



Nomination Process

Join the Illinois State Board of Education in recognizing the incredible work happening in and around Illinois schools and celebrating the exemplary educators who go above and beyond to make positive impacts in their school communities.

Please see our eligibility guidelines for teachers and other educators.

Professional Categories

- **Teachers** - Teachers with five or more years of teaching experience (including the current school year)
- **Early Career Educators** - Teachers with less than five years of experience (including the current school year)
- **Administrators** - Superintendent, principal, assistant principal, etc.
- **Student Support Personnel** - School nurse, psychologist, social worker, school counselor, speech/language therapist, dean, librarian, instructional coaches, etc.
- **Educational Service Personnel** - Aides/paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, custodians, administrative assistants, support professionals, bus drivers, resource officers, etc.
- **Community Volunteers** - Parent teacher association members, school board members, or any individuals not employed by the school/district, who positively contribute time and energy to their school/district
- **Teams** - A group of individuals from any combination of the above categories that positively contributes time and energy to their school/district

Application Components

- **Candidate info**
- **Three scored categories**
 - Professional Biography and Resume
 - Letters of Recommendation
 - 1 letter from a colleague
 - 1 letter from a director supervisor
 - 1 letter from a student or family (only required for candidates applying for Teacher of the Year Cohort)
 - Essay Responses
 - 1 essay response from all applicants
 - 2 additional essay responses only for candidates applying for Teacher of the Year Cohort

Nominate an outstanding colleague today!

Nominations are accepted in both the fall and the spring for Those Who Excel (TWE) & Teacher of the Year (TOY); however, nominations must be submitted by **October 15** for consideration in the 2025 award cycle. Candidates **must be nominated** before being invited to apply for an award.

Nominations for the 2025 TWE & TOY are due by **October 15, 2024**. Qualified nominees will be sent the application materials, which must be submitted by **November 30, 2024**.

See all important dates and access the nomination form at isbe.net/TWETOY.

Award Categories

Illinois Teacher of the Year Cohort

Teachers selected for the 2025 Illinois Teacher of the Year Cohort are experienced educators and experts at the forefront of their field. They demonstrate a commitment to equity and to the success of all students. These teacher-leaders collaborate with colleagues, students, and families to create positive school cultures. They are lifelong learners who connect their classrooms to the community at large and who inspire other teachers within and beyond their schools. They have become integral members of their schools, districts, and the teaching profession and advocates for improving outcomes for students. The Regional and Specialized Teachers of the Year listed below are all part of the Illinois Teacher of the Year Cohort. **Among this cohort, those with five or more years of teaching experience qualify as finalists for Illinois Teacher of the Year.**

Regional Teachers of the Year

- Far North Suburbs Regional Teacher of the Year
- Cook County Regional Teachers of the Year (Minimum of 3)
- Far West Suburbs Regional Teacher of the Year
- Far South Suburbs Regional Regional Teacher of the Year
- East Central Regional Teacher of the Year
- Southern Regional Teacher of the Year
- Northwest Regional Teacher of the Year
- West Central Regional Teacher of the Year

