

2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year

Program Nomination Guidelines



Sponsored by
Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Teaching and Leading
Administrator and Teacher of the Year Program
P.O. Box 771 - Jackson, MS 39205-0771
Phone: 601-359-3513
Website: www.mdek12.org/OTL/OTC/recognition



Administrator of the Year Program Overview

The Mississippi Administrator of the Year Program (MAOY) recognizes outstanding administrators who have succeeded in leading high-quality learning opportunities for students as well as demonstrating exemplary contributions to the profession. It is the vision of the MAOY program to elevate student success and strengthen the teaching profession by honoring, promoting excellence, and celebrating effective leaders who guide their school towards better teaching and learning.

Eligibility and Criteria

The 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year candidate must:

- Be a full-time certified K-12 administrator employed in a state-accredited Mississippi public school as a building elementary or secondary principal, assistant principal, career and technical education director or alternative school director
- Candidate must notify Mississippi Department of Education of any changes in his or her status as an administrator. Failure to notify MDE of any changes, the candidate will be ineligible to serve as a finalist and/or state administrator
- Have a minimum of three (3) years of experience as an administrator, and
- Have plans to continue in an active administrator status at the building-level the following year.

The Mississippi Administrator of the Year candidate should have superior ability in:

- Shaping the vision of academic success and showing exceptional gains in student learning
- Motivating and cultivating leadership in teachers and all members of the school
- Implementing innovative programs
- Creating a positive school culture
- Possess leadership capabilities and,
- Positively impacts the community through the school

Role of the State Administrator of the Year

The 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year (MAOY) represents all the outstanding leaders and administrators in Mississippi. The MAOY serves as an ambassador for the teaching and leading profession, as well as a spokesperson for leaders and administrators. The following are examples of opportunities available to MAOY:

- Chair committees and focus groups to support teaching and learning
- Assist in the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders in the profession; and
- Present his/her area of expertise or platform at workshops, conferences, and professional development sessions.

Awards and Rewards

The 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year Program provides the following awards and rewards:

- A one-time \$5,000.00 salary supplement from MDE
- Formal statewide recognition ceremony sponsored by MDE
- Tuition waiver from William Carey University for an advanced education degree (specialist or doctoral degree)
- Paid travel expenses (contingent upon the availability of funds) for the duration of MAOY service year(s)
- Opportunities to speak at various conferences, conduct professional development sessions, and serve on various educational and leadership committees
- Serve as a lifelong alumnus with past MAOY recipients
- Serve on the state Administrator of the Year Selection Committee.

Application and State Selection Process

The Mississippi Administrator of the Year application is available each year in October with the application deadline in January. A memorandum, application guidelines and application are sent to each school district superintendent by email. Application and guidelines are available via the following webpage at: <https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OTC/recognition>

Local District Selection

At the local district level, districts may select their district administrator of the year by following all local criteria and guidelines. Each district is allowed only **one entry** for the state program.

Selection Committees and Process

Selection of the State Administrator of the Year will be the combined responsibility of two groups: MDE Screening Committee and the State Selection Committee. Each candidate application will be reviewed a minimum of two (2) times by two (2) different members of the MDE Screening Committee. The top sixteen (16) candidates, four (4) from each congressional district, will be identified for consideration for the State Selection Committee. The sixteen (16) applications are sent to the State Selection Committee for reviewing and scoring. The Selection Committee will meet and discuss their findings based on the content of the applications submitted by the sixteen (16) candidates and then choose the top four candidates, with one being selected from each congressional district. The selected administrators will be named Mississippi Administrator of the Year finalists.

After selecting one administrator from each congressional district, the State Selection Committee will:

- Interview each congressional district finalist, which includes a performance task
- Debrief and score each finalist, and
- Recommend the Mississippi Administrator of the Year and Alternate Administrator of the Year.

Application Instructions

Complete all sections of the application (sections 1 – 5). Any part of the application that is left incomplete will result in a score reduction. All applications should be **typed and not handwritten, printed one-sided not two sided**. For sections 2-4, include your school district number and congressional district number in the top right header. To be recognized as your district administrator of the year at the Mississippi Administrator and Teacher of the Year Awards Ceremony, an application must be submitted.

