

**Dr. Michael Johnson**  
*Commissioner*

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**Department of Education  
and Early Development**

Juneau, Alaska

**STATE OF ALASKA**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Four Teachers Named Finalists for Alaska Teacher of the Year**

JUNEAU – Today the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development announced four teachers as finalists for the 2023 Teacher of the Year: Heather Baker (Kenai Peninsula Borough School District), Harlee Harvey (North Slope Borough School District), Mark Martin (Denali Borough School District), and Charles Lance Smith (Anchorage School District).

The finalists went through four rounds of evaluation by committee which included interviews, personal essays, sample lessons, and letters of recommendation.

The Alaska Teacher of the Year and an alternate will be announced at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The selected teacher will serve as Alaska's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year and will be able to participate in programs and activities with other State Teachers of the Year coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

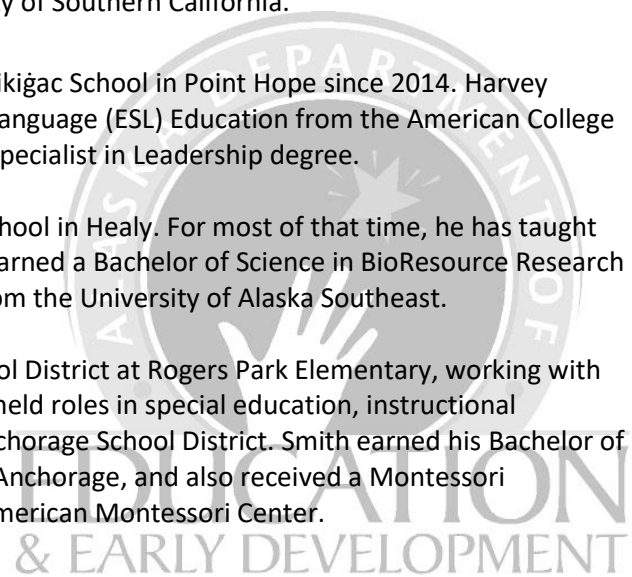
"Alaska's Teacher of the Year finalists have been recognized by their peers as deserving of special recognition," Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson said. "We join them in celebrating the dedication of these four educators and also as an opportunity to thank all Alaskan teachers for their hard work."

Heather Baker teaches a multiage 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade class at K-Beach Elementary School in Soldotna, where she has taught since 2019. She has also taught at Nikiski North Star Elementary and worked as a Migrant Ed STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) teacher and tutor. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Washington and a Master of Arts (MA) in Education with Elementary focus from the University of Southern California.

Harlee Harvey has been an elementary teacher at Tikigac School in Point Hope since 2014. Harvey earned a Master's in Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Education from the American College of Education, where she also earned an Education Specialist in Leadership degree.

Mark Martin has taught for 17 years at Tri-Valley School in Healy. For most of that time, he has taught middle school science, engineering, and math. He earned a Bachelor of Science in BioResource Research at Oregon State University and a MA in Teaching from the University of Alaska Southeast.

Charles Lance Smith teaches in the Anchorage School District at Rogers Park Elementary, working with high gifted and twice-exceptional students. He has held roles in special education, instructional technology, and Montessori teaching within the Anchorage School District. Smith earned his Bachelor of Arts in Education K-8 from the University of Alaska Anchorage, and also received a Montessori Elementary Diploma Certification from the North American Montessori Center.



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*The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides information, resources, and leadership to support over 130,000 students in 505 public schools across the state of Alaska. The mission of the department is to ensure an “**Excellent Education for Every Student Every Day.**”*

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