

Wyoming's 2026-27 District Teachers of the Year

All 48 Wyoming School Districts are encouraged to annually recognize a District Teacher of the Year (DTOY). Educators selected by their districts in Spring 2026-27 are officially designated as 2026 District Teachers of the Year.

Aimee Gray - Albany County School District #1



Aimee Gray teaches health and physical education at Laramie High School and Whiting High School, where she redesigned the health curriculum and strength and conditioning program to make health and fitness more accessible and relevant to students. She holds a B.S. and M.S. in Kinesiology and Health from the University of Wyoming, co-teaches an immersive outdoor leadership course, and has earned Teacher of the Year honors, young professional awards, and multiple academic journal publications.

Vicki Arnold - Big Horn County School District #1



Vicki Arnold is a passionate educator with nearly two decades of teaching experience, currently teaching mathematics and STEM at Rocky Mountain Middle High School in Cowley. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University with a major in Math Education and a minor in History Education. Recognized as the Rocky Mountain Middle High School Teacher of the Year for the 2025-2026 school year, Ms. Arnold adapts her instruction to meet individual needs, emphasizing real-life connections to help students find relevance in education and thrive in the classroom.

Natalie Logan - Big Horn County School District #2



Nicole Logan is a 6-8 grade special education teacher at Lovell Middle School with 21 years of experience empowering students through individualized support and strong relationships. She holds a Bachelor's from Montana State University Billings and Master's degrees in Curriculum & Instruction and Educational Technology from Western Governors University. Dedicated to fostering self-advocacy and a growth mindset, Ms. Logan uses data-informed instruction and collaborative co-teaching strategies to help every student build confidence and achieve success.

Mark Sanford - Big Horn County School District #3



Mark Sanford has been instructing Wyoming students for 38 years as a 9–12th grade Business Education teacher. Throughout his teaching career and 38 years as a wrestling coach—affectionately known as “Sando” to his students—he has prioritized building strong, trust-based relationships that foster personal accountability and growth. Mr. Sanford is dedicated to creating a supportive, engaging environment where students and athletes feel cared for as they overcome obstacles and work together toward common goals.

Chere Knotwell - Big Horn County School District #4



Chere Knotwell is a fifth-grade teacher at Laura Irwin Elementary School in Basin, with 33 years of experience spanning elementary, middle school, special education, and literacy leadership. She holds a Bachelor's from the University of Wyoming and advanced degrees in ESL and Reading, bringing deep expertise and a track record as a four-time Teacher of the Year. Guided by an inquiry-based, collaborative approach, Ms. Knotwell focuses on building strong relationships and inclusive classroom communities that empower students to think critically, ask meaningful questions, and achieve their full potential.

Tracy Ennis - Campbell County School District #1



Tracy Ennis is a STEM educator for junior kindergarten through sixth grade at Hillcrest Elementary in Gillette, where she has taught for 20 years. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Montana State University and a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction from Black Hills State University. An ISTE-certified educator and 19-year student leadership advisor, Ms. Ennis incorporates The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People framework to foster self-confidence, integrating innovative technology and hands-on STEM learning to inspire the next generation of leaders and problem solvers.

Hayden Hohnholt - Carbon County School District #1



Hayden Hohnholt is a 6th–8th grade math teacher at Rawlins Middle School. He received his bachelor of science-education from Concordia University of Nebraska in 2014. Throughout his teaching career, one of his most cherished awards was being named a crystal apple recipient in 2025 by his students and colleagues. His main focus is to make every student feel welcomed and included within the classroom environment. This level of comfort allows students to take risks within the classroom knowing that any mistakes or failures are part of the learning process.

Kegan Willford - Carbon County School District #2



Kegan Willford is a 7th–12th Grade Social Studies Teacher at Encampment K-12 School, where he instructs courses in World Geography, World History, American History, Government, and Economics. A graduate of the University of Wyoming with a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Social Studies Education, Mr. Willford prioritizes cultivating critical thinking and historical literacy in his classroom. Rather than relying on simple date memorization, his teaching guides students to analyze diverse perspectives and critically interrogate sources.

