



KANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

2026 Nomination



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Kansas Teacher of the Year Program

Mission

The mission of the Kansas Teacher of the Year (KTOY) program is to build and utilize a network of exemplary teachers who are leaders in the improvement of schools, student performance and the teaching profession.

The KTOY program, sponsored by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), identifies, recognizes and utilizes representatives of excellent teaching in the elementary and secondary classrooms of the state.

The KTOY state finalists serve as ambassadors for education in Kansas, making public appearances across the state.

The KTOY is nominated to represent Kansas in the National Teacher of the Year program. The National Teacher of the Year program, a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, is presented by Voya Financial.

Nominations

Each school district may nominate one elementary classroom teacher and one secondary classroom teacher for Kansas Teacher of the Year.

Principals and superintendents do not submit a nomination entry form identifying their candidate(s) but are required to approve and sign the online application after it has been completed by their candidate(s).

All teachers should have an equal opportunity to be nominated for and selected as the district nominee. The local nomination and selection process should not be biased nor give the appearance of bias.

The local selection committee should be comprised of individuals representing all publics with an interest in education.

School principals and superintendents are encouraged to plan recognition ceremonies honoring their exemplary teachers.

Nominations should be made without regard to age, sex, race or religion.

Candidates will complete their nominations using an online application program. The nomination questions are detailed in this packet of information so that candidates can begin work on them immediately. **The online application program will open Sept. 6, 2024, and will close Nov. 8, 2024.**

Registration

Visit apps.ksde.org for registration and instructions.

General Qualifications and Responsibilities

For the purpose of this program, a classroom teacher is defined as a teacher who has and is responsible for a group(s) of students.

The nominee must be a full-time classroom teacher in any state-approved or accredited school, prekindergarten through grade 12, who is planning to continue in an active teaching status. A nominee who does not continue as a full-time classroom teacher for the 2025-2026 school year is not eligible for the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year or any awards associated with the program.

The teacher's current responsibilities should include:

- Assessment of students, including the assignment of grades on a report card.
- Preparation of lesson plans.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Discipline
- Day-to-day functioning of class(es), including duties such as attendance, lunch count, lunch and recess duty, etc.

By the end of the current school year, the teacher must have completed a minimum of five years as a classroom teacher.

The nominee:

- Has the respect and admiration of students, parents and colleagues.
- Is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence.
- Collaborates with colleagues, students and families to create a school culture of respect and success.
- Deliberately connects the classroom with key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large.
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning.
- Expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way.
- Must be committed to serving as a leader in efforts to improve schools, student performance and the teaching profession in Kansas. Every teacher nominated for KTOY will have the opportunity to become an active member of the Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN).

Opportunities include:

- Serving as an advocate for students.
- Working with state policymakers, business and community leaders, and others who shape public opinion to promote accurate perceptions of the realities of today's classrooms.
- Using the teacher voice to help shape education policy at the local and state levels.
- Serving as a resource for the state's college and university teacher education programs and working with those students considering or committed to entering the teaching profession.
- Serving on state advisory and selection committees, as conference and workshop presenters and as consultants.
- Participating in professional development activities designed to provide exemplary educators with needed tools to become more effective leaders.

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The nominee must be released from classroom responsibilities during the year of recognition as necessary in order to fulfill the obligations inherent in the honor. Every attempt will be made to schedule activities around the classroom schedule.

General guidelines for classroom release time



The Kansas Teacher of the Year will be awarded The Hubbard Foundation Kansas Teacher of the Year Ambassadorship, which will enable the KTOY to devote significant time during the second semester (January-May) to activities that support the mission of the KTOY program.

It is recommended that the school district hire a full-time replacement teacher in order to provide continuity for the students in the classroom during the Kansas Teacher of the Year's absence. The KTOY will be in the classroom when not actively engaged in responsibilities as KTOY Ambassador.

Funds will be provided to pay travel and other necessary expenses incurred by the KTOY during the ambassadorship.

If selected as the 2026 National Teacher of the Year, the nominee must be released from classroom responsibilities during the year of recognition to fulfill the obligations inherent in the honor.

