

# CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE

# 2026



# AWARDS BANQUET GUIDELINES

# ROLE OF THE INSTITUTE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

The Charter Institute at Erskine will select two Teachers of the Year: one from a brick and mortar school and one from a virtual school. Teachers of the Year serve as ambassadors for the Institute as well as all schools and students within the Institute. The Teachers of the Year will serve for one school year and are leaders and role models for all Institute teachers.

- The Charter Institute at Erskine (Institute) Teachers of the Year (TOY) are classroom teachers in a public pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary, middle, or secondary school with a professional certificate. This includes all subject area teachers, vocational teachers, school librarians, school counselors, curriculum resource teachers, teacher specialists, speech-language pathologists, and lead teachers who are planning to continue in an active teaching status. Active teaching status means that the teacher is planning to continue teaching (e.g. not retiring or moving into an administrative position the following year).
- The TOYS are continuing-contract teachers and have direct contact with students a minimum of three hours a day, on average, and must hold a valid South Carolina teaching certificate.
  - Schools may nominate uncertified TOYs with the understanding that they will not be selected as Institute Teacher of the Year. TOYs who are not willing to compete at the state level for Institute recognition may be nominated with the understanding that they may not be selected as Institute Teacher of the Year.
- The TOYS collaborate with colleagues, students, and families to create a culture of innovation and excellence.
- The TOYS may work with the Institute throughout the year on special projects or professional development to promote and develop great teachers and the charter schools they serve.
- The TOYS will attend the CERRA State Teacher of the Year Forum Conference.
- The TOYS agrees to complete the State TOY application process as the Institute's TOY and may consult previous TOYs for input and suggestions for their application.
- The TOYs will be invited to be part of the Institute Leaders Cohort.
- The TOYS will serve as a judge for the next year's Institute TOYS and present the award to the new TOYS.

***Ms. Mary Elizabeth Farmer of American Leadership Academy Lexington is named the 2024-2025 Teacher of the Year.***



# TEACHERS OF THE YEAR SELECTION PROCESS

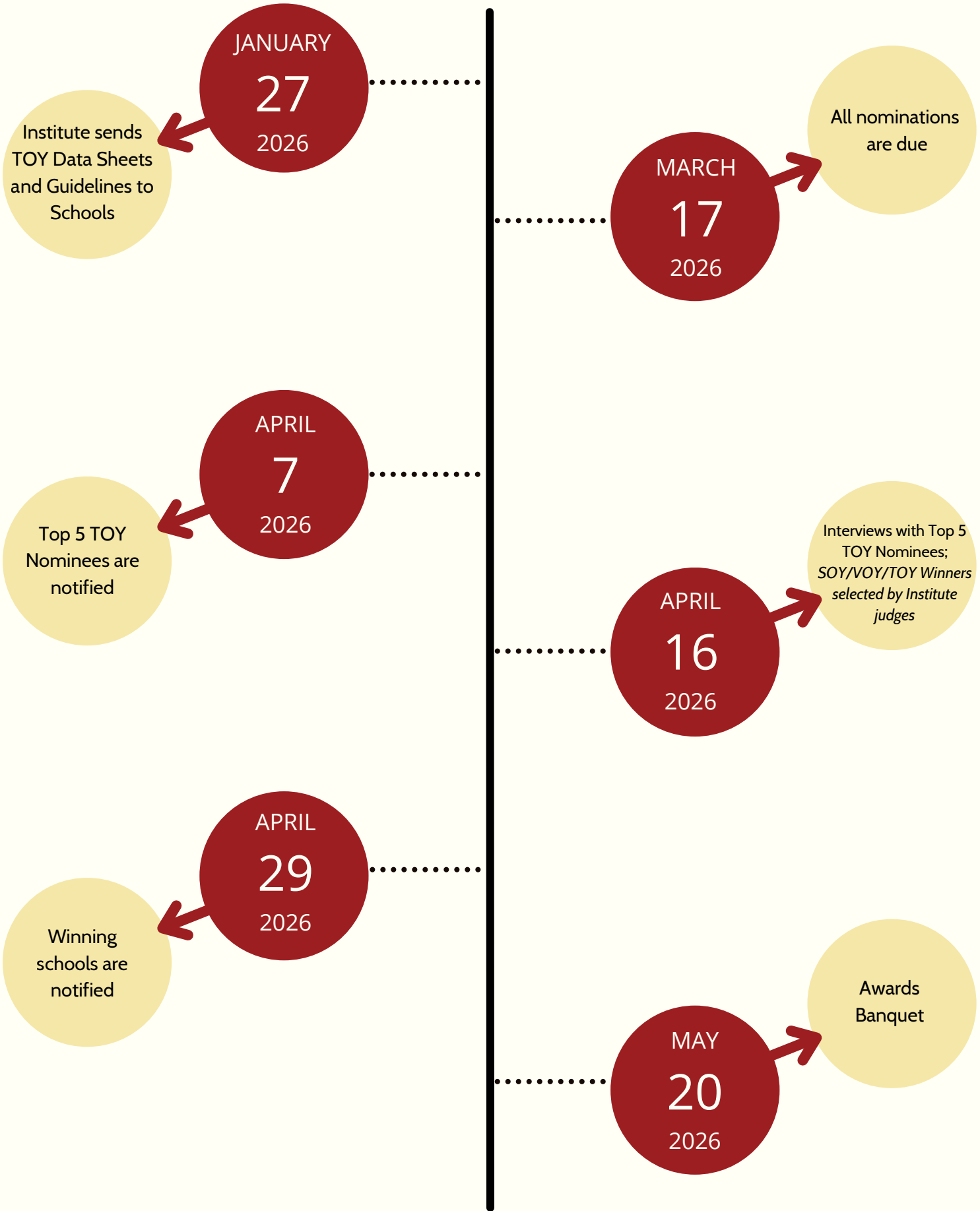
- Notices are sent to schools early each calendar year regarding the Teachers of the Year application timeline.
- The schools submit their TOY data sheets and the teachers' completed portfolios in mid-March. Schools with more than one grade span may submit one teacher in each category: Elementary, Middle, and High.
- All identifying information is redacted from the portfolios and each portfolio is assigned a number to maintain confidentiality and avoid partiality.
- The portfolios are then distributed to judges along with score sheets.
- The judges have approximately a week to review the portfolios and submit the score sheets.
- The top five teachers with the highest scores will be notified and must then participate in a face-to-face interview with the judges.
- Each of the top five teachers will be asked the same questions during their interview.
- The judges will score the interviews, privately discuss the interviews, and select the winners.
- The winners will be announced at the Awards Banquet and will serve as the Institute TOYs for the following school year. A virtual teacher and a brick and mortar teacher will both be selected to represent the Institute as Teachers of the Year.

