your Application, review it carefully. Make sure all information is complete and accurate. Failure to provide a complete Application by the due date will result in your candidate being disqualified from the 2024-2025 Los Angeles County TOY Program.

Application Components:

Cover Page (Not to exceed 1 page)

The cover page should include the documentation name and the following information about the candidate:

- Documentation Name (County Name, District Name, followed by candidate First Name and Last Name)
- First Name and Last Name
- Grade Level(s) Teaching - Subject(s) Teaching
- School where Employed, City
- School District, County

Introductory Letter (Not to exceed 750 words)

The introductory letter is from the candidate to the evaluation committee. It should present a powerful statement about your commitment to continued achievement for all students, and should address all prompts and provide specific examples:

- Explain what it is like to be a student in your class.
- Paint a clear picture that helps the reader to envision a typical day.
- Include a brief example of an ideal real day and a brief example of how you turned a challenging moment into a teachable moment.
- Share an inspirational moment from your own teaching experience that illustrates an important aspect of education.

Professional Biography (Not to exceed 750 words)

The professional biography should be written in the first person from the candidate's point of view. Please include the following:

- The factors that influence you becoming a teacher.



- Your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education or the professional community, to date

Professional Resume (Not to exceed 2 pages)

Please include your accomplishments in the areas listed below, beginning with the five most recent items in chronological order (most recent first).

NOTE: California Teachers Association (CTA), National Education Association (NEA), are not certifications, they are memberships

- **Education** - Colleges and Universities attended (including postgraduate studies), degrees earned, majors, and years of attendance.
- **Certifications and Professional Association Memberships** - Professional association memberships, including information regarding offices held, and year obtained.
- **Work Experience** - Teaching employment history with title, organization, years in position, grade level, and subject area of each assignment.
- **Leadership Experience** - Staff development position, organization and years in position.
- **Awards and Other Recognition** - Awards and other recognition of your teaching, including the year received.

Essays – Provide an essay addressing each of the following six topics. Please indicate evidence of student impact. Do not include external links. **Each essay not to exceed *750 words*:**

1. Philosophy of Teaching

Describe a content lesson or unit that exemplifies your philosophy as a teacher. Show how your deliberate instructional decisions create student learning and reveal what you value in education.

Address all prompts and provide specific examples:

- Describe what you are doing to create a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students.
- The greatest rewards you find in teaching.



- How your views about teaching are demonstrated in your personal teaching style.
- How you engage students of all backgrounds, abilities, and readiness levels in learning and how that learning influences your students.
- A content lesson or unit that defines you as a teacher and how your beliefs about teaching are demonstrated in this lesson or unit.

2. School Culture

Describe how you deliberately create culture in your classroom and school.

Address the prompt and provide specific examples:

- Demonstrate how you leverage relationships and collaborate with others to teach students of all backgrounds and identities.

3. School Community Involvement

Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with the community. Demonstrate the impact of this work on student learning and success.

Address all prompts and provide specific examples:

- Specific ways you are involved with colleagues in creating school-community partnerships.
- Your commitments to the community through service-oriented activities (such as volunteer and civic) that enhance the home, school, and/or community connection and the role you played in the projects.
- How you foster student involvement in community service projects and utilize the community in your classroom.

4. Education Issues and Trends

Define an issue you have had to advocate for either in your school, state, or beyond. Describe how you demonstrated leadership as part of your work on this issue and how your work contributed to the success of your students.

Address all prompts and provide specific examples:



- Address the issue in depth.
- Outline possible causes and effects.
- Outline possible resolutions.
- Describe how you address or work to improve the issue both within and outside of the classroom.

5. State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Initiatives

Describe how your teaching and/or professional experiences contribute toward the work of California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction's (SSPI) Initiatives.

Select **ONLY** *one or two* of Superintendent Thurmond's initiatives and provide specific examples. You may find them on his [Transforming Schools Initiatives web page](#).

6. National Teacher of the Year

As the 2026 National Teacher of the Year, serving as the ambassador of education for the United States, you have been asked to give a speech to a large audience of teachers. This speech is being recorded and will be shared broadly with a larger audience. Write the speech that you would give in this scenario.

In your speech, address all prompts and provide specific examples:

- The skills, values, knowledge and ethics you would convey.
- The positive messages you would communicate to your profession and to the public.
- Why you would recommend individuals to enter the teaching profession.
- How you would strengthen and improve the teaching profession.
- How you support the teaching profession, such as through teacher collaboration and mentoring.
- What is and/or what should be the basis for accountability in the teaching profession.



Letters of Recommendation

Include **three** letters of recommendation from a diverse array of colleagues/stakeholders that support why you should be a 2026 California Teacher of the Year. Each letter of recommendation is **not to exceed one page**.

When choosing letters of recommendation to submit, consider how they might extend the Application by covering areas or examples not addressed elsewhere in the application.

Each letter of recommendation must include a signature. Do not include other materials, such as pictures, portfolios, or press clippings.

At least one letter must be from a parent, colleague, administrator or student. Letters may be from among the following titles or education stakeholders and should only be one per title:

- District Superintendent
- Principal
- Administrator
- Colleague
- Student
- Parent
- Community Civic Leader

Headshot Requirements

Please attach **TWO professional headshots**. This photo will be used in all materials for the LA County competition as well as the State competition.

- 5" x 7"
- Color
- Head shot of the teacher only. No group shots. No cropping. No Selfie.
- Portrait Orientation
- 300 ppi, .jpg format
- No fuzzy photos



Introductory Video

Include an introductory video. **(Not to exceed 3 minutes.)**

Provide a YouTube link or any hyperlink URL to where the introductory video can be viewed. Make sure it can be viewed by “anyone with the link”. The video is NOT judged on aesthetics. It can be produced simply with a cell phone by the teacher and does not require any bells and whistles. It is used as one more way to get to know the applicant. Note, we will also provide the opportunity for any applicant who is selected as one of the CA TOY to upgrade their video if they choose.

The introductory video should include:

- An introduction including your name and the county you are representing. (e.g., My name is ... I am a 2026 California Teacher of the Year Candidate from ... County."
- A description of why you teach.

Submitting the Application

Online Form

Part 1 of the Application must be submitted via online and you will receive a confirmation email stating that your online application was submitted.

LINK for Online Application: <https://forms.gle/vwyfVbczUbFhB3TGA>

E-Mail

Part 2 of the Application (*Written Component Documentation*) must be submitted as one complete file in Microsoft Word to LACOE Events Coordinator – Naime Laskar at Laskar_Naime@laoe.edu

The entire application, BOTH PART 1 AND 2, are due on or before **Sunday, June 1, 2025, 11:59PM. Absolutely no late applications will be accepted!**

Interview Phase (*Semifinalists Only*):

The top 25 scorers will advance to the county’s semifinal round of interviews. A second LACOE Selection Committee will conduct the interviews. Semifinalists will be contacted to schedule their interview time. The interviews will be held on **Monday, June 23 & Tuesday, June 24.**