Section I – Application Form

Complete the application form and include the following signatures:

- Applicant
- School District Superintendent

Attach the application form (pages 11-12) to the original application only.

Section II – Resume

Complete the resume section found on page 12. Include your school district number and congressional district number in the top right header. Please do not add your name, address, phone number, or references on the resume page.

Section III – Professional Biography

Complete a professional biography in 3rd person with no more than 500 words. Include the following details:

- Name of school, including grades, city and state
- Highlight your degrees, name of institutions where they were received; spell out your degrees
- Personal philosophy of education and teaching, and factors that influence you to become an educator
- Any Awards or points of pride
- A sentence or two about pedagogical priorities

Include your school district number and congressional district number in the top right header.

Section IV – Response Questions

Respond to the five questions on pages 15-19 of the application. Each response should not be more than 750 words. The questions will be scored and based on the following:

- Adheres to standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Answers the question clearly and concisely; and
- Provides a compelling narrative that speaks to the applicant's ability to serve as the Mississippi Administrator of the Year.

Response questions will focus on the following:

- During your tenure as administrator, describe the shared mission and vision you helped develop and facilitate improving student achievement. Explain how you ensured a diverse group of stakeholders were involved in both the development of and execution of the building's shared mission and vision. Attach an artifact (graph or summary) of evidence showing how the mission and vision supported student achievement.
- In your role as an administrator, what have you done to promote equity for students and staff in your school?
- As the instructional leader, how did you determine your staff's instructional strengths and areas of growth? What steps did you take to celebrate strengths and address deficit areas?
- What strategic planning have you implemented to track and monitor student outcomes? Share details of your plan. As a result of your plan, were there any areas of concern? Have you celebrated any areas of success?
- What do you consider to be a public education issue today? Address one issue in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions. How are you addressing this issue in your role as an administrator?

Include your school district number and congressional district number in the top right header of each question per page.

Section V – Letters of Support

Attach three (3) letters that support why you should be the 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year. At least one of these letters must be a recommendation from your superintendent, the remaining letters may be from the following: parent, colleague, administrator, teacher, student/former student, or civic leader. Submit all letters with the application. Letters should not exceed one page in length and double-spaced between paragraphs, 12-font size, letterhead (if available), signature of supporter.

Letter Details:

- Student achievement and success **(Superintendent only)**
- Applicant's achievements in and outside the school, or other specific evidence
- Applicant's efforts to strengthen and improve the teaching profession and why the applicant qualifies to become Mississippi's 2026-2027 Administrator of the Year.

Submitting Applications

After completing sections 1-5 of the application, submit **the original application (sections 1-5)** to the following email: specialprograms@mdk12.org

Submit (4) four stapled copies with sections 2-5 (include a cover sheet with your name and school district) postmarked by January 8, 2026 to:

**Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Teaching and Leading
Administrator of the Year Program
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205**

For questions, contact Sandra Hilliard at 601-359-3513 or by email: shilliard@mdk12.org