*See the next page for this year's timeline.*



***Ms. Sharmaine Roaden of Cyber Academy of South Carolina is named the 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year.***

# INSTITUTE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR PROCESS TIMELINE



# TEACHERS OF THE YEAR INTERVIEW FORMAT

- The top five finalists, along with their school leaders, will be notified and an interview schedule will be sent to them.
- Each of the five teachers will come to the Institute office to be interviewed by a panel of judges.
- Each one will have a specific amount of time for the interview, where they will introduce themselves and give an overview of their educational philosophy and perspectives.
- The judges will ask each finalist the same questions and give a score for each one.
- After all interviews are held, the judges' scores will be tallied and two Institute Teachers of the Year chosen.
- These teachers will serve as the Institute Teachers of the Year during the following school year.
- The Institute Teachers of the Year will be a secret until the Awards Banquet.

[Click here to view the State TOY information](#) or scan the QR code.



Contact Katie Graybill at [kgraybill@erskinecharters.org](mailto:kgraybill@erskinecharters.org) or (803) 830-0719.

***Ms. Megan Patterson of Belton Preparatory Academy is named the 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year.***



## STUDENT OF THE YEAR

The Institute Student of the Year is selected by the same panel of judges who select the Teachers of the Year and the Volunteer of the Year. The Student of the Year is a student who has demonstrated leadership, achieved academic excellence, or overcome great obstacles. Schools may nominate one SOY per school level (one per elementary school, middle school, and high school,).

*Consider the following when submitting your nomination.*

- *What qualities make this student stand out from the rest of his/her peers?*
- *How has the student taken a negative circumstance and turned it into something positive?*
- *How has this student taken advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by a charter school?*
- *How is this student leaving his/her mark on your school?*



***Lilly Oliver,  
2024-2025 Elementary School Student of the Year***

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

The Institute Volunteer of the Year is selected by the same panel of judges who select the Teachers of the Year and the Students of the Year. The Volunteer of the Year is a parent, community member, or someone otherwise associated with your school who has generously devoted their time and resources to bettering charter schools in South Carolina.

