



Zach Murray is PCPS 2020 District Teacher of the Year

Ponca City Senior High Science Teacher Zach Murray has been selected as the Ponca City Public School 2020 District Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made at the annual Teacher of the Year Banquet held on February 20, 2019 at the high school commons.

With over 200 people in attendance, the banquet was catered by Ponca City Public Schools' Campus Catering. The theme for this year's event was "#TEAMPCPS!" The tables and room were decorated with Team Ponca décor in school colors red and blue.

The evening started with the Pledge of Allegiance and an invocation by Pastor Dewayne Bardwell from Ponca City Assembly Church. Superintendent Shelley Arrott gave the welcome and thanked everyone who helped with the banquet. She gave a special thanks to the Campus Mart Catering staff for the meal, the high school Student Council students for serving, and all the Central Office personnel responsible for the planning and preparations for the banquet. She introduced Ms. Betsy Easley, Professional Development/Teacher of the Year Committee representative, who explained the Teacher of the Year selection process.

Bret Smith, Executive Director of Operations, introduced the 2019 Teacher of the Year Lindsay Roehl Freeman who talked about her year as District Teacher of the Year. Bret also presented her with a gift basket from the district.

A media presentation using the banquet and a yearbook theme was shown highlighting each TOY candidate, produced by Chris Adams, Broadcast Engineer and Mary Ladd, District Public Information Coordinator.

Curtis Layton, Executive Director of Human Resources, recognized previous TOY candidates and introduced this year's nominees. As each candidate was introduced, student comments specifically written for their TOY candidate were read. According to attendees, these student comments are always one of the highlights of the banquet.

Each candidate was presented a beautiful bronze award of a student holding a star, along with a certificate from the district. Assisting with the presentations were Shelley Arrott, Dr. Don Nuzum (Board President), and Barbara Cusick (Executive Director of Curriculum).

Shelley Arrott and Curtis Layton made the big announcement of the new 2020 District Teacher of the Year – Drum roll please, and the big announcement was made. The 2020 District Teacher of the Year is Zach Murray! The crowd applauded and gave him a standing ovation as he made his way to the podium to give his acceptance speech.

Murray thanked everyone for the honor and stated that he did not achieve it on his own. “It takes a team to make a great teacher. I had help from lots of sources – all the different academic departments, district administration, support staff, and many more. Superintendent Arrott set the district theme this year as #TEAMPCPS – making us all a successful team. I am very proud to be a part of #TEAMPCPS.”

Shelley Arrott and Curtis Layton presented Murray with the award and a gift bag from local businesses and individuals. Patsy Williams presented him with a \$500 check from the Ponca City School Foundation, Inc. Superintendent Arrott read a special Citation of Commendation from State Senator Bill Coleman and State Representative Ken Luttrell from the State of Oklahoma.

Superintendent Shelley Arrott thanked everyone for coming and focused on how teacher advocacy for public education in Oklahoma has united our state to make education a top priority.

Arrott also shared stories of how teachers impact student lives not only through instruction, but also through the positive relationships they develop with their students. “Tonight, I want to tell you the story of Mary Schanski Cooper. Mary graduated from Po-Hi in 1935. She was born in 1918 in Owasso, Michigan, and was the fifth of nine children. Her parents were immigrants from an area in Central Europe, now known as Slovakia. Mary’s family frequently moved for work, which resulted in huge gaps in her learning. She eventually moved to Ponca City to live with her sister and brother in law, Helen and Ted Humes, in hopes of receiving a better education. Mary remembered her time in Ponca City as a very positive part of her life. Even though Mary did not attend college, she valued learning and felt she received an excellent education in Ponca City, and more importantly, she loved the way she was accepted and treated by her teachers and fellow classmates at Po-Hi. Because of her love for Po-Hi, upon her death in 2016, Mary bequeathed her entire estate to Ponca City Senior High School. The endowment she provided allowed us the funds to purchase something significant that will remain a legacy in our district for many years to come – a 9 foot Steinway Concert Grand Piano now adorning the stage of our new Concert Hall.”

“Please always remember the positive difference you make for our students every single day. I know, the work of reaching and teaching every student, is all-consuming, emotionally draining and often thankless. We content with variables most adults in private industry do not have to deal with – the constant changing emotional and academic needs of children. Countless hours of planning, preparation, reflection and collaboration occur in classrooms and professional learning communities across each site every day in this district. Always remember, everything you say and do is likely the topic of someone’s dinner discussion each evening. You are molding the future of many!”

“In closing, I want to tell you we have an unbelievable staff at PCPS. You work tirelessly on behalf of students and serve incredibly important roles in the lives of so many. Your impact is profound and reaches to places you will never see or realize. The lives you touch and the service you provide are unspeakable. I want to thank you for doing the most important work of all – educating the next generation, which is the real hope for our world for creating peace and solving great problems.”

“Thank you for modeling patience, courage, perseverance, wisdom, responsibility, generosity, and a commitment to lifelong-learning to the best of your ability each and every day in your classroom. Most of all, thank you for everything you have done and will continue to do to create a better future. The love you demonstrate for our students, our school, and our community has shaped who we are and what we are known for. I am incredibly proud to serve alongside each one of you as your superintendent. Thank you for being a member of Team PCPS and an Oklahoma educator. To quote the late PCPS employee Marty Ladd, “It’s just another day in paradise!”

*Pictured top left: Zach Murray with group of Po-Hi Student Council Students
Top right: Shelley Arrott & Zach Murray*

