



July 31, 2025

For Immediate Release

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### **Utah State Board of Education Announces the 'Fab Five' Finalists for 2026 Utah Teacher of the Year**

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) is proud to announce the five finalists for the 2026 Utah Teacher of the Year award. After a rigorous selection process that reviewed nominations from across the state, these five educators have been distinguished for their exceptional dedication, innovative practices, and profound impact on the lives of their students and communities. These finalists, dubbed the 'Fab Five,' represent the pinnacle of teaching excellence in Utah, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to student growth, exemplary teaching, and professional leadership. They will now move forward to the final stage of the selection process.

The 2026 Utah Teacher of the Year Finalists are:

- Aaron Andersen | Chinese and AP U.S. History | Skyridge High School, Alpine School District
- Markay Anderson | Elementary Education | Ashley Elementary, Uintah School District
- Joanna Andres | Social Studies | Park City High School, Park City School District
- Dr. Joseph Kozlowski | 2nd Grade | Edith Bowen Laboratory School, Utah State University
- Aston (Rai) Pattison | Special Education | Kearns Junior High School, Granite School District

In the coming weeks, these five finalists will participate in intensive professional learning to prepare for the next phase of the selection process. This preparation will culminate in an in-person interview with the 15-person Utah Teacher of the Year Selection Committee, which is composed of representatives from the Utah State Board of Education, the Utah Education Association, USBE staff, and

other education and community stakeholders.

The 2026 Utah Teacher of the year will be announced at an awards ceremony on September 4, 2025. The winner will go on to represent Utah in the National Teacher of the Year Program.

"Each year, I am humbled by the caliber of educators in our state, and this year is no exception," said Katie Jones, Utah Teacher of the Year Coordinator. "These five finalists exemplify the heart and soul of education in Utah. They are master teachers who not only deliver exceptional instruction but also create learning environments where every student feels seen, valued, and empowered to succeed. Their work transforms lives and strengthens the future of our state."

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