

OFFICIAL RULES
TAMPA BAY TIMES NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION
NIE EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR 2026 CONTEST

These rules are for the Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education Program's NIE Educator of the Year 2026 Contest ("Contest"). This Promotion is open to entries from January 1, 2026 at 12:00 AM ET, through 11:59 PM ET April 1, 2026. All entries must be received by 11:59 PM ET April 1, 2026. The sponsor of this Contest is the Times Publishing Company ("Sponsor"). Entry into this Contest constitutes the Entrant's full and unconditional agreement to and acceptance of these rules, terms and conditions.

ELIGIBILITY:

NO PURCHASE IS NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Purchase will not improve chances of winning. The Contest is open to legal residents of the United States and Florida who are educators (teachers, media specialists, paraprofessionals, etc.) in one of the following Florida counties: Citrus, Hillsborough, Hernando, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas or Polk. Eligible Entrants will have reached their 18th birthday on or before January 1, 2026.

Employees of Times Publishing Company, its affiliates and subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, contest prize suppliers, and participating advertisers and their immediate family members are not eligible to win. Contractors of or for such entities or persons, and their immediate family members, are also ineligible to win. "Immediate family members" means parents, siblings, spouses, children, grandparents and grandchildren, whether by current or past marriage, remarriage, adoption or cohabitation, and anyone living in the same household, whether related or not. Times Publishing Company's determination as to eligibility is final and binding.

HOW TO ENTER:

Entries will be accepted on the NIE Educator of the Year link at tampabay.com/nie. No other method of Entry will be accepted. All information provided at the time of Entry must be accurate and all required data fields in the Entry form must be complete, including a valid email address of which the Entrant is the authorized account holder at the time of Entry. "Authorized Account Holder" means the person to whom the email address is assigned by an Internet access or online service provider, or other organization (such as a business or educational institution) that is responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain name associated with the email address submitted.

Incomplete entries are void and ineligible to compete or win. The Sponsor shall not be responsible for lost, late, incomplete, misdirected, garbled, jumbled, damaged or illegible entries or votes, for any computer, electronic, telephone, cable, or network hardware or software malfunction or failures of any kind, for any other problems or errors in modes of transmission, or for any other human or technical error.

The odds of winning depend on the number of eligible entries received and satisfaction of the judging criteria described below.

By entering the contest, Entrant gives Sponsor permission to use his or her contact information to contact him or her concerning this Promotion, or concerning other goods or services offered by Sponsor.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY:

The Entry must be the original work of the author identified as the Entrant, and must be in English. Entries must comply with all applicable law governing intellectual property, including all laws governing copyright. Entry into the contest constitutes the Entrant's warranty that the Entry is free of content infringing any rights of third parties. Plagiarism of any kind will result in disqualification. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is prohibited. Any Entry using poetry, song lyrics, characters, or any other type of material created or authored by someone else must be accompanied by that author's express written permission and properly acknowledged; otherwise, the Entry will be disqualified. Depictions of violence, graphic sexual content, and material derogatory to any individual or group based on race, gender, nationality, age, disability, religion or any other similar characteristic will result in disqualification. Entries must not have been previously published or sold.

GRANT OF RIGHTS UPON ENTRY:

Submission of an Entry constitutes the Entrant's grant to the Times Publishing Company of a full, unconditional, royalty-free worldwide license to publish the Entry in print, electronic or other media, including online, and in any other form of media now existing or later invented, and to use the Entry for promotional purposes without obligation to compensate the Entrant.

INDEMNIFICATION:

Submission of an Entry constitutes the Entrant's agreement to indemnify Times Publishing Company, including its officers, directors, agents and employees, against any claim of copyright infringement and any other legal claim arising out of the publication of the Entry.

HOW WINNERS WILL BE SELECTED:

The Winner will be selected by a judging panel composed of Times Publishing Company staff from all timely, eligible entries received based on the following judging criteria: adherence to theme, creativity and educational merit. The decisions of the judges are entirely their own, and are final. The Winner will be chosen by the judges and contacted no later than May 1, 2026.

NOTIFICATION OF WINNER:

A Times Publishing Company representative will notify winner on or before May 1, 2026, by phone or email by using the information on the Entry. If the company representative is unable to speak directly to a winner by 5 p.m. on the business day following the date of contact first attempted, the winner will be disqualified and forfeit all rights to the prize, and an alternate winner will be chosen based on the vote tally and, if necessary because of a tied vote, by random drawing. If the company representative is unable to speak directly to an alternate winner by 5 p.m. two business days following the date of contact first attempted, the alternate winner will be disqualified and forfeit all rights to the prize, and another winner will be chosen as described above. If any winner chosen and notified does not meet all eligibility requirements including signing the Affidavit and Release referred to below, an alternate winner will be selected as described above.

PRIZE:

One Winner will receive a \$1,500 cash prize; a grand prize plaque; a Tampa Bay Times prize pack; an invitation to present the winning lesson, strategy or project at the 2026 Florida Press Educational Services Summer Training Conference; reimbursement for miles traveled to and from the conference at a rate designated by Times Publishing Company (\$0.40/mile); and one night in a hotel to attend the conference, if the Winner lives farther than 60 miles away from the conference location. There will be up to five (5) runner-up Winners. Each runner-up Winner will receive a \$300 cash prize and a certificate of recognition. The total monetary value of the prize is \$3,000.00.

