ENTRY CATEGORY:
Staff and student recognition programs

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION:
Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), is an education agency with approximately 1500 employees who support L.A. County’s 80 districts, which are comprised of more than 1,850 schools that serve approximately 1.4 million students.
The Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year (TOY) recognition program is the largest in the state, recognizing the top 16 teachers across 80 Districts. As part of the California and National Teacher of the Year programs, the program honors the teaching profession and brings attention to educators who successfully employ strategies to increase academic success and narrow the achievement gap among diverse students. Those selected by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) as County Teachers of the Year are educators who have shown exemplary dedication, compelling classroom practices, positive accomplishments and professional commitment. They serve as standard-bearers for the teaching profession and their 72,000 classroom colleagues countywide. The program traditionally features an annual luncheon recognition each September for all participants but was conducted virtually last year due to the pandemic.

We had not experienced a disruption to this momentous recognition for many teachers in the 50 years that the program has been in operation in California. Due to the very fluid situation of the pandemic in the 2020-2021 school year, LACOE, like the rest of the world, planned a virtual program. Many of the teachers did not get the very public recognition they so rightly deserve. In preparation for the 40th annual celebration, we used focus group research involving TOY judges, former TOY recipients and various industry partners to gather data that would determine how the annual recognition program could be enhanced or changed to improve the experience of the future applicants and honorees.

The data identified three objectives: (1) make the application process accessible to all eligible teachers within the County; (2) professional learning and grant opportunities for honorees throughout the year; and (3) access to special events through sponsored partnerships.

These conversations led to the development of a more comprehensive approach to selecting Teachers of the Year in which we partner with LACOE’s philanthropic arm, the Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation, to uplift teacher voices throughout the year with grant opportunities, ongoing professional development, and access to special events through sponsorship opportunities, in addition to the annual recognition event hosted by LACOE.

The annual banquet highlighted educational innovation, student learning and how rewarding the teaching profession can be. The program’s success was evaluated with a survey for honorees, TOY Judges and District attendees. This year, 56 applications were submitted to be recognized as Teachers of the Year. An in-person banquet to honor our Teachers of the Year —following all CDC, state and county-recommended mitigation protocols—drew over 330 attendees. A Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year was selected as a California State Finalist, demonstrating the efficacy of the updated application and selection process.
Branding
For the 40th anniversary of the Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year Program, the LACOE Communications and Public Affairs team undertook a brand refresh to the program logo and collateral materials. The goal was to elevate the LACOE brand with an emphasis on brand identity (use of consistent brand colors and typography).

Objective:

- Improve visibility and hierarchy between icon and description
- Explore color and gradients
- Refine or update the shape of the apple
- Discover new iconography
Social Media

We wanted to continue to recognize and uplift teachers of the year but in a way that diversified content on our platforms and elevated our partners and sponsors to increase future opportunities for investment and sponsorship. Our social media copy/captions are focused on storytelling while still highlighting their recognition as teachers of the year.

Special events | Teachers of the Year invited to inaugural Los Angeles Rams game at Sofi Stadium
Special events | Teachers of the Year invited to Chargers game at Sofi Stadium
Banquet | Top 16 Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year
Professional Learning | Tips from TOYs
Sponsorship | California Credit Union

Professional learning and grant opportunities:

2021 Teacher of the Year Equitable Innovation Grants
The Los Angeles County Office of Education and its philanthropic arm, the Greater LA Education Foundation, announced that 30 educator projects from 20 school districts as the first to receive new Teacher of the Year Equitable Innovation Grants. Ranging from intimate interventions for students with special needs to centralized districtwide training, the funded projects benefited more than 12,000 students across the region.

2022 Teacher of the Year Equitable Innovation Grants
The Los Angeles County Office of Education and its philanthropic arm, the Greater LA Education Foundation, announced that 41 educator projects from 22 districts are the recipients of the 2022 Teachers of The Year Equitable Innovation Grants totaling $75,000! Addressing social-emotional wellbeing, STEM and hands-on learning projects, and educator retention, the funded projects will impact over 21,000 students across Los Angeles County. An estimated 75 percent of these students come from under-resourced backgrounds and qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

LIVE Professional Development Webinar Series | Safe and Welcoming Schools
The series consists of eight live webinars with supporting videos, study guides and materials. Each series will focus on practical strategies for the classroom centered around social emotional learning (SEL). Upon each series completion, educators received free classroom support materials sent directly to their school. Space and free materials were limited, LA County Teachers of the Year were given an early invitation to register for the series.