*Consider the following when submitting your nomination.*

- *How has this volunteer made the school community a better place?*
- *What impact has his/her time and resources have on your school?*
- *What makes this person a role model to your school's students?*



***Chelsea Blakeley,  
2024-2025 Volunteer of the Year***

# AWARDS BANQUET CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

Nominate a Teacher of the Year for each category (if applicable).

Elementary School

Middle School

High School



*Remember that Teacher of the Year nominees must complete their own applications including a headshot, biography, narrative, and letters of support. Full requirements are listed on the application.*

Nominate a Student of the Year for each category (if applicable).

Elementary School

Middle School

High School

Nominate a Volunteer of the Year.

Notify your teacher(s), student(s), and volunteer that they've been nominated. Consider making it a celebration!

Share the link to register with your team and your school's nominees and register by May 1.

Keep an eye out for an email from the Institute about registration, nomination status, etc.

Attend the Awards Banquet on May 20!

MARCH

17

2026

SOY/VOY/TOY  
Winners  
selected by  
Institute judges

APRIL

16

2026

Awards  
Banquet

All nominations are  
due

Schools with  
winning  
SOY/VOY/TOY are  
notified

APRIL

7

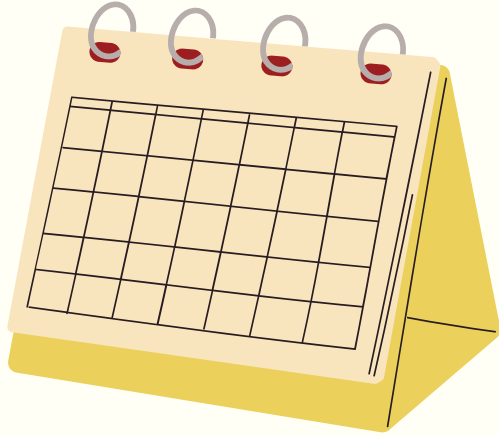
2026

MAY

20

2026

# 2026 AWARDS BANQUET INFORMATION



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Evening

Columbia, SC

[CLICK HERE TO NOMINATE STUDENTS, TEACHERS,  
AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR](#)

Nominations Due by March 17

[https://erskinecharters.formstack.com/forms/institute\\_awards\\_banquet\\_nominations\\_2026](https://erskinecharters.formstack.com/forms/institute_awards_banquet_nominations_2026)

## CONTACT

**KATIE GRAYBILL**

Assistant Director of Communications

[kgraybill@erskinecharters.org](mailto:kgraybill@erskinecharters.org)

(803) 830-0719

**ASHLEY EPPERSON**

Deputy Chief of Staff

[aeperson@erskinecharters.org](mailto:aeperson@erskinecharters.org)

(803) 995-0527

# STATE TOY SELECTION PROCESS

The South Carolina guidelines and eligibility requirements closely mirror those of the Institute. The application and selection process, however, is very different and more stringent. While two teachers will be recognized as Institute Teachers of the Year, only one will advance to compete in the South Carolina Teacher of the Year application and selection process. Institute leadership will work collaboratively with the selected teachers to determine which individual will represent the Institute at the state level and will provide guidance and support throughout the process. Below are the application and selection process for the State Teacher of the Year.

The South Carolina Teacher of the Year application process mirrors that of the National Teacher of the Year. The SCDE provides application guidelines that districts must be used when submitting a nominee to the state program.

## Steps in the Application Process

- By mid-October, districts submit the name of their District Teacher of the Year (DTOY) to the state's program coordinator.
- The State Teacher of the Year (STOY) application is shared with all DTOY and district coordinators for preparation purposes ahead of submission. Submissions are accepted from mid-November to early January.
- The selection process begins. The selection of the STOY is the combined responsibility of three groups: the Screening Committee, the Finalists Committee, and the Selection Committee.
- The STOY and the four Honor Roll teachers are selected.
- The STOY, Honor Roll teachers, and all DTOY are honored at a celebratory event in Columbia in the spring. Pursuant to Section 59-26-90 of the SC Code of Laws, the STOY receives a \$25,000 award, each Honor Roll teacher receives \$10,000, and all other DTOY receive a \$1,000 award. Each honoree also receives citations and appropriate commendations from the State Superintendent of Education and State Board of Education.
- The State Superintendent of Education enters the name of the STOY in the National Program in the fall. The Teacher of the Year coordinator facilitates the STOY application to the national title and organizes the STOY participation in all the national events.

