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**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Applications Due:** Wednesday, April 23, 2025, by 5 pm

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| **2026 COLORADO TEACHER OF THE YEAR**  **Part I Application** |

**Program Questions:**

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Additional information is available online at the [Colorado Teacher of the Year webpage](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeawards/teacheroftheyear)

**2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year**

**Applications Due: Wednesday, April 23, 2025, by 5:00 pm**

## Background

The Colorado Teacher of the Year Program is our state's oldest and most prestigious honors program which recognizes the contributions of the classroom teacher – the backbone of the American educational system. No one person has a greater impact on the education of a child than does the teacher who creates the primary learning and instructional environment. It is the mission of the National Teacher of the Year Program to honor our nation’s greatest teachers while providing rigorous professional learning for teachers to be leaders and advocates.

## Program Guidelines

The candidate must be a dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher in any state-approved or accredited school, kindergarten through grade twelve, who is planning to continue in an active teaching status. (Supervisory and administrative responsibilities should be of secondary consideration.)

The Colorado Teacher of the Year candidate must have the respect and admiration of their colleagues and:

1. Is an expert in their field who guides 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 the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large;
4. Demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning; and
5. Expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way.

## Duties and Responsibilities

Being named the Colorado Teacher of the Year is not only an award, but also an honor, and one that comes with an enormous responsibility: representing the entire teaching profession in Colorado.

The Colorado Teacher of the Year acts as:

* A liaison between the teaching community, Colorado Department of Education, school districts, and communities;
* An education ambassador to businesses, parents, service organizations, and media;
* A resource on the state of the profession to be available for workshops and conferences around the state; and
* An education leader involved in teacher forums and education reform and activities.

The Colorado Teacher of the Year is also expected to attend national events such as the National Teacher of the Year Ceremony. In addition, the Teacher of the Year serves on the Commissioner’s Teacher Cabinet and attends other education meetings, conferences, and workshops around the state.

Because the Teacher of the Year is invited to attend events and participate in speaking engagements during the year, they must be poised, articulate, and have the energy to make and withstand a busy schedule (approximately 10-15 days out of the classroom throughout the year of recognition). Colorado’s Teacher of the Year is also put forward as Colorado’s nominee for the Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) National Teacher of the Year program.

## Application Process

The 2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year selection is a two-part, rigorous selection process to validate the candidate's knowledge and skills in the classroom, as well as their dedication to the school, district, and community. The following table details each phase of the state selection process.

| **Timeline** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Part I: Application**  (March 19 – April 23, 2025) | Each applicant submits the brief **Part I Application** containing biographical and professional information, resumé, 2 brief response questions, and a short video response. |
| **Application Office Hours** | Office hours will be offered for applicants to receive support during the application window. The following sessions will be offered during the Part I Application:   * Wednesday, April 2, from 3:30 – 4:30 pm * Wednesday, April 16, from 3:30 – 4:30 pm   Visit the [CTOY website](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeawards/teacheroftheyear) for more information on Application Office Hours. |
| **Part I Application Due** | Part I Applications Due: **Wednesday, April 23, 2025, by 5 pm**  Submit your application via the [online form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55cca7b25d40402eb08911fa66bf455a). |
| **Part I: Review**  (April – May 2025) | Applications will go through an initial screening process and review to check for completeness and compliance with application requirements. Applications will be reviewed using the evaluation rubric on page 8. Overall application strength as well as for coverage of geographic areas, variety of grade levels, and content areas will be considered when determining semi-finalists. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application, and 15-20 semi-finalists will be announced following the Part I review. |
| **Part II: Application**  (May 21 – June 25, 2025) | Each semi-finalist submits the **Part II Application** containing 5 essay-style narrative questions on topics ranging from personal teaching philosophy to the issues facing education, and letters of recommendation. |
| **Application Office Hours** | Office hours will be offered for applicants to receive support during the application window. The following sessions will be offered during the Part II Application:   * Wednesday, May 28, from 3:30 – 4:30 pm * Wednesday, June 11, from 3:30 – 4:30 pm   Visit the [CTOY website](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeawards/teacheroftheyear) for more information on Application Office Hours. |
| **Part II Applications Due** | Part II Applications Due: **Wednesday, June 25, 2025, by 5 pm** |
| **Part II: Review**  (June – July 2025) | Applications are reviewed by a selection committee. Overall application strength as well as for coverage of geographic areas, variety of grade levels, and content areas will be considered when finalists. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application, and 5-7 finalists will be announced following the selection committee review. |
| **Virtual Interview**  (August 11-13, 2025) | 5-7 finalists will be invited to be interviewed with the selection committee via web conferencing. |
| **Site Visit**  (Mid-September 2025) | Finalists may be visited/observed in their school setting by members of the Selection Committee. |
| **Announcement**  (October 2025) | The **2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year** will be announced by October 31, 2025. |
| **National Teacher of the Year Application Submitted**  (October 31, 2025) | The 2025 National Teacher of the Year Application will be submitted for national award consideration. |

