



Teachers of the Year (TOY) Program 2026 - 2027 Application Instructions

Downloadable Application Cover Page

For your convenience, the 2026-2027 *Contra Costa TOY Application Cover Page* is available as a “fill-in form” on the CCCOE Teacher of the Year Web page at:

The fill-in form must be downloaded and saved to your desktop before data entry begins. Please fill out the *Application Cover Page* electronically and then save it as “*Last name.cover page*”.

Application Formatting

Paper, Spacing, and Fonts

All application components must be printed on standard 8½” by 11” white paper. Responses must be typewritten; using a 12 point Arial font; double spaced; and margins of ¾ inch on right, left, top, and bottom. Do not use compressed type. All application components should be numbered at the bottom center of the page.

Page Titles

All sections should have a title at the top of each page.

Sequence and Pagination

Assemble the application packet as follows:

I.	2026/27 Application cover page	
II.	Classroom/Teaching/School schedule	
III.	Background Experience and Professional Development Activities	Limit 2 pages
IV.	Essays	
1.	Professional Biography	Limit 2 pages
2.	Philosophy of Teaching	Limit 1 page
3.	Student Progress	Limit 2 pages
4.	School-Community Involvement	Limit 1 page
5.	The Teaching Profession	Limit 2 pages
V.	Three (3) Letters of Support (Limit one page per letter)	Limit 3 pages

Submitting the Application

Application Assistance

Districts should review applications to ensure that all instructions have been followed including font, margins, day and time constraints, and number of pages. Make sure there are no typographical errors, misspellings, or errors in grammar.

Submitting the Application

Applications must be submitted to the Contra Costa County Office of Education, Communications Office by email to communications@cccoe.k12.ca.us. **All applications must be received no later than Monday, March 16, 2026 at 5 p.m.**

All questions should be directed to the Communications Dept.

Marcus Walton, Director II, Communications & Special Events
CCCOE Communications Office
77 Santa Barbara Road, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
Phone: (925) 942-3420 • communications@cccoe.k12.ca.us

2026-27 Application Packet

I. Cover Page

The application cover page requires the signatures of the applicant, school principal, and district superintendent. The applicant's signature certifies that the content of the application is complete and accurate. The district superintendent's signature acknowledges that, if selected as a Teacher of the Year or nominee, the teacher may receive gifts or merchandise from program sponsors, and he/she will be exempted from any district policy governing the acceptance of gifts.

II. Applicants' School Schedule

On a separate piece of paper, please provide the school's regular Monday through Friday schedule as well as your own, including the time that you arrive, leave, and have lunch break. Indicate any days and/or times in April through June that school will not be in session and note any alternate schedule days such as minimum or planning days, or constraints that would prevent classroom observation (e.g., school closed, field trip, prep period, testing, vacation, etc). This information is necessary to ensure the applicant's availability in the classroom for site visits.

III. Background Experience and Professional Development Activities

This section should be 1–2 pages in length. Beginning with the most recent list:

- a. Colleges and universities attended (including postgraduate studies), dates of attendance, and degrees earned.
- b. Teaching employment history with time period, grade level, and subject area of each assignment.
- c. Professional association memberships, including information regarding offices held and other relevant activities.
- d. Staff development leadership activities, mentorships, and leadership activities in the training of future and current teachers that you have presented.
- e. Awards and other recognition of your teaching, including dates and exact involvement.

IV. Essays (5)

This section includes five (5) essays on the following topics:

1. Professional Biography (Limit 2 pages)

Describe:

- The factors that influenced your becoming a teacher
- Your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education

2. Philosophy of Teaching (Limit 1 page)

Describe:

- Your personal views about teaching, including what aspects make you an outstanding teacher
- The rewards you find in teaching
- How your views about teaching are demonstrated in your personal teaching style.

3. Student Progress (Limit 2 pages)

Describe:

- How you know your students are achieving
- Your use and understanding of data
- What you do with the information to improve instruction
- Assessment methods used
- How you assess and address the needs of students at-risk, and how you differentiate instruction to meet the needs of at-risk students.

4. School-Community Involvement (Limit 1 page)

Describe:

- Partnerships, such as involvement with colleagues and creating school-community partnerships
- How you involve and utilize the community in your classroom
- Commitment to the community through service-oriented activities (such as volunteer

and civic) that enhance the home, school, and/or community connection

Note: descriptions should not include personal/family volunteer service, and do not include professional development that is required by your school/school district.

Include:

- How you establish local partnerships that strengthen family involvement in children's education
- Community involvement beyond that which is considered basic school-related involvement
- How you get your students involved in community service

5. The Teaching Profession (Limit 2 pages)

Describe:

- Why you would recommend that individuals enter the teaching profession
- How you strengthen and improve the teaching profession
- How you support the profession, such as through teacher collaboration and mentoring
- What is and/or what should be the basis for accountability in the teaching profession

V. Letters of Support (3)

Include three letters of support from among the following: district superintendent, principal, administrator, colleague, student, parent, or community civic leader. All letters should extend the application by covering areas or examples not addressed elsewhere.

Letters of support are limited to one page each. Do not include other materials, such as portfolios or press clippings.

Contra Costa County TOY Finalists

The applications are evaluated and scored by a selection committee consisting of educators and members of the business community. The applications with the four highest scores will be named as the finalists. School principals and district liaisons will be contacted in April if their candidate is selected as a finalist and will receive a site visit. Following the site visits, an email will go out to all TOYs and TOY district liaisons announcing the four finalists.

Each of the four finalists will receive a site visit in May from our TOY Classroom Observation/Interviewers. The Communications team will work with each of the finalists to schedule a date and time and will provide details about the visit. The visit will be scored using a set of rubrics.

The final step in the selection process is Finalist Speeches. On Thursday, June 18, 2026, the four TOY finalists will be required to attend a finalist reception where they will each give a short speech in front of educators and members of the business community. On the same day, prior to the reception they will meet with the Communications team to produce a short video that will be submitted with their application for the California Teacher of the Year.

County Teacher of the Year Celebration

The two finalists who will be named as the County Teachers of the Year

California Teacher of the Year Application

Each of the four finalists will be required to complete an application for the California Teacher of the Year. The application will be sent as soon as the Communications Dept. is notified by the state of its availability, usually in March. The application deadline will be announced at that time but is usually in early July. The state application includes a video requirement, which will be produced by the Communications Dept. on Tuesday, June 18, 2026, between 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., the same day of the Finalist Reception. A finalist may produce the video on their own if preferred.

The state application must be emailed to the Communications team by the deadline. After reviewing the applications, they will be submitted to the state by the Communications Director.

California Teacher of the Year

The California Teacher of the Year selection committee will contact the County TOY's who have been selected as a finalist for the state TOY in August. The winner is announced in October.

If a Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year is selected as California Teacher of the Year, they may need to be released from classroom duties for up to 30 days in the school year and additional days in years thereafter. If the teacher is selected as a candidate to the National Teacher of the Year Program, the district or county will provide travel reimbursement to the teacher for participation in the National Teacher of the Year meeting. If selected as National Teacher of the Year, the applicant will be released for a full year. The school, district, or other administrative authority employing the applicant will provide substitute personnel and ensure that salary and benefits are not diminished during release time.