



## **Texas State Teacher of the Year Program**

### **Nomination Guidelines for the Year 2010**

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**Texas Education Agency  
State Board of Education**

# Texas State Teacher of the Year

Since 1969, the Texas State Teacher of the Year Program has honored excellence in classroom education and provided a forum to showcase many outstanding educators whose efforts and example have inspired their students, their colleagues and the communities they serve. In 2008-2009, the program recognized a State Elementary Teacher of the Year and a State Secondary Teacher of the Year, in addition to 38 Regional Teachers of the Year.

Every fall, the Texas State Teacher of the Year program honors two State Teachers of the Year — one in elementary education and one in secondary education — and Regional Teachers of the Year from each of the 20 Education Service Center regions. The two State Teachers of the Year typically become spokespeople for teachers in the state the year following their nomination. **They serve as traveling ambassadors for public education with a schedule of speeches, workshops and presentations, while continuing to be a classroom teacher.** The program's mission is to select outstanding classroom teachers who are also able to speak for, motivate, and exemplify the contributions of all teachers.

The state program is affiliated with the National Teacher of the Year Program, the oldest and most prestigious awards program to focus public attention on excellence in teaching. Texas' final selection committee nominates one teacher to be considered for national honors. A selection committee representing the major national educational associations selects the National Teacher of the Year from the nominees submitted by the 50 states. Every spring, the National Teacher of the Year is announced by the president during a Rose Garden ceremony at the White House and is honored at special events in the nation's capital. The National Teacher of the Year takes a year's sabbatical from classroom instruction and serves as a roving ambassador for the teaching profession.

Classroom teachers traditionally have received recognition under the program. School districts may no longer nominate librarians and counselors for regional, state, and national honors. Administrators are not eligible. All nominees must be employed by an accredited public school in Texas during the 2008-2009 school year to be eligible for nomination. The nominating district shall be the district in which the teacher worked during the 2008-2009 school year.

Candidates should be skillful, dedicated teachers who plan to actively continue classroom teaching. They should take an active role in their communities as well as their schools, and demonstrate professional poise and articulateness. The most important criterion in evaluating nominees is their ability to inspire a love of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities.

These criteria, provided by the national Council of Chief State School Officers, are used for both the state and national programs. The Teacher of the Year candidate should:

- be an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teacher in any state-approved or accredited school (containing some configuration of pre-K through grade 12) who is planning to continue in an active teaching status;
- inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn;
- have the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues;
- play an active and useful role in the community, as well as in the school; and
- be poised, articulate, and possess the energy to withstand a taxing schedule.

# Texas State Teacher of the Year Nomination Guidelines

The state program recognizes a Teacher of the Year in both elementary and secondary categories at the regional and state levels. **Participating districts may nominate two teachers — one in elementary and one in secondary education.** However, districts also may follow a process that selects one overall nominee for recognition.

In most cases, the elementary category consists of early childhood/pre-K through grade 5 and the secondary, grades 6-12. But grade divisions and classroom arrangements may vary from district to district. In general, elementary teachers will instruct the same class throughout the day in what is regarded as a traditional grade-school setting; secondary teachers will conduct classes in subject areas in a class-period or block-time schedule to different groups of students during the school day. Any questions regarding the categories should be referred to the regional coordinator, Ron Simpson, 972.348.1040, or Texas Education Agency.

## Application

The Teacher of the Year Application and Nomination Guidelines for the year 2010 are available at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/awards/toy/>. The application may be used for multiple entries. All information should be supplied on the entry form, or if word-processed, the form should list the same section topic headings, with pages numbered sequentially. The application consists of an application cover sheet with the name and information about the nominee, the school and the district, as well as a section containing answers to several essay questions.

There are two deadlines that nominees must observe to qualify. First, applicants must fill out the cover sheet, sign it, and obtain the signature of both their principal and their superintendent. A signed *copy* of this cover sheet must be received by the regional coordinators (listed on page 8) at the Regional Education Service Centers **no later than 5 p.m., Friday, June 12, 2009**. Faxed cover sheets *will* be accepted. Coordinators at the Regional Education Service Centers will acknowledge each applicant and send to the state coordinator at TEA a list of all nominees in their region.

