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Date: August 23, 2004

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Finalists to Compete for 2005 Alaska Teacher of the Year Honor

Commissioner of Education & Early Development Roger Sampson has named five finalists for the 2005 Alaska Teacher of the Year honor. They are:

- ◆ **Rita Davis.** – an elementary special education teacher at Swanson elementary School in Palmer with the Matanuska-Susitna School District, with 30 years of teaching experience.
- ◆ **Morgan Gray** – a seventh and eighth grade math, science and technology teacher at Tanana Middle School in the Fairbanks School District, with 15 years of teaching experience.
- ◆ **Travis Harrington** – a band middle school band teacher at Mirror Lake Middle School in the Anchorage School District, with eight years of teaching experience.
- ◆ **Jonathan Smith** – a tenth grade biology teacher at Juneau Douglas High School in the Juneau School District, with 12 years of teaching experience.
- ◆ **Ronnie Stanford** -- a grade 6 through 12 music teacher at Barrow High School in the North Slope Borough School District, with 20 years of teaching experience.

A screening committee appointed by Commissioner Sampson recommended the finalists from a field of applicants submitted by school superintendents and school district selection committees. The committees typically consist of parents, school administrators, teachers, students, and business and other community leaders. School district selection committees are not limited to the number of applications they can submit to the Alaska Teacher of the Year Program. Any person in the community may submit an application to the committee. The application of each Teacher of the Year nominee needs to be signed and approved by the applicant's school superintendent and principal.

Commissioner Sampson will invite a statewide team consisting of elected presidents of major parent and education associations to select one of the finalists as 2005 Alaska Teacher of the Year and one as Alternate Teacher of the Year. The selection committee will review each of the applications, view a video of each finalist in an actual classroom teaching situation and interview each. The selection committee will meet in late October. The winner will be named in November.

Alaska's 2004 Teacher of the Year is **Kathie Steele**, an English and reading teacher at Eagle River's Chugiak High School in the Anchorage School District.

In November, Commissioner Sampson will forward the name of the Alaska Teacher of the Year to the National Teacher of the Year competition based in Washington, D.C.

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