Georgia Teacher of the Year Program

2025 District Coordinator’s Guide
# Table of Contents

Georgia Teacher of the Year Program .......................................................... 3
  Program History ......................................................................................... 3
  Program Goals .......................................................................................... 3
Georgia Teacher of the Year Ambassadorship ............................................. 3
Georgia Teacher of the Year Annual Timeline .......................................... 4
2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year Timeline .............................................. 4
Georgia Teacher of the Year Application Process .................................... 5
  State Program Qualifications .................................................................... 5
  Former TOTY Eligibility ........................................................................... 5
  Application Questions ............................................................................... 6
Initial Application Review ........................................................................... 7
Finalist Interviews and Luncheon ............................................................... 7
Finalists Expectations .................................................................................. 7
District Teacher of the Year Program Guidance ....................................... 8
  District Timeline ....................................................................................... 8
  State Application Eligibility ...................................................................... 8
  District Teacher of the Year Announcement ............................................ 9
CCSSO National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) Program ............................ 10
  History ..................................................................................................... 10
  National Teacher of the Year Annual Program Events .......................... 10
Georgia Teachers of the Year (GTOY) Association .................................. 11
Georgia Teacher of the Year Program Sponsor Funding ........................... 11

**GEORGIA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM**

2025 APPLICATION SIGNATURE FORM .................................................. 12
Georgia Teacher of the Year Program

The State School Superintendent is responsible for selecting the Georgia Teacher of the Year and has appointed the Director of Strategic Alignment to oversee this project and to select the state’s representative. The Georgia Department of Education does not discriminate against any person or group in the selection of candidates for the program on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or educational affiliation. Learn more about the Georgia Teacher of the Year Program here.

Program History

The first Georgia Teacher of the Year was selected in 1971. Georgia’s Teacher of the Year Program (GaTOTY) annually spotlights the teaching profession and recognizes outstanding public-school teachers at the local and state levels. It is a prestigious awards program that focuses attention on excellence in teaching. The 1999 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Andy Baumgartner, honored our state by being named the 47th National Teacher of the Year.

Program Goals

The GaTOTY program strives to promote and retain quality teachers and focuses on three program goals:

1. Elevate the teaching profession by recognizing, celebrating, and providing unique and innovative learning experiences for highly accomplished teachers.
2. Amplify teacher voice to advance student learning and champion student success.
3. Expose teachers to relevant policy topics and develop the context for teacher leadership.

Georgia Teacher of the Year Ambassadorship

Being named a Georgia Teacher of the Year is not only an award, but an honor that comes with an enormous amount of responsibility to represent the teaching profession in the state. The Georgia Teacher of the Year is a full-time position requiring a one-year sabbatical from their district teaching duties while working directly with the Georgia Department of Education. The commitment spans the full fiscal year from July 1 to June 30.

The GaTOTY serves on the Georgia State Board of Education as an Ex-Officio (non-voting) member. All travel costs are provided by GaDOE for SBOE related events.

The GaTOTY serves as an educational ambassador for Georgia public education and acts as a representative and advocate for all Georgia public school teachers, students and families. During their tenure, the GaTOTY speaks to various groups throughout the state; conducts staff development activities in his or her area of expertise; serves on statewide committees; and participates in numerous state conferences. The GaTOTY is also responsible for social media communications on the official Georgia Teacher of the Year Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Visit our Facebook page here GaTeacher. Twitter accounts are established for each GaTOTY.
The GaTOTY represents Georgia at national events as a member of the CCSSO National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) program cohort with other state teachers of the year. The GaTOTY will enter the NTOY competition and if selected, will commit to all of the responsibilities that come with that honor, including an additional year as an ambassador for public education across the nation.

**Georgia Teacher of the Year Annual Timeline**

The GaTOTY application window opens in September and closes in November each fall. District Teachers of the Year (DTOTY) completing their term of service in the current school year are eligible to apply for the following year’s Georgia Teacher of the Year, if all program qualifications are met.

