



Ponca City Public School District Announces and Honors 2018 Teacher of the Year Nominees

The Ponca City Public School District is proud to announce and honor the 2018 site Teacher of the Year (TOY) nominees. The District Teacher of the Year will be announced at the annual TOY Banquet hosted by the district on February 21, 2017, 6:00 p.m. at the Senior High School. The theme this year is "We Treasure Our Teachers."

The Three Finalists Are - Britany Lawrence, Paula Macpherson-Cochran and Katy Thomason are the three finalists for the district. Each elementary site has one nominee with the secondary schools having more than one to allow a more proportional representation from each site. After the nominees are announced, the TOY Committee has the difficult task of selecting three finalists for the esteemed District Teacher of the Year honor. Each site TOY nominee is listed below along with information about each of them in keeping with the theme of *Treasuring Our Teachers*.

Finalist Britany Lawrence– Title I Math Teacher at East Middle School

"Ms. Lawrence is an excellent example of what a teacher should be," said East Principal Tami Flaspohler. "Her colleagues and students treasure her savviness with technology. Ms. Lawrence is hard working and compassionate about teaching. Her dedication to her students is second to none. She always adds a high level of creativity to her lessons, connecting Math to real life situations that her students can relate to. She assists with the Association of Classroom Teachers (ACT) and communicates well with staff members. We are very proud to have Ms. Lawrence represent us as East Middle School's Teacher of the Year. She is more than a treasure; she is the whole pot of gold!"

Finalist Paula Macpherson-Cochran – Orchestra Teacher at West Middle School

West Principal Curtis Layton said, "West Middle School has a treasure when it comes to Paula Macpherson-Cochran. Ms. Cochran's motto is 'whatever is best for kids.' Paula is not only passionate about orchestra and the music she teaches, but she is passionate about the education of the whole child. She works collaboratively with the entire school to support West's programs because she knows success in extracurricular is built on a strong educational foundation. Ms. Cochran teaches strings to 100 students at West in just three class periods. She manages each of her students with a firm hand while building strong relationships with them. The students and faculty are proud to recognize Paula Cochran-Macpherson as one of our Teachers of the Year."

Finalist Katy Thomason – 5th Grade Teacher at Liberty

"Katy Thomason is an educator we treasure at Liberty," said Liberty Principal Jennifer Martinez. "Ms. Thomason is a passionate teacher who cares deeply about student learning. She strives to make each day an opportunity that challenges her students academically and socially. Ms. Thomason is open to change, new ideas, new technology and new ways of approaching how to teach students. She is a mentor and teacher leader in incorporating district initiatives such as ST Math and Engage2Learn. It is truly a privilege to work with her."

Jeffrey Shelton – 4th Grade Teacher at Garfield

Garfield's Principal Lori Cox explained, "Jeff Shelton is definitely a treasure to Garfield Elementary. He has been a part of our staff for several years and has taught third, second, and fourth grades. He always has kind words and is positive with others. He values his colleagues and is always eager to help them. He is very generous with his pupils. In addition, Jeff is always willing to mentor troubled students. He is a master organizer for several of our parent involvement activities. We treasure what Jeff brings to our Garfield Stars."

Cassy Kendrick – PE Teacher at Lincoln

"Lincoln Elementary found a treasure when Cassy Kendrick was hired as the Physical Education teacher," reported Lincoln Principal Elizabeth Hargraves. "Her enthusiasm for physical activity inspires students, as well as staff. Cassy's goal is for kids to find physical activities they love so they can become active for their entire life. She takes whatever is going on in the environment, whether it is the weather, season, school, holiday, etc. and builds physical activities around them in her lessons. Don't be surprised when you stop by and see students ice skating on paper plates in the gym."

RaeShauna Anderson – Kindergarten Teacher at Roosevelt

Roosevelt Principal Ronda Merrifield said, "Ms. Anderson is a treasure to our students and the teaching profession through her diligence to challenge all students to reach their highest potential. Roughriders receive a trove of memorable experiences through her stories, patience and educational opportunities that are a valuable foundation for future learning adventures."

Alisa Becker – Art Teacher at Trout

Trout Principal Carla Fry said, "We treasure teachers that establish relationships. Alisa Becker establishes relationships that open the child's creative side. This allows a new framework for them to see themselves. I hope every child has a teacher that will open the door and support them on their new adventures. Andy Rooney said, 'Most of us end up with no more than five or six people who remember us. Teachers have thousands of people who remember them for the rest of their lives.'"

