Tennessee Teacher of the Year: Guidebook for Applicants – Part 1

Tennessee Department of Education | 2025-26

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Introduction

Congratulations on your nomination for Tennessee Teacher of the Year!

The goal of the Tennessee Teacher of the Year program is to recognize and celebrate the wealth of excellent teachers that exist across the state. We applaud teachers who prioritize the needs of all children, who devote their professional lives to enriching the lives of Tennessee students, and who demonstrate exceptional gains in student achievement.

In order to be considered for the state-level award, a Teacher of the Year candidate must:

- be a full-time, certified, in good standing, pre-K–12 teacher in a state-accredited public or charter school in Tennessee at each stage of the recognition process (school, district, region, grand division, state, and national levels),
- spend more than 75% of the school day in direct instruction to students,
- have a minimum of three years of experience as a teacher in Tennessee public or charter schools, and
- have a track record of exceptional gains in student learning.

This guidebook is provided to help the applicant complete each component of the application process.

With any questions, please contact the Educator Recognition Coordinator, Sarah Brown, at Sarah.Brown@tn.gov.

Sample Timeline

Date	Action
Dec. 3	Teacher of the Year nominees are submitted to the department by Directors of Schools and designees.
Dec. 17	Teacher of the Year nominees receive notification email from state Teacher of the Year coordinator.
Jan. 6	Weekly Office Hours Begin
Jan. 8	Webinar #1: Overview of the Teacher of the Year Process
Jan. 15	Webinar #2: Approaching Part I Teacher of the Year Application
Feb. 3	District-level Teacher of the Year nominees submit Part I application.
April 1	27 region-level Teacher of the Year semi-finalists are announced, and semi-finalists receive Part II of the application.
April 16	Webinar #3: Approaching Part II Teacher of the Year Application
May 12	Region-level Teacher of the Year semi-finalists complete and submit Part II application.
June 1	9 region-level Teacher of the Year finalists are announced, and finalists receive instructions for completing the interview.
June	Finalist interviews are held.
August	Three Grand Division Teachers of the Year and Tennessee Teacher of the Year are announced at the annual Educators of Excellence Banquet.

This timeline has been constructed based on the typical dates for the Teacher of the Year process. These are not necessarily exact dates. To view the projected timeline for the current selection cycle, please visit the Tennessee Teacher of the Year website.

Benefits of Participating in the Tennessee Teacher of the Year Selection Process

While the application process requires time and attention to detail, applicants may experience many benefits to participating in the Tennessee Teacher of the Year process.

At the local level, each candidate will be recognized and celebrated by colleagues and leaders within their school, district, and community for the hard work and passion they bring to Tennessee students every day. In some communities, school and district Teacher of the Year winners receive recognition and awards underwritten by local sources.

The nine region-level finalists will have the opportunity to serve on the Tennessee Teacher Advisory Council, a group of educators from across the state who empower teachers to impact policy and practice for quality and equitable educational outcomes across Tennessee, to promote/foster relationships between stakeholders, and to elevate the voice of teachers and students.

The Tennessee Teacher of the Year will have the opportunity to represent Tennessee in the National Teacher of the Year program, which includes a year of all expenses paid travel and professional development opportunities with State Teachers of the Year from across the country.

RECOGNITION BY LEVEL	LOCAL	REGIONAL	STATE
Celebrated for making exceptional gains with students by colleagues, leaders, and community members.	✓	✓	✓
Honored at the annual Educators of Excellence banquet		✓	✓
Serve as an advisor and advocate for state-level programs through the Tennessee Teacher Advisory Council.		✓	✓
Represent Tennessee in the National Teacher of the Year program.			✓

Overview of the Tennessee Teacher of the Year Selection Process

Teachers of the Year are selected competitively through five cycles: school, district, region, grand division, and state in three grade bands: pre-k- elementary, middle, and high school.

School- and District-Level Selection

To participate in the Tennessee Teacher of the Year process, each candidate will first need to be selected as the school and/or district Teacher of the Year representative. Each school and district select their Teacher of the Year representatives through a unique process – to learn more about the local process, please contact the local principal or district office.