Baylee Kerkvliet - Converse County School District #1



Baylee Kerkvliet is an English Language Arts teacher at Douglas High School in Douglas. Over her 12-year career, she has taught grades 7–12, managed online math instruction, served as Junior Class Sponsor, and led as Work-Based Learning Coordinator to connect students with hands-on business opportunities. Ms. Kerkvliet holds a Bachelor of Arts from Black Hills State University, a Master of Arts from the University of Wyoming, and earned her National Board Certification in ELA/Adolescence and Young Adulthood in 2025. Through cooperative learning, reflection, and research, she focuses on empowering her students to never settle for mediocrity, but to strive for remarkability.

Tracey Lawrence - Converse County School District #2



Tracey Lawrence is a passionate K–6 art teacher at Grant Elementary and Glenrock Intermediate School with over 23 years of experience. A summa cum laude graduate of Black Hills State University with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, she was honored with the Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award in 2015. Ms. Lawrence designs innovative, hands-on lessons that collaboratively integrate art across the curriculum. Through her engaging and joyful approach, she fosters creativity, confidence, and academic growth in a positive, inclusive environment where every student feels seen, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Danielle McKenzie - Crook County School District #1



Danielle McKenzie is a K–3 Special Education teacher at Sundance Elementary School in Sundance, where she provides individualized instruction and collaborates with families and educators to build foundational academic, social, and emotional skills. A graduate of Black Hills State University with a dual Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Special Education, Ms. McKenzie is trained in evidence-based strategies for inclusive settings. Passionate about early intervention and supportive learning environments, she focuses on building student confidence and helping every child reach their full potential.

Josie Hulkovich - Fremont County School District # 1



Josie Hulkovich is a 9–12th grade social studies teacher at Pathfinder High School in Lander, where she has spent over 20 years dedicated to alternative education. She holds a Bachelor's from Montana State University–Bozeman, a Master's in Integrated Curriculum and Literacy from the American College of Education, and certifications in both social studies and at-risk education. In addition to teaching a wide range of social studies courses, she coordinates the senior project program and serves on the district literacy coalition. Ms. Hulkovich emphasizes interdisciplinary learning and student-centered instruction, building strong relationships that help diverse learners think critically, gain confidence, and recognize their full potential.

Dena Shaw - Fremont County School District # 2



Diana (Dena) Shaw is a Pre-Kindergarten Teacher at the Little Rams Learning Center in Dubois, with 20 years of experience pouring her heart into early childhood education. She holds a Wyoming K–6 Elementary Certification, a Bachelor of Arts in Reading Education with an Early Childhood minor from Eastern Washington University, over 200 Wyoming STAR hours, and completed specialized LETRS Early Childhood training. Mrs. Shaw goes above and beyond to make learning fun, meaningful, and engaging, creating a joyful classroom where curiosity is celebrated and young learners build the confidence, independence, and strong foundation needed to enter kindergarten with a lifelong love of learning.

Shaily Kranz - Fremont County School District #25



Shaily Kranz is a creative and dedicated third-grade teacher at Willow Creek Elementary in Riverton, WY, who holds a Bachelor's in Elementary Education from the University of Wyoming and a Master's in Learning and Technology from Western Governors University. She creates dynamic digital resources and co-leads after-school enrichment programs focusing on project-based learning and community service. Guided by her motto, "Once a student, forever a student!", Ms. Kranz builds lasting relationships and prioritizes collaborative, inquiry-based learning that empowers students to think critically, solve problems, and build lifelong confidence.

Adam Brasel- Fremont County School District #38



Adam Brasel is the K–12 Adapted Physical Education teacher at Arapahoe Schools in Arapahoe, Wyoming, with two decades of service in education and athletics. A graduate of the University of Wyoming, Mr. Brasel focuses on complete inclusion by designing individualized physical education programs tailored to the unique needs of every student. With 20 years of experience coaching football, wrestling, soccer, and Olympic weightlifting, his approach centers on fundamental skill development and character building, cultivating supportive, high-expectation environments where all students can build health literacy and achieve success.

Ellice Neff - Goshen County School District #1



Ellice Neff teaches High School Art at Torrington Highschool in Goshen County. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from CSU-Pueblo. She takes pride in living a purposeful life dedicated to helping others, developing personal skills, and serving where needed. Her pedagogical priorities include creating a supportive and inclusive classroom, meeting students where they are, and helping them build confidence, practical skills, and a lasting appreciation for learning.

