



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release
November 15, 2010**

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LITTLE ROCK: In an awards ceremony televised and web-streamed live by Today's THV, Kathy A. Powers of Conway was named the 2011 Arkansas Teacher of the Year at the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock on Friday night. Powers, a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School in the Conway School District, received a \$15,000 cash award with the title. In addition, she will represent Arkansas in the 2011 National Teacher of the Year competition and spend the 2011-2012 school year working in residence at the Arkansas Department of Education.

Governor Mike Beebe, Arkansas Education Commissioner Tom W. Kimbrell, 2010 National Teacher of the Year Sarah Brown Wessling and 2010 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Vandy Nash presented the award to Powers.

"We are so proud to be able to honor some of our finest teachers, in such a festive way," Kimbrell said. "Teachers play such an integral role in the lives of our students, and the 14 who are here tonight definitely go above and beyond to connect with students and push them to higher levels of learning."

Fourteen regional finalists were selected by a committee of former teachers of the year and Arkansas Department of Education Office of Teacher Quality staff. Those 14 were narrowed to four, with the winner being Powers and three runners-up being:

- First runner-up Therese Thompson, a fifth-grade teacher at John Tyson Elementary School in the Springdale School District
- Second runner-up Karen S. Hart, a high school biology teacher at Jonesboro High School in the Jonesboro School District
- Third runner-up Mary Katherine Parson, a high school biology teacher at Central High School in the Little Rock School District

The 10 regional finalists include:

- Blair Ballard, a fourth-grade teacher at Walnut Ridge Elementary School in the Lawrence County School District
- Vickie Beene, an 11th-grade English teacher at Nashville High School in the Nashville School District
- Julie Boyd, a second grade teacher at Hurricane Creek Elementary School in the Bryant School District
- Jeannette Dempsey, an Environmental and Spatial Technology teacher and a kindergarten Spanish teacher at College Hill Elementary IB World School in the Texarkana School District

- Oretha Faye Ferguson, a 10th-grade English teacher at Southside High School in the Fort Smith School District
- Kristy Parish, a kindergarten teacher at Westside Elementary School in the Searcy School District
- Rebecca Vaughn, a kindergarten teacher at Wedlock Elementary School in the West Memphis School District
- Maryann Walker, a third grade teacher at M.A. Hardin Elementary School in the White Hall School District
- Carolyn Whisenant, a kindergarten teacher at Mountain Home Kindergarten in the Mountain Home School District
- Emily Kathryn White, a kindergarten teacher at Monticello Elementary School in the Monticello School District

Thanks to grant money provided by The Walton Family Foundation, each of the finalists will receive \$1,000, with the Arkansas Teacher of the Year receiving an additional \$14,000. In addition to The Walton Family Foundation and Today's THV 11, major sponsors for the event are: SMART Technologies, Blue Bell Creameries, Wendy's, Delta Dental of Arkansas and Entergy Arkansas.

The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.