Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year Program
2014-15 Information & Application Instructions

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:
The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has proudly served as the sponsoring organization of the Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year Program—an honors competition and awards luncheon that spotlights excellence in public education. The county program, the largest in the state, is part of the California and National Teacher of the Year programs.

Each year, LACOE presents an awards luncheon to recognize all district-level Teachers of the Year. During this luncheon, LACOE announces 16 teachers as the Los Angeles County titleholders, who will automatically qualify for the state competition, with a chance to participate in the nationals. LACOE encourages all Los Angeles County public school districts to participate. Program information, the application and complete instructions are available on the Teachers of the Year website at www.lacoe.edu/toy

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:
Eligibility for the California Teachers of the Year Program is limited to candidates who are successful as finalists in their local county competitions, have been teaching for at least eight years, and meet any of the following criteria:

- Fully credentialed teachers in public or private schools who teach any of pre-kindergarten through grade twelve
- Teachers of adults who provide instruction in the same curriculum as those who teach in elementary or secondary grades
- Instructors who have some administrative responsibilities but for whom teaching students is the primary responsibility
- Teachers who are available to fulfill ambassadorial duties during the year
- Teachers who have been in the classroom for more than eight years

Applicants to the county program may be selected as a California Teacher of the Year. Because of that possibility, all applicants should be prepared to fulfill the responsibilities of representing the teaching profession in a variety of settings and assisting their teaching colleagues in a variety of ways. Teachers selected as state winners may be called away from their classroom 30 or more instructional days during their title year.
TIMELINE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>March – May 2014</td>
<td>Districts organize their own district-level TOY programs.</td>
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<td>May 20, 2014</td>
<td>TOY Application Workshop at LACOE Office in Downey 9300 Imperial Hwy., Downey. Room EC 107. 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>✪ Monday, June 16, 2014 (before 5pm)</td>
<td>DEADLINE for all application materials from district TOY.</td>
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<td>July 9, 2014</td>
<td>Selection Committee #1 reviews written application materials.</td>
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<td>July 11, 2014</td>
<td>25 semifinalists are selected and notified of interview schedule.</td>
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<td>July 29 &amp; 30, 2014</td>
<td>Selection Committee #2 conducts interviews with semifinalists.</td>
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<td>August 22, 2014</td>
<td>Deadline for LACOE to submit the (16) TOY apps. to the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 19, 2014</td>
<td>District TOY Awards Luncheon and media announcement.</td>
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NOMINATION ALLOWANCES:
Each public school district may establish its own internal process for selecting one or more exemplary teachers to compete in the program. All school districts (except Long Beach and Los Angeles) are allowed 1 nominee. Long Beach Unified School District is allowed 3 nominees, and Los Angeles Unified School District is allowed 22 nominees.

AWARDS BANQUET:
All district-level Teachers of the Year are invited to attend the awards luncheon. The sixteen (16) winners of the Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year competition will be publicly announced at the luncheon. Family members, parents, students, former students, district representatives and news media will also be invited.

OPT OUT POLICY:
District Teachers of the Year who want to opt out of the county-level competition and still attend the awards luncheon may omit the essays but must still submit the 5-page application, the Personal Mini-Profile and their photograph.

STATE PROGRAM:
The LACOE Communications Department will make all arrangements to send the applications of the 16 county winners to the CDE by its deadline. Teachers selected as state winners may be called away from their classroom 30 or more instructional days.
APPLICANT’S SCHEDULE AND TIME CONSTRAINTS:

Provide the school’s regular Monday through Friday schedule as well as your own, including the time that you arrive, leave, and have lunch break. Indicate any days and/or times in October 2014 that school will not be in session and note any alternate schedule days such as minimum or planning days. This information is necessary to ensure the applicant’s availability in the classroom in the event of a site visit. Please note that if a teacher is unavailable for a site visit, consideration for Teacher of the Year is not possible.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

Each contestant must submit: a 4-page application form, a 1-page supplementary form, four (4) essays, an Introductory Letter, a Background & Experience letter, and provide one (1) photograph of himself or herself. After a review of the written applications, the judges will then select 25 semifinalists to proceed on to the interview phase of the competition. The 25 semifinalists will then need to complete an additional three (3) essays and bring them to the interview (see page 7 of this document for info.)