Teachers who have received recognition as KTOY are not eligible for nomination. Those who have been recognized as a state finalist in the KTOY program in the previous three years are not eligible for nomination. Teachers who have been nominated in prior years, but did not achieve at least a state finalist ranking, may be nominated the following year.

Information Required to Complete the Kansas Teacher of the Year Online Application

Nominee

Nominee Entry Page: General Information

When you access the online application program, you will need to provide general information including:

- Name
- School district
- School
- Home contact information.
- The subject and grade level you currently teach.
- Number of years you have taught in your career and in your current position.
- If you are filing as an elementary or secondary candidate.

You will also need to enter the name and email address of both your principal and superintendent. If your assistant principal or assistant superintendent must sign the nomination in lieu of your principal or superintendent, enter the assistant principal or assistant superintendent's name and email address. Please make sure the email addresses are accurate as they will be used in routing the application through the online approval process.

The program is set to auto-fill some of the information required on the form. Once you have entered your school district and the name of your school, the program will complete the school address, phone number and fax number.

After completing and saving the Nominee Entry page, your next step will be to proceed to the Nominee Upload page to upload the documents described below. If you are not ready to upload your documents, you may log out of the program. Once ready to upload the documents, you may log in to the online application program and proceed to the Nominee Upload page.

Nominee Upload Page

You will upload your resume, professional biography, response questions, three recommendation letters, photograph and, if necessary, a photograph release form to the Nominee Upload page. All documents, with the exception of your photograph, should be saved as .pdf documents. Your picture should be saved as a .jpg file.

Instructions for naming each of the required documents are included in the description for each section on the following pages.

You must upload a document for each section except for the optional photograph release form. If your photograph is protected by copyright, you must upload a photograph release form. You will not be able to submit your application until all of the required documents have been uploaded to this page.

Resume (maximum two pages)

Your resume should be easy to read and may be single-spaced. Include the year(s) for each item on your resume. Your picture should not appear on your resume.

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Categories are as follows:

1. Education – List colleges and universities attended, including postgraduate studies, with degree earned, major and years of attendance (i.e., 2007-2011) for each entry.
2. Licenses and/or Certifications – List licenses and/or certifications you currently hold and the year each was obtained.
3. Work Experience – List work experience, including employer (i.e., school district and school), position, grade level, subject area, and years in position (i.e., 2011-2016).
4. Professional Association Memberships – List professional association memberships, including offices held, other relevant activities and years (i.e., 2011-2012) for each entry.
5. Leadership Experience – List leadership experience, including position, organization, and years in position (i.e., 2010-2012).
6. Awards and Other Recognition – List awards and other recognition you have received as a teacher, including year received for each entry.

Save resume for uploading to the online application as LastName_USDNumber_Resume.pdf.

Professional Biography (maximum 250 words)

Please complete your professional biography in third person. By completing this section, you agree that your biography can be used in Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas Teacher of the Year program materials.

Your biography should paint a picture of you as a professional educator. Please include the following items:

- The grade level and subject you currently teach.
- The school in which you currently teach, including city and state.
- All degrees you hold, including the institution where they were received (i.e., Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Connecticut).

Please follow the following style guidelines:

- Spell out your degrees (i.e., Bachelor of Arts, not BA).
- Capitalize a subject area only when it is a language (i.e., capitalize English, but not calculus).
- Use your first and last name in the first reference, but your last name only on second and subsequent references.
- Spell out all acronyms the first time they are used.

Save professional biography for uploading to the online application as LastName_USDNumber_ProfessionalBiography.pdf.

Response Questions

Respond to the five questions noted below, highlighting your personal story and why you believe you should be the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year. Please indicate evidence of student impact. Please do not include external links.

Your responses may include pictures that help illustrate your story, but the pictures should not be the focal point of your response.

Maximum word counts are indicated in parenthesis.

Please include the question number and the question in bold type, followed by your response in regular type. Separate each of the five questions and responses so each stand alone and will be easy to follow.