District coordinators should refrain from submitting a state application on behalf of the DTOTY without the candidate being fully informed of the program expectations and having an opportunity to review and edit their application.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Teachers of the Year Selected</th>
<th>Spring semester prior to term of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Application Window Opens</td>
<td>Late September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Application Window Closes</td>
<td>Late November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Review Period</td>
<td>December – February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Finalists Announced</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Finalist Interviews and Luncheon</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Conference and Gala; New Georgia Teacher of Year Announced</td>
<td>May or June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Term of Service Begins</td>
<td>July 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Teacher of Year Term of Service Ends</td>
<td>June 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year Timeline**

The 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year will be selected during the 2023-2024 school year. The estimated program timeline is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2023-2024 SY District Teachers of the Year Selected</th>
<th>Spring Semester 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2025 Georgia Teacher of Year Application Window Opens</td>
<td>September 1, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 Georgia Teacher of Year Application Window Closes</td>
<td>November 17, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 Application Review Period</td>
<td>December 2023 – February 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 GaTOTY Ten Finalists Announced</td>
<td>April 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 GaTOTY Finalist Interviews and Luncheon</td>
<td>April 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 GaTOTY Conference and Gala; 2025 GaTOTY Announced</td>
<td>May 30-31, 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 GaTOTY Term of Service Begins</td>
<td>July 1, 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 GaTOTY Term of Service Ends</td>
<td>June 30, 2025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Georgia Teacher of the Year Application Process

State Program Qualifications

The Georgia Teacher of the Year candidate has the respect and admiration of their colleagues and must possess the following attributes:

1. A certified public school classroom teacher with a valid and current Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) Professional or Advanced/Lead Professional certificate in prekindergarten through Grade 12. Special education, physical education, art, music, and ROTC are eligible, along with media specialists.*

2. Full-time, with a minimum of three (3) years of classroom teaching experience.

3. Is an exceptional, dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher planning to continue in active teaching status**.

3. Is an expert in the field who advances growth for students of all backgrounds and abilities.

4. Builds collaborative relationships with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of success.

5. Plays an active and useful role in the community as well as in the school.

6. Deliberately connects the classroom to community to impact student growth and learning.

7. As a lifelong learner and teacher leader, utilizes innovation to create learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.

8. Expresses themselves in an engaging and clear way, conveying the classroom experience to a variety of audiences.

*Counselors and Speech Pathologists are not eligible for the state or national programs.

**Active teaching status is defined as spending at least 50% of contract time teaching students in a classroom setting through the term of the GaTOTY. Supervisory responsibilities should be of secondary consideration.

Former TOTY Eligibility

Teachers who have received recognition as a Georgia Teacher of the Year are not eligible for state nomination. Teachers who have been recognized as a District Teacher of the Year in the previous three (3) years are not eligible for a state nomination.
Application Questions

The narrative response questions in the Georgia Teacher of the Year application parallel the questions for the national program. Questions are subject to change based on national program guidance. Applicants should carefully review the state application questions before submitting a response.

All narrative response questions have a 750-word count maximum. The candidate’s biography has a 250-word count maximum. Candidates should make every effort to write concise yet thorough essays and maximize the allotted word count. Candidates should highlight their personal story and include evidence of student impact in each essay.

Biography Content:
- The grade level and subject you currently teach
- The school in which you currently teach, including city and state
- All degrees you hold include the institution where they were received (i.e., Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Connecticut)
- Any awards or points of pride
- Pedagogical priorities

Biography Style Guide:
- Spell out your degrees (i.e., Bachelor of Art not BA)
- Only capitalize a subject area when it is a language (i.e., capitalize English, 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

Narrative Response Questions

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? Show how your deliberate instructional decisions create student learning and reveal your beliefs about teaching and learning.

2. Describe a project or initiative you have been involved in that deliberately creates culture in your classroom or school. Describe how you build and use relationships to collaborate and to teach students of all backgrounds, abilities, and identities. What is the status of this project today?

3. Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with their local city, county, region, and/or state community. Show how these community connections and collaborations dissolve classroom walls and are used to impact student learning and success.

4. Describe a time when you grew as a teacher leader and life-long learner as a result of being an advocate in your school, county, region, state or beyond. Describe your advocacy, how it helped you to grow, its influence on other educators, and how it impacted students.
5. As the Georgia Teacher of the Year, serving as the ambassador of education for Georgia, 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. What is your message? What is the talk you give? [You may indicate a specific audience. For example, a "back to school" talk.]

6. The Georgia Teacher of the Year serves as an advocate and spokesperson for educational stakeholders through public speaking engagements and social media. The GaTOTY must refrain from voicing political views on any platform. Describe your experience with public speaking and using social media to advocate for the profession. How does your experience make you qualified for this position?

Initial Application Review

A panel of respected educators from across the state assesses all applications based on a standardized rubric to narrow the field to ten finalists. Although judges carefully consider all items in the application, the ability and desire to be an articulate spokesperson for Georgia public education is the most important qualifications. The ten finalists are announced in early March.

Finalist Interviews and Luncheon

The ten finalists participate in a panel interview and prepare a presentation on a provided topic. A panel of judges consisting of GaDOE senior leadership, GTOY Association members, and statewide educational leaders, selects the runner-up and the Georgia Teacher of the Year winner. Results remain confidential until announced at the banquet held in the spring. The process culminates with a luncheon to honor the ten finalists.