APPLICATION WORKSHOP:

LACOE conducts its annual application workshop to motivate applicants and guide them on how to best prepare the written materials and get ready for the semifinalist interviews. The workshop, which lasts one hour, is open to all district Teachers of the Year nominees. For more information, go to the TOY website at www.lacoe.edu/toy.

APPLICATION SEQUENCE AND PAGINATION:

Assemble the application package as follows:

- 2015 State TOY Application (4-page fill-in form located on www.lacoe.edu/toy) p. 1-4
  1. Attach a printed school schedule for October, 2014 not numbered
  2. Attach printed directions to your School not numbered
- Background Experience and Professional Development Activities p. 5-6*
- Introductory Letter from the Applicant to the Evaluation Committee p. 7-8*
- Essays: (1-4 only. Semifinalist will be contacted to complete 5-7.)
  1. Professional Biography p. 9-10
  2. Student Progress p. 11-12
  3. School-Community Involvement p. 13
  4. Philosophy of Teaching p. 14
- (3) Letters of Support not numbered
WRITTEN APPLICATION COMPONENTS:
One of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s areas of focus is on closing the achievement gap and meeting the needs of all students, including those who traditionally underperform. This overarching theme sets the tone for the application.

California Teachers of the Year are frequently called upon to deliver brief, inspirational messages and to address questions from the media, the public, and peers. It is important that our teacher representatives be able to provide answers that are succinct, yet thoughtful and inspirational in nature. Even though teachers may represent particular subject areas, teachers should show a broad, global view of educational practice.

The essence of this application is a set of essays in which the applicant describes his or her background experiences, professional development, and personal views about education. All candidates, as representatives of their county, are considered exemplary in the teaching field. However, application reviewers report that the best applications are those that inspire through specific and compelling examples; provide evidence of meeting all students’ needs; and convey a “passion” and commitment above and beyond that of most applications. Reviewers note that a "voice of authenticity” runs throughout the best applications.

BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
1-2 pages In List Form:
• Provide colleges attended, including postgraduate studies, and dates of attendance and degrees.
• List teaching history with time period, grade level, and subject area of each assignment.
• List professional memberships, including information regarding offices held and other relevant info.
• List staff development activities, mentorships and training of other teachers you have presented.
• List awards and other recognition of your teaching, including dates and exact involvement.
INTRODUCTORY LETTER — (1-2 pages)
This letter should present a powerful statement about the applicant and his or her commitment to continued achievement for all students. It should explain what it is like to be a student in your class. Relate an inspirational vignette that illustrates an important aspect of education. Paint a clear picture that helps the reader to envision a typical day. Include a brief example of an ideal real day and a brief example of how you turned a challenging moment into a teachable moment.

THE FOUR ESSAYS—(Note page limitations for each)
1.) Professional Biography (2 pages)
   Describe: Factors that influenced your becoming a teacher and your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education.

2.) Student Progress (2 pages)
   Describe: How you know your students are achieving. Include: Descriptions illustrating your use and understanding of data. Consider: Assessment methods used, what you do with information to improve instruction, how you assess and address the needs of students at-risk, and how you differentiate instruction to meet the variety of needs in your classroom.

3.) School-Community Involvement (1 page)
   Describe: Partnerships, such as involvement with colleagues and creating school-community partnerships, how you involve and utilize the community in your classroom, commitment to the community through service-oriented activities that enhance the home, school, and/or community connection. Include: How you establish local partnerships that strengthen family involvement in children’s education, community involvement beyond that which is considered basic school-related involvement, how you get your students involved in community service. Descriptions should not include personal family obligations.

