



THE NEA FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

GUIDELINES FOR NEA STATE, FEDERAL AND DIRECT AFFILIATES

Nomination Deadline: March 13, 2026

- Purpose** The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize, reward, and promote both excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. The NEA Foundation (NEAF or the Foundation) and National Education Association (NEA) present the awards jointly.
- Benefits** All Awards for Teaching Excellence recipients receive expenses-paid travel to Washington, D.C. for The NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala; the 2027 gala will be held in February 2027.
- The five awardees selected nationwide for The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence receive \$10,000 in cash each plus expenses-paid travel to the Gala for themselves and one guest. The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence recipient, who is selected from the five Horace Mann awardees, receives \$25,000 in cash and a commemorative gift.
- Eligibility** All current members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit are eligible, including teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff. NEA state affiliates, the Federal Education Association, and direct affiliates may each submit **one** nomination per year. Only nominations submitted and endorsed by one of these affiliates will be considered. Should a nominee's NEA membership be discontinued between the date of their nomination and the Salute to Excellence in Education Gala, hosted by The NEA Foundation, the nomination must be rescinded. In that instance, however, the state affiliate, Federal Education Association, or direct affiliate will have the opportunity to submit a new nomination.
- The NEA Foundation (NEAF) – like NEA – does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. NEAF encourages NEA state leaders to consider awardees who reflect the diversity among NEA members and who teach in schools representing the diversity of the student population.
- Notification** The NEA Foundation will notify Horace Mann awardees and their affiliate presidents in Summer 2026. The public announcement of the recipients of the 2027 Awards for Teaching Excellence and the 2027 Horace Mann awardees will be made by the NEA Foundation in the Fall of 2026.

Selection**AFFILIATE LEVEL**

Each NEA affiliate determines its own best process for selecting its Awards for Teaching Excellence nominee and submits a single nominee's name and qualifications to the NEA Foundation, consistent with the criteria described below. A state affiliate cannot nominate the same educator more than once.

NATIONAL LEVEL

A national selection panel chooses the five recipients of the Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence from among the affiliate awardees. The President and CEO of The NEA Foundation and the NEA President appoint these panelists.

The Horace Mann nominees will interview with the national selection panel in August 2026 and based on these interviews, the NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence recipient will be chosen.

Announcement

The CTA Board of Directors will name the CTA nominee in its April 2026 Board of Directors meeting. CTA's nominee to NEA will be recognized at the June 2026 State Council of Education.

Information

The following guidelines describe the selection process for the CTA nominee. For further information, please contact the CTA Equity & Justice Department at ejd@cta.org.

CTA Deadline

Friday, March 13, 2026

Criteria

Nominations for the national awards are judged according to five criteria. Panelists rate state nominees on each criterion using the point value indicated below.

- 1) **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:** The nominee demonstrates expertise, creativity, and innovation in providing rich learning opportunities for students. The nominee uses a variety of strategies to effectively address students' different learning styles and needs. (15 points)
- 2) **ADVOCACY FOR THE PROFESSION:** The nominee is a current, active member of the local, state, and/or National Education Association, and has assumed leadership roles at one or more of these levels. The nominee is an active member of other professional organizations and engages in activities that advance the profession and public education. The nominee is a strong, effective spokesperson for students, educators, and the profession. (15 points)
- 3) **COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE:** The nominee works to provide a safe, supportive learning environment that meets the needs of all students, regardless of differences. The nominee recognizes and explicitly addresses the full array of values, cultures, and experiences represented in our diverse modern society, through interactions with students. (10 points)
- 4) **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The nominee actively engages families to support student learning and success. The nominee is intentional in engaging the community to enhance student learning and student success. (5 points)

- 5) **LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The nominee continually engages in experiences to improve his or her practice and to gain new skills and knowledge. The nominee shares this new learning with colleagues in effective ways. The nominee's participation in and commitment to professional development has a visible impact on his or her students, institution, and community. (5 points)

Contents of Nomination

Nomination packages must include all of the items listed below, in the specified order. Formatting instructions are noted for each section.

A) APPLICATION FORM

The application form requests contact information

Two pages.

for the state, federal, or direct affiliate; the nominee; and the nominee's local affiliate. The application form can be downloaded from CTA's website at cta.org/nea-foundation-awards.