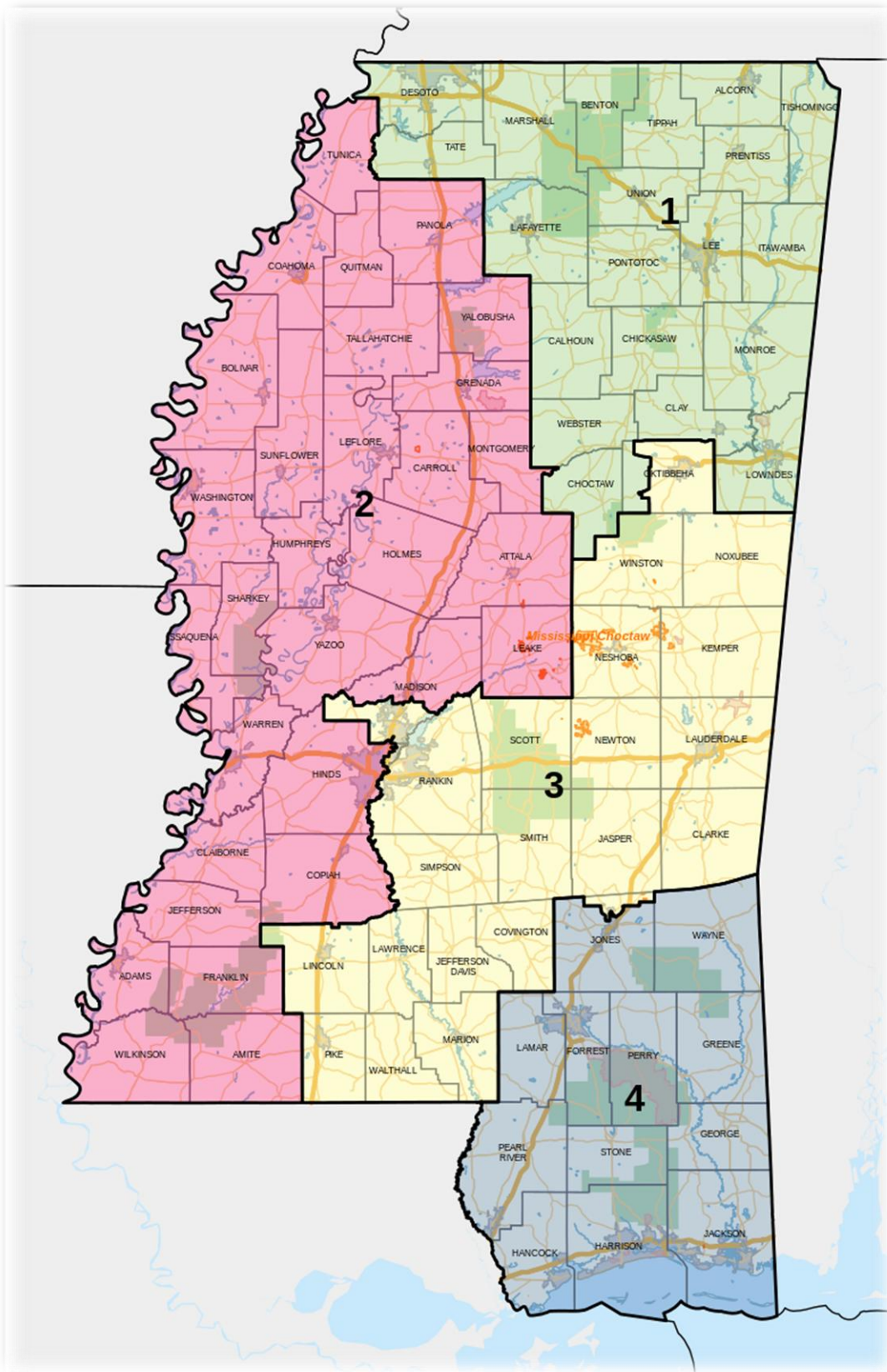
FYI: Submit only the requested sections 1-5 (original), sections 2-5 (4 stapled copies), please do not send:

- Administrator of the Year Cover page
- Guidelines
- Timeline
- Congressional map
- Evaluation rubric
- Folders or notebooks

Administrator of the Year Program Timeline (Tentative)

Date	Activity
October 2025	The 2026-2027 Administrator of the Year nomination application is emailed to district superintendents. The application is available on the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Teaching and Leading webpage: https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OTC/recognition
January 8, 2026 (Postmarked)	Deadline for application submission. Submit one (1) original application sections 1-5 to: specialprograms@mdek12.org and four (4) stapled copies, application sections 2-5 (include a cover sheet with your name and school district) to the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Teaching and Leading. (see page 6 for address)
January 2026	MDE Screening Committee will review district applications. Four (4) applicants with the highest score from each congressional district will be chosen for a total of sixteen (16) applicants.
February 2026	A letter of congratulations emailed to district administrators.
February 2026	State Selection Committee will review the sixteen (16) district applications and choose four (4) finalists. MDE will notify school district superintendents of the selected finalists.
March 2026	Four (4) congressional district finalists' interviews.
April 2026	Mississippi Administrator and Teacher of the Year Awards Ceremony (State Administrator of the Year and Alternate will be announced)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT MAP



2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year Application Evaluation Rubric

Each candidate will be rated on the components of the application. Please use the following rubric as a checklist and guide when completing your application. Incomplete applications will result in a score reduction. Each candidate may receive up to **100 points**.