Laura Stam - Hot Springs County School District #1



Laura Stam is a third-grade teacher at Ralph Witters Elementary in Thermopolis, with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education and Special Education from Western Governors University. A former Goyen Foundation Literacy Fellow, she serves as Vice President of Events Operations for The Reading League Wyoming, co-hosts the Teach Smarter: The Science of Learning podcast, and writes The Knowledge Exchange Substack. As founder and team lead of the Wyoming Science of Teaching and Learning Collaborative, Ms. Stam connects educators with research and applies evidence-based practices to drive student success.

Tara Hall - Johnson County School District #1



Tara Hall is a math and science teacher at New West High School, a small alternative school she co-founded in 2019 to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of every student. With nearly three decades of teaching experience in Wyoming and Colorado, she holds a Bachelor's from the University of Wyoming, a Master's from Montana State University–Bozeman, and has been a National Board Certified Teacher since 2013. In addition to her classroom leadership, Ms. Hall serves as an assistant cross country coach and is dedicated to building strong relationships that help young people develop the confidence, resilience, and skills needed to succeed.

Brian Cox - Laramie County School District #1



Brian Cox is an agriculture science teacher at Johnson Junior High School and South High School in Cheyenne, dedicated to fostering student potential through agricultural education and the National FFA Organization. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Agriculture from Texas Tech University, where he competed on the livestock judging team and assisted with plant research connected to NASA initiatives. Through hands-on, experiential learning and career readiness programs, Mr. Cox connects classroom instruction with real-world applications to empower students with leadership skills, personal growth, and success in the agriculture industry.

Jackie O'Briant - Natrona County School District #1



Jackie O'Briant is a National Board Certified IB Literature and 9th-grade English teacher at Natrona County High School in Casper, with 22 years of teaching experience. She holds degrees from the University of Wyoming and Grand Canyon University, alongside a Gifted and Talented endorsement from the University of Iowa. A frequent presenter on adolescent literacy for organizations such as the Wyoming Department of Education, Ms. O'Briant is passionate about connecting students with transformative books and mentoring new educators to help them thrive in the classroom.

Andrea Renae Williams - Niobrara County School District #1



Andrea Williams is a third-grade teacher at the Wyoming Virtual Academy with over 27 years of experience in traditional and virtual classrooms. Dedicated to empowering elementary students statewide, she creates engaging instructional systems that foster student ownership, self-reflection, and academic confidence. Ms. Williams actively collaborates with colleagues, mentors new educators, and connects students with community experts to build meaningful relationships and inspire a lifelong curiosity for learning.

Kix Carter - Park County School District # 1



Alixia “Kix” Carter is a 6th-grade Science teacher at Powell Middle School in Powell, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Montana and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Grand Canyon University. Dedicated to creating a safe, collaborative environment where learning is an exciting journey, Ms. Carter builds strong personal connections with her students to encourage risk-taking and empower them toward continuous growth and academic mastery.

Jessica Hill - Park County School District # 6



Jessica Hill is a fifth-grade teacher at Sunset Elementary School in Cody, where she has spent 22 years inspiring students to learn, grow, and believe in themselves. A National Board Certified Teacher, she holds a Bachelor’s and a Master’s in Special Education from the University of Wyoming, as well as an Education Specialist degree from Walden University. Dedicated to cultivating a supportive, student-centered classroom grounded in optimism and high expectations, Mrs. Hill focuses on building strong relationships, fostering a growth mindset, and empowering every child to transform challenges into opportunities.

Ashton Shepperson - Park County School District #16



Ashton Shepperson is the K–12 Visual Arts teacher in Meeteetse. Transitioning from a background in veterinary medicine and holding a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from the University of Wyoming, she earned her teaching credentials through the University of West Florida to pursue her passion for art education. As a member of the University of Wyoming’s Project-Based Learning cohort, Ms. Shepperson is a strong advocate for student voice and choice, teaching art through real-world skills to foster creativity, resiliency, and problem-solving in a supportive studio environment.

Kellie Preuit - Platte County School District #1



Kellie Preuit is a first-grade teacher at Libbey Elementary School in Wheatland, with 33 years of experience in elementary education. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from the University of Wyoming and a Master's in Integrated Technology from Lesley College. Dedicated to professional excellence and student achievement, Ms. Preuit centers her classroom on strong relationships, high expectations, and foundational literacy. She focuses on cultivating independence, critical thinking, and perseverance in a supportive environment where young learners feel respected and motivated to succeed.

