



2027 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Guidelines

Updated Process as of April 2026

Arkansas Teacher of the Year Program

The Arkansas Teacher of the Year Program recognizes the contributions of certified classroom teachers, library media specialists, and school counselors in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. There are three awards for which a teacher may be eligible:

- *District Teacher of the Year (DTOY)*
- *Arkansas Teacher of the Year (ATOY)*
- *National Teacher of the Year (NTOY)*

The DTOY candidate must complete the electronic application and submit it to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) no later than **Friday, June 5, 2026, by noon**. Upon receipt of the application, the DTOY will be considered for the 2027 ATOY.

Duties & Responsibilities of the ATOY

The successful candidate who serves as the Arkansas Teacher of the Year (ATOY) must maintain his/her current employment position. The ATOY will be released from classroom responsibilities during their year of service from July 1, 2027 to June 30, 2028.

Being named the Arkansas Teacher of the Year comes with the significant responsibility of representing the entire teaching profession of Arkansas. Duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Represent Arkansas teachers as an ambassador of education with professionalism and integrity.
- Make scheduled public appearances across the State.
- Develop professional development and provide technical assistance to Arkansas teachers and students in collaboration with DESE.
- Represent Arkansas in the National Teacher of the Year cohort and competition.
- Act as a liaison between the teaching community, districts, the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Legislature, and communities.
- Serve on the Arkansas State Board of Education as an ex-officio member.

The ATOY is expected to attend both state and national events such as educational meetings, conferences, and workshops. Since the ATOY will be requested to attend many events and make presentations and speeches during the year, they must be poised, comfortable presenting to various audiences, and able to manage a busy schedule.

The ATOY automatically becomes Arkansas's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) program.

ATOY Selection Criteria

Each public school district and public charter system in Arkansas may select one teacher as its District Teacher of the Year (DTOY) and nominate that teacher for the ATOY program. As required by Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-17-2501 et seq., the ATOY will be selected from among District Teachers of the Year.

During the first round of the 2027 ATOY selection process, the top 15 finalists will be selected using this [rubric](#). This application is the first round of selection. The top 15 finalists will be notified via email with instructions on the next steps including the submission of additional evidence. Four state semi-finalists will be selected and will be scheduled for interviews, and classroom visits by the selection committee. The selection committee will send a final recommendation to the ADE Secretary for final approval.

ATOY Selection Timeline

April 1, 2026	District superintendent notifies ADE of the teacher selected as their DTOY.
June 5, 2026	Each DTOY submits the online application to the ADE.
June 5 to September 30, 2026	The ATOY committee begins the selection of the top 15 finalists and four state semi-finalists.
September 2026	Selection committee will visit state semi-finalists' classrooms.
October 2026	2027 ATOY is announced by the ADE.
October 31, 2026	Application for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) must be submitted.
December 2026	The National Selection committee moves through the selection process for the NTOY and selects the top 4 finalists. NTOY finalists, their state secretary and state teams will be notified by the NTOY program.
Spring 2027	The NTOY finalists will be brought to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Selection Committee.
Spring 2027	The 2027 National Teacher of the Year will be announced.



The following pages contain an outline of the information required for the online application. Please note that **ONLY** the electronic submissions will be accepted.

It is recommended that you keep a document copy of the application in case you encounter issues with the electronic submission process.

Automatic Disqualifications

Note that any of the following will prevent an application for further consideration:

- Application is incomplete;
- Application is submitted after the deadline;
- Applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria;
- Misrepresentation of facts on application;
- Applicant has been previously named the overall Arkansas Teacher of the Year by the Arkansas Department of Education;
- Applicant has previously received a Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB) sanction.

Submission Procedures

Application Checklist:

The online application is comprised of the following:

- Instructional Video Lesson
- Resume
- Response Questions
- Letters of Recommendation
- 2027 Candidacy Approval Form
- W-9 Form
- Photo Release Forms
- Professional Headshot



Section 1: Acknowledgement and Directions

Acknowledgement Question 1

Have you been selected as your District Teacher of the Year for the 2025-2026 school year?

Yes

No

Acknowledgement Question 2

I am aware that this application must be received by the Arkansas Department of Education no later than noon June 5, 2026, and that applications and supplemental documents received after that date and time will not be considered.

Yes

No

Acknowledgement Question 3

Do you hold an Arkansas standard teaching license?

Yes

No

Acknowledgement Question 4

Please indicate if you have ever received a public sanction for a violation of the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators. A public sanction is a sanction that was approved by the State Board of Education and made public on AELS and/or the Division website. This would include a written reprimand or higher.

Yes

No

Section 2: Teacher Information

Candidate's Last, First Name: _____

Candidate's Phone Number: _____

Candidate's School Email Address: _____

School District: _____



District Superintendent Name: _____

School Name: _____

Will you remain in the same district for next year? _____

Will you remain an active teacher until June 2027? _____

Primary Subject Area(s) the Candidate Teaches: _____

Grade Level(s) the Candidate Teaches: _____

Total Years of Teaching Experience: _____

Years in Current Position: _____

School Profile: *Urban, Suburban, or Rural* _____

Public School Type: *Traditional Public School or Public Charter School* _____

Years in Current Position: _____

District Teacher of the Year Point of Contact: _____

District Teacher of the Year Point of Contact's Email Address: _____

Candidate's Social Media Profiles: _____

Languages Candidate Speaks: _____

Lead or Master Designation: _____

Merit Pay Recipient: _____



Section 3: Professional Biography & Resume

Provide a 250-word biography; see biography of 2025 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Jeanie Wilcoxon as an example: <https://ntoy.ccsso.org/honorees/jeanie-moore-wilcoxon>