**Note:** The following application questions and scoring rubric are intended only as a reference document for instructions and application planning purposes. This is a comprehensive document; there is information in this document not available in the online application.

Part I applications for the 2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year must be submitted online at the link below, **by 5 pm on Wednesday, April 23, 2025.**

**Submit Part I Applications via the** [**online form**](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55cca7b25d40402eb08911fa66bf455a)**.**

**2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year**

**Part I Applications Due: Wednesday, April 23, 2025, by 5 pm**

**Below is the Candidate Information you will be asked to complete in your** [**online application**](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55cca7b25d40402eb08911fa66bf455a)**. The online application form does not save works in progress so applicants may wish to complete their information in this document and copy responses into the online application. Please ensure all required uploads are completed and ready to be attached when you begin the online form.**

## Candidate Information

Full Name (Last, First):

Personal E-mail:

School E-mail:

Personal Telephone:

District Name:

School Name:

Subject Area:

Grade Level:

Years of Teaching:

Years in current position:

**Optional Demographic Information** (answers to this section are optional) \*

**Gender:**

* Woman
* Man
* Prefer to self-describe
* Decline to answer

**Age:**

* 21-29
* 30-39
* 40-49
* 50-59
* 60 or older

**Race/Ethnicity:**

* Asian/Indian Subcontinent (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.)
* Black/African American (A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.)
* Hispanic or Latino/Latina (A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin.)
* Native American/Alaskan Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America [including Central America], and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.)
* Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.)
* White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. Not Hispanic or Latino.)
* Multiple Ethnic/Racial Identities
* Prefer to self-describe
* Decline to Answer

\*The Colorado Teacher of the Year will be selected without regard to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and will not be discriminated against based on disability.

You will also be asked to upload a PDF copy of your resume to the Online Application. Resumes should not exceed two pages.

## Application Narrative Questions

When developing Response Questions, reference the attached evaluation rubric (page 8) to establish expectations for performance. Please ensure that answers are thoroughly checked for correct grammar and spelling. The following template may be used to plan your responses before entering them into the online application. All provided text boxes will expand as content is entered.

**Response Questions**  
**Respond to the following questions highlighting your personal story and why you believe you should be the Colorado Teacher of the Year. Do not include external links. Maximum word counts are indicated in parenthesis.**

1. **Tell us your story of how you came to the teaching profession.** Why do you teach? What inspired you to become an educator and what experiences shaped your path? *(maximum 500 words)*

| Click here to enter text. |
| --- |

1. **How have you positively impacted your community through your work as an educator?** Please provide specific examples of initiatives, projects, or partnerships you have created, led, or contributed to, and describe the outcomes for students, families or the broader community. *(maximum 500 words)*

| Click here to enter text. |
| --- |

**Video Response**

Address the question below in a brief video that is **no more than three minutes** long. You may use the platform that works best for you (YouTube, Vimeo, recorded from a device and shared via Google folder link, etc.). Important: please ensure that your video link is not set to “Private”.

