2020 National Teacher of the Year

PROGRAM FACTS

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The process begins with the selection of state teachers of the year from the 50 states, District of Columbia, four U.S. territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity. Those teachers, selected by the states, submit written applications that are reviewed by a national selection committee representing major national education organizations. Four finalists are selected and complete in-person interviews with selection committee members, who vote to choose the National Teacher of the Year.

The selection process has varied over the years. In the early years, media sponsors picked the winners after finalist nominees were interviewed by journalists. Not every state/territory submitted a nominee every year.

The Council of Chief State School Officers has been involved in the program since its inception in 1952. Other partners over the years have included McCall’s, Look, and Ladies Home Journal (magazines that have all since stopped publishing); Encyclopedia Britannica and the U.S. Office of Education (in the years before it became a Cabinet-level department).

The National Teacher of the Year has been recognized each year at the White House. Although the president often makes the official presentation of the NTOY to the nation, the First Lady or another member of the president’s family, or a member of the Cabinet, have also led the recognition in years past.

During his or her year of recognition, the NTOY is released from classroom duties to travel as a spokesperson and ambassador for education.
Beyond supporting the individual National Teacher of the Year each year, the program offers one-of-a-kind professional learning opportunities for teachers in the participating states and territories. It is designed to hone communications skills, expand knowledge of education policy, and grow teaching and learning practices. The goal of this programming is to elevate the voices of teachers and ensure that teachers are leaders in state and national policy conversations.

Events for the state teachers throughout the year include a program induction hosted by Google in Palo Alto, Calif.; a week of events with federal policymakers in Washington, D.C.; and a final meeting hosted by ETS in Princeton, N.J.

The NTOY Program is sponsored by Google for Education, Verizon, Pearson, Voya Financial, Educational Testing Service, and Education First, with in-kind support from TED-Ed, the College Football Playoff Foundation, and the Space Camp.
Tabatha Rosproy, the 2020 NTOY, is the first early childhood educator to be named National Teacher of the Year.

Though the program has existed for 69 years, there are 70 teachers of the year. Two NTOYs were named in 1957: Eugene Bizzell, a high school English teacher from Texas, and Mary Schwarz, a third grade teacher from Missouri.

Geraldine Jones, a first-grade teacher at Hope Public School in Santa Barbara, California, was named the first National Teacher of the Year in 1952. She made $3,350 a year, according to a profile in McCall's, which ran the program at the time.

California has produced the most National Teachers of the Year, with seven. Other states that have multiple NTOYs include Washington (five), Connecticut and Minnesota (four each), and Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon and Virginia (three each.)

Rosproy is the second NTOY from Kansas. Marjorie French, a math teacher from Topeka, was named NTOY in 1962.

Most NTOYs (40) taught at the high school level. National Teachers of the Year also taught at 16 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, two juvenile detention centers, one K-12 school, one junior/senior high and, as of 2020, one preschool housed in a retirement community.

National Teachers of the Year were most likely to teach or all subjects at the pre-K, elementary or middle school level (18 NTOYs). Other frequent subjects for teachers include social studies, including history, international relations and humanities (17 NTOYs); English (15 NTOYs); science (eight NTOYs); and math (four NTOYs.)