Each district is eligible to nominate three educators to participate in the region-level selection process, with one educator representing each of the three grade bands: Pre-K - elementary, middle, and high school.
District nominations are due in December.

State

Grand Division

Region

District

School

Region-Level Selection

After district level nomination, each nominee must complete Part I application to continue to the region-level selection process.
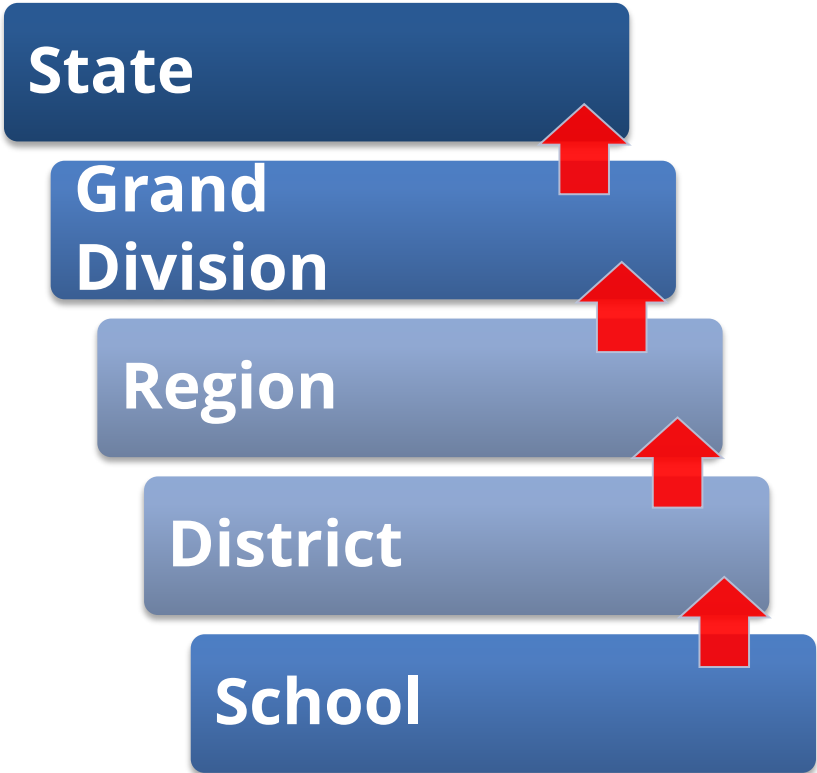
Part I of the application will be emailed to each nominee by the Educator Recognition coordinator. The part I application contains three sections:

- basic information about the nominee and their school,
- three written response questions, and
- an optional opportunity to submit up to 3 pages of supporting documentation.

Guidance for each component of the Part I application is provided in this guidebook.

After Part I applications are submitted, regional scoring committees will identify one region-level semi-finalist in each grade band for each of the nine regions. This region-level selection results in a total of 27 region-level semi-finalists from across the state. All region-level applicants will be notified of their application decision following the completion of scoring.

Grand Division-Level Selection

If selected as a region-level semi-finalist, the Tennessee Teacher of the Year coordinator will provide the Part II application to each candidate via email. To move forward in selection, each candidate must complete the Part II application.

State-Level Selection

The nine region-level finalists will then complete an interview, which will be held virtually.

A statewide scoring committee will utilize both the application and interview components to identify one educator to represent each of the East, Middle, and West Grand Divisions as well as one educator to represent the entire state as the Tennessee Teacher of the Year.

The Tennessee Teacher of the Year will then move on to represent Tennessee in the National Teacher of the Year program administered by the Council for Chief State Schools Officers.

Written Response Guidance

The written responses account for the majority of points available in application scoring; these responses represent your best qualities as an exceptional educator. This section provides several useful strategies for writing a compelling story. The tips, suggestions, and the exemplars included in this guidance document do not represent the sole way to address the written response prompts. Using these suggestions does not guarantee a specific outcome in the selection process. However, this guidance can help a candidate reflect on experience as an educator which will assist in the completion of the application.