The completed entry, with answers to the essay questions and the cover sheet with original signatures of the applicant, principal and superintendent, is due at the Regional Education Service Center **no later than 5 p.m., Friday, June 26, 2009**. Faxed entries *will not be* accepted. **This is considered the official entry and any failure to meet this deadline will result in disqualification.**

Nominees should answer the entire application form cover sheet and essay questions and not exceed the page limitations. Nominees are urged to be brief and succinct in their written responses, focusing on their most significant experiences and characteristics. Please double check for spelling errors. Candidates who add a personal touch to their applications will also produce a stronger entry, as well as provide contest judges — who have a limited amount of time to evaluate each entry — with an application that is more readable and targets a nominee's strong points.

### Please note:

- Application responses should be typed or word-processed, and be double-spaced, with at least one-inch margins and a font size no smaller than 12 point. The essay topics, such as PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY or PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING, should be at the beginning of each section.
- The completed Candidate Application Form (page 1) is the cover sheet for the entry.
- The Application, on plain white paper, should either be stapled or submitted in a clear plastic folder with a simple, sideways clasp. No notebooks or loose-leaf binders, please. This is done to facilitate photocopying of applications.
- Copies of entry materials should be retained by the teacher nominees and the districts as originals cannot be returned.

# Texas State Teacher of the Year Selection Process

Districts may establish their own selection process in choosing their Teacher of the Year nominees. Some suggestions for establishing a district selection process are included in these guidelines. However, to be considered for regional and state recognition, candidates must observe the following:

- **They must be nominated by the superintendent of their district, or the district in which they taught during the 2008-2009 school year.**
- **They must answer completely the state application form.** (Districts may use their own applications or submitted materials in making their own selections.)
- **Once an application has been signed and submitted for judging at the regional level, it may not be altered or edited by any contest coordinator, judge or administrator.**

District nominees automatically advance to regional competition, which is coordinated by each Education Service Center. A panel of judges in each region, composed primarily of members of various teacher associations, meets to evaluate the written applications and select a Regional Elementary Teacher of the Year and a Regional Secondary Teacher of the Year. The Texas Education Agency will provide regional coordinators with judging score sheets, if requested.

Regional selections will take place from June 26 through July 31, 2009. Once the judging is completed, regional coordinators should **send the original applications of the regional winners to TEA's program coordinator in the Division of Educator Excellence by August 7, 2009 (or sooner, if possible).** These regional winners will automatically become semifinalists in the State Teacher of the Year Contest. Additionally, TEA requests an electronic (jpeg or tiff format) or regular photo of the regional winner before the end of September 2009.

Semifinalist judging will take place on Friday, August 21, 2009. Two panels of judges (one for elementary and another for secondary) composed primarily of members of teacher associations will meet in Austin to review the written applications of the semifinalists and select three finalists for Elementary Teacher of the Year and three finalists for Secondary Teacher of the Year. Finalists' superintendents and the Education Service Centers will be notified, and TEA will distribute a news release announcing the six finalists the following week.

The final judging is scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2009. The six finalists will be invited to Austin to be interviewed by a panel of judges, which is typically composed of representatives of educational administrator associations, a member of the State Board of Education and the previous Texas Teachers of the Year. The panel will choose the two state winners and designate one to represent Texas in the National Teacher of the Year Program.

The week following the interviews, the six finalists' superintendents will be notified of the outcome, and TEA will distribute a news release to announce the winners. Copies of this news release will be sent to all executive directors and regional coordinators at the Education Service Centers.

The Texas Education Agency will submit Texas' entry for the state's nominee to the National Teacher of the Year Contest. The National Teacher of the Year Contest, conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers in Washington, D.C., will announce four finalists in January or February 2009.

# **Texas State Teacher of the Year Recognition and Sponsorship**

## **Recognition**

The two State Teachers of the Year and the Regional Teachers of the Year for 2009-2010 will be honored by the State Board of Education at an awards ceremony and luncheon tentatively scheduled for November 2009. Awards from the Texas Education Agency are distributed at this time. The accomplishments of the state honorees are featured, and an overview of the program and its purpose in the field of public education is offered. More details on the state ceremony will be announced at a later date.

Districts and the Education Service Centers schedule and coordinate their own awards ceremonies according to their own needs and desires. However, to avoid confusion, it is recommended that district and regional recognition ceremonies take place before the state ceremony in November 2009.

## **Sponsorship and Support**

The Texas Education Agency is the official sponsor of the Texas Teacher of the Year program. Major sponsors include H-E-B; Dell, Inc.; SMART Technologies; SMARTer Kids Foundation; Blue Bell Creameries; Mike A. Myers Foundation; Texas Association of School Business Officials; Texas Computer Education Association; Texas School Public Relations Association; Association of Texas Professional Educators; Texas AFT; Texas Association of School Administrators; Texas Association of School Boards; Texas Association of Secondary School Principals; Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Texas Business & Education Coalition; Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Texas Educational Support Staff Association, Inc.; Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Texas PTA; and Texas State Teachers Association.

