



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 2023

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**ALABAMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED –
OAK MOUNTAIN MIDDLE SCHOOL’S JEFFREY L. NORRIS
SELECTED 2023-2024 TOP EDUCATOR**

*“Berry Middle School Secondary Teacher Kevin Pughsley Named
Alabama’s Alternate State Teacher of the Year!”*

Montgomery, Ala. – A special event was held at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts this evening. The Alabama State Board of Education officially announced this year’s Alabama Teacher of the Year and Alternate State Teacher of the Year.

This exciting event narrowed the list of 16 finalists announced earlier to our state’s two most outstanding educators. Mr. Jeffrey L. Norris, who teaches at Oak Mountain Middle School located in the Shelby County School System, has been named the 2023-2024 Alabama Teacher of the Year (TOY). He will serve as the state’s official ambassador for public education and the teaching profession.



As an accomplished educator in the Shelby County School System, Mr. Norris inspires students and families in his community to achieve.



Alabama Teacher of the Year Jeffrey L. Norris strives to live out John Maxwell's philosophy, “a great leader’s courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position.” He began his formal career in a variety of distinct positions with the Shelby County School System, including as a third and fifth grade classroom educator. He was also a highly effective gifted education teacher.

Alabama Teacher of the Year Jeffrey L. Norris attained National Board Certification and degrees in both Educational and Teacher Leadership. He also entered school administration for eight years and served as an administrative assistant, assistant principal, and school principal.

As the COVID-19 pandemic prompted many to consider life changes, Jeffrey L. Norris courageously decided to return to the classroom. He taught Advanced English Language Arts at Oak Mountain Middle School and sixth grade mathematics.

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STATE ANNOUNCES 2023-2024 STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Alabama Teacher of the Year Jeffery L. Norris believes all members of the education community school personnel, classroom teachers, and parents have a responsibility to lead. He works every day to promote student-centered, positive, and inspirational learning.

“My beliefs about teaching center on three words environment, engagement, and empowerment,” said Alabama Teacher of the Year Jeffery L. Norris. “I ensure that my students are connected to the world around them. When I plan lessons, I keep engagement at the forefront and will go to extreme lengths to engage and gain the attention of our students. During my career, I have attended professional development workshops, completed research, and presented state and local workshops on positive classroom transformations. A physical change of the classroom environment can set the tone for learning and immediately grabs students’ attention and focus. It provides a cohesive theme, which ties standards to learning and classroom activities.”

When asked to describe the positive impact that Mr. Norris is having on achievement, one local student (Saisha) said, “This was the best class! My friends, classmates, and Mr. Norris were more like my family, and this was the first class where I could open up and truly talk without overthinking.” Another student (Tessa) said, “I remember on the first day of school, Mr. Norris handed us a quote to illustrate. Mine was, ‘There is no elevator to success – you have to take the stairs.’ I told it to my dad, and he still tells it to me constantly. Every time I hear it, I think back to that day in English class that changed my life.”



Tonight, **Berry Middle School Science Teacher Kevin Pughsley** was also named Alabama’s Alternate Teacher of the Year. This highly respected school is located in the Hoover City School System.

As a young student, Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley struggled with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and found it hard to learn in class. In high school, two inspirational teachers changed this for him and made learning exciting and relevant.

He realized how impactful teaching could be and developed a personal aspiration to become a great teacher. Following his dream, Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley attended Samford University and obtained a bachelor’s degree in Elementary/Special Education and master’s degree in education.

During his teaching internship, he was told “you shouldn’t be a teacher because you will never be good at it.” This fueled him and made him truly realize the power of words. Now as an experienced educator, Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley is a mentor teacher for A+ College Ready. He is a top trainer for educators across Alabama and uses Marzano’s *New Art of Teaching* and *Five Questions Every Teacher Should Ask* to encourage other educators to consider student and parent feedback. He also advocates for all educators to teach with enthusiasm.

Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley focuses on building positive relationships with at-risk students and parents. In 2018, he received the prestigious Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) National Award.

STATE ANNOUNCES 2023-2024 STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

“I believe in and teach my students the importance of a growth mindset,” said Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley. “My colleagues and I try to bring our students and families into a community of caring. I enjoy encouraging our new educators to utilize best practices, district-wide training, and small group mentoring opportunities. I am truly thankful to my family, colleagues, students, and local community for their great support.”

Additional Information

After being selected the Alabama Teacher of the Year spends a majority of the school year serving as an official spokesperson for education. The Alabama Teacher of the Year presents professional workshops to various groups throughout the state and nation.

Additionally, our state Teacher of the Year is also our official candidate for the National Teacher of the Year Award.

Dr. Eric G. Mackey, State Superintendent of Education, said it is exciting to recognize these great educators. “Alabama Teacher of the Year Jeffrey L. Norris and Alternate State Teacher of the Year Kevin Pughsley clearly illustrate the level of professionalism and commitment, which exists within Alabama’s education community,” said Mackey. “Both of these outstanding educators exemplify classroom excellence.”

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