## Phase One: The Initial Screening

The Screening Committee is composed of four sets of judges, and each group includes teachers, administrators, higher education representatives, SC business representatives, community leaders and SCDE staff members. Each set of judges reviews and scores up to twenty-one applications.

Applications are identified only by numbers; all references to the applicant's name, gender, ethnicity, and school district are redacted - to the extent that all meaning is preserved - prior to distribution to the judges. Each applicant may earn a 100-point maximum using the point system described below. After totals from all judges in each set are tallied, the Teacher of the Year coordinator will send copies of the twenty-five highest scoring applications to members of the Finalists Committee.

# STATE TOY SELECTION PROCESS

## Phase Two: Finalists Selection

The Finalists Committee is composed of at least five judges from the following or related categories:

- Former State Teacher of the Year – who served at least four years prior to date of judging
- School or district leader representative
- Civic representative
- Business representative
- State Board of Education Member

Using the same scoring system employed in Phase One, members of the Finalists Committee review and rate each application to select the five finalists for STOY. Applications are identified only by numbers; all references to the applicant's name, gender, ethnicity, and school district are redacted - to the extent that all meaning is preserved - prior to distribution to the judges. When totals are tallied, the State Superintendent of Education notifies the five candidates with the highest scores of their selection as finalists.

## Application Point System

- Content Lesson or Unit (20 points)
- School Culture (20 points)
- Community Involvement (20 points)
- Public Education Issue (20 points)
- State Teacher of the Year (20 points)

In the case of a tie between candidates, tiebreaker categories (in order of importance) are 1. Content Lesson or Unit, 2. School Culture, and 3. Public Education Issue.

## Phase Three: Classroom Videotaping & Interview Day

The Selection Committee is composed of at least seven judges from the following or related categories:

- Former State Teacher of the Year – who served at least four years prior to date of judging
- Former Honor Roll teacher – who served at least four years prior to date of judging
- College Student/Pre-Service Teacher Representative
- School or district leader representative
- Civic representative
- Business representative
- Higher education representative

The five finalists participate in a two-step process as part of the final phase of the selection process: a videotaping session in each of their classrooms by the SCDE Office of Communications and an interview conducted by the members of the Selection Committee.

The SCDE contacts the finalists to arrange a classroom video recording session. Each teacher selects an unedited and uninterrupted five-minute classroom segment (additional segments are recorded and played during the celebration event), which is shown to the Selection Committee members to be scored.

# CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE

# 2026



Ms. Anne Brown  
2018-2019  
Royal Live Oaks Academy



Ms. Julie Phillips  
2019-2020  
South Carolina Virtual Charter School



Ms. Katie Bell  
2020-2021  
Lowcountry Leadership Charter School



Ms. Laura Ferguson  
2021-2022  
South Carolina Connections Academy



Ms. Megan Patterson  
2022-2023  
Belton Preparatory Academy



Ms. Sharmaine Roaden  
2023-2024  
Cyber Academy of South Carolina



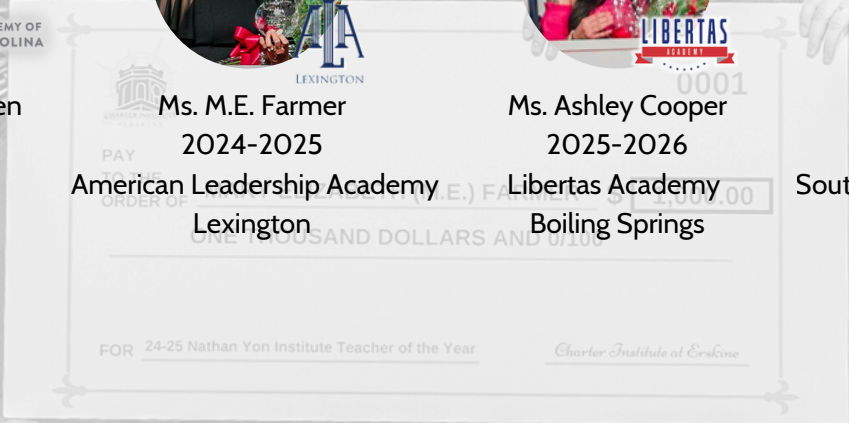
Ms. M.E. Farmer  
2024-2025  
American Leadership Academy Lexington



Ms. Ashley Cooper  
2025-2026  
Libertas Academy Boiling Springs



Ms. Aimee Connell  
2025-2026  
South Carolina Virtual Charter School



# TEACHER OF THE YEAR HALL OF FAME