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PRESS RELEASE

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Lewisville, Granbury ISD Teachers Named Regional Teachers of the Year

(White Settlement, TX). A Lewisville ISD elementary teacher and Granbury ISD secondary teacher have been selected to represent the north Texas region in this year's state Teacher of the Year competition. Dr. Isela Russell, a third-grade Spanish immersion teacher at Wellington Elementary School in Lewisville ISD, and Michael Beauchamp, an automotive technology teacher at Granbury High School in Granbury ISD, were named the 2023 Region 11 Teachers of the Year during a special awards ceremony on August 1, 2023. The event, hosted by the Education Service Center Region 11 and generously funded by the EECU credit union, recognizes all of the teachers of the year from school districts in the north Texas region. The Teacher of the Year Program, sponsored by the Texas Association of School Administrators, allows districts to submit one elementary and one secondary candidate to compete at the regional and state levels. Eighty-eight teachers, representing 46 school districts in Region 11, participated in this year's competition.

District winners who competed for the regional award were required to submit their resumes describing their educational history and professional development. In addition, they were asked to write their own professional biography as well as five lengthy essays detailing:

- a defining lesson they have developed,
- a special project or initiative they have participated in that creates school culture,
- an example of how they connect students to the community,
- how they have grown as a leader and learner as a result of being an advocate, and
- their message/platform should they be selected as the National Teacher of the Year.

The regional selection panel, comprised of teachers (including two past regional winners), central office staff, and a superintendent from school districts within Region 11, reviewed and scored all of the essays

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before selecting Russell and Beauchamp as the regional winners. In addition to these two regional winners, 10 teachers (five elementary candidates and five secondary candidates) were recognized with a “best of category” essay award.

Dr. Isela Russell

Dr. Isela Russell has been an educator for 20 years, serving in Lewisville ISD since 2015. She graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2002, earning two bachelor’s degrees (Spanish and Sociology). She went on to earn her master’s degree in 2003. In 2013, she received her doctorate in K-16 Educational Leadership and Policy Study from the University of Texas Arlington. Prior to joining the teaching staff at Lewisville ISD, she served as an instructional math specialist and a bilingual math teacher in Irving ISD.

In 2023, Dr. Russell was honored to be named the Lewisville Independent School District Teacher of the Year, recipient of the Texas Lifetime Honorary PTA Award, as well as Best in Denton County Elementary Teacher in 2022. Additionally, Dr. Russell was named District Teacher of the Year for Irving ISD in 2010. She is a passionate educator who holds all students, colleagues, and herself to the highest expectations. She is a strong believer in César Chávez’s phrase, “¡Sí Se Puede!” (“Yes, you can!”), and believes that ALL students, regardless of backgrounds, can make “Pigs Fly.” As a young girl, she faced many obstacles in the education system. After overcoming personal challenges, such as learning English and becoming the first in her family to pursue Higher Education, she made an oath to become an educator who always gives 110% so her students, and anyone around her, can reach their fullest potential and believe that ANYTHING is possible.

“Her story is so compelling,” stated Chrissy Greeling, a judge from Keller ISD. “She shares how her family was from Mexico and that she had to repeat the third grade simply because her parents couldn’t communicate effectively with school officials. She goes on to say that she is a tireless advocate for public education, which is so important in today’s climate.”

“Dr. Russell keeps her ‘Yes, you can!’ theme running throughout her application, and it is so inspiring that she believes in paying it back one student at a time,” states Kellie Conlon, a judge from Crowley ISD.

“She sums up her message in one statement: You were made to be a difference maker. She truly has made a difference!” shared John Williams, a judge from Mansfield ISD.

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Michael Beauchamp

Michael Beauchamp earned his bachelor's degree in Workforce Education and Development from Southern Illinois University. Beauchamp brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role. A former U.S. Marine with 30+ years of experience, Beauchamp served in the military as a Logistics and Readiness Manager, a Maintenance Chief for a light-attack helicopter squadron and an aviation logistics squadron, and a Senior Training Manager from the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training. He took this wealth of experience and brought it to Granbury ISD, where he serves as an automotive technology teacher at Granbury High School.

"I just love the way he runs his classroom," shared Chandra Turrentine, a judge from Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD. "He also does so much to advocate for his students!"

"He finds ways to motivate his students and sets them up for success outside of the classroom," stated Lisa Day, a judge from Northwest ISD. "He finds ways to continue growing so that he can give back to kids."

"He's a very student-centered educator," shared Dr. Jeff Russell, a judge from Denton ISD. "That sentiment was evident throughout his application."

Russell and Beauchamp will now compete at the state level for the Texas Teacher of the Year award. The Texas Association of School Administrators' selection committee will meet to review the applications of the regional winners on August 14, 2023, and then name three elementary teachers and three secondary teachers as state semifinalists in the competition on September 5. These six semifinalists will then participate in an interview with the selection committee on October 19. The elementary and secondary state winners will be announced on October 20.

The 10 "best of category" essay award winners recognized at the ceremony are:

Defining Lesson/Unit Essay

Elementary – Tiffany Stokes, Aledo ISD

Secondary – Amie Adams, Krum ISD

Project/Initiative Essay

Elementary – Ashley Benson, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD

Secondary – Stephanie Riley, Denton ISD

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Connecting Students to the Community Essay

Elementary – Tammy Rainey, Decatur ISD

Secondary – Sarah Milosh, Azle ISD

Growing through Advocacy Essay

Elementary – Stefan Benedetti, Carroll ISD

Secondary – Morgan Wright, Weatherford ISD

National Teacher of the Year Platform Essay

Elementary – Corrine Brookshire, Arlington ISD

Secondary – Jodi Brownlee, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD

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