Finalists Expectations

Finalists are expected to fully participate in the interview process, the honorary luncheon, and the annual spring conference and gala. Districts are responsible for travel and lodging costs associated with these events. All other expenses are funded by the Georgia Teacher of the Year Program.

Learn more about the Georgia Teacher of the Year Program here.
District Teacher of the Year Program Guidance

The system superintendent is responsible for selecting the local system Teacher of the Year but may appoint a person to oversee this project and an outside committee to interview, observe, and select the system’s representative. Local system superintendents may nominate a representative to serve as the local education agency District Teacher of the Year. This representative may apply to participate in the selection process for the Georgia Teacher of the Year if the representative meets the program qualifications and eligibility. School and district nominations are recommended to take place during the spring semester, having DTOTYs complete their term of service the following fiscal or school year.

The narrative response questions in the GaTOTY application parallel the questions for the national program. It is suggested that participating districts use similar narrative response questions when conducting the selection process within their systems.

District Timeline

It is the desire of the Georgia Teacher of the Year program to encourage a consistent selection process in every school district. The Georgia Department of Education does not have a state-mandated deadline for districts to select their local teacher of the year. It is recommended that districts choose their representative in the Spring semester, having that DTOTY serve their district term during the fiscal year from July 1–June 30 to align with the state and national timeline. This process will provide the nominee ample time to prepare their state application portfolio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DTOTY Title/Cohort</th>
<th>DTOTY Selection</th>
<th>Serving as District TOTY Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Apply for GaTOTY</th>
<th>GaTOTY Title and Service Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2024 DTOTY</td>
<td>Spring 2023</td>
<td>July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024</td>
<td>Fall 2023</td>
<td>2025 GaTOTY: July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025 DTOTY</td>
<td>Spring 2024</td>
<td>July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025</td>
<td>Fall 2024</td>
<td>2026 GaTOTY: July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026 DTOTY</td>
<td>Spring 2025</td>
<td>July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026</td>
<td>Fall 2025</td>
<td>2027 GaTOTY: July 1, 2026-June 30, 2027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State Application Eligibility

District Teachers of the Year serving in the current school year are eligible to apply for the following year’s GaTOTY. In the timeline above, the 2024 DTOTY, selected during the 2022-2023 spring semester and serving their district term of service during the 2023-2024 school year, is eligible to apply for the 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year. The state program runs one year ahead to align with the national program. Candidates could potentially serve for three consecutive fiscal years if they are selected as the representative for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>District Teacher of the Year Term of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>District Teacher of the Year Term of Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Georgia Teacher of the Year Term of Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>National Teacher of the Year Term of Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
District coordinators should refrain from submitting a state application on behalf of the District Teacher of the Year without the candidate’s full knowledge and consent. Before selecting a local TOTY, district coordinators should ensure each nominee is willing to accept the state title if offered. Candidates should be fully informed of the program expectations and have ample opportunity to review and edit their application. GaDOE reserves the right to communicate directly with any candidate who submits a state application.

District Teacher of the Year Announcement

The state program would like to welcome and congratulate each District Teacher of the Year as they are named. Upon announcement of your DTOTY, coordinators are asked to provide the teacher’s contact information to the state director.

2024 District Teachers of the Year are those completing their term of service during the 2023-2024 fiscal or school year.

Announce your 2024 District Teacher of the Year HERE.

Note: Teachers who have been recognized as a District Teacher of the Year in the previous three (3) years are not eligible for a state nomination. Former Georgia Teachers of the Year are not eligible to reapply.
CCSSO National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) Program

The National Teacher of the Year Program is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The CCSSO is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials (chiefs) who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education and the five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions.

History

The CCSSO National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) program began in 1952. The program was designed to honor outstanding teachers, and through them to salute and show respect for the teaching profession. The NTOY Program identifies expert teachers across the country, recognizes their effective work in the classroom, amplifies their voices, and empowers them to participate in policy discussions at the state and national levels. CCSSO is committed to ensuring every child has a highly effective teacher and views this work as crucial to transforming the education workforce.

CCSSO believes that if teachers are to truly have an impact on the continuing improvement of instruction in classrooms, it is imperative that the ‘teacher’s voice’ be a part of all discussions impacting instruction in the nation’s classrooms. The NTOY program serves as a training ground for state-identified teachers to hone their skills and powerfully advocate for what is best for children, schools, and the teaching profession in policy or practice discussions.