The Application Part I Extended Response Prompts

1. How do you know that your students are successful in your content area specialty as a result of your instruction? Include evidence, such as data, stories, or anecdotes, to support your response. *Do not exceed 500 words.*
2. Describe a project or initiative you helped create which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, and what is the status of this project today? Please include evidence of student impact in your response. *Do not exceed 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. How do you collaborate with others (e.g. colleagues, students, families) in this work? Please include evidence of student impact. *Do not exceed 500 words.*

Personally Identifiable Information

In efforts to reduce potential unconscious bias, your written responses and supporting documentation needs to exclude any Personally Identifiable Information (PII)* for yourself or your school. Prior to submission, please exclude or redact any PII prior to submitting your application. This could include items such as school logos, names, specific addresses, or photos of yourself or administrators. As such, please ensure that your supporting documentation is still easily understood without the inclusion of PII.

***Personally Identifiable Information (PII).** The term "PII," as defined in OMB Memorandum M-07-1616, refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual. Redacting PII means removing any information that could potentially identify a specific individual before submitting the data. Before uploading redacted information, confirm that the personally identifiable information cannot be discerned.

Criteria Used to Evaluate the Prompts

Overall, each response question will be assessed according to the degree to which the response:

- adheres to standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation conventions;
- answers the question clearly and concisely; and
- provides a compelling narrative that speaks to the applicant's ability to serve as the Tennessee Teacher of the Year.

Additionally, the application will be evaluated holistically to assess the degree to which the applicant:

- is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence;
- collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success;
- deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large;
- demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning; and
- expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way.

Though a strong response may look different for each written response prompt, these guiding criteria can help ensure that the components of the application complement one another and give the most comprehensive view of a candidate's excellence as an educator.

Addressing Common Missteps

- Are you answering the question?
    - Take the time to unpack the question and think about what it is asking.
    - Ask someone else to read your response and ask if they can determine the question being addressed.
- Are you answering **all parts** of the question?
    - Use the unpacking strategy below to ensure that you plan for and address all parts of the prompt with sufficient detail.
- Are you giving a comprehensive picture of yourself as an educator throughout all responses?
    - Try to avoid using the same example or idea in your response to each question. Your goal is to give a complete picture.
- Are you writing to show what learning looks like in your classroom?
    - Write to **show not tell**. Use examples and tell stories of things that students, parents, or colleagues have said or done.
    - Show how your work influenced the learning and growth of others through examples and evidence. Highlight your accomplishments rather than being humble about them.
    - Write "through" the word count in your draft. Often, it takes writers some time to get to

the best part of their responses, so begin by writing more than you need, then strategically edit to meet the word count.

Unpacking the Application Prompts

Unpacking is a useful writing preparation strategy to assist in successfully planning for and address all aspects of a writing prompt with sufficient detail. A sample "unpacking" for each application prompt is provided below. It is important to note that using this strategy and these samples will not guarantee a particular outcome in selection; this strategy should serve as a solid foundation to ensure that the personal experiences and instructional practices described in each response are represented in a way that allows reviewers to focus on evaluating a candidate's innovation and excellence as an educator.

Question 1

How do you know that your students are successful in your content area specialty as a result of your instruction? Include evidence, such as data, stories, or anecdotes, to support your response. (maximum 500 words)

[How do you know that your students are successful in your content area specialty as a result of your instruction?] If am successful as a teacher, what would I expect to see from my students at the end of the year? The quarter? The week? The day? In what ways can I describe what success looks and sounds like in the specific content area, grade level, and context in which I teach? [Include evidence, such as data, stories, or anecdotes, to support your response.] How do I assess my students' success on a daily, weekly, monthly, and/or yearly basis? What stories, anecdotes, formative data, or summative data can I share that shows this success? I should clearly describe how I know my instruction is effective for my students' learning and growth.