Biography

- Write in 3rd person– use your first and last name in the first reference. Use only your last name on second and subsequent references.
- Include grade level and subject you currently teach
- Include school name and city where you teach
- Include all degrees you hold and the institution where they were received (e.g., Bachelor of Science and a Master of Education with an emphasis in guidance and counseling from Arkansas State University)
- Any awards, recognitions, or points of pride
- A sentence or two about pedagogical priorities
- Spell out acronyms the first time they are used
- Only capitalize a subject area when it's a language
- Maximum 250 words

Resume

Do not include your mailing address or a picture of yourself on the resume. **Note that any information beyond two pages will not be considered by the selection committee.** Add as many details as you wish in a format style of your choice, including the required information:

- your full name;
- your educational history (include degrees and years obtained);
- certifications and year(s) obtained;
- work experience (begin with your current experience);
- leadership experience including staff development and training of future teachers;
- community involvement;
- professional association memberships (local, state and/or national affiliations and years of membership); and
- other awards and recognitions (include year obtained).

The resume must be in PDF format, no more than two pages, have one-inch margins, and use a font of at least 10 points.

Title the file in the following format: **Candidate's LastName_FirstName_Resume.pdf**

Section 4: Response Questions

Q1: As the Arkansas Teacher of the Year, you will serve as the state's ambassador of education for a year. You have been asked to deliver remarks at an event for aspiring teachers and their mentors. What is your message? (500-word limit)



Q2. Describe a time when you demonstrated teacher leadership and lifelong learning through your work in your school, state, or beyond. Describe your work, how it helped you grow, and how it meaningfully impacted students and other educators. (500-word limit)

Section 5: Student Outcome Data

Provide evidence of student achievement resulting from the implementation of innovative instructional strategies and the use of high-quality instructional materials. For each piece of evidence submitted, include a brief narrative explaining the context of the evidence and how it demonstrates student learning. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, data from formal and informal assessments, test score results, Value-Added Model (VAM) data, student performance in academic competitions, or other relevant indicators of student growth and achievement.

(Submissions should not exceed three double-spaced pages. All personally identifiable student information must be fully redacted.)

Section 6: Letters of Recommendation, Photo, & Forms

3 Letters of Recommendation: The letters of recommendation should support why you should be the Arkansas Teacher of the Year. Each letter should be directed to the National Teacher of the Year Program, as they will be used for the winner’s national application. Each letter of recommendation must be from the candidate’s supervisor, colleagues, former principals, parents, students, or civic or community leaders. Also, each letter should provide specific examples of the candidate’s contributions to his/her school and district. No more than three recommendation letters will be accepted. Please title the file as follows:

Candidate’s LastName_FirstName_Letter of Recommendation 1.pdf

Candidate’s LastName_FirstName_Letter of Recommendation 2.pdf

Candidate’s LastName_FirstName_Letter of Recommendation 3.pdf

Photo: A professional headshot, such as a yearbook photo, of the candidate must be uploaded to the online application and must be a JPEG file, 1000x1025 pixel minimum. Please title this file as follows: **Candidate’s Last Name_First, Headshot.**

Section 7: Instructional Video

Step 1 – Obtain signed parent consent using the ADE Photo Release forms prior to recording candidate’s video. If a student’s parents refuse to grant permission, please ensure that the student is seated out of the camera’s range and that his or her full name is not used in the video. Videos may be used for training selection committee members or may be featured on the Arkansas Department of Education website or similar sites and social media.



Step 2 – Prepare to record candidate’s instructional lesson video. Almost any type of camera can be used to film the lesson, including a digital camera, camcorder, flip cam or mobile device. If the lesson is being taught in a virtual setting, the recording of the instructional lesson may be obtained through an teleconferencing platform. Below are keys to a quality video:

Video Tips

- Use a tripod, if possible.
- Keep the camera stationary at the side of the classroom instead of moving back and forth.
- Turn on all the lights and close the blinds.
- Close the classroom door and windows to minimize background noise.
- Repeat student responses to make them audible, if students speak in a soft voice.
- High-quality video recording is preferred. Some digital cameras have a limit on video length. Be sure to test the camera before recording.
- An external microphone enhances the audio quality but is not required.
- Do NOT edit the video in any way. The submission must be continuous and unedited. If the recording appears to have been edited; the entire application will not be scored.

Step 3 – Record and review candidate’s lesson. For a reviewer to have sufficient information to perform an evaluation, please record:

- The teacher’s actions;
- The majority of the students’ actions; and
- Clear audio of the teacher and students.

The recommended video length is 15 minutes and must not exceed 16 minutes.

Step 4 – Submit the video via the YouTube link in the online application. Ensure the video is unsubscribed and unlisted on the privacy settings. Directions for uploading the video submission are below, but the nominee may also work with the school and/or district’s technology representative for assistance.



Creating a YouTube Link:

1. Go to www.youtube.com.
2. Create a YouTube account by clicking at the top right of the screen. An existing Gmail account may be used to create the YouTube account.
3. Click the at the top right of the screen to upload the video.
4. When the upload screen loads, click the dropdown arrow to change it from “Public” to “Unlisted.”
5. Click the arrow graphic to select the video file to upload.
6. Select the video file to upload for submission.
7. Wait for the video to completely upload. The link will be uploaded to the online submission form.

This video will be scored as part of Round 2 for the Top 15 Finalists.

Online Submission Instructions

Once the components listed above are prepared, please access the online application at 2027 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Application. The application in its entirety must be electronically submitted on or before **Friday, June 5, 2026 at noon.**

ADE Contact Information

For questions about the Arkansas Teacher of the Year Program, please contact:

Capri Bell Salaam

Teacher of the Year Coordinator
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