

Good evening and welcome again to our honorees and invited guests,

Together with Kathryn Rossman from the Agency of Education, we are the state coordinators for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. Unfortunately, Kathryn cannot be with us this evening. Fortunately, we have Pat Fitzsimmons from the Agency of Education who serves as a mentor for PAEMST applicants, to serve in Kathryn's place in introducing our science finalists.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teaching. The Awards were established by Congress in 1983. The President may recognize up to 108 exemplary teachers each year and awards alternate years between elementary and secondary educators.

Awards are given to teachers from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Department of Defense Education Activity schools, and the U.S. territories as a group (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and U.S. Virgin Islands). Each jurisdictional awardee will receive a \$10,000 National Science Foundation award and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. for the awards ceremony, recognition events, and professional development opportunities.

The award recognizes those teachers have both deep content knowledge of the subjects they teach and the ability to motivate and enable students to be successful in those areas. Since the program's inception, more than 5,200 teachers have been recognized for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession.

Awardees reflect the expertise and dedication of the Nation's teaching corps, and they demonstrate the positive impact of excellent teachers on student achievement. The National Science Foundation administers

PAEMST on behalf of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Before awardees are ultimately determined by the national selection committee, they first go through a rigorous selection process here in Vermont by a committee of past awardees and other accomplished professionals. Members from the state selection committee have been invited tonight to share in the celebration. I believe only Jenny Hewitt was able to attend. Jenny can you stand up and be recognized please.

In my capacity as a state coordinator, I oversee the selection process for Math and take great pride in celebrating ALL of our state finalists here at the annual VT-NEA Accomplished Teacher Reception. Just two weeks ago, our state finalists were honored with a Concurrent House Resolution and congratulated by the General Assembly under our golden dome in Montpelier.

Without further ado, **let us begin by honoring our three state finalists in Science, Engineering and Technology.** Finalists, please come up when your name is called and remain with Pat and I until both have been introduced.

(Pat)

Alyssa Castellini

“Making science accessible to all students and promoting their growth continues to be Alyssa’s primary focus.” Alyssa Castellini is a 3-5th grade science teacher at Bethel Elementary School. Over the course of the past 10 years Alyssa has developed her skills as an educator, excelling at engaging *all* students in scientific inquiry and discovery. She puts equity and inclusion at the forefront of her teaching practice and pays attention to individual student needs, addressing them in a way that builds confidence and engages learners. Alyssa readily tackles student misconceptions by using examples that students can easily understand and then draw parallels to the material at hand. Acknowledging that there is always more for her to learn as an educator, she uses data to guide her teaching and to highlight areas for improvement in her own practices. Alyssa is also a

leader in her professional community. She exhibits a willingness to step up as a lead educator, serving as a role model for other teachers and providing avenues by which they can improve their teaching practices. This year, we had the pleasure of witnessing Alyssa's leadership abilities as she assumed the responsibility of leading the White River Valley SU K-5 science educators to further develop the district's proficiency-based learning initiatives. Tonight, we would like to acknowledge Alyssa Castellini for her exceptional contributions to science education in Vermont.

JoAnn Harvey

It is with great pleasure that we acknowledge JoAnn Harvey as a PAEMST science finalist for Vermont. JoAnn is a 2nd grade teacher at Georgia Elementary School who models a passion for science. She encourages her young learners to deepen their understanding of science concepts through engaging instructional practices that inspire curiosity and inquiry. As her students explore and question the environment around them, JoAnn addresses student questions and misconceptions by bringing in real-world connections and experiences into her classroom. She does this by using hands-on teaching strategies to ensure that every student understands the material and is able to engage with it in a meaningful and authentic way. The activities and learning experiences are so powerful that students come back years later to talk about what they learned in Ms. Harvey's class! JoAnn's enthusiasm for science extends outside of the school day. She has had a long-standing commitment to running after-school STEM clubs and creating opportunities for community engagement in the school setting. She created a planet walk in the school building, a bird sanctuary, and a labyrinth outside the building; giving all in the community an opportunity to engage and learn in these alternative/educational spaces. A colleague of JoAnn shared with us that, "JoAnn has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in teaching and has made a significant impact on the lives of her students, families, and our community." And a parent shared, "What sets Jo Ann apart is her unwavering enthusiasm and creativity in the classroom." JoAnn, tonight we would like to acknowledge you for your exceptional contributions to science education in Vermont.

(Kate)

I'm very proud this evening to honor our state finalist in Mathematics and Computer Science.

Our state finalist for mathematics comes to us from the Washington Village School in Washington Vermont. Throughout her years of teaching she has served as a math coach, math leader, mentor for new teachers, math tutor and facilitated math programming after school.

Her Superintendent says this about her. "She is a master of utilizing student assessments to evaluate, monitor, and enhance student learning. She works with her school data teams to employ a variety of assessment methods to gauge her students' progress and tailor her instruction accordingly. Her experience and work with data teams has allowed her to fine-tune her assessment strategies, providing timely and targeted interventions to ensure that EVERY student reaches their full potential in mathematics."

After 29 years of teaching in our public schools, she still LOVES working with students. It is with great pleasure we honor this evening, Kathy Gingras.

It is very exciting to see Vermont put forth such exceptional educators as state finalists for the PAEMST. The waiting game continues as the National Selection Committee makes their choices for one Vermont Math and one Vermont Science Awardee from this amazing group of educators.

Congratulations again to our three state finalists, thank you for your service to Vermont students and families and to our public schools, and good luck!

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention that nominations will open this fall for 7-12th grade teachers. If you know an outstanding middle/high school STEM teacher, consider nominating them for this prestigious award. Thank you!