

CULLOWHEE, N.C. — Twenty-four educators from across North Carolina have been named finalists for the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) 2027 Burroughs Wellcome Fund NC Career and Technical Education (CTE) Teacher of the Year Award. These educators are recognized for their excellence in career and technical education pathways and their commitment to fostering student success.

“Last year, North Carolina public school students earned 382,964 career and technical education credentials, the most in our state's history,” said State Superintendent Maurice “Mo” Green. “Numbers like that do not happen by accident. They happen because of the CTE teachers in classrooms across North Carolina who pour their hearts into preparing students for what comes next. These twenty-four finalists are an extraordinary representation of that work.”

NCCAT, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the North Carolina Association for Career and Technical Education (NCACTE), developed the CTE Teacher of the Year award to honor outstanding CTE educators, encourage teacher leadership, and emphasize the importance of CTE instruction in North Carolina public schools.

“NCACTE embraces the opportunity to showcase these role model CTE teachers,” NCACTE Executive Director John Kirkman said. “These teacher leaders make a difference in the lives of CTE students and their communities daily.”

Finalists will attend a week of professional development from October 26-30, 2026. The winner will be announced during a recognition event on October 29, 2026, at the Embassy Suites in Concord, North Carolina.

“NCCAT is honored to celebrate this outstanding group of career and technical education teachers,” said NCCAT Executive Director Dr. M. Brock Womble. “The dedication and leadership these educators bring to their classrooms daily is inspiring. We are proud to recognize these remarkable finalists and the impact they have on their students, communities, and public education across North Carolina.”

The Signature Sponsor for this year’s event is the Burroughs Wellcome Fund.

“Career and technical education teachers play a critical role in preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world,” said Alfred Mays, the Chief Diversity Officer for the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. “These outstanding educators help students connect classroom learning to meaningful careers while developing the problem-solving, technical, and leadership skills that strengthen our communities and workforce. The Burroughs Wellcome Fund is proud to support NCCAT in recognizing and celebrating educators who inspire the next generation of innovators, creators, and leaders.”

Meet the Finalists:

- Adara Barnes, Alamance-Burlington School System
- Justin Deal, Alexander County Schools
- John Moody, Asheville City Schools
- Elizabeth Roberson, Bladen County Schools
- Kelly Richardson, Brunswick County Schools
- David Brotherton, Caldwell County Schools
- Amanda Forbes, Camden County Schools
- Clare Matusевич, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
- Matthew Wykoff, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Tammy Cox, Cumberland County Schools
- Danyelle Pickell, Currituck County Schools
- Regina Smith, Guilford County Schools
- Kimberly Hackett, Harnett County Schools
- Austin Rash, Iredell-Statesville Schools
- Caitlin Goforth, Madison County Schools
- Sophie Voris, McDowell County Schools
- Luke Smith, Pender County Schools
- David Tripp, Pitt County Schools
- Caroline McKee, Randolph County Schools
- Bradford Taylor, Rowan-Salisbury Schools
- Donnie Henson, Rutherford County Schools
- Heather Graves, Scotland County Schools
- Marie Antonette Jimenez, Warren County Schools
- Christopher Hicks, Wayne County Schools

Awards and Recognition, presented by the Development Foundation of NCCAT, Inc., include:

The NCCAT CTE Teacher of the Year will receive:

- \$5,000 cash prize
- Instructional supply funds for their school
- Three-year membership in NCACTE
- Participation in the national ACTE Conference as the NC ACTE Teacher of the Year representative

The Runner-Up will receive:

- \$2,000 cash prize

- Three-year membership in NCACTE

All Finalists will receive:

- Travel and substitute costs for the week of NCCAT professional development
- One-year membership in NCACTE

About NCCAT:

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) supports teachers and impacts students through exemplary professional development programs. By increasing teacher effectiveness, NCCAT strengthens public education across the state. NCCAT equips educators with innovative teaching methods, best practices, and resources to take back to their classrooms. To learn more about NCCAT's programs, visit www.nccat.org or call 828-293-5202.

About the Burroughs Wellcome Fund:

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund (BWF) is a private foundation dedicated to advancing biomedical sciences and supporting the next generation of scientific researchers and educators. With a strong commitment to fostering innovation and excellence in science, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund has made a significant investment in the realm of STEM education. In the past 25 years, BWF has invested more than \$100 million to support initiatives and networks in STEM education. In addition to funding, BWF provides opportunities for interactions with colleagues and engagement with the broader community of educators and grant recipients across other BWF education programs. BWF's focus on support of education highlights the belief in the pivotal role it plays in shaping the future of scientific discovery and addressing complex global challenges.