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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Robert Williams named Alaska Teacher of the Year 2009**

JUNEAU – Robert Williams, a math teacher at Colony High School in Palmer in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, has been named 2009 Alaska Teacher of the Year.

Larry LeDoux, Alaska Commissioner of Education & Early Development, presented the award to Mr. Williams in Anchorage today at the annual conference of the Association of Alaska School Boards. Williams' term begins January 1, 2009.

"Mr. Williams represents the many teachers in Alaska who inspire their students to reach for excellence," Commissioner LeDoux said. "He recognizes that quality teachers are the single most important factor in student success, and he lives up to this responsibility admirably.

"Mr. Williams forms bonds with his students by demonstrating that he cares about them, whether it is by becoming an adviser to the Peer Helpers or simply by showing up at their after-school activities. In every way, Mr. Williams roots for his students.

In the classroom, he inspires with his optimism, his belief that every student can succeed, and his talented use of diverse teaching strategies to meet the needs of each of his students."

Commissioner LeDoux also announced that Helen "Ellie" Sharman, a K-2 teacher at Gustavus School, was named the Alternate Alaska Teacher of the Year for 2009. Sharman would serve in the Alaska position if Williams is named National Teacher of the Year.

Williams has taught for 21 years, two of which in his current position. He teaches algebra, geometry and Advanced Placement calculus. He also has taught at Palmer High, Houston Jr./Sr. High, Nome-Beltz High, and schools in New York City and Gambia. In a joint program of the Department of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska, he has mentored 19 beginning teachers in Nome, Savoonga, Gambell, Palmer and Wasilla.



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Williams holds a bachelor's degree in petroleum engineering from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, a master's degree in math education from Columbia University in New York, and a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Alaska Anchorage.

“My greatest contributions and accomplishments in education include organizing and emceeding math assemblies at four different schools, increasing teacher retention rates as a mentor teacher, and improving student performance among high-achieving and struggling students,” Williams said in his application for Teacher of the Year. “I am a very competency-focused teacher. I love having a positive rapport with my classes and I want students to enjoy being in the class; however, student performance is key.”

Helen Sharman has taught multi-grade classrooms for 16 years, all in Gustavus. Sharman's mother and grandmother were teachers, as well. “I love the teaching profession because I find that when I am around children their natural energy forces me to be a more creative person,” she said in her application. “To me, children's joy of learning is infectious, and there are few things more satisfying than helping children make discoveries.”

The Alaska Teacher of the Year may be called upon to speak at education conferences and participate in various statewide education working groups. The Teacher of the Year also receives nearly \$16,000 worth of technologically advanced equipment for his or her classroom from the Smarter Kids Foundation of Canada.

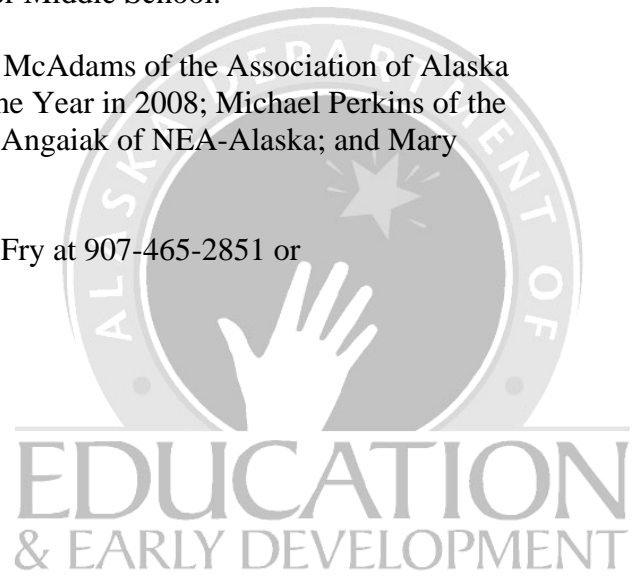
The teacher is the Alaska nominee for national teacher of the year. The national winner will be recognized at an event in Washington, D.C., in April 2009. The Council of Chief State School Officers sponsors the national competition.

A statewide selection committee appointed by Commissioner LeDoux recommended Williams from a field of four finalists. The committee considers a written application, a video snapshot of the teacher in the classroom, and an interview. Besides Williams and Sharman, the other finalists were Christine Villano at Denali Elementary School in Fairbanks, and Debbie Niekamp at Palmer Junior Middle School.

Members of the selection committee were Scott McAdams of the Association of Alaska School Boards; Ray Voley, Alaska Teacher of the Year in 2008; Michael Perkins of the Alaska Council of School Administrators; Barb Angaiak of NEA-Alaska; and Mary Schrage of the Alaska PTA.

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