The Georgia Teacher of the Year is required to submit an application for the national program and partake in all NTOY events during their cohort’s tenure. The National Teacher of the Year is released from classroom duties during the year of recognition to serve as a spokesperson and advocate for the entire teaching profession. The National Teacher of the Year maintains a full schedule of speaking engagements throughout the country, and increasingly the world, before a variety of education, community, and business groups.

National Teacher of the Year Annual Program Events

NTOY Orientation Conference, February
Washington Week Conference, April or May
Teacher Appreciate Week, May
NASA Space Camp, July
Smithsonian Educator’s Day, July
Impact & Influence Conference, October
National College Football Playoffs, January

More information can be found at [https://ntoy.ccsso.org/](https://ntoy.ccsso.org/)
Georgia Teachers of the Year (GTOY) Association

All GaTOTY finalists are inducted into the Georgia Teachers of the Year Association during the spring conference. The association serves as a partner in supporting the state program and conference.

More information can be found at https://www.gtoyassoc.com

Georgia Teacher of the Year Program Sponsor Funding

The Georgia Foundation for Public Education (GFPE) was created in 2010 by the Georgia General Assembly to support educational excellence in Georgia. GFPE is a non-profit organization and can accept tax-deductible donations. GFPE serves as the Georgia Teacher of the Year program fiscal agent as well as a presenting sponsor.

The GaTOTY program receives an annual grant from the GFPE. The grant is supported in part through the purchase of Honor Educators special license plates by Georgia residents at the Department of Revenue. More information can be found here.

State law does not allow taxpayer dollars to support teacher recognition, therefore we rely on the generosity and fiscal support of our sponsors. Tax deductible donations can be made through a secure server at the GFPE at https://gfpe.org/donate. Designate your donation to the Georgia Teacher of the Year Program.

Sponsorship Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsorship Level</th>
<th>Minimum Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presenting</td>
<td>$50,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond</td>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platinum</td>
<td>$10,000 to $24,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>$5,000 to $9,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>$2,500 to $4,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>$1,000 to $2,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>$500 to $999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sponsorship of in-kind donations are also welcomed and appreciated. In-kind donations support our Teacher of the Year prize packages. Please reach out to Dawn Ashmore, Director of Strategic Alignment dashmore@ doe.k12.ga.us for in-kind sponsorship opportunities. All sponsors are recognized at our annual gala.
The 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year will serve as an ambassador for Georgia public education traveling to speaking engagements and working with the Georgia Department of Education, requiring considerable time away from home. This is a full-time position. The commitment spans the full fiscal year from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. The 2025 GaTOTY will enter the 2025 National Teacher of the Year competition and if selected, will commit to all the responsibilities that come with that honor including an additional year as an ambassador for public education across the nation.

I understand that if selected as the 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year, the teacher nominated from my school and school district will need to be released from all responsibilities to perform speaking and public appearance duties in his or her role as ambassador for Georgia public education. Due to budget cuts, the GaDOE is no longer able to provide funds for a year’s sabbatical. If this applicant is selected as the Georgia Teacher of the Year, the district will pay the salaries of the teacher and a substitute for one year.

Name of Nominee: 
District Name: 
School Name: 

Superintendent’s Name (Please Print)    Superintendent’s Signature

Principal’s Name (Please Print)    Principal’s Signature

District TOTY Coordinator’s Name (Please Print)    District TOTY Coordinator’s Signature

I understand that if selected as the 2025 Georgia Teacher of the Year, the commitment spans the full fiscal calendar year from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. In this position I will spend considerable time away from school and family while traveling to speaking engagements, attending meetings and conferences, and giving workshops as an ambassador for Georgia public education. As the Georgia TOTY I will enter the National Teacher of the Year competition and if selected will commit to all of the responsibilities that come with that honor. I hereby give my permission that any or all the attached materials may be shared with persons interested in promoting the Georgia Teacher of the Year Program.

Signature of Nominee: ___________________________  Date: ___________________
Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Employees, students, and the general public are hereby notified that the Georgia Department of Education does not discriminate in any educational programs or activities or in employment policies.

The following individuals have been designated as the employees responsible for coordinating the department’s effort to implement this nondiscriminatory policy.

Perkins Act—Audrey Bergeron, Vocational Equity Coordinator (404) 657-8317
Title VI—Legal Services (404) 656-4689
Title IX—Legal Services (404) 656-4689
Section 504 and ADA—Legal Services (404) 656-4689

Inquiries concerning the application of the Perkins Act, Title VI, Title IX, or Section 504 and ADA to the policies and practices of the department may be addressed to the Georgia Department of Education,

Twin Towers East, Atlanta 30334, (404) 656-2800; to the Regional Office for Civil Rights, Atlanta 30323; or to the Director, Office for Civil Rights, Education Department, Washington, D.C. 20211.