Specialized Teachers of the Year

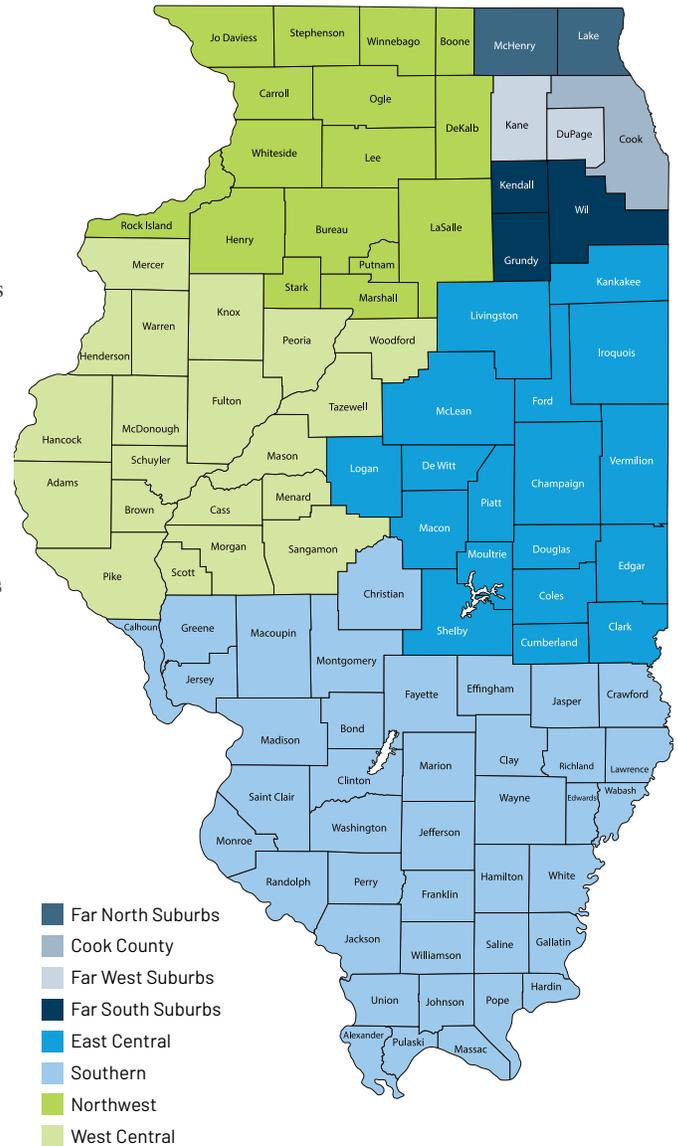
- Bilingual Teacher of the Year
- Special Education Teacher of the Year
- Early Childhood Teacher of the Year
- Outstanding Early Career Educator of the Year

Those Who Excel Awards

To receive the **Award of Excellence**, the most prestigious of the Those Who Excel honors, educators must have demonstrated a commitment to equity and to the success of all students. They regularly collaborate with colleagues, students, and families to create positive school cultures. They are lifelong learners who connect their schools to the community at large and who inspire other education professionals within and beyond their schools.

Educators presented with the **Award of Meritorious Service** have gone above and beyond in service to their school communities. They are experienced educators who take on leadership opportunities and whose accomplishments uplift the culture of learning in their school. They stand as exemplars of their profession and have become integral members of their schools and districts.

Educators who receive the **Award of Special Recognition** are valued members of their school community who have been recognized by their colleagues, students, families, and administrators for the skills, passions, and talents they bring to their school community.



Eligibility

Each section of the application -- biography and resume, letters of recommendation, essay response(s) -- is reviewed and evaluated for the following six key competencies. To qualify for Those Who Excel and Teacher of the Year awards, the candidate:

- Is an experienced educator and expert in their field.
- Is committed to equity and guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence.
- Collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success
- Deliberately connects the classroom and community to impact student growth and learning.
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning.
- Expresses themselves in an engaging and professional way.

In addition to the above requirements, the Teacher of the Year also:

- Is currently employed as a full-time classroom teacher in an Illinois school.
- Intends to remain employed in current role for the following two academic years.
- Has as a minimum of five years of teaching experience (including current year).
- Has not been named to Teacher of the Year Cohort in the last five years.
- Must be willing and able to fulfill the Illinois Teacher of the Year duties throughout the year-long, paid sabbatical.
- Has verification of school district consent to participate in the year-long sabbatical during the following school year.

Projected Timeline (Timeline is approximate and subject to change.)

- Nominations may be submitted year round, but should be submitted by **October 15, 2024** for consideration in 2025 award cycle.
- **September 9, 2024:** Informational Webinar
- **October 15, 2024:** Nominations due
- **November 1, 2024:** Applications sent out to qualified nominees
- **November 30, 2024:** Applications close
- **December 2024:** Applications reviewed and scored
- **Late February 2025:** All awardees announced
- **March 2025:** Teacher of the Year Cohort Reception and finalist interviews
- **March 2025:** Spring nomination period begins
- **April 2025:** Illinois Teacher of the Year announced
- **May 2025:** 51st Annual Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Banquet
- **July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026:** State-funded sabbatical for 2025 Teacher of the Year



Scan to nominate
an outstanding
Illinois educator!