1. Describe a content lesson or unit that defines you as a teacher. How did you engage students of all backgrounds and abilities in the learning? How did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson or unit? *(maximum 750 words)*
2. Describe a project or initiative in which you have been involved that contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, how did you collaborate with others and what is the status of this project today? Please include evidence of student impact. *(maximum 500 words)*
3. How do you ensure that education transcends the classroom? Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with the community. Please include evidence of student impact. *(maximum 500 words)*
4. What do you consider to be a major public education issue today? Describe how you demonstrate being a lifelong learner, leader and innovator about this issue, both in and outside of the classroom walls. *(maximum 500 words)*
5. As the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year, you serve as a spokesperson and representative for all teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the public? *(maximum 750 words)*

Save response questions for uploading to the online application as LastName_USDNumber_ResponseQuestions.pdf. Your responses to all five questions will be uploaded as a single document.

Recommendation Letters

Attach three one-page recommendation letters that support why you should be the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year. At least one of these must be a recommendation from a current administrator. The other two recommendations may be from a student/former student, parent, colleague or business/community/civic leader.

Each letter should not exceed one page in length.

Save recommendation letters for uploading to the online application as:

- LastName_USDNumber_Recommendation1.pdf
- LastName_USDNumber_Recommendation2.pdf
- LastName_USDNumber_Recommendation3.pdf.

Photograph

Attach a headshot photograph of the candidate suitable for publicity purposes:

- Full-color image.
- Portrait orientation.
- At least 300 DPI (image does not need to be larger than 4" x 6" inches).
- .jpg format.
- Sharp contrast between individual and background is preferred. A contrasting plain, light background is requested rather than a picture of the candidate taken outdoors, sitting in a chair or with some other type of background scenery.

By completing this section, you agree that your picture can be used in Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas Teacher of the Year program materials.

Save photograph for uploading to the online application as LastName_USDNumber_Headshot.jpg.

Copyright Release

If photograph is copyright protected, please include permission for its use in Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas Teacher of the Year program materials.

Save photograph copyright release for uploading to the online application as LastName_USDNumber_PhotoRelease.pdf.

Nominee, Principal and Superintendent Approval and Signatures

The nomination must be approved and electronically signed by the nominee, nominee's principal and nominee's superintendent.

Nominee's Approval and Signature

After completing the Nominee Entry page and uploading all required documents to the Nominee Upload page, the nominee will proceed to the Signature Page by clicking on the red button that reads, Approval and Signature Page. This red button is located at the bottom of the Nominee Upload page.

Signature Prompt

As the nominee, you will be prompted to type your full name, tab and then select a signature style.

When ready to submit your nomination, click on the red button that reads, Save and Submit to Principal and Superintendent for Approval. You will be prompted to log out of the online application program. Once you click the Save and Submit button, you will not be able to access your nomination.

Principal/Superintendent's Approval and Signatures

Your principal and superintendent will each receive an email indicating that you have submitted a nomination for Kansas Teacher of the Year that is ready for their review and approval. They will be directed to the KSDE Authentication Page, where they will be required to register for the Kansas Teacher of the Year program if they have not already done so.

Once their registrations have been approved, your principal and superintendent will be able to log in to the Kansas Teacher of the Year online application program and select your nomination from the Nominee List. They will be able to open and review each document.

After completing the review of the nomination packet, the principal/superintendent will proceed to the Signature Page by clicking on the red button that reads, Approval and Signature Page. This red button is located at the bottom of the page.

Signature Prompt

The principal/superintendent will be prompted to type his/her full name, tab and then select a signature style.

When ready to approve the nomination, the principal/superintendent will click on the red button that reads, Save and Notify Nominee of Approval. The principal/superintendent will be prompted to log out of the online application program. Once the principal/superintendent clicks on the Save and Notify Nominee of Approval button, he/she will not be able to access your nomination.

Nominee Notifications

The nominee will receive separate email notifications once the principal and superintendent have approved the nomination. When both the principal and superintendent have approved the nomination, the nominee will receive an email indicating that both administrators have approved the nomination and that it has been submitted to the Kansas State Department of Education.