Sarah VanNatter - Platte County School District #2



Sarah VanNatter is a Junior High and High School Mathematics and Life Science teacher, as well as a Concurrent Adjunct Math Professor in Guernsey. She holds a Bachelor's in Science Education and a Master's in Mathematics Education from Western Governors University, and serves as the Student Council sponsor. Driven by a commitment to student-focused growth, Ms. VanNatter prioritizes building strong relationships and fostering deep conceptual understanding to create an engaging environment where learners of all abilities can thrive.

Tina Melin - Sheridan County School District #1



Kristina (Tina) Melin is a 6th–8th grade science, biology, and anatomy & physiology teacher at Big Horn Middle and High Schools in Big Horn, with 26 years of experience in math and science education. A graduate of Bemidji State University with a Bachelor's in Secondary Math and Science Education and the University of Wyoming with a Master's in Natural Science, she has earned multiple accolades throughout her career, including nominations for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Ms. Melin emphasizes a hands-on learning approach and strong community relationships, challenging her students to stay curious, tackle hard things, and live by her motto of being a person of action.

Birch Haraden - Sheridan County School District #2



Birch Haraden is a fifth-grade teacher at Highland Park Elementary with 15 years of experience in education. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Black Hills State University, where he was an NAIA All-American and Scholar-Athlete in track and field. Mr. Haraden serves in multiple leadership roles, including the Superintendent's Cabinet, PBIS Leadership Team, and assistant cross country coach. Renowned for creating authentic learning experiences that bridge the classroom to the real world, he prioritizes interdisciplinary instruction, community partnerships, and strong, trust-based relationships to empower students as confident, connected learners.

Betsy Mack - Sheridan County School District #3



Betsy Mack is a 7th–12th grade English teacher at Arvada-Clearmont High School in Clearmont, Wyoming, where she has served for 10 years of her 14-year career in education. A graduate of the University of Wyoming with a Bachelor's in Secondary English Education, she actively pursues professional development to continually drive student achievement. Centered on rigorous literature, Ms. Mack's energetic and engaging classroom relies on student-led discussions, purposeful movement, and real-world application to foster a deep appreciation for complex reading.

Melissa Allen - Sublette County School District #1



Melissa Allen is a special education teacher for at-risk students at Skyline Academy in Pinedale, with 15 years of experience in education, including seven years as a paraprofessional. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Elementary Education and Special Education from Western Governors University. Deeply committed to advocating for students who need it most, Ms. Allen prioritizes creating an inclusive, student-centered environment where resilient learners can thrive. Through a safe and supportive classroom setting, she focuses on equipping students with essential life tools, helping them overcome barriers, and guiding them to achieve milestones they once thought impossible.

Kristi Hibbert - Sublette County School District #9



Kristi Hibbert is a middle school science teacher at Big Piney Middle School in Big Piney, with degrees from Idaho State University and Pepperdine University. A Student Research Advocate for the Society for Science, grant recipient, and GEAR UP Advisor, Ms. Hibbert mentors dozens of students annually in authentic STEM research projects that compete at regional and state ISEF-affiliated fairs. Through her work in the classroom, athletics, and robotics coaching, she leverages real-world applications—such as local wildlife and conservation research—and personalized pathways to foster high expectations, student efficacy, and academic growth.

Caroline Smalstig - Sweetwater County School District #1



Caroline Smalstig is an 8th-grade U.S. History teacher at Rock Springs Junior High School in Rock Springs, with degrees from the University of Wyoming and Western Governors University. Through programs like the RIDE initiative and the Malcolm Wallop Civic Engagement Program—as well as developing statewide curriculum for the documentary Dear Sirs—she connects historical concepts to real-world community issues. Dedicated to student-centered learning and civic engagement, Mrs. Smalstig cultivates a supportive, engaging classroom where students are encouraged to think critically, take intellectual risks, and find joy in learning.