B) NOMINATION LETTER

The nomination letter from the state, federal, or direct affiliate president explains why the nominee deserves the award.

Three pages maximum, double-spaced, 12-point or larger type. Must be on the Local Chapter affiliate letterhead and signed by the Local Chapter affiliate president.

C) RESUME

The resume provides a brief, factual overview of the nominee's career, including

Two pages maximum.

positions held, degrees attained, honors received, etc. The resume may also describe personal achievements or activities that are not noted elsewhere.

D) NOMINEE'S STATEMENT

The nominee's statement must be written by the nominee, as a first-person

Seven pages maximum, single-spaced, 12-point.

narrative. The statement should include specific examples to illustrate all five of the award criteria. The questions below do not need to be copied verbatim in the text. However, state nominees are strongly encouraged to include headings or keywords related to the criteria to aid the panelists in their reading.

1) PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

How have you grown as an educator throughout your career? Cite examples of ways you have developed your skills and/or adapted your practice over time. What strategies or methods do you use to support student learning and student success? Share a story about how your work has made a difference for a student or a group of students.

2) ADVOCACY FOR THE PROFESSION

How has your involvement in the National Education Association or NEA affiliate(s) contributed to your success as an educator? How would you persuade a new colleague to join or become more active in the association? In what other ways do you serve as an advocate for the profession and for public education? Please include examples and, if possible, links to videos of you speaking.

3) COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

How do you address issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in your interactions with students? What is the result of such efforts? How does your approach to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice affect your work? Please include examples.

4) FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How have you been intentional in engaging families and community members to support student learning and success? How do you build relationships with parents and community members? Please include examples.

5) LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What experiences or activities have been most beneficial to your professional knowledge, skills, and practice? How have you contributed to the professional development of your colleagues? How has your professional growth made a difference for your students, school, and community? Please include examples.

E) ENDORSEMENT LETTERS

Letters of endorsement are written by the nominee's local affiliate president, colleagues, current or former students,

Up to three letters, two pages maximum each, double-spaced preferred. Letters must be submitted with all other materials.

parents, or community members. Letters should be signed, and the salutation should address the NEA Foundation's national selection panel.

F) DIGITAL PHOTO & PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Please email your JPEG photo (at least 72 pixels per inch and 400KB) to the CTA Equity & Justice Department at ejd@cta.org when you mail your nomination packet. Use attached Photo Release Form.

Deadline: March 13, 2026

CTA NOMINATION PACKET CHECKLIST:

A) APPLICATION FORM	2 pages
B) NOMINATION LETTER	3 pages maximum
C) RESUME	2 pages maximum
D) NOMINEE'S STATEMENT	7 pages maximum
E) LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT	6 pages maximum (3 letters, 2 pages each)
F) DIGITAL PHOTO & PHOTO RELEASE FORM (ATTACHED)	1 page maximum

Submission

- 1) Do **not** staple or permanently bind the materials. Paper clips are acceptable.
- 2) Do **not** use covers or other decorative packaging.
- 3) Include **only** the materials requested in these guidelines.
- 4) Mail one complete nomination packet (**Deadline is March 13, 2026**) to:
California Teachers Association
Attn: CTA Equity & Justice Department
P.O. Box 921
Burlingame, CA 94011-0921

Submissions by fax or e-mail are not permitted.

Questions? Email the CTA Equity & Justice Department at ejd@cta.org.



PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

1) The above named person consents to the unlimited use by the California Teachers Association, NEA Foundation and/or the National Education Association (NEA) of his/her image in any form, including but not limited to, digital media, film, audio recording, or still photography, in connection with any Foundation and/or CTA and/or NEA publicity or communications effort. These efforts may include, among other things, publications, videos, and websites.

2) The above-named person agrees that the California Teachers Association, NEA Foundation and/or NEA may have unlimited use of any program information or text from communications that they submit to either of them, in connection with any Foundation and/or CTA or NEA publicity or communications efforts, as described above.

3) The California Teachers Association, NEA Foundation and/or NEA shall be under no obligation to use the above-mentioned person in any way.

4) The above-named person further agrees that the California Teachers Association, NEA Foundation nor the NEA will compensate them financially or otherwise for the consents granted above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

1/14/2026