Deadline

All nominations must be submitted to the Kansas State Department of Education on or before November 8, 2024. Nominations are not submitted until they have been approved and electronically signed by the nominee, principal, and superintendent.

Selection Process

The KTOY program consists of local, regional and state competitions. The regions correspond to the state's four U.S. congressional districts.

Regional

KSDE will appoint regional selection committees responsible for reviewing the nomination forms and selecting six semi-finalists for recognition at the regional level:

- Three elementary teachers.
- Three secondary teachers.

Two regional finalists will be chosen from among these six teachers:

- One elementary teacher
- One secondary teacher

Regional selection committees will be comprised primarily of education administrators and teachers.

Each regional finalist will receive a \$2,000 cash award from Security Benefit in Topeka. They also will be the state finalists for the Kansas Teacher of the Year.

State

KSDE will appoint a state selection committee to select the KTOY from among the eight state finalists. Selection committee members will independently review and evaluate the written nomination forms and videotaped interviews of the finalists.

The state selection committee will be comprised of individuals representing business and industry, legislators, boards of education, education administrators, teachers, higher education institutions, education organizations, parents and students.



Recognition and Awards

Regional

Nominees will be honored at recognition ceremonies in each region. Each regional finalist will receive the Security Benefit cash award at the regional recognition ceremony. These events are planned for:

<p>REGION 1 April 12, 2025 Salina Dinner, followed by awards program.</p>	<p>REGION 2 April 6, 2025 Topeka Lunch, followed by awards program.</p>
<p>REGION 3 April 6, 2025 Overland Park Dinner, followed by awards program.</p>	<p>REGION 4 April 12, 2025 Wichita Lunch, followed by awards program.</p>

State

The 2026 KTOY State Awards Banquet will be tentatively held Sept. 20, 2025, in Wichita. The reception will be at 4 p.m., followed by dinner and the awards program at 5 p.m.

The state finalists will be introduced individually, while district nominees will be recognized as a group during the "grand march," at the beginning of the program. The celebration will culminate in the announcement of the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year.

The Kansas Teacher of the Year will:

- Be awarded a lifelong learning scholarship, enabling the recipient to enroll free of charge in up to nine credit hours per year at any Kansas Regents institution provided the individual is actively pursuing a teaching career in Kansas at the following institutions:

Washburn University, Topeka

Baker University, Baldwin City

Bethany College, Lindsborg

Kansas Wesleyan University, Salina

MidAmerica Nazarene University, Olathe

University of Saint Mary, Leavenworth

Tabor College, Hillsboro

Webster University, Kansas City

- Be awarded The Hubbard Foundation KTOY Ambassadorship, enabling to devote significant time during the second semester (January-May) to activities that support the mission of the program.
- Receive a cash award in the amount of \$4,000 from Security Benefit in Topeka.
- Receive a rental vehicle from Enterprise Rent-a-Car, Merriam, for use during the program.
- Receive a Leader in Education ring from Jostens, Inc.

Following the state awards banquet on Saturday, a meeting for the 2026 KTOY and state finalists will be held on Sunday, Sept. 21, 2025, in Wichita. Team members will begin to discuss and plan their activities for the year.

Timeline

August 2024

KSDE posts 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year nomination packet on agency website.

September 6, 2024

Online application program for 2026 KTOY opens.

November 8, 2024

Online application program for 2026 KTOY closes.

April 12, 2025

Nominees honored and regional finalists announced at regional recognition banquets.

- Region 1 - Salina (dinner)
 - Region 4 - Wichita (lunch)
-

April 6, 2025

Nominees honored and regional finalists announced at regional recognition banquets.

- Region 2 - Topeka (lunch)
 - **Region 3** - Overland Park (dinner)
-

September 19, 2025

2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year Leadership Conference, Wichita.

(Participants include all teachers nominated by their districts for 2026 KTOY.)

September 20, 2025 (tentative)

2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year State Awards Banquet, Wichita.

(Participants include all teachers nominated by their districts for KTOY.)

