

National History Day Celebrates 78 Teacher Nominees for the 2026 NHD Teacher of the Year Award

COLLEGE PARK, MD – May 11, 2026 – National History Day® (NHD) is proud to announce the teachers honored as the 2026 National History Day Teacher of the Year Award nominees. Teachers from all [NHD affiliates](#) could self-nominate or be nominated by community members for the award, which honors one teacher in the junior division and one in the senior division. NHD staff worked with local programs to select up to one middle school teacher and one high school teacher to represent each affiliate for this prestigious award. In addition to celebrating outstanding history scholarship and innovative classroom instruction, the 2026 Teachers of the Year will each receive a \$5,000 cash prize.

Each nominee for the National History Day Teacher of the Year Award is a teacher who demonstrates a commitment to engaging students in historical learning through the innovative use of primary sources, implementation of active learning strategies to foster historical thinking skills, and participation in the National History Day Contest. 78 educators are up for the award this year.

“Teachers play a fundamental, and often undervalued, role in guiding the next generation of civic-minded leaders and change-makers,” said National History Day Executive Director, Dr. Cathy Gorn. “We are excited to celebrate the accomplishments of these 78 outstanding educators and their impact on students, their local communities, and history education.”

One national winner in the junior division and one in the senior division will be selected by a committee of experienced teachers and historians and announced on Thursday, June 18, 2026, at the National History Day National Contest Awards Ceremony in College Park, Maryland. The Awards Ceremony will begin around 9 a.m. and will be livestreamed at nhd.org/awards-ceremony.

Congratulations to this year’s National History Day Teacher of the Year Award nominees:

Affiliate	Teacher	Division
Alabama	Mrs. Blakeney Lewis	Junior
	Mrs. Alana Barrett	Senior
Arizona	Mrs. Donna Gustafson	Junior
	Mr. Jeron Velasco	Senior
Arkansas	Ms. Jean Hill	Junior
	Mrs. Kylie Crosskno	Senior

California	Mrs. Lisabet Nepf	Junior
Colorado	Mrs. Lindsey Gomez	Junior
	Mr. Michael Storer	Senior
Connecticut	Ms. Nancy Barlow	Junior
	Mrs. Chelsea Schonvisky	Senior
Delaware	Mr. Brent Freccia	Senior
Florida	Ms. Emily Funston	Junior
	Ms. Natalie Smith Williams	Senior
Georgia	Dr. Katherine Johnson	Junior
	Dr. Yi'Sheika Lawrence	Senior
Guam	Mrs. Valerie Tanayan	Junior
	Ms. Joanna Payumo	Senior
Hawai'i	Mr. Jaimy Valerio	Junior
	Ms. Janyce Omura	Senior
Idaho	Mr. Tyler Schwarzbach	Junior
	Ms. Calista Houdek	Senior
Illinois	Mr. Eric Haak	Junior
Indiana	Mr. Lawney Francis II	Junior
Iowa	Ms. Ann Jackson	Junior
Kansas	Ms. Jasmine Puderbaugh	Junior
Kentucky	Mrs. Tracy Saylor	Junior
Louisiana	Ms. Katelyn Muro	Junior
Maryland	Mrs. Amie Dryer	Senior
Massachusetts	Ms. Kierstyn Bohl	Junior
	Mr. Mike Lee	Senior
Michigan	Mrs. Shana Ransford	Junior
	Mr. Brett Sidle	Senior
Minnesota	Mrs. Zoe Kourajian	Junior
	Ms. Courtney Major	Senior

Mississippi	Mr. Craig Wood	Senior
Missouri	Mrs. Kelly Patterson	Junior
	Mr. Mack Williams	Senior
Montana	Ms. Jacqueline Marshall	Junior
	Mrs. Taylor Olsen	Senior
Nebraska	Mrs. Amy Diegel	Junior
	Mr. Noa Craft	Senior
Nevada	Mrs. Kelly Smith-Nott	Junior
	Ms. Jessica Eichstedt	Senior
New Hampshire	Mrs. Valerie Custeau	Junior
	Mr. Christopher Quirke	Senior
New Jersey	Mrs. Christy Marrella	Junior
	Ms. Tracey Prince	Senior
New Mexico	Mrs. Wendy Dove	Junior
	Mr. Lee Wilson	Senior
New York	Ms. Kristen Waterman	Junior
	Mr. Jonathan Kyriacou	Senior
NHD China	Mr. Oleksiy Luchyk	Senior
NHD Korea	Mr. Steven Hanson	Junior
	Ms. Savannah Bamburg	Senior
North Carolina	Ms. Michelle Rutledge	Junior
	Mr. Wesley Young	Senior
North Dakota	Mr. Zach Hochhalter	Senior
Ohio	Ms. Allison Edler	Junior
	Mr. Kenneth Clark	Senior
Oklahoma	Mrs. Carrie Walker	Junior
Pennsylvania	Dr. Brad Testa	Junior
	Mr. Josh Elders	Senior
Rhode Island	Mrs. Mary Meehan	Junior

	Mr. Chris Stanley	Senior
South Carolina	Mr. Cameron Lentz	Junior
Tennessee	Mrs. Nicole Whitecotton	Junior
Texas	Ms. Jeanaline Celis	Junior
	Mr. Rhett Carter	Senior
Utah	Mrs. Julia Winslow	Junior
	Mr. Taylor Brooks	Senior
Virginia	Mrs. Erica Harris	Senior
Washington	Mr. John Buchinger	Junior
	Ms. Sabrina Shaw	Senior
Washington, D.C.	Mr. Andrew Grover	Senior
Wisconsin	Ms. Krystal Klemme	Junior
	Ms. Kari Nuskiewicz	Senior
Wyoming	Mrs. Michelle Stebner	Junior

About National History Day (NHD)

NHD is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, that seeks to improve the teaching and learning of history. Established in 1974, NHD currently engages more than half a million students each year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest and supports teachers through professional development opportunities. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the annual National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD is sponsored in part by the Joyful Noise Charitable Foundation, The Better Angels Society, Bezos Family Foundation, Library of Congress, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Behring Global Educational Foundation, and the National Park Service. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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