Question 2

Describe a project or initiative you helped create which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, and what is the status of this project today? Please include evidence of student impact in your response. (maximum 500 words)

[Describe a project or initiative you have been involved in which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture.] I need to articulate our school culture and its importance. What have I done to improve my school outside of my classroom? When I describe the project or initiative, I want to focus on sharing the ways this project or initiative contributed to how our culture is built. [What

was your role, and what is the status of this project today?] Here, I want to specifically define my role and tasks I completed as part of the project or initiative. I need to be clear about how I collaborated with others and the value of this collaboration—for my practice, the project, and/or school culture. I need to be explicit about the result of the project or initiative, how it is being carried forward and/or improved, and my current role in the project. [Please include evidence of student impact.] Here – or earlier when I'm describing the project – I need to make the connection between the project, my role, school culture, and ultimately student impact. How do I know the project was successful? Put differently, how did students explicitly benefit from this project or initiative? What stories, anecdotes, or data can I share that shows this success?

Question 3

How do you ensure that education transcends the classroom? Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with the community. How do you collaborate with others (e.g. colleagues, students, families) in this work? Please include evidence of student impact. Please include evidence of student impact. (maximum 500 words)

[How do you ensure that education transcends the classroom?] I need to think about how what I do (i.e. instruction, specific projects, clubs or extracurricular activities I lead) impacts the world outside of my classroom, specifically with my students. Why is what I teach my students important for the lives they live outside of my classroom, both now and in the future? [Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with the community.] Here, I should specifically describe and "show" how I connect my students to the community. Do students participate in community service? Explore the heritage of the community they live in? Connect with community members through mentorship? I should aim to show examples of both how I bring the community into my classroom and how I bring my classroom out into the community. When I describe these connections, I want to focus on how these connections expand student learning beyond the classroom and what I do to make this learning relevant and accessible to my students. [How do you collaborate with others (e.g. colleagues, students, families) in this work?] Here, I should identify how I work with others, such as colleagues, community partners, families, and even students themselves, to create these experiences. [Please include evidence of student impact.] How do these community and world connections impact my students? What stories, anecdotes, or data can I share that shows this impact?

Written Response Examples

The written responses below were taken from high-performing applications in the regional, state, and national selection processes. Following each example, a commentary is provided to identify why the response is considered an example.

Question 1 Example

How do you know that your students are successful in your content area specialty as a result of your instruction? Include evidence, such as data, stories, or anecdotes, to support your response. (maximum 500 words)

The following exemplar response was taken from a 2020-21 region-level finalist application.

The students I teach have achieved success through a variety of classroom practices. One of the most effective practices I utilize is goal setting. At the beginning of each semester, I share each child's benchmark data with him/her. This data comes from several sources including EasyCBM, iReady, and classroom assessments. I conference individually with each student and encourage him/her to make his/her own goals as well. We discuss plans for achieving the goals. I get parents on board by sharing the results of the assessments with them and answering any questions they may have. I ensure that the information is presented in a clear and parent friendly manner.

I group students based on their performance and adapt learning materials to their goals. I use leveled readers, sight word lists, and online tools. I often work with small groups of students who require extra support with a given concept. Using iReady, I assign lessons to students in their area of need. While students work, I remind them they are working on meeting their goals. I find it to be especially motivating when we are working on a class assignment and I am able to tell a student: "This will help you meet your goal."

In August 2020 while analyzing data, I noticed most students scored one to two grade levels below the grade-level expectation in phonics. Accordingly, the goal for several students was to improve their phonics score by one grade level by December. When using iReady, growth of one grade level is indicated by 100% of Annual Typical Growth. After the December benchmark, students who make 50% of Annual Typical Growth are considered on track for making a year's growth in a year. Nine of twenty-two students made more than 100% of Annual Typical Growth from August to December as

measured on the iReady benchmark assessment for reading. Eight students made between 50% and 100% of Annual Typical Growth during the same time frame. Only four of the students I had for the full semester did not achieve the goal.

In the spring of 2021, I set a class goal. I challenged my students to beat their previous growth score. Fourteen of seventeen students achieved the goal. Of the three remaining students, two still made more than a year's growth. I had students set individual goals as well by choosing an area in which to improve their scores by at least one grade level. They looked at their data and chose the area. Eight chose phonics, three chose comprehension, three chose math, one chose high frequency words, and three chose vocabulary. Fifteen students made gains toward their goal. Twelve of those improved their scores by one grade level from January to April.

