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ECSD NEWS RELEASE

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ECSD's Top Five Candidates for Teacher of the Year

Pensacola, FL: The Escambia County School District's 2018 Teacher of the Year (as in the 2017-2018 year) will be announced during the Escambia County Public Schools Foundation's Golden Apple Dinner, this Friday, Jan. 27, 2017, at New World Landing. Media are welcome, please email kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us with your intentions.

Below you will find out a little about each of the top five candidates. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Name: Lisa Bloodworth

School: J. Hh Workman Middle School
Academy: Health Academy: Culinary Arts
Years of Teaching: 28

Professional credentials: In addition to her teaching certifications, she has completed the ProStart Program at Johnson and Wales Culinary School, and Serv Safe certification (managerial level).

Quote from Principal Traci Ursrey, "Ms. Bloodworth's enthusiasm, dedication, and expertise are the driving force behind the success of the health academy program. She worked with people in her field to develop the curriculum, obtain necessary resources, and build a successful program."

What would you tell a new teacher? I would tell a new teacher that this can be the most rewarding profession out there. There are numerous rewards involved in working with students. No two days are the same, and it is always entertaining. You will constantly be growing and trying to change to challenge both yourself and the students. But don't go into this profession expecting praise and immediate rewards. You find the challenges that go along with the profession to be many, but worth it at the end of the day. When you have a current or previous student who comes back to tell you about a moment of success, you find that it is well worth all the work you did.

What do you wish our community knew about teachers and the teaching profession? I wish that our community knew how hard teachers plan and work to come up with activities for our classes. Most teachers are hard working and want their students to succeed. We really do want

the best for our students in order to produce productive citizens that will thrive in society. Also, be a part of the education system. All of us have something to offer our students. I take many field trips to show the students the outside world and what opportunities are out there for them. I believe that you need to include the community in helping to teach the students. After all, they learn better by seeing and experiencing than sitting in the classroom.

Who is the teacher you remember most from your years as a student and what was special about that person? I remember my Food and Nutrition teacher from high school. She was very strict, but fair. We were able to cook as a group in her room, but she never lost her cool. She was always calm and collected. I remember that she wore dresses and heels every day and never broke a sweat. Looking back, I am not sure how she did it. Especially because now I am in her place and can't even begin to understand how she was able to walk around in those heels in the kitchen. That took talent. She was always finding fun ways to relate food and nutrition to our groups. She also encouraged us in the groups to be a family. That is what I instill in my students. I figure that if you eat together many times then you become a family of sorts. I want them to work together and realize that they all have something to offer the group and help each other. Also my mom was a teacher and she showed me every day what to do in the classroom by how she treated us at home. She was very caring and loving in how she corrected us and taught us skills that we needed to be good people. My mom still comes up to the school to help me in the classroom. The students love working with her because she finds a way to include all students and make them want to learn. She really leads them to better skills and understanding.

Name: Lacey Brown

School: Jim Allen Elementary

Grade: 3

Years of Teaching: 3

Professional credentials: Certified to teach Prekindergarten and ESOL (English as a second language)

Quote from Principal Rachel Watts, "Ms. Lacey Brown has been involved in many leadership roles at our school. For example, she began our Friday Shout-Outs to recognize and praise our teachers and staff. She is an integral part of our faculty who goes above and beyond her required duties and she is willing to help any student, teacher, support staff or parent any time."

Who is the teacher you remember most from your years as a student and what was special about that person? The teacher that I remember the most is Mr. Rob Doss. He was my teacher for several social studies classes during my time at West Florida High School. His varied experiences in life made him a captivating storyteller. He cared about what he taught, and he was able to make it applicable to my life. I was not excited about taking economics my senior year, but I soon found that it was one of my favorite classes. I learned, from him, that a great teacher can make any content engaging. Mr. Doss praised my hard work and determination more than any teacher I had ever had; I felt like I was more than a name on a roster. He was caring,

compassionate, and kind. I always knew that he wanted to see me succeed in whatever challenges I faced. I hope that I am a "Mr. Doss" for my own students.

What do you hope your students will take away from their time in your classroom? I hope that my students will come away from my classroom with two things. First, I want them to know how valuable they are and how much they have to offer the world. My goal is to have encouraged them so much throughout the year that when they leave my classroom they know that they are important and that they have contributions to make to society. Secondly, I hope that my students leave my classroom with a love of learning. Everything that I do in my classroom, from engaging technology to flexible seating, is designed to make students enjoy the learning process. If they come away from my classroom knowing they are valued deeply, realizing they are important, and looking to their future with excitement, then I know I have done my job well.

What is the best or funniest thing you ever learned from one of your students? The funniest thing I have ever learned from my students is that I cannot dance. Okay, maybe I already knew that! I like to be silly and fun with my students, and I enjoy learning about the things they like. Last year, a group of my girls tried to teach me a popular dance at recess. I tried my best, but despite their best teaching efforts, I was informed that my technique was not correct. I learned, or was reminded, that I cannot dance, but I was also reminded how important it is to connect to your students! I have learned that when students know that you care about them and their interests, they are more willing to give you their attention and hard work in the classroom.

Name: Angelia Grimes

School: Hellen Caro Elementary

Grade: 1st grade Self-Contained ESE Classroom

Years of Teaching: 6

Professional Credentials: Certified to teach Elementary (Kindergarten through sixth grade) and Exceptional Student Education.