**PROMPT:**

* Begin by saying your name and introducing yourself: “My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_grade/subject teacher at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ school district.”

In **three minutes or less**, please address the following:

* + Today, attracting and retaining teachers in the profession is more important than ever. **What advice would you offer to an incoming teacher starting their career in education or a student considering a career in education?** Please share your insights. Your response could include why teaching is important, how to succeed in the classroom, building strong relationships with students, and navigating the challenges of teaching.

| **Link to Video:** | Click here to enter text. |
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## Additional Application Documentation

**Upload the following information in the** [**online application**](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55cca7b25d40402eb08911fa66bf455a)

**Résumé**  
Submit a résumé (as a PDF file) addressing the following categories: Education, Certifications, Experience, Leadership, and Awards/Other Recognitions. Keep the résumé as simple as possible, with a maximum of two pages.

**Letter of Support**  
Include a recommendation letter from your current administrator that supports why you should be the **2026 Colorado *and* National Teacher of the Year**. The letter should not exceed one page in length.

**Publicity Photograph**  
Include a publicity photograph of the applicant (5”x7”, portrait orientation, in color, minimum 300 dpi - acceptable file formats are JPG, PNG, or PDF, not to exceed 1 MB in size, no zip files).

**2026 Colorado Teacher of the Year**

**Part I Application Evaluation Rubric**

(For CDE use only)

**Use this rubric only as a reference. The selection committee will use the following to evaluate applications.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicant:** |  | **Score:** | **/30** |

###### **Required Application Components**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Completed Applicant Information Section | Yes  No |
| Provided Link to Video Response | Yes  No |
| Included Résumé | Yes  No |
| Included Letter of Recommendation from Current Administrator | Yes  No |

###### **Application Response Questions**

1. **Tell us your story of how you came to the teaching profession. Why do you teach? What inspired you to become an educator and what experiences shaped your path?**

0 – Was inconsistent or overlooked/omitted parts of the question.

4 – Response was limited or provided unclear description of why the applicant teaches.

7 – Provided adequate explanation of how the applicant came to teaching.

10 – Provided a clear and compelling description of applicant’s path to teaching. Clearly supported the response with detailed evidence of inspiration and experiences.

1. **How have you positively impacted your community through your work as an educator? Please provide specific examples of initiatives, projects, or partnerships you have created, led, or contributed to, and describe the outcomes for students, families or the broader community.**

0 – Was inconsistent or overlooked/omitted parts of the question.

4 – Response was limited or provided unclear description of applicant’s positive impacts in the community.

7 – Provided adequate explanation of how the applicant has impacted the community through their work as an educator.

10 – Provided a clear and compelling description of positive impacts on the community. Clearly supported the response with detailed examples of initiatives, projects, or partnerships created, led, or contributed to, and the outcomes for students, families or the broader community.

1. **Overall Application including Supplemental Materials: Résumé, Letter of Recommendation and Video.**

* Reviewers: please create a holistic score for Criteria 3 based on the response questions PLUS supplemental materials.

0 – Was inconsistent or overlooked/omitted parts of the question.

4 – While there may be compelling moments in the application, the evidence is not consistent. The teacher may use the same example for each question, or the description may rely on a surface “telling” without specific detail.

7 – While the responses may not be perfect, this teacher undoubtedly inspires possibility and promise in others. There is consistent evidence that this teacher’s thoughtful understanding of teaching and learning impacts individuals and/or groups of students. This teacher builds community in the classroom and sometimes outside of the classroom. This teacher is someone others look up to and respect.

10 – There is consistent and compelling evidence that this teacher’s unique understanding of teaching and learning impacts both individuals and groups of students, alike. This teacher understands the nuances of the classroom and builds community both within and outside the classroom walls.