4.) Philosophy of Teaching (1 page)
   Describe: Your personal views about teaching, including what aspects make you an outstanding teacher, the rewards you find in teaching, and how your views about teaching are demonstrated in your personal teaching style.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT
Include three letters of support from among the following: district superintendent, principal, administrator, student, parent, or community civic leader. All letters should extend the application by covering areas or examples not addressed elsewhere. Letters of support are limited to one page each.

PERSONAL MINI-PROFILE — (up to 150 words)
Include a brief description of the teacher, his/her class, subject(s) taught, and the school.

5X7 SELF PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPH
• 5” x 7” original print – not a photocopy or digital printout.
• Color glossy head shot of the teacher only. No group shots.
• Place the teacher’s name, school and district on the back of the photo.

APPLICATION FORMAT REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES:
When preparing the written components, the following guidelines must be adhered to or the candidate will be disqualified from the competition:
• Use Microsoft Word (not Word Perfect or any other word processing software) to complete all the written components. An electronic version will be required if you are chosen as a semifinalist.
• Print out all application materials on standard 8 ½ by 11 white paper.
• Print, using a 12-point Arial font (only)
• Set line spacing to double spaces between lines with a margin of ¾ inch on right, left, top, and bottom. Do not use compressed type.
• Address the essence of the essay questions, avoid repeating information. Insert a page break between each essay.
• Limit responses to the number of pages indicated.
• Insert the page number at the bottom center of each Page Footer. Start at page 5.
• Insert your name and school in the top right Page Header.
• Paper clip each application set. DO NOT STAPLE.
• Do not submit other materials such as: portfolios, press clippings, or videotapes.

Characteristics of the most outstanding applications:
• Puts the reader in the classroom and leaves the reader easily able to visualize the classroom setting and the teacher as the instructional leader, leaving the reader wanting to know more through ample classroom examples, which are provided.
• Conveys depth of content knowledge and how to deliver it creatively to engage students and influence student learning as reflected in their measurable achievements.
• Reflects the teacher’s personal journey and shows the teacher’s influence beyond the classroom and into their school community.
• Maintains a student-centered perspective as the applicant weaves in numerous examples of student engagement.
• Inspires through commitment as a lifelong learner who models dedication to continued learning.
• Focuses on building relationships that transform and empower students, parents, and community.
• Presents depth of content knowledge and how to differentiate instruction in ways that clearly results in student learning.
• Reflects the teacher’s dedication to the belief that all children can achieve.
MAILING INSTRUCTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION:
The applicant must provide one original application (printed single-sided) and an additional 5 copies (printed back-to-back). Mail the application materials to: Communications Department, 9300 Imperial Highway, Downey, CA 90242-2890, Attention: Susan Bishop. The entire application is due on or before Monday, June 16, 2014, 5:00 p.m. Absolutely no late applications will be accepted!

INTERVIEW PHASE APPLICATION PROCESS (Semifinalists Only):
The top 25 scorers will advance to the county’s semifinal round of interviews. A second LACOE Selection Committee will conduct the interviews. Semifinalists will be contacted to schedule their interview time.

Only the semifinalists must submit the final three essays. The essays must follow the same guidelines listed on page 6 of this document. The Semifinalist must bring an electronic version (Microsoft Word document) of the final three essays and all the previously written application components on the day of the interview.

SEMIFINALIST ESSAYS—(Note page limitations for each)

5.) Education Issues and Trends (1 page)
Describe: What you consider to be the two or three biggest issues in public education today. Address one issue in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions.

6.) The Teaching Profession (2 pages)
Describe: Why you would recommend that individuals enter the teaching profession, how you strengthen and improve the teaching profession, what is and/or what should be the basis for accountability in the teaching profession, and the ways in which you support the profession through teacher collaboration and mentoring.

7.) National Teacher of the Year (1 page)
If chosen as the National Teacher of the Year, you would serve as a representative and spokesperson for the nation’s teaching profession. What would be your message? What skills, values, knowledge, and ethics would you convey? What would be your platform? What positive message would you communicate to your profession in general and to the public?