



## **2015 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Guidelines and Information**

### **Mission Statement**

The Arkansas Teacher of the Year (ATOY) program, under the leadership of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), identifies, recognizes and utilizes representatives of excellent teaching in the elementary and secondary classrooms in Arkansas public schools. The mission of the ATOY program is to promote the profession and recognize quality teachers implementing "best practices" in Arkansas public school classrooms.

### **Program History**

The classroom teacher is the backbone of the American educational system. No one person has a greater impact on the education of a child than does the teacher who creates the primary learning and instructional environment. The National Teacher of the Year (NTOY) program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching.

The statewide competition is part of the NTOY program, which is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with the ING Foundation and People to People Ambassador Programs.

The Arkansas Teacher of the Year (ATOY) Awards Program, co-sponsored by the ADE and the State Board of Education, is an annual event designed to recognize outstanding elementary, middle and high school teachers from around the state. The program provides an opportunity to focus public attention on excellence in classroom teaching.

According to Arkansas Code Annotated 6-17-2501 et seq., ADE is required to have at least one district candidate to represent school districts in Pulaski County and one district candidate to represent each education service area in the regional competition; therefore, school district participation should be a priority, with submissions being sent to ADE.

The Arkansas Teacher of the Year will be placed on administrative paid leave for one year to work-in-residence with the ADE to develop professional development and provide technical assistance to teachers and students. The ATOY will serve as an ambassador for education in Arkansas, making public appearances across the state. The ATOY is nominated to represent Arkansas in the NTOY program.

### **Selection Process**

The ATOY program adheres to the requirements of the national program regarding schedules, composition of the portfolios and areas in which nominees will be judged. This year's selection process will exceed the national guidelines. The selection process will focus on the instructional practices and strategies that applicants have used to increase student achievement in their classroom and in the overall school setting.

Following the submission of the portfolios from each District Teacher of the Year, ADE will identify and select educators and the current ATOY to serve as a panel of judges to rate nominees according to the program guidelines. The panel of judges will select one district candidate to represent each of the 15 education service areas and one district candidate to represent school districts in Pulaski County in the regional competition. The panel, consisting of at least three judges, also will make the final recommendation for the four ATOY semi-finalists based on the following areas:

- Review of nominee's application,
- Panel interviews with nominee, principal and/or superintendent,
- Review nominee's five-minute video presentation, and
- Observation of nominee's classroom.

After members of the judging panel have reviewed and discussed the above-mentioned areas, the judges shall recommend one candidate to the commissioner of education. The three remaining semi-finalists will be ranked as first, second and third runners up.

### **Qualifications for Nominees for the Teacher of the Year**

Nominees shall be skillful and dedicated teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through 12. Administrative personnel such as principals, librarians and guidance counselors are not eligible to be considered for the program. Instructional literacy facilitators have to spend at least 70 percent of their time in the classroom to qualify as a nominee.

The candidate should

- be an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled teacher in any state-approved or accredited school, pre-kindergarten through 12, who is planning to continue in an active teaching status; (supervisory and administrative responsibilities should be of secondary consideration);
- inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn;
- have the respect and admiration of students, parents and colleagues;
- play an active and useful role in the community and school; and
- be poised, articulate and possess the energy to withstand a taxing schedule.

Nominees shall have an employment history of teaching, continuously or intermittently, for an accumulative period of three years or more in an Arkansas public school previous to the date of such person's nomination.

The ATOY candidate must be engaged directly in instruction with students in a classroom setting for more than 70 percent of the individual's contracted time in a school in Arkansas at the time of nomination. If the candidate chooses to leave the school during the selection period, the school shall submit another candidate. Nominees who are not actively engaged in teaching in a public school at the time at which observations are made shall be disqualified.

The ATOY will remain an active employee of the nominating school district during his/her term of service.

Candidates must hold a valid and current teacher's license, as approved by the ADE Professional Licensure Unit.

### **District Teacher of the Year Nomination Guidelines**

The ADE will annually provide district coordinators of the ATOY program with detailed instructions and proper forms based on the NTOY program. Also, upon request, the state coordinator will provide sample questions to the district level selection committee.

Each district may only nominate one teacher. Once applications are received and sorted according to the 15 education service areas and Pulaski County, the panel of judges will then select one candidate to represent each of the education service areas and one candidate for school districts in Pulaski County.

Nominees shall submit a portfolio describing themselves and setting forth their positions on education issues. In Arkansas, Teachers of the Year are annually chosen at the school and district levels through a variety of procedures. District-level processes range from open nomination to formal selection by a district-wide committee from among nominees at every school. Continuous changes to improve the selection process are expected and recommended.

It is the desire of the ATOY program to promote and encourage a consistent selection process in every school district to ensure the selection of a person who will represent his or her fellow teachers.

School and district nomination timelines should give the nominee ample time to prepare his or her portfolio for submission to the state. The selection process should be completed by a broad-based committee representing teachers, building administrators, parents and students.

Teachers who have received recognition as the ATOY are not eligible for nomination. Those who have been recognized as a District Teacher of the Year in the previous three years are not eligible for nomination. Teachers who have been nominated in prior years but did not achieve at least a district ranking may be nominated the following year.

#### **District Coordinators' Responsibilities**

The process should be facilitated at the district level by a coordinator who fully understands the process and who can work with the Teacher of the Year nominees so that they fully understand the process. Their responsibilities are as follows:

- confirm that school and district level processes are conducted according to guidelines/timelines and maintain supporting documentation.
- provide sample questions to the district-level selection committee. Upon request, the ADE will assist in making these questions available.
- If necessary, establish a building and district-level process that provides access for all teachers.
- Mail the Teacher of the Year Application Form to Gloria Stephens at ADE by 4:30 p.m. Friday, May 30, 2014.
- Assist the District Teacher of the Year with completing the application, explaining timelines, and reviewing and critiquing the application prior to it being submitted to the ADE.