No alternative prize, cash or other substitution is permitted except in the event of prize unavailability. Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize or prizes of equal or greater value. Prizes are not transferable or assignable by the Winner.

HOW TO CLAIM THE PRIZE:

To claim the prize, the Winner must appear in person at the Times Publishing Company Office during regular business hours and present valid, government-issued photo identification showing age and residency. Winners may be required to sign legal documents or provide additional proof of eligibility. Winners must complete an affidavit of eligibility, release of claims and consent to publicity (which releases sponsors, affiliates, and suppliers from any and all liability related to this promotion or use or acceptance of the prize), without making changes, and return the properly completed affidavit for receipt by Times Publishing Company within 5 days of the date the winner received prize notification. Failure of Times Publishing Company to receive a properly executed affidavit within 5 days of winner notification will result in disqualification and forfeiture of prize. Alternate winner is subject to all requirements and limitations in these Official Rules. By accepting a prize, a winner agrees to allow the use of his or her name, voice, photograph, likeness and any information provided on the Entry form, along with the photograph entered, in any media now known or hereafter invented and for any purpose, including advertising, promotional or other purposes by Times Publishing Company and its affiliates, without further compensation.

PRIZE RESTRICTIONS:

Winner is responsible for any charges not specifically listed as part of the Prize, including but not limited to: transportation, parking, tax, gratuities, and incidentals. Prize cannot be transferred or substituted, except that Times Publishing Company may substitute a Prize or Prizes of equal or greater value when necessary, as determined in its sole discretion. Winner should allow up to four days for delivery of the Prize.

All federal, state and location taxes fees and surcharges and any necessary or appropriate insurance are the responsibility of the Winner. The Winner agrees to pay all such taxes, fees and surcharges as required by law. Winner must complete a W-9 tax form provided by the Times Publishing Company prior to taking possession of the Prize. Any transportation required for the Winner to take possession of the Prize is the Winner's responsibility and will not be furnished by the Sponsor.

AFFIDAVIT AND RELEASE:

As noted above, Winner will be required to sign and return an Affidavit of Eligibility and General Release, which includes an affirmation of eligibility, a release and waiver of legal claims, and consent to publicity. Winner agrees to hold harmless the Sponsor, their parent, related, affiliated and subsidiary companies and their respective officers, directors, employees, agents and assigns (collectively, the “Released Entities”) from any and all liability for damages or losses of any nature incurred in connection with the use or misuse of the Prize. Failure to complete and sign the Affidavit of Eligibility and General Release will result in forfeiture of the Prize and its award to another Winner.

SPONSOR:

The Sponsor of the Contest is Times Publishing Company, PO Box 1121, St. Petersburg FL 33731.

WINNERS’ LIST:

For a list of Prize Winners send a self-addressed stamped envelope before July 31, 2026 to: NIE Educator of the Year 2026, Times Publishing Company - Newspaper in Education, PO Box 1121, St. Petersburg FL 33731.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Promotion rules shall be governed and enforced pursuant to Florida law, excluding choice of law provisions. Entrants and their parents or legal guardians agree to be bound by these rules by Entry into the Contest. The Contest is void where prohibited. The Sponsor is entitled to interpret these rules as needed and its decisions are final. The Sponsor reserves the right to correct typographical, clerical or printing errors in any promotion materials. The Sponsor may cancel or terminate this promotion if, for any reason beyond its control, the promotion is not capable of being run fairly or securely. Each Entrant acknowledges and agrees that Sponsor may use information submitted to contact Entrant and/or to offer the Sponsor’s products or services.

ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

All federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply. Void where prohibited by law. Promotion rules shall be governed and enforced pursuant to Florida law, excluding choice of law provisions. By entering the Contest, the entrant, for him/herself and for his/her heirs, executors, administrators, assigns and anyone else claiming by or through him/her, waives, covenants not to sue and fully releases and forever discharges any and all rights, claims or causes of action whatsoever that he/she may have against any of the Released Entities arising directly or indirectly out of entrant’s participation in the Contest. This waiver and release covers, without limitation, any damage, liability, cost, attorneys’ fees and expenses whatsoever, whether known or unknown and whether foreseeable or not. Sponsor reserves the right to make changes in the rules of the Contest, including the substitution of a Prize of equivalent value, which will become effective upon announcement. None of the Released Entities are responsible for typographical or other errors in printing, the offering, or the administration of the Contest or in the announcement of the Prize.

Sponsor is entitled to interpret these rules as needed and such decisions are final. Sponsor reserves the right to correct typographical, clerical or printing errors in any promotion materials.

For a copy of the Official Rules, send a self-addressed, postage pre-paid envelope to Official Rules Request, NIE Educator of the Year 2026, Times Publishing Company - Newspaper in Education, PO Box 1121, St. Petersburg FL 33731.

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