



2026 Montana Teacher of the Year

Program Information and Application Instructions

The mission of the Montana Teacher of the Year program is to elevate student success by empowering classroom innovation and enhancing pathways to teacher leadership.

- The TOY program elevates student success by celebrating teachers who honor individual student strengths and each child's unique abilities.
- The TOY program empowers classroom innovation by recognizing teachers who are responsive to the complex realities that define Montana's diverse and unique classrooms across the state.
- The TOY program enhances pathways to teacher leadership by creating teacher ambassadors at the local, state, and national levels to connect classrooms to the community.

Selection Process

The MT TOY Program is part of the National Teacher of the Year Program conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), of which Montana's Superintendent of Public Instruction is a member.

Diverse statewide selection committees review and interview applicants to determine the finalists and ultimately the Montana TOY who then competes at the national level to become CCSSO's National TOY. For more information on the National TOY, please visit: <https://www.ccsso.org/national-teacher-of-the-year>.

All active Montana K-12 teachers who are making a positive difference for students in their community are encouraged to apply.

Teachers can self-nominate by filling out an application or any member of the public can fill out a nomination form for a Montana teacher they feel is qualified. The OPI will then reach out to the nominated teacher and ask that they complete an application.

- [Nomination forms](#) are due to the OPI MT TOY committee by June 13, 2025.
- Applications are due by July 1, 2025.
- Complete applications must be emailed to MTTOY@mt.gov

For more information about the MT TOY Program, please visit: [Montana Teacher of the Year](#)



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2026 MT TOY Program Timeline

- **May 9, 2025** - Nomination and application window opens
- **June 13, 2025** - Nominations due
- **July 1, 2025** - Applications due to MTTOY@mt.gov
- **July-August 2025** Applications reviewed by committees
- **Mid-September 2025** - Finalists selected by state committee
- **Mid-September 2025** - Finalists interviewed by state committee, MT TOY selected
- **October 2025** - National Teacher of the Year Application Due to CCSSO
- **February 2026** - MT TOY begins duties and NTOY activities

Application Checklist

Submit the following files with the correct file names by email to MTTOY@mt.gov by July 1, 2025. Only complete applications will be reviewed by the selection committees.

- ☐ Supporting Evidence – Recommendation 1
- ☐ Supporting Evidence – Recommendation 2
- ☐ Supporting Evidence – Recommendation 3
- ☐ Basic Information
- ☐ Resume
- ☐ Headshot
- ☐ Professional Biography
- ☐ Response Questions



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Supporting Evidence

Provide three letters of recommendation that support why you should be the 2026 Montana Teacher of the Year. At least one of these must be a recommendation from a parent, colleague, administrator, or student and each letter should not exceed one page in length. PDF is the preferred document format.

File Name Format

- LastName_City_Recommendation1.pdf
- LastName_City_Recommendation2.pdf
- LastName_City_Recommendation3.pdf

Application

Create Microsoft Word documents for each of the following sections.

- Basic Information
- Resume
- Professional Headshot
- Professional Biography
- Response Questions

Name each file according to the instructions for each document.



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Basic Information

- ☐ Full Name
- ☐ Preferred Name
- ☐ State
- ☐ Personal Address/City/State/ZIP
- ☐ Personal Phone Number
- ☐ Personal Email Address
- ☐ School Email Address
- ☐ School Subject Area(s) Taught
- ☐ Grade Levels Taught
- ☐ Years of Teaching
- ☐ Years in Current Position
- ☐ School Address/City/State/ZIP
- ☐ School Phone Number
- ☐ All Professional Association Memberships
 - ☐ NEA (including state and local affiliates)
 - ☐ AFT (including state and local affiliates)
 - ☐ ASCD
 - ☐ National Council of Teachers of English
 - ☐ National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
 - ☐ National Science Teachers Association
 - ☐ National Association for Music Education
 - ☐ Other (write in all that apply)

I am a National Board Certified Teacher

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ In Progress

File Name Format: LastName_City_BasicInfo



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Resume

Resumes should not exceed two pages -- keep it as simple as possible. Categories are as follows

- Education
 - Include school name, degree, major, and years attended
- Certifications
 - Include the specific certification and year obtained
- Work Experience
 - Include position title, organization, years in position
- Leadership
 - Include position title, organization, years in position
- Awards and Other Recognition
 - Include the name of the award or recognition and the year received

File Format: LastName_City_Resume.pdf

Headshot

Include a photograph that meets the following specifications

- Color
- portrait orientation
- 300ppi
- .jpg

File Format: LastName_City_Headshot.jpg



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Biography

Please complete your professional biography in third person, as this will be used in promotional materials by the Montana Office of Public Instruction and the CCSSO National Teacher of the Year program. By completing this section, you agree that your biography and headshot can be used publicly. (Maximum 250 words)

In your bio, 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 include the institution where they were received (i.e., Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Connecticut)

In your bio, please follow the following style guidelines:

- Spell out your degrees (i.e., Bachelor of Art not BA)
- Only capitalize a subject area when it's 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

File Format: LastName_City_ProfessionalBio



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Response Questions

Respond to the following questions, highlighting your personal story of positively influencing Montana students, and why you believe you should be the 2026 Montana Teacher of the Year. Please indicate evidence of student impact. Please do not include external links. Maximum word counts are indicated in parenthesis.

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 you have been involved in which 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 Montana Teacher of the Year, you serve as a spokesperson and representative for Montana teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the public? (maximum 750 words)

File Format: LastName_City_ResponseQs