Malcolm Robb - Sweetwater County School District #2



Malcolm Robb is a 7th-grade Social Studies teacher at Lincoln Middle School in Green River, where he has taught in the district since 1999. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Montana State University and a Master of Arts from Grand Canyon University. Employing multi-modal learning techniques to engage diverse learning styles, Mr. Robb strives to make social studies both challenging and fun. His teaching approach focuses on building strong student relationships, fostering critical thinking skills, and developing a foundational understanding of civic responsibility to prepare young learners for lifelong success.

Lauren Hugo - Teton County School District #1



Lauren Hugo is a middle school mathematics teacher in Jackson, with over two decades of experience teaching early adolescents. She holds a Master's Degree in Middle Level Education from the University of Vermont. Utilizing the MidSchoolMath curriculum and the Building Thinking Classrooms framework, Ms. Hugo emphasizes collaboration, curiosity, and real-world problem-solving. She prioritizes strong relationships and a supportive classroom culture, creating an environment where students feel safe taking intellectual risks, exploring diverse mathematical approaches, and building confidence in their problem-solving abilities.

Cheryl Lowham - Uinta County School District #1



Cheryl Lowham is a 7th-grade Social Studies teacher at Davis Middle School in Evanston, with 42 years of middle school teaching experience. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Utah State University and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from the University of Wyoming. A compassionate and dedicated educator, Ms. Lowham focuses on making a meaningful difference in her students' lives everyday through a steadfast commitment to her classroom and profession.

Tom Wells - Uinta County School District #6



Thomas Wells is a high school Special Education teacher, Department Head, and Transition Coordinator at Lyman High School in Lyman. He holds a Bachelor's in Elementary and Special Education and a Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of Wyoming, along with a K-12 Principal Endorsement. Recognized for his dedication both in the classroom and through more than two decades of coaching and officiating high school athletics, Mr. Wells focuses on preparing students for life after high school. His instructional philosophy centers on high expectations, individualized support, and strong relationships to ensure every learner builds practical skills in an inclusive environment.

Debbie Keller - Washakie County School District #1



Deborah (Debbie) Keller is a 6th and 7th-grade Social Studies and K–8 English Language Learner (ELL) teacher at Worland Middle School in Worland. She holds an Associate's from Casper College, a Bachelor's from the University of Wyoming, and a Master's in Literacy from Lesley College. With extensive experience across public and institutional settings, Ms. Keller serves on her school's Guiding Coalition and leads the Social Studies Professional Learning Community. Guided by a belief that literacy is essential across all disciplines, she enriches student learning through educational expeditions and Wyoming History Day projects while actively advocating for at-risk youth in her community.

Donald Anderson - Washakie County School District #2



Donald (Don) Anderson is a 7th–12th grade mathematics teacher at Ten Sleep School in Ten Sleep. He holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's in Secondary Mathematics Education from Chadron State College and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Education at the University of Wyoming. Grounded in problem-based learning and real-world applications, Mr. Anderson fosters curiosity, collaborative sense-making, and perseverance, helping students build conceptual understanding and confidence without fear. Beyond the classroom, he serves as the Student Council advisor, Knowledge Bowl coach, and a contributor to professional development focused on strengthening rural mathematics instruction.

Jennifer Steveson - Weston County School District #1



Jennifer Steveson is a special education teacher at Newcastle Middle School in Newcastle, with 29 years of dedicated service in the district. She holds a Bachelor's in Elementary and Special Education from Black Hills State University and a Master's in Teaching and Learning from Grand Canyon University. Dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based instruction, Ms. Steveson prioritizes strong relationships with families and colleagues while helping students embrace their strengths, persevere, and build independence. Beyond her classroom, she actively serves as a literacy leader, Delta Kappa Gamma officer, and middle school volleyball coach, guiding students with her core belief to "love them, feed them, and teach them."

Shanna Kinnick - Weston County School District #7



Shanna Kinnick is a middle school science teacher at Upton Middle School in Upton, with 19 years of teaching experience. She holds double Bachelor's degrees in Elementary and Special Education and a Master's in Reading from Black Hills State University, along with a Master's in Teaching Secondary Biological Sciences from Western Governors University. As the Student Council advisor, Ms. Kinnick fosters leadership, service, and a positive school culture. Her learner-centered teaching approach focuses on critical thinking and inquisitiveness, inspiring students to grow academically while building self-resilience, empathy, and a genuine enthusiasm for science.