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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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Jackie Lee Johnson Named Alaska Teacher of the Year

JUNEAU – Jackie Lee Johnson, a fifth-grade teacher at Pioneer Peak Elementary in Palmer, has been named Alaska Teacher of the Year for 2010.

Larry LeDoux, Alaska Commissioner of Education & Early Development, presented the award to Johnson on Sunday in Anchorage at the annual conference of the Association of Alaska School Boards. Johnson's term begins January 1, 2010.

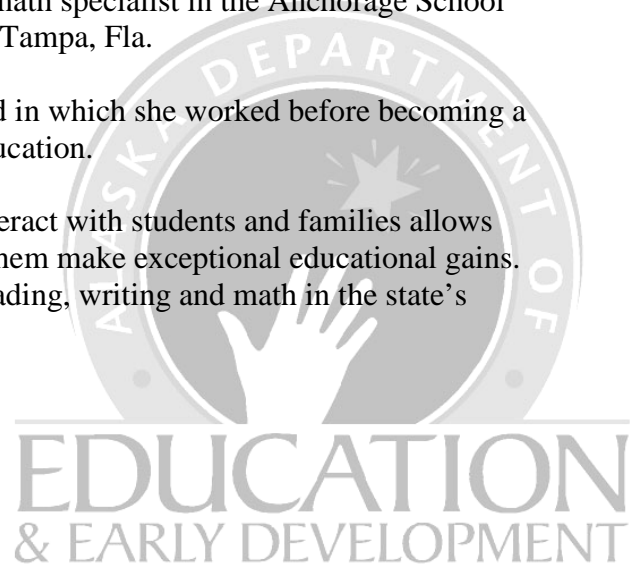
"Ms. Johnson represents the wonderful teachers in Alaska who strive to meet the needs of all students and who bring out the best in our children," LeDoux said. "As Ms. Johnson says, 'Teaching is a lifestyle. It is always a part of me.' This award reminds us of the debt of gratitude we owe to inspiring teachers."

Commissioner LeDoux also announced that Candace Mudge, a fifth-grade music teacher in the Denali Borough School District, is the Alternate Alaska Teacher of the Year for 2010. Mudge will serve as Alaska Teacher of the Year if Johnson is named National Teacher of the Year.

Johnson has taught for 14 years, including as a music specialist at two schools in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, a math specialist in the Anchorage School District, and at schools in Las Vegas, Nev., and Tampa, Fla.

She holds a bachelor's degree in zoology, a field in which she worked before becoming a teacher, and a master's degree in elementary education.

Johnson said her ability to communicate and interact with students and families allows her to understand her students' needs and help them make exceptional educational gains. Most of her students earn advanced scores in reading, writing and math in the state's standards-based assessments.



As well, Johnson mentors other teachers in math pedagogy and has served on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District’s teams that write technology and math curricula and select math materials.

“I believe that the best teachers are attuned to their students’ interests and will use those interests to facilitate a child’s education,” Johnson said. “To do so, teachers must listen to students and learn their interests and concerns. In our classroom, I believe that students have as much to contribute to the class as I do and students quickly learn that their contributions are valued.”

Alternate Teacher of the Year Candace Mudge has taught for 18 years, including 12 years in Illinois. She holds a bachelor’s degree in music education and a master’s degree in education.

Mudge has built the music program in the Denali Borough School District’s three schools along an 80-mile stretch of the Parks Highway. Her husband, Darren Mudge, teaches music in the adjoining Nenana City School District. They combine their programs to create opportunities that normally only a larger district would enjoy.

“I cannot wait to see my musicians each day. I think about teaching constantly. My choice to passionately motivate both children and adults, to be the best they can be, is an enormous part of my attitude,” Mudge said.

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 is the Alaska nominee for national teacher of the year.

The Alaska Teacher of the Year and the alternate were chosen by a committee composed of members of major educational associations and the current Teacher of the Year, who is Robert Williams at Colony High School. The committee considered a written application, a video snapshot of the teacher in the classroom, and an interview.

For more information: Pioneer Peak Elementary: 907-745-0157; Denali Borough School District: 907-683-2278; EED Information Officer Eric Fry at 907-465-2851 or eric.fry@alaska.gov.

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