



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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State Superintendent of Education

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**ALABAMA “SWEET 16” FINALISTS**  
**FOR STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED TODAY**  
*“Highlighting Our Top Educators and Their Dedication to the Teaching Profession”*

**Montgomery, Ala.** – Teachers are an essential part of our lives. They inspire us to reach our full potential and instill an appreciation for learning in each of us.

Our teachers support us and want each of us to flourish and achieve a lifetime of success.

Today, 16 outstanding educators have officially been selected as finalists for the 2024-2025 Alabama Teacher of the Year (TOY) Award. Each personifies true classroom excellence and consistently excels in the profession.

*Alabama Teacher of the Year* is one of our state’s oldest and most esteemed awards.

This year’s 16 finalists soared into consideration for this award from a highly skilled group of more than 155 top educators, who submitted applications for this year’s state honor.

**Alabama State Department of Education - 2024-2025 District Teachers of the Year**

**Shelley Grimes**

*Enterprise City School System* – Brookwood Elementary School  
District I Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Rylee Baxter**

*Enterprise City School System* – Enterprise High School  
District I Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Deana S. Hooks**

*Auburn City School System* – Pick Elementary School  
District II Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Katie Dye**

*Randolph County School System* – Randolph County High School  
District II Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Deborah Stringfellow**

*Elmore County School System* – Airport Road Intermediate School  
District III Elementary Teacher of the Year

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2024-2025 Alabama TOY 16 Finalists Announcement

**Kira Ledbetter Aaron**

*Vestavia Hills City School System* – Vestavia Hills High School Freshman Campus  
District III Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Sharya J. Aaron**

*Birmingham City School System* – Sun Valley Elementary School  
District IV Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Dr. Sarah Frances Moland**

*Birmingham City School System*– Jackson-Olin High School  
District IV Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Laura H. Fennell**

*Autauga County School System* – Pine Level Elementary School  
District V Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Neysa Countryman**

*Saraland City School System* – Saraland High School  
District V Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Janet Kuchinski**

*Oxford City School System* – Coldwater Elementary School  
District VI Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Jennifer W. Dasinger**

*Oxford City School System* – Oxford High School  
District VI Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Melissa T. Bryan**

*Jasper City School System* – Maddox Intermediate School  
District VII Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Derick A. Franck**

*Florence City School System* – Florence Middle School  
District VII Secondary Teacher of the Year

**Shannon Williamson**

*Huntsville City School System* – Blossomwood Elementary School  
District VIII Elementary Teacher of the Year

**Kristen Brown**

*Madison City School System* – Liberty Middle School  
District VIII Secondary Teacher of the Year

Alabama's Teacher of the Year spends the school year serving as a full-time, official ambassador for both education and the teaching profession.

Alabama's representative is a candidate for National Teacher of the Year and also conducts professional-level workshops to various groups at the local and national levels.

*2024-2025 Alabama TOY 16 Finalists Announcement*

This year's pool of 16 outstanding educators will soon be narrowed down to the final *Top Four*. The 2024-2025 Alabama Teacher of the Year will be announced by the Alabama State Board of Education and Alabama State Department of Education in May.

Reflecting on his experiences, Alabama's current Teacher of the Year, Jeff Norris, said, "We are proud to extend special congratulations to these exceptional educators who were officially selected as a part of the Alabama Teacher of the Year 16 Finalists. Each is a great candidate, and we cannot wait to see who will be named the 2024-2025 Alabama Teacher of the Year. They truly exemplify excellence and outstanding classroom leadership."

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