CRITERIA	LOW SCORE	AVERAGE SCORE	HIGH SCORE	MAX POINTS	SCORE
II. Resume A. Education-colleges/universities, degree, major, and dates B. Teaching Experience – district/school, position, subjects, and dates C. Professional/Leadership Experience-organization/district, position, dates D. Awards/Recognition – title and dates E. Certifications – clearly defined (endorsements and year obtained)	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-3 Points ____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 4-7 Points ____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 8-10 Points ____	10	
III. Professional Biography (maximum 500 words) A. Written in third person B. School's name, grades, degrees, name of institutions C. Personal Philosophy of Education and factors that influenced you to become an educator D. Awards or points of pride E. Pedagogical priorities	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-3 Points ____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 4-7 Points ____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 8-10 Points ____	10	
IV. Response Question #1 (maximum 750 words) During your tenure as an administrator, describe the shared mission and vision you helped develop, facilitate and improve student achievement. Explain how you ensured a diverse group of stakeholders were involved in both the development of and execution of the building's shared mission and vision. Attach an artifact (graph or summary) of evidence showing how the mission and vision supported student achievement. ○ Describes the shared mission and vision to improve student achievement ○ Ensured a diverse group of stakeholders were involved in the shared mission and vision ○ Attaches an artifact of evidence	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-4 Points ____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 5-9 Points ____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 10-15 Points ____	15	
IV. Response Question #2 (maximum 750 words) In your roles as an administrator, what have you done to promote equity for students and staff in your school? ○ Promotes equity for students ○ Promotes equity for staff	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-4 Points ____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 5-9 Points ____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 10-15 Points ____	15	

IV. Response Question #3 (maximum 750 words) As the instructional leader, how did you determine your staff's instructional strengths and areas of growth? What steps did you take to celebrate strengths and address deficit areas? ○ Determines staff instructional strengths ○ Determines staff areas of growth ○ Steps to celebrate strengths ○ Address deficit areas	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-4 Points _____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 5-9 Points _____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 10-15 Points _____	15	
IV. Response Question #4 (maximum 750 words) What strategic planning have you implemented to track and monitor student outcomes? Share details of your plan. As a result of your plan, were there any areas of concern? Have you celebrated any areas of success? ○ Outlines strategic plan to track and monitor student outcomes ○ Areas of concern ○ Celebrated any areas of success	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-4 Points _____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 5-9 Points _____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 10-15 Points _____	15	
IV. Response Question #5 (maximum 750 words) What do you consider to be a public education issue today? Address one issue in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions. How are you addressing this issue in your role as an administrator? ○ Addresses one public education issue today ○ Outlines possible causes ○ Outlines effects ○ Outlines resolutions ○ Addresses issue as an administrator	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-4 Points _____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 5-9 Points _____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 10-15 Points _____	15	
V. Letters of Support (3 Letters) A. At least one letter is from the superintendent citing student achievement (letterhead). The remaining letters may be from: parent, colleague, administrator, student/former student, or civic leader B. Applicant's achievements in and outside the school, or other specific evidence C. Why the applicant is qualified to become Mississippi's 2026-2027 Administrator of the Year D. Letters do not exceed one page in length (double-spaced between paragraphs and 12 font size) E. Signature of supporter	Fails to cover all required areas. 0-1 Points _____	Provides adequate evidence in all areas. 2-3 Points _____	Provides clear and exceptional evidence in all areas. 4-5 Points _____	5	
				Maximum Points	100
Tally the points allotted in each of the sections. This is the candidate's final score. The highest total any candidate may earn is 100 points.				Final Score	



2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year Application Form

Section I (please type)

Candidate's Employment Information	
Full Name: (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.)	Educator ID Number:
School District:	School:
School District Number:	Congressional District: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4
School Address:	
School Phone:	
School Website:	
Work Email:	
Type of Administrator: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle ☐ High School	
Total Years Administrator Experience:	
Superintendent's Name:	Superintendent's Phone:
Superintendent's Email:	
Candidate's Personal Information	
Home Address:	
Personal Email:	
Cell Phone:	Home Phone:
Twitter Handle:	Facebook Profile:
Instagram Profile:	Other Social Media:
Professional Information	
Professional Memberships (i.e., MASS, MASA, etc.):	
Platform/Areas of Interest:	