I analyze data to determine if students are successful. When students are involved in setting a measurable goal, and they see daily learning as taking steps toward that goal, they are more engaged and more focused in the work of learning.

Commentary:

This written response clearly and compellingly identifies how the educator knows students are progressing towards mastery: the educator works collaboratively with students to set and achieve goals based on data. Rather than simply telling the reader about student or educator data, the educator weaves evidence and data points into a larger narrative about goal-setting. In addition to describing the process of goal-setting, the educator defines key components of their instruction (i.e. grouping, leveled readers, online tools) as well as key forms of assessment used to track success (i.e. EasyCBM, iReady, and classroom assessments). In addition to responding to each component of the question, this response also shows evidence of the Teacher of the Year criteria:
- We can identify that the educator is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence based on the student success data shared.

- It is clear that the educator collaborates with students and families to create a culture of respect and success based on the collaborative nature of goal-setting.
- The educator clearly expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way, as the narrative presents a clear and compelling storyline that presents no gaps in responding to the prompt.

Question 2 Example

Describe a project or initiative you helped create which contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, and what is the status of this project today? Please include evidence of student impact in your response. (maximum 500 words)

The following response was taken from the 2020-21 Tennessee Teacher of the Year's application.

"...winning that talent show in the 7th grade lit a fire in me and made me want to perform everywhere I possibly could. " - Emily Ann Roberts, former KMS Talent Show contestant, runner up on "The Voice," and contracted performer for WME Entertainment & Starstruck Management in Nashville

In 2007, during my first year at Karns Middle School (KMS), I launched the KMS Talent Contest. In our very first year, we had over 1,200 audience members rattling the gym floor with excitement during this inaugural event. It would soon become a school tradition and a foundation for "The Karns Way."

"The Karns Way" is an expectation of personal excellence in how we present ourselves and how we treat others—reminding teachers and students alike to celebrate and elevate our peers even in

uncomfortable situations. In middle school, this community is critical for ensuring students feel safe and supported as they learn and grow.

THE AUDIENCE: I ask kids, during their most vulnerable years, to sing, dance, and talk in front of people. If the culture in my program isn't right, situations can spiral and have lasting consequences on students' self-confidence. This school-wide project that connects my classroom to the rest of the student body is an extreme example of when I hold "The Karns Way" to the fire. I painstakingly train my student audience to be supportive, even in the unpredictable gymnasium atmosphere during the final competition. My training has been effective—for 14 years, students, parents, and visitors have encouraged in a way that has picked dancers off the floor, calmed the spirits of frightened singers, and changed the minds of the self-doubting kids.

THE CONTESTANTS: My reputation as one who runs a risk-free and supportive environment is essential—or the students will never trust me to help showcase their talent to the world (or at least their peers). I hold live auditions and give personalized feedback so contestants can improve after each round and truly shine. Recognition for having something special to offer is a powerful gift for a middle schooler –especially when that something special is unique. Giving confidence is life-changing.

THE CREW: School staff plays a large role in planning, but the real magic happens when I collaborate with the 40-60 member student crew. I treat the student crew as true colleagues, coaching them in leadership and teamwork to handle extreme situations in sound, setup, lighting, and audience control. The event requires problem solving and creativity to keep the attention of 1200+ spectators, making lasting memories for everyone – and even catapulting some performers and crew members into entertainment careers and fame.

THE LEGACY: Today, the KMS Talent Contest is a living, breathing tradition that defines "The Karns Way." Despite the pandemic, we are working to recreate the show's magic in The Virtual Karns Way!