## **Technical Assistance**

The state coordinator at TEA will provide guidance in helping promote participation at the grass-roots level and execute a successful program. Regional coordinators, listed on page 8, also are available for technical support for the districts in their areas.

Please direct questions about these procedures and the program to coordinators at the Education Service Center in your region, or to the state coordinator at the Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Office of Educator Excellence, Austin, TX 78701. The phone number is (512) 463-6396.

# Suggestions for Conducting Teacher of the Year Contest

## Project Design

- Start planning early.
  - Give the project high priority. Talk to administrators in other districts that already participate.
- Check with the regional coordinator at your Education Service Center if you do not already know who participates. Contact the state coordinator in the Division of Educator Excellence at the Texas Education Agency for assistance.
- Include teachers in the planning process.
  - Make the focus of your program the recognition of local teachers, not the competition for a state-level nominee.
  - Recognize more than your teacher nominees as part of any awards program or event to promote the perception of the program as one that recognizes teaching excellence and not one that divides winners and losers.
  - It is a good idea to designate one central office staff person to serve as Teacher of the Year coordinator. In many districts the director of public information coordinates the program. Curriculum and personnel directors might also take on this duty.

## Nomination and Selection

- Use a democratic process to select your nominee.
- Districts might decide to allow teachers to nominate themselves for the honor. This may work well in smaller districts.
- Principals on each campus might ask teachers to nominate one of their peers to represent their campus in the local district contest. The nomination forms might include supporting statements.
- Alternatively, principals might ask department heads to select a campus nominee. Campus faculty councils or advisory groups might select several nominees, with one campus representative chosen from among the nominees by a vote of all teachers on the campus.
- Another option is to involve parent organizations in selecting campus nominees.
- Once campus representatives are chosen, or if nominations are open to all interested teachers, a district selection committee might be appointed. This committee might include representatives of parent groups, teacher organizations, non-certified personnel, principals, the president of a high school student council, the local newspaper publisher, the Chamber of Commerce president, a school board member, previous Teachers of the Year and others. Existing committees within the district, such as curriculum councils or districtwide faculty councils, might also take part in selections.

## Publicity and Sponsorship

- Enlist the help of your local newspaper and/or television station to publicize the selection of your Teacher of the Year. Tell your local news media representatives about the program and this positive story about public education.
- Ask local businesses and organizations to get involved with your program and seek their support for awards and recognition.
- Honor the winners and finalists at special functions and at any annual staff banquet. Ask the Teacher of the Year to represent your district at community functions, and regional, state or national conferences.

# Reasons to Participate in the Texas Teacher of the Year Program

Consider nominating candidates now for the Texas Teacher of the Year. Nomination Guidelines and Application Forms are available on the Texas Education Agency web site: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/awards/toy/>. The program has many benefits, and the time and effort spent in the nomination process is a worthy investment.

## Each Texas Teacher of the Year nomination is . . .

- **memorable for the teacher.** Recognition has the immediate benefits of boosting the teacher's morale and validates the solid perceptions of students, parents and colleagues. The Texas Teacher of the Year Program opens doors to professional opportunities such as serving on various advisory groups, participating in Teacher of the Year Forums and professional organization activities. The acknowledgment expands the influence of teachers whose leadership is recognized.
- **valuable for students.** Students will feel great pride and joy when their teacher, or a teacher they know, is chosen as the Teacher of the Year at the school, district, regional or state level. Students can feel special by association with an exceptional teacher.
- **significant for the school and faculty.** Nominating the Teacher of the Year raises the credibility of a school and its staff in the local community.
- **meaningful for the school district, its leaders and patrons.** The positive effects that a school receives accrue throughout the school district. Enhanced community prestige and community pride are priceless and directly contribute to improved expectations, support for schools and student learning.
- **important for the profession.** Recent studies have indicated that teachers are one of the most vital links to a good education. Nominees for Teacher of the Year are evidence of the inspiring impression teachers have on students and education.
- **good for the community.** A healthy society values education and appreciates the educators who work to ensure future generations are well-educated. A nominee for Teacher of the Year provides the community an opportunity to recognize a representative of the profession and celebrate the importance of teachers.

