

Award nomination information and application preview

Since 1997, the National Center for Families Learning and Toyota North America (Toyota) have partnered to recognize educators who are making a difference in the lives of families. Now in its 30th year, the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year Award honors extraordinary educators who use a strong multigenerational approach to learning and focus on building effective family-school partnerships that support student learning outcomes and school improvement. NCFL and Toyota seek nominations from across the United States in order to amplify unsung heroes in our communities and their efforts to help families succeed and thrive.

The educator selected as the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year will receive a \$20,000 grant to further ongoing family learning efforts. One runner-up will receive \$5,000. The winner and runner-up will be recognized in San Antonio, Texas on November 10th during the 2026 Families Learning Conference, NCFL's annual convening of educators, practitioners, researchers, and community-based organizations from across the nation.

Who can nominate:

- Students or participants, parents of students, school leaders, colleagues, and community members are encouraged to nominate an educator who should be recognized for their service and impact.
 - Relatives of nominees are not eligible to nominate.
- Nominators should know the nominee's work well and have a thorough knowledge of the nominee's strengths, approaches, and positive impact on behalf of children and families.
- Parents wishing to nominate their student's teacher (and students wishing to nominate their teachers) are strongly encouraged to partner with a school administrator to complete the nomination form.

Nomination process:

Nominations will be accepted in two phases. During the first phase, anyone can nominate a family educator. The selection committee will review nominations on a rolling basis, and select nominators to complete a more thorough application as well as submit a letter of support from the nominee's supervisor or school/organization leader.

- **February 18 through March 18** – Open call for nominations
- **February 25 through April 30** – Nominators invited to complete expanded application
- **June** – Finalists interview with selection committee
- **July** – Non-finalists notified of status
- **November** – Winner and runner-up recognized at the 2026 Families Learning Conference

Nomination requirements:

- Nominations should include compelling evidence and concrete examples of how the nominee engages families in the learning process.
- Phase 2 applications must include letters of support from the nominee's school principal or organization executive director (unless the nominator is the nominee's principal or executive director) AND a parent/student.
- Schools or organization-based programs may nominate up to two family educators using separate nomination forms.
- Self-nominations and nominations from relatives of the nominee will be disqualified.
- Incomplete nominations or late submissions will not be accepted.

Nominees must meet the following criteria:

- Work in the United States for a school- or community-based program that engages families in learning.
- 75% of nominee's work is in the classroom or teaching environment.
- Demonstrate a record of success engaging families in learning. Examples of successful efforts include, but are not limited to:
 - creating opportunities for families, schools, and communities to build their capacity for home-to-school partnerships;
 - targeting the needs voiced by families and those of the communities in which they live;
 - using evidence-based family engagement practices that show promise;
 - focusing on children's academics, oral language or vocabulary development, adults' learning goals, and/or reading and literacy development;
- Have a passion and persistence for supporting the engagement of parents.
- Work alongside parents and children using a strong multigenerational approach to help them learn together in innovative ways.
- Implement innovative ideas for expanding their program to benefit families and/or to engage more families.
- Serve communities and families with high literacy needs and socioeconomic needs.

Award requirements:

- Winning educators will be asked to participate in NCFL's outreach activities to promote their practices and programs, including:
 - Participation in the 2026 Families Learning Conference in San Antonio, Texas from November 8-11. (Travel, lodging, and registration expenses will be covered by NCFL)
 - Participation in a Teacher of the Year webinar in the spring of 2027.
 - Participation in other outreach-related activities such as blog posts, social media, etc.
- Award funds must be used on a family engagement project during the 2027 calendar year.

- Award winners will commit to sharing project and family stories with NCFL on an ongoing basis, to be used for communications throughout the year—including NCFL social media platforms.
- Award winners will commit to sharing with NCFL any intellectual property (including lesson plans, handbooks, posters, etc., where applicable) created using grant funds.
- Award winners will commit to sharing an end-of-year report with NCFL outlining the project.

This document is for reference only and will not be accepted as an application. Official nominations must be submitted via the [online form in English or Spanish*](#). Incomplete entries can be saved and returned to at another time. All required sections must be completed before submitting nominations.

Nomination deadlines:

- Phase 1 nominations must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. PDT on Wednesday, March 18, 2026.**
- Phase 2 nominations must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. PDT on Thursday, April 30, 2026.**

For assistance or questions, please contact Sara Ulliman at sulliman@familieslearning.org.