Commentary:

The educator clearly identifies a project (school talent show) that impacted school culture. By clearly defining the school culture ("The Karns Way"), the educator then shows the reader how each aspect of the talent show is connected to the culture (audience, contestants, crew, legacy). The educator states the role that they played in each aspect of the talent show (training the audience to

be supportive, giving feedback, collaborating with the school staff and student crew), and identifies that the status of the project is ongoing as they transition the project to meet the constraints of the current pandemic. Lastly, educator identifies several forms of student impact throughout the narrative, both abstract (i.e. empathy, self-confidence, leadership, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving) and concrete (i.e. career and fame). In addition to responding to each component of the question, this response also shows evidence of the Teacher of the Year criteria:

- The educator deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large by including students, families, and school staff in the execution of the event.
- It is clear that the educator collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a culture of respect as defined by "The Karns Way".
- The educator clearly expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way, as the narrative presents a clear and compelling storyline that presents no gaps in responding to the prompt.

Question 3 Example

How do you ensure that education transcends the classroom? Describe specific ways in which you deliberately connect your students with the community. How do you collaborate with others (e.g. colleagues, students, families) in this work? Please include evidence of student impact. (maximum 500 words)

The following response was taken from a 2020-21 National Teacher of the Year finalist's application.

A picture of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sits on the wall in my classroom, along with the quote, "Life's most persistent and urgent question: What are you doing for others?" Before a student can leave the classroom each day, they must tell me one thing they did to help someone else. Their answers are typically small acts of kindness; however, my students recognize that each act of service positively impacts our community, and therefore is extremely valuable.

In our school, it is well known that if you need a student's help, you call my room. In a typical year, my students read with 2nd graders weekly, collect winter clothes for kids in our school, pick up the

playground equipment at the end of each recess, and, when we lost our school counselor at the beginning of last year, my students volunteered to mentor younger students.

My students are activists and advocates, and the reach of their impact extends well beyond the walls of our school. My kids were invited as speakers to the state university's Leadership and Inquiry for Turnaround Conference, where they spoke to teachers and administrators about what education needs to look like for culturally diverse students like them. They have been interviewed on local TV and radio stations, and their fans on social media include former NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia and the author Jacqueline Woodson.

I partner with outside organizations that help my students grow their capacity as changemakers for their communities. The state Film Center provides my students with curriculum, film equipment, and professional media mentors to support them in their filmmaking. Every Friday, lawyers, and law students from the state Center for Legal Inclusion mentor my students in their argumentative speaking and writing. And when the head of the organization Girls Education International visited my students last year to discuss her organization's mission to expand educational opportunities for girls in Africa and South Asia, my kids committed to partnering with students in Tanzania to raise funds and awareness of their needs. These partnerships better prepare my students to rise as champions for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Many of my former students are active in student government at the middle and high school levels, have joined clubs dedicated to community service, and give back to our school by volunteering in our afterschool program. They have also taken the lead in organizing recent youth protests and events. In conversation with these students, I am proud to say that they often cite their time in our classroom as the catalyst for the work they are doing to improve their communities today.

Commentary:

The educator clearly identifies in the opening paragraph that education transcends their classroom through service. The narrative identifies both how students demonstrate acts of service in their school (i.e. volunteering, mentoring) and in their community (i.e. activists and advocates to outside stakeholders). The educator also identifies how the community is brought into the classroom through strategic partnerships. The discussion of partnerships also shows how the educator collaborates with others to provide these transformational opportunities to students. Lastly, the educator cites evidence of student impact, such as continuing to improve their community through

volunteering, activism, and advocacy. In addition to responding to each component of the question, this response also shows evidence of the Teacher of the Year criteria:

- The educator deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large by building relationships with external partners.
- The educator clearly expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way, as the narrative presents a clear and compelling storyline that presents no gaps in responding to the prompt.

Additional Documentation Guidance

Additional documentation encompasses all application materials submitted outside of the written responses and includes the optional supporting documentation, resume, letters of recommendation, and professional biography. Additional documentation is assigned one total score and is evaluated holistically to assess the degree to which the applicant:

- Is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence.
- Collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success.
- Deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large.
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning.
- Expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way.

This section provides several useful strategies to ensure the additional documentation complements the written responses and presents a comprehensive picture of the candidate's excellence as an educator.