Mike Arnold – Special Education Teacher at Union

Union Principal Dr. Trina Resler said, "The best teachers have true, warm affections toward students and a genuine desire to impart to them what he believes to be of value. Mike Arnold is a real treasure because he shows us all that he cares for us and inspires us to be our best selves. We treasure Mr. Arnold because he values life, love, learning, honesty, and integrity. We know he treasures these, not because he tells us, but because he shows us through his contagious actions."

Christy Kurtz - 1st Grade Teacher at Woodlands

"We treasure our teachers like Ms. Kurtz because she genuinely makes a difference in the lives of her students," said Woodlands Principal Tim Williams. "She goes the extra mile to help her students achieve academically and socially, and she cares about what goes on in their lives outside of school as well. She is one of those teachers that you go back to visit long after you have been in her class."

Linda Gray – Pre-Kindergarten Teacher at Washington Pre-K Center

Pre-Kindergarten Principal Barbara Davis said, "We treasure Linda Gray at Washington PreK Center as our Teacher of the Year. She is a highly valued member of our staff. Ms. Gray has so many bright and shiny qualities. She is creative, innovative, caring, and giving, and she has a wealth of knowledge. She is willing to share her ideas, resources, and time to help us all be the best we can be. Her students are her passion and seeing them learn and grow truly makes her sparkle. Without a doubt, Ms. Gray is a treasure to the teaching profession."

Valerie Huffer – 7th Grade Language Arts Teacher at West Middle School

West Principal Curtis Layton said, "Valerie Huffer possesses many qualities that make her a treasure to West Middle School. She has a passion for teaching and recognizes the value and worth of each student. Ms. Huffer's students are fortunate to have a teacher who is warm and accessible. Her personality enables her to build a rapport with students, staff, and parents. Students in Valerie's classes know that learning requires them to ask and analyze; they are challenged to think, and take ownership of their own learning as she applies the Engage model. The West Middle School community is proud to recognize Valerie Huffer as one of our Teachers of the Year."

Troy Buller – Vocational Business & Information Technology Teacher at Ponca City Senior High

"Mr. Buller possesses 'with-it-ness,'" said Po-Hi Principal Thad Dilbeck. "He has natural abilities that enable him to make teaching look easy. One visit to his classroom and it's easy to see that his students are engaged, on-task, and enjoying the process. His knowledge and use of technology is great, but he continually seeks to expand his curriculum so that Po-Hi students are instructed in the use of the latest technology or software available. Mr. Buller also never fails to assist other staff members, clubs, or organizations when signage or graphic art work is requested. We treasure Mr. Buller and are thankful that he is a Po-Hi staff member!"

Zach Murray– Science Teacher at Ponca City Senior High

Po-Hi Principal Thad Dilbeck said, "Mr. Murray's ability in the classroom is second to none. He is the consummate professional. He is always willing to broaden his horizons as a teacher so that students are better prepared. He has high expectations for his students and is willing to provide extra help or remediation when needed for students to enjoy success. He is a favorite among the students and staff. Mr. Murray teaches regular and advanced courses, serves as a Professional Learning Committee (PLC) chair, serves as the ACT president, and consistently volunteers to serve on various Po-Hi and district committees. We treasure Mr. Murray and are thankful he is a Po-Hi staff member!"

Audra Mason – Counselor at Ponca City Senior High

High school Principal Thad Dilbeck said, "Ms. Mason is a Po-Hi treasure. Acting as our lead counselor, Ms. Mason consistently shows her true passion for students. She is hard working, professional, compassionate, and focused. I'd say that Ms. Mason continually goes above and beyond but 'above and beyond' is her norm. Ms. Mason possesses the 'IT' factor. Students love and respect her, teachers appreciate her abilities, and administration relies heavily on her expertise. We treasure Ms. Mason and are thankful she is a Po-Hi staff member!"

Mark Kimbrell – Math Teacher at Wildcat Academy

"The staff and students at Wildcat Academy treasure Coach Kimbrell for a myriad of reasons," said Director of Alternative Programs Karla Streeter. "Coach Kimbrell works diligently to help every student with their math. There are many days that he has a line of students at his desk needing his assistance. Mr. Kimbrell is patient with each student. The students know that he cares about them because he takes the time to get to know each one of them. Coach Kimbrell forms positive and lasting relationships with his students. His willingness to not only teach a difficult subject, but also to be an encouraging role model makes him a treasured part of Wildcat Academy."

Pictured top row, left to right: Jeffrey Shelton, Katy Thomason, Cassy Kendrick, RaeShauna Anderson, Alisa Becker, Mike Arnold, Christy Kurtz, Linda Gray

Bottom row: Valerie Huffer, Paula Macpherson-Cochran, Britany Lawrence, Troy Buller, Audra Mason, Zach Murray, Mark Kimbrell

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