Quote from Principal Sandy Moore, "Mrs. Grimes-Graeme is truly a teacher who loves to teach. She creates a classroom environment that ensures that all students are successful and she firmly believes that every child can, and will, learn in her classroom."

What would you tell a new teacher or a prospective teacher about the profession? I would tell a new teacher to please remember that as a teacher you are always honing your craft. No matter how many years of experience you have or training you have received, teachers never reach a level of perfection. That first year will feel overwhelming, but that's ok! Each year you will get better and more efficient, but the path of growing will never be over. Reach out and build a community of other teachers that are like-minded and use those people for support. Those people may not be in your grade level, or even your school, but find your tribe of teachers and support each other. It may take a village to raise a child, but each teacher needs their own like-minded tribe.

What do you wish our community knew about teaching? I wish my parents (and parents in the community) knew how much I care about my students. When they're not at school, I think about them and hope they are having a good weekend or holiday. If I know they are having a special celebration coming up, I am thinking about them on that day. If they are going through a hard time, I worry about them. When a student enters my classroom, they become someone that I care deeply about. Their personal well-being and social growth matters to me just as much, if not more, as their academic growth.

Who is the teacher you remember most from your years as a student and what was special about that person? My 11th grade AP U.S. History teacher went above and beyond to support me during a tough personal year. His classroom was a safe place for students. He opened his doors for us to eat lunch in his room. His classroom was rigorous, but judgment free. I truly credit him for giving me the opportunity to be successful that school year and graduate high school.

Name: Emily McMillan

School: C.A. Weis Elementary School

Grade: 2nd grade

Years of Teaching: 10

Professional Credentials: Certified to teach Elementary (Kindergarten to 6th grade), ESOL (English as a second language)

Quote from Principal Holly Magee, "When you walk into Ms. McMillan's classroom, you will see standards-based, student driven, teaching at it's best. She also teaches so much more than the academic child in her room. She teaches her students to be polite, thoughtful, and to do for others."

What is your goal as a teacher? My goal is that every child fully understands that I see them for more than their story and that they can and will become much more than their experiences. One of my favorite quotes comes from the book, *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*, "Moreover, by altering our approach, we can begin to see students as more than their story. All too often, we reduce students to their experiences and make decisions about their capabilities based on those experiences." I want my students to always remember to strive to continue becoming the best they can be! "And all the colors I am inside have not been invented yet." -Light in the Attic

What do you wish our community knew about teaching? I wish that the community recognized the bigger connection between our nation and the teaching profession. Simply stated, we educate to elevate. Leaving a legacy is inevitable for teachers, but the depth of our influence to elevate extends much further than most recognize. I love the quote from Dave Burgess, "It's not just about raising test scores; it's about raising human potential. We are in the life changing business." This life changing mindset is so much more than just with the future of our nation. We, the teachers, elevate our students, other teachers, schools, communities, our state, and the nation's global position.

What do you hope your students will take away from their time in your classroom? In my classroom, we constantly say that we are becoming a champion of life. In reality, I hope my students take away more than just learning from the time when they are in my classroom. The words that we have chosen as a class to describe a champion of life are: hope, inspiration, courage, and perseverance. In my classroom, we have adopted a phrase from South Africa, "Ubuntu". This can be translated as "human kindness," but the meaning is much larger. The idea of "Ubuntu" is based on the concept of human connection, that I am what I am because of who we all are together. It embraces the idea of connection, community, and hope. I want students to make our community, city, state, and nation a better place! We refer to the Nelson Mandela quote as a reminder that we are growing for a bigger purpose than just for us! "Am I going to enrich myself in order to enable my community around me to be able to improve?" Nelson Mandela

Name: Cassie Mense

School: Myrtle Grove Elementary

Grade: 4th grade ESE Inclusion Class

Years of Teaching: 7

Professional credentials: Certified to teach Elementary Education (grades Kindergarten through 6th grade), Exceptional Student Education, and she has the ESOL (English as a second language) Endorsement.

Quote from Principal Robin Maloy, "Mrs. Mense embodies the spirit of a passionate educator. She is always looking for innovative ways to engage her students. She is willing to try new strategies and introduce her students to new technologies and manipulatives. It is not unusual for Mrs. Mense to seek out and attend professional development opportunities which help her grow as an educator."

What would you tell a new teacher or a prospective teacher about the profession? Your best days are the unexpected. You can plan a lesson page for page but there will always be moments that you never see coming, which bring the biggest learning in your class. Your students will have moments that they blow you away with their kindness, their intelligence, and their understanding of things around them. We once had a discussion on a story about 9-11 that to this day nearly brings me to tears. They went so far beyond the lesson plan in trying to truly understand the day.

Who is the teacher you remember most from your years as a student and what was special about that person? The strongest part of my personality evolved in High School when I joined Drama at Tate High School. Mr. Ron Archer was an incredible mentor, tough at times, but brought out the best we could be. I went into drama shy and over those few years he gave me the confidence to stand up and be passionate about something I loved to do. He challenged us because he knew we had it in us, that I had it in me. That confidence built with each challenge and rolled over into college and beyond and continues to build every day in my profession.

What is your goal as a teacher? No matter what lesson or activity my kids might associate with fourth grade, I want them to always know they are capable of great things. There is so much potential within every child that walks into my room no matter where they come from or where

they have been. I want them to see it and know that the road may not always be easy, but there will be someone always thinking about them and cheering for them to succeed. They are going to have to take on challenges, but the end result is worth it.

Media queries about Escambia County School District topics should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at 850-469-6219 or kstefansson@escambia.k12.fl.us. Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfl

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