September 21, 2025

2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year Team Meeting, Wichita.

(Participants are 2026 KTOY and state finalists.)

January 2026

2026 KTOY Team Legislative Conference and Legislative Recognition Day, Topeka. (Participants are 2026 KTOY and state finalists.)

February 2026

Kansas Exemplary Educators Network (KEEN) State Education Conference, Topeka.

(Participants are KEEN members, including Kansas exemplary educators involved in the KTOY and other programs.)



Professional Development Activities

Conferences

As exemplary educators, the 2026 Kansas Teacher of the Year finalists, semifinalists and district nominees will have the opportunity to participate in professional development conferences during the year. They will join exemplary educators identified through other programs at conferences designed to provide educators with the tools they need to become more effective leaders.

Conferences are tentatively planned for the following dates:

- Sept. 19-21, 2025
- Late Jan. 2026
- Feb. 2026

Typically held in conjunction with the team conference in January, the 2026 KTOY Team Legislative Recognition Day is set tentatively for late Jan. 2026. The Kansas Senate and the Kansas House of Representatives will recognize the 2026 KTOY and state finalists. Team members will have the opportunity to give presentations to the Senate and House Education Committees.

School District Visits

The 2026 KTOY and state finalists will schedule and plan visits to each other's school districts during the 2025-2026 school year.

In addition, semifinalists and district nominees for 2026 KTOY who attend the state leadership conference in September will be assigned to teams so they can schedule and plan visits to each other's school districts during the 2025-2026 school year. Each semifinalist and nominee should plan to participate in four to eight school district visits.

Kansas Teacher of the Year Ambassadorship

The Hubbard Foundation

The Board of Directors for the Kansas Foundation for Excellence in Education established a permanent endowment for the KTOY program. When fully endowed, the earnings will fund a one-semester ambassadorship for the Kansas Teacher of the Year.

The ambassadorship, named in honor of the lead contributor, R. D. and Joan Dale Hubbard Foundation gave \$250,000 for this purpose.

Partnership with Security Benefit

Security Benefit, Topeka, serves as the chief corporate partner for the KTOY program with its commitment to provide \$28,000 in financial assistance each year. These funds are used to recognize and reward exemplary classroom teachers.

- A cash award in the amount of \$4,000 will be presented to the KTOY at the state awards banquet.
- A cash award in the amount of \$2,000 will be presented to the finalists — one elementary teacher and one secondary teacher — in each of the four congressional districts at the regional level of the KTOY program. These awards will be presented at the regional recognition banquets.
- A contribution in the amount of \$2,000 will be given to the regional leadership team in each of the four congressional districts to assist in underwriting the expenses of the regional recognition banquets.

The KTOY program, including the application and selection process, is under the direction of KSDE.

For more information, contact:

Tamla Miller

Public Service Administrator - KTOY Program

Communications and Recognition Programs

(785) 296-4950

tmiller@ksde.org



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KANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM 2026 NOMINATION

MISSION

To prepare Kansas students for lifelong success through rigorous, quality academic instruction, career training and character development according to each student's gifts and talents.

VISION

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

MOTTO

Kansans Can

SUCCESS DEFINED

A successful Kansas high school graduate has the

- Academic preparation,
- Cognitive preparation,
- Technical skills,
- Employability skills and
- Civic engagement

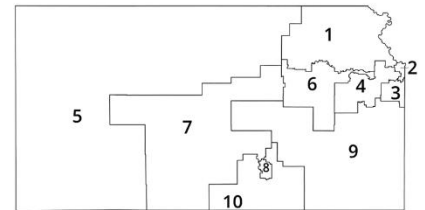
to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.


OUTCOMES

- Social-emotional growth
- Kindergarten readiness
- Individual Plan of Study
- Civic engagement
- Academically prepared for postsecondary
- High school graduation
- Postsecondary success



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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

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Dr. Ben Proctor

The Kansas State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: KSDE General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, KSDE, Landon State Office Building, 900 S.W. Jackson, Suite 102, Topeka, KS 66612, (785) 296-3201

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Jan. 25, 2024