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CONTACT: Communications
334-694-4686
comm@alsde.edu

STATE ANNOUNCES 2023 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINAL FOUR

New Alabama Teacher of the Year and Alternate will be Officially Announced Soon

Montgomery, Ala. – The list of 16 finalists has been narrowed to four of Alabama's most outstanding educators. Each of these educators is described as a true classroom ambassador.

The Alabama Teacher of the Year (TOY) Program is one of our state's oldest and most esteemed awards programs. This year's four finalists have been selected from a group of more than 150 highly skilled educators. The 2023-2024 finalists are:

Elementary



Jeffrey L. Norris
Shelby County School System
Oak Mountain Middle School
State School Board District III Elementary Teacher of the Year



Lauren Murdoch Brascho
Pell City School System
Coosa Valley Elementary School
State School Board District VI Elementary Teacher of the Year

Secondary



Kevin Pughsley
Hoover City School System
Berry Middle School
State School Board District III Secondary Teacher of the Year



Katie McGee
Cullman City School System
Cullman Middle School
State School Board District VI Secondary Teacher of the Year

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Additional Information

The next step for the final four is an extensive interview with the state judging committee. The 2023-2024 Alabama Teacher of the Year will be announced on May 10, 2023.

The Teacher of the Year spends the school year serving as an official spokesperson for Alabama education and the teaching profession. Also, they represent our state for the National Teacher of the Year Award.

Jeffrey L. Norris – *Shelby County School System – Oak Mountain Middle School*
(State School Board District Three)

Jeff Norris strives to live out John Maxwell's philosophy, "a great leader's courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position." He began his formal career in a variety of distinct positions with the Shelby County School System, including as a third and fifth grade classroom educator. He was also a highly effective Gifted Education teacher.

He attained National Board Certification and degrees in both Educational and Teacher Leadership. He also entered school administration for eight years and served as an administrative assistant, assistant principal, and school principal.

As the COVID-19 pandemic prompted many to consider life changes, Jeff Norris courageously decided to return to the classroom. He taught Advanced English Language Arts at Oak Mountain Middle School and sixth grade mathematics.

He believes all members of the education community–school personnel, classroom teachers, administrators, and parents–have a responsibility to lead. Jeff Norris works every day to promote student-centered, positive, and inspirational learning.

Lauren Murdoch Brascho – *Pell City School System – Coosa Valley Elementary School*
(State School Board District Six)

Lauren Murdoch Brascho may be called "teacher" by many, but the word "encourager" would more properly define her personal path to becoming a top educator. She wanted to become a real role model who could encourage others to consider the teaching field.

Lauren Murdoch Brascho makes it her personal mission to encourage each of her students to truly follow their dreams. She is also dedicated to showing them, through her actions, that she genuinely believes in them. She obtained her undergraduate degree from the University of Montevallo in 2009. She later went on to attend graduate school at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2014.

She has worked for the Pell City School System for 13 years and currently teaches third grade at Coosa Valley Elementary School. She was awarded both the Chick-fil-A Teacher of the Month award and Pell City Schools' National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) Scholarship.

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Kevin Pughsley – *Hoover City School System – Berry Middle School*
(State School Board District Three)

As a young student, Kevin Pughsley struggled with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and found it hard to learn in class. In high school, two inspirational teachers changed this for him. They made learning both exciting and relevant.

He realized how impactful teaching could be and developed a personal desire to become a great teacher himself. Following his dream, Kevin Pughsley attended Samford University and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Elementary/Special Education and a Master of Science in Education. During his teaching internship, he was told "you shouldn't be a teacher because you will never be good at it." This fueled him and made him truly realize the power of words.

Now as an experienced educator, Kevin Pughsley is a mentor teacher for A+ College Ready. He is a top trainer for educators across Alabama and uses Marzano's New Art of Teaching and *Five Questions Every Teacher Should Ask* to encourage other educators to obtain and consider student and parent feedback. He advocates for all educators to teach with enthusiasm and make learning fun and inspiring.

Kevin Pughsley focuses on developing positive relationships with at-risk students and their parents. In 2018, he received the prestigious Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) National Award.

Katie McGee – *Cullman City School System – Cullman Middle School*
(State School Board District Six)

Katie McGee, a seventh grade English language arts National Board Certified teacher at Cullman Middle School personifies a life-long learner. She always dreamed of becoming a famous actress and grew up practicing her personal acceptance speech for the Academy Awards.

She even won first place for her monologue at the 2001 Alabama State Thespian Competition. Now as a top educator, she shares her love and enjoyment for storytelling with her students.

Katie McGee uses her great acting skills to bring literature to life for her students. It keeps them engaged and excited about learning.

She has strengthened her classroom skills by earning a Bachelor's degree in social studies in 2013 and a Master of Arts in English Language Arts from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She is now an adjunct instructor at Wallace State Community College.

Katie McGee will officially complete her educational specialist degree this year. Her top priority has always been to ensure that every student experiences personal success, gains confidence in the classroom, embraces risk taking, and truly sees themselves as being "smart."

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