FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 5, 2024

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.

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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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