



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

Alabama  
State Board  
of Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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Governor Kay Ivey  
President

**ALABAMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED –  
BLUFF PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL’S KATIE H. COLLINS  
SELECTED STATE’S 2025-2026 TOP EDUCATOR**

Jackie Zeigler  
District I

*“George Washington Carver High School Secondary Teacher Aubrey Bennett Named  
Alternate State Teacher of the Year”*

Tracie West  
District II

**Montgomery, Ala.** – A special event was held at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery this evening and the Alabama State Board of Education officially announced this year’s Alabama Teacher of the Year and Alternate State Teacher of the Year. This exciting event narrowed the list of finalists to the state’s top two educators.

Kelly Mooney  
District III

Katie H. Collins who teaches at Bluff Park Elementary School in the Hoover City School System has been named the 2025-2026 Alabama Teacher of the Year (TOY). She will serve as the state’s official ambassador for public education and the teaching profession. As an accomplished educator, she inspires students and families in her community to achieve.

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.  
District IV



Katie H. Collins is a lifelong learner. This year marks her 20<sup>th</sup> year teaching. She has taught first grade, middle and high school French, English as a Second Language (ESL) in elementary, and adult courses. Collins’ strength is rooted in her faith with a heart dedicated to serving others. She believes relationships are the foundation to student success and enjoys identifying and nurturing her students’ unique academic gifts.

Alabama Teacher of the Year Katie H. Collins is enthusiastic about modeling her passion for learning, designing innovative cross-curricular Project-Based Learning units, and facilitating student autonomy and leadership.

Tonya S. Chestnut, Ed.D.  
District V  
Vice President

Collins’ proudest professional accomplishment has been creating the Communities Family Literacy Program. She and two colleagues saw a need for parent and pre-school English language services among ESL families in the Hoover City School System.

Marie Manning  
District VI  
President Pro Tem

This grassroots program has now transformed into a fully funded literacy initiative, employing adult and pre-school instructors. She believes in the transformative power of education and plans to continue advocating for students and working to further advance the teaching profession. She works daily to promote student-centered, positive, and inspirational learning.

Allen Long, M.D.  
District VII

Katie H. Collins earned a Bachelor of Arts from Furman University, and a Master of Arts in French Education and Certification in English as a Second Language from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.  
District VIII

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.  
Secretary and  
Executive Officer

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STATE ANNOUNCES 2025-2026 ALABAMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

“I believe student engagement is the heartbeat in the joy of learning,” said Alabama Teacher of the Year Katie H. Collins. “I am passionate about designing dynamic cross-curricular lessons that both engage and empower every student to have a positive impact on the world. As the 2025-2026 Alabama Teacher of the Year, I will work to raise more awareness about mental health among our youth and promote best practice solutions and independence-building classroom experiences. It is critical that we provide children with the tools to navigate both the real and virtual worlds in a way that fosters resilience and overall well-being.”

George Washington Carver High School Teacher Aubrey Bennett was also named Alabama’s Alternate State Teacher of the Year. This historic school is located in the Birmingham City School System.



Growing up in a single-parent household truly shaped Aubrey Bennett into the teacher he is today. Without a father at home to guide him, he found himself in an inspiring social studies classroom while living in East Syracuse, New York, that ultimately changed his life forever.

His fourth-grade teacher, Mr. Sampson, ignited an enthusiasm for social studies and a thirst for knowledge. He demonstrated the amazing ability to analyze history and current events.

This set in motion the positive path that Alabama Alternate State Teacher of the Year Aubrey Bennett ultimately would take in becoming a top educator. Today, he works to inspire young people just like his teacher did for him. He knows his students see him as more than just a teacher but a positive mentor. He wants them to understand the world around them, to think critically, and to form their own opinions.

Aubrey Bennett devotes his time to ensuring every student is informed, socially aware, and open-minded. He goes to work each day excited and ready to inspire the next generation of leaders.

His greatest joy is working to build lasting and positive connections with local families. “Mr. Bennett truly is making a lasting impact on the lives of students,” said George Washington Carver High School Student Government President Jacob Woods. “His influence extends far beyond the classroom, and I know many students, including myself, will carry the lessons he has taught us throughout our lives.”

Alabama Alternate State Teacher of the Year Aubrey Bennett earned a Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Management from Marist College, a Master’s of Secondary Education from the University of Phoenix, and is currently working to become a National Board Certified Teacher.

The Alabama Teacher of the Year presents professional workshops to various groups throughout the state and nation. Additionally, our state Teacher of the Year is also our official candidate for the National Teacher of the Year Award.

*Dr. Eric G. Mackey, State Superintendent of Education*, said it is exciting to recognize these remarkable educators. “Alabama Teacher of the Year Katie H. Collins and Alternate State Teacher of the Year Aubrey Bennett clearly represent the highest levels of professionalism,” said Mackey. “Both are outstanding educators and exemplify classroom excellence. We are thankful for their continued commitment to advancing student achievement in Alabama.”

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