**This application can be translated into additional languages by emailing Sara Ulliman at sulliman@familieslearning.org. Translation requests will be completed within 3-4 business days.*

Application definitions:

- **Nominator** – Person completing application
- **Nominee** – Person being nominated
- **Best practices** – Methods or techniques that have been shown by research and experience to work better than other methods over time
- **Literacy rate** – The percentage of the population of a given age group that can read and write
- **Multigenerational approach** – Engaging parents and children in learning
- **Parent** – A person caring for a child, including someone who may not be a parent or guardian. NCFL uses this term to reflect a variety of families.
- **Socioeconomic status** – A combination of factors that describe families' access to opportunities. Factors include income and overall financial security, education, and resources.

Application preview begins on the next page.

Nominator's Information

Please complete the following information. The selection committee will review nominations on a rolling basis, and select nominators to complete a more thorough application as well as submit a letter of support from the nominee's supervisor or school/organization leader.

** Required information*

Nominator's first name *

Nominator's last name *

Relationship to nominee *

Nominator's email address *

Nominator's primary phone number *

Are you nominating yourself for this award?* Yes / No

Please note that self-nominations are not eligible and answering "yes" to this question will disqualify your nomination. Please partner with a colleague, school leader, student, or parent of a student to complete the nomination form.

Is the nominee your family member?* Yes / No

Please note that nominations by family members are not eligible and answering "yes" to this question will disqualify your nomination. Please partner with the nominee's colleague, school leader, student, or parent of a student to complete the nomination form.

Nominee's Information

Nominee's first name *

Nominee's last name *

Nominee's title *

Nominee's email address *

Nominee's Organization Information

Please enter information for the organization or school that will host the funded program.

Organization or school name to receive funding *

Street address *

City *

State *

Zip *

Phone number *

Ages/grade levels served *

First Phase Nomination Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to share why your nominee should be considered for the 2026 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year award. Please support your answers with evidence and examples (i.e., anecdotes, observations, results).

Each question has a limit of 1000 characters.

1. What are some examples of how your nominee has impacted their students and families? Describe how the nominee demonstrates a record of success in engaging families in learning.*
2. How does the nominee demonstrate a passion and persistence for supporting the engagement of parents?*

Second Phase Nomination Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to give a better understanding of your nominee and the work they have done with families in the community/school they serve. Please support your answers with evidence and examples (i.e., anecdotes, observations, results).

Each question has a limit of 1000 characters.

1. Nominee's number of years engaging families as a school or community educator *
2. How does the nominee support parents and children through innovative strategies and the use of a strong multigenerational approach?*
3. How does the nominee implement innovative ideas for expanding their program to benefit families and/or to engage more families?*
4. Describe the communities and families the nominee supports in terms of literacy rates and socioeconomic status.*

Note: If you do not have statistics for reference, an anecdotal description of the type of funding, resources, and opportunities available to the school/community can be provided.

5. Give examples of how the nominee successfully communicates best practices and partners with other organizations.*
6. Use the space below to share additional information and examples about the nominee and their work.

Letter of support from the nominee's school principal or organization executive director.*
Allowable file types: .doc, .docx, .pdf, and .txt

Letter of support from a student or parent of a student in the nominee's classroom.* Allowable file types: .doc, .docx, .pdf, and .txt

Add additional files, up to three, if needed. Photos and other forms of media are supported.
If a media file exceeds 50MB in size, please provide a link to the media instead, such as YouTube, Vimeo, Prezi, etc., here.

We would like to learn more about the other types of programming offered at the site/organization where the nominee engages with learners.

Does the nominee's site/organization offer: (check all that apply)

- Four-component family literacy programming (adult education, early childhood education, parent education, and interactive parent-child activities)
- Family leadership programming (designed to support parents and caregivers with knowledge and skills by providing tools and learning opportunities to become engaged advocates for themselves, their children, their families, and communities)

Application Confirmation and Nominee Requirements:

If selected as a finalist, the nominee will be required to interview virtually with the NCFL Teacher of the Year selection committee. During this meeting, nominees will review the following requirements, to be fulfilled by the winner:

- Implement and sustain a family learning project for the 2027 calendar year;
- Share the activities and story of the funded project with NCFL, particularly through requested communications;
- Share with NCFL any intellectual property (including lesson plans, handbooks, posters, etc., where applicable) created using grant funds;
- Participate in NCFL's extensive outreach activities to promote family engagement practices and programs, including:
 - Participation in the 2026 Families Learning Conference that will be held in San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 8-11, 2026.
 - Participation in a Teacher of the Year webinar in the spring of 2027.

Confirm submission with your initials *