Administrator of the Year Candidate's Signature

By signing this nomination form, I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understand the eligibility, criteria guidelines, and accept the responsibilities for Mississippi Administrator of the Year as outlined in the nomination packet on pages 2-3.
- I understand that I must notify Mississippi Department of Education of any changes in my status as an administrator. Failure to notify MDE of any changes, the candidate will be ineligible to serve as a finalist and/or state administrator.
- I understand that I will become ineligible if I am not a full-time K-12 administrator at each stage of the recognition process (district, congressional finalist, and state).
- If selected as the 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year, I may be requested for various speaking and/or professional development engagements during the year of my recognition as necessary to fulfill the obligations (see pages 2-3) inherent in the honor.
- I give my permission that any or all the materials provided (other than home address and telephone) may be shared with people interested in promoting the Mississippi Administrator of the Year Program.
- This application represents my work and my experience. It was written without content generated by others, including, but not limited to artificial intelligence tools. Appropriate citation is used when referencing, summarizing or paraphrasing the work of others.

Signature of Candidate _____ **Date** _____

District Superintendent's Approval and Signature

By signing this nomination form, I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understand the eligibility, criteria guidelines, and responsibilities for Mississippi Administrator of the Year as outlined in the nomination packet on pages 2-3.
- The candidate meets the criteria guidelines for Mississippi Administrator of the Year as outlined in the nomination packet and submits this nomination with my approval.
- The candidate will become ineligible if he or she is not a full-time K-12 administrator at each stage of the recognition process (district, congressional finalist, and state).
- If the candidate is selected as a congressional finalist, the district agrees not to send a news release, until Mississippi Department of Education announces the candidate as a congressional finalist.
- If the candidate is selected as the 2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year and is requested for various speaking and/or professional development engagements during the year of recognition as necessary to fulfill the obligations (see pages 2-3) inherent in the honor, I give my approval.

Signature of Superintendent _____ **Date** _____

2026-2027 Mississippi Administrator of the Year Application

Section II: Resume

Education

School Name	Degree	Major	Years Attended (i.e., 2010-2014)

Teaching Work Experience

Title	District/Organization	Subject(s) Taught	Years in Position (i.e., 2010-2014)

Professional Leadership Experience

Position	District/Organization	Years in Position (i.e., 2010-2014)

Awards and Other Recognition

Award/Recognition	Year Received

Licensure Certifications

Endorsement Code/Area	Year Obtained
<i>(i.e., 154 Mathematics)</i>	<i>(i.e., 2010)</i>

Section III: Professional Biography

(Complete in 3rd Person/maximum 500 words, see page four (4) of the guidelines for details)

Section IV: Response Questions 1-5

1. During your tenure as administrator, describe the shared mission and vision you helped develop, facilitate and improve student achievement. Explain how you ensured a diverse group of stakeholders were involved in both the development of and execution of the building's shared mission and vision. Attach an artifact (graph or summary) of evidence showing how the mission and vision supported student achievement. **(maximum 750 words)**

School District Number _____
Congressional District Number _____

2. In your role as an administrator, what have you done to promote equity for students and staff in your school? **(maximum 750 words)**

School District Number _____
Congressional District Number _____

3. As the instructional leader, how did you determine your staff's instructional strengths and areas of growth? What steps did you take to celebrate strengths and address deficit areas?
(maximum 750 words)

School District Number _____
Congressional District Number _____

4. What strategic planning have you implemented to track and monitor student outcomes? Share details of your plan. As a result of your plan, were there any areas of concern? Have you celebrated any areas of success? **(maximum 750 words)**

School District Number _____
Congressional District Number _____

5. What do you consider to be a public education issue today? Address one issue in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions. How are you addressing this issue in your role as an administrator? **(maximum 750 words)**

Section V: Three (3) Letters of Support

(See page five (5) of the guidelines for details)