



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Tom W. Kimbrell, Commissioner

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News Release

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FOUR FINALISTS FOR ARKANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED

LITTLE ROCK — Four teachers from across Arkansas are one step closer to the title 2012 Teacher of the Year. Today, the Arkansas Department of Education released the names of the state finalists for the coveted award.

"Research shows the most important school-related factor affecting student performance is the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders," said Arkansas Education Commissioner Dr. Tom Kimbrell. "Arkansas is fortunate to have thousands of extraordinary educators serving students across our state. These four teachers are among the best. Their value to our students and our state is immeasurable. We are pleased to honor their work and dedication through this recognition."

The four state finalists are:

— **Matthew Garrett of Rogers.** He is a 4th and 5th grade science teacher at Old Wire Road Elementary School with 11 years experience. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Louisiana at Monroe and a master's degree from Arkansas State University.

— **Kara Jones of Conway.** She is a 5th grade math teacher at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School with eight years experience. She has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Christian Brothers University in Memphis.

— **Shelina Mashail Warren of Pine Bluff.** She is a 9th grade social studies teacher at Jack Robey Junior High School with eight years experience. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas at Monticello and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

— **Kimberly Kaye Wilson of Monticello.** She is a 9th-12th grade visual art teacher at Monticello High School with 16 years experience. She has bachelor's degrees from Winthrop University in South Carolina and Trinity College in Vermont and master's degrees from Kent State University in Ohio and the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

A panel from the Arkansas Department of Education spent this week visiting each of the four state finalists at their schools and observing each in their classrooms. The panel will recommend to Kimbrell its choice for the next Teacher of the Year. The winner will be announced in November.

The state finalists were chosen among regional finalists throughout Arkansas representing each education service cooperative and Pulaski County.

Other regional finalists were Megan Davis of Blytheville, Marilyn Gillespie of Benton, Shonda Wrinkle of Ashdown, Kisa Morman of West Memphis, Margaret Elumbaugh of Batesville, Brooke Bramlett of Lawrence County, Chrystine McClung of Eureka Springs, Jennifer Kimbrell of North Little Rock, Wanda Williams of Bearden, Elizabeth Green of Texarkana, Meghan Estep of Fort Smith, and Lorraine Nielsen of Searcy.

The Arkansas Department of Education extends congratulations to all the teachers.

Photographs of the four state finalists are available upon request to Seth Blomeley (contact above).

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