Optional Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation is permitted to provide additional evidence for references made in the extended responses. Some examples of supporting documentation include student work, teacher effectiveness data, lesson plans, parent or community communications materials, etc. Please ensure all supporting documentation adheres to school and/or district's privacy policies (i.e., media releases).

Supporting documentation is completely optional and choosing not to submit supporting documentation will not penalize the applicant in any way. If the applicant chooses to submit supporting documentation, documentation is limited to **3 pages** maximum for the part I application. Any documentation over this maximum will not be provided to reviewers. In **Part I**, supporting documentation may NOT include any personally identifying information either for the applicant

themselves or the applicant's school. Please redact any personally identifying information prior to submission (ex. photos of yourself, photos that could identify your school, student names, school name, co-workers' names, etc.).

To submit supporting documentation, upload one single PDF file in the space provided on the online form. It is important to ensure that all supporting documentation is clear and legible to facilitate a smooth review process. To meet this requirement:

- **Font Size:** Ensure that the font size used in any textual documentation is at least 10 points or larger. Smaller fonts can be difficult to read, especially in printed documents.
- **Image Clarity:** When including images, photos, or scans, make sure they are of high quality and resolution. Blurry or pixelated images can make it difficult for reviewers to interpret the content.
- **Image Placement:** Avoid overcrowding a page with too many images. Limit the number of images on one page to no more than three. Properly space and arrange images for clarity.
- **File Format:** Supporting Documents must be in PDF format.
- **Contrast and Readability:** Ensure there is sufficient contrast between text and background colors to make text easily readable. Avoid using light text on a light background or dark text on a dark background.
- **Margins and Spacing:** Maintain adequate margins and spacing between text and images to avoid clutter. This can improve overall document readability.
- **Organized Layout:** Arrange your documentation in a logical and organized manner.

These guidelines ensure that all supporting documentation is clear, legible, and well-organized, making it easier for reviewers to assess and understand the content.

Additionally, applicants should consider the following best practices when compiling supporting documentation:

- ***Directly connect supporting documentation to the written responses, but do not rely on supporting documentation to make your case:*** Supporting documentation should not be a substitute for high-quality explanation in the narrative nor stand alone as extraneous information. Effective supporting documentation should **extend** a reviewer's understanding of the written responses by directly connecting to aspects of the narrative where additional evidence (such as student work) may make writing clearer.
- ***Ensure each page of the supporting documentation demonstrates the Teacher of the Year criteria:*** In some cases, the written response prompts do not permit sufficient opportunities to share characteristics of specific experiences which would fully demonstrate an applicant's ability to serve as Teacher of the Year. Like the best practice above, effective supporting documentation can serve to **expand** the reviewer's understanding of your ability to meet the

Teacher of the Year criteria. To ensure reviewers understand what they are viewing and why it is important, be sure to provide notes with relevant information and context for any materials not directly addressed in the narrative.

Additional Opportunities for Support

To further support Teacher of the Year applicants, the department will offer a webinar series as well as weekly office hours throughout the application period. Links for webinars and office hours are provided to each candidate in their notification email. All webinars will be recorded and available on the Teacher of the Year [website](#).

- **Jan. 8 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. CST:** Overview of the Teacher of the Year Process
    - This one-hour webinar will orient applicants to the Teacher of the Year process. Applicants will also hear from the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Tennessee Teachers of the Year. Lastly, applicants will have an opportunity ask the Teacher of the Year coordinator any questions.
- **Jan. 16 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. CST:** Approaching the Part 1 Teacher of the Year Application
    - This one-hour webinar will dive more deeply into the components of the part 1 Teacher of the Year application.
- **Weekly Office Hours:** Held on Mondays from 3-4 p.m. CST from January 6 to February 3.

Additional Resources

Please visit the Teacher of the Year [website](#) for the following additional resources:

- **Selection Process Timeline:** This document contains important dates and deadlines for the current year selection cycle.
- **Part I Application:** This document contains all questions listed in the electronic application. Applicants are encouraged to use this document to draft and revise application responses prior to submitting via the online form.