Amanda Bowser

Oak Crest Elementary School
Broken Arrow Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"The greatest reward of teaching is the opportunity to love a child in a life-changing way each and every day."

Current Teaching Position
2nd-5th Grade; Math Interventionist, Gifted, Learning Coach

Years of Experience
4 years in present position
10 years total

Educational Preparation
B.A. in Education, East Central University

Philosophy of Teaching
"The teaching profession is strengthened most when educators recognize and believe we never stop being students ourselves."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message
"Fellow teachers, we do not labor in vain. We are a chosen people. Let us rekindle our joy for the art of teaching and remember our passion that first led us to this life-altering profession. Let us remember that every day brings an opportunity to show compassion, empathy, humility, selflessness, forgiveness, and ultimately love."

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Cindy Butler

Parkview Elementary
Mid-Del Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"My rewards come from the looks in my students' eyes when they achieve success on something they thought they were never really good at."

Current Teaching Position

5th Grade; Language Arts

Years of Experience

21 years in present position
30 years total

Educational Preparation

B.S. in Elementary Education, Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Philosophy of Teaching

"Making learning as fun as possible is a trick that keeps my students excited about reading and writing, and the confidence that I instill in them keeps them proud and fearless when sharing their work."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"We chose to teach because we know we can make a difference in the lives of our young people today, and we should not let politics, pay schedules, or any other issue not directly related to our devotion to our students hinder our efforts. We are a part of the most powerful profession in the world and we have the right to take great pride in that."

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Jennifer Callaway

Jenks Alternative Center
Jenks Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST
NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"When students know they are accepted, barriers to learning can begin to fall and academic rigor can begin."

Current Teaching Position
9th-12th grade; English I, II, III and IV, Healthy Lifestyles

Years of Experience
5 years in present position
22 years total

Educational Preparation
Master of Human Relations, University of Oklahoma
B.A. in English Education, Cameron University
Ph.D. currently in progress, Oklahoma State University

Philosophy of Teaching
"Helping students develop into responsible, successful adults is like hunting treasure. Many layers must be removed and the focus must remain constant. Finding the treasure in each student drives me to walk into my classroom each day and extract the brilliance waiting to burst forth."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message
"Connect with your students. Accept them for who they are, where they are, and let their gifts develop in their own way."

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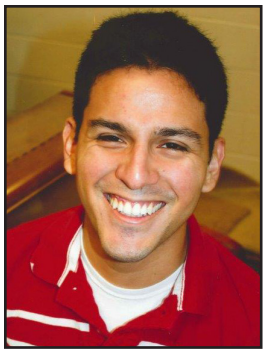

Tony Flores

Wiley Post Elementary School
Putnam City Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"It is an honor to be a part of the career that saved my life. I owe my life to the field of education and teachers. I plan to spend the rest of my life paying back that debt by changing the lives of students for decades to come."

Current Teaching Position
Kindergarten-5th grade; General Music

Years of Experience
4 years in present position
4 years total

Educational Preparation
Bachelor of Vocal Music Education, Southern Nazarene University
Master of Music Education degree in progress, University of Oklahoma

Philosophy of Teaching
"An outstanding teacher understands that there is more to life than math and reading. We can produce the most knowledgeable students, but what good is that if we have not given them the tools to survive emotionally, physically, and mentally in an ever-changing society?"

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message
"We bring hope for the future. We are the ones shaping and creating the next generation, and because of that, we must remain focused on the children. Our community desperately needs our care for we are all connected like a delicate web. We are at the center of this web and our surrounding orbs can only be as strong as we are."

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Lori Hartin

Madill High School
Madill Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"There is no better contribution to education than the daily practice of teaching students in the classroom."

Current Teaching Position

9th-12th Grade; English II, Pre-AP English II, Competitive Speech

Years of Experience

7 years in present position
9 years total

Educational Preparation

B.A. in Social Studies Education, Northeastern State University

Philosophy of Teaching

"My personal teaching style is grounded in mutual respect and enthusiasm. The best way to respect my students is to value their opinions and their struggles."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"My message is one of hope and the power of positive thinking. Together, we can continue to provide a quality education to students while promoting the many triumphs that transpire in public education."

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Lisa Kerns

Hilldale Lower Elementary School
Hilldale Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"An outstanding teacher is first and foremost a gifted instructor that continually seeks out professional development opportunities to improve his/her craft."

Current Teaching Position

2nd Grade

Years of Experience

13 years in present position
20 years total

Educational Preparation

B.S. in Education, Midwestern State University

Philosophy of Teaching

"My belief is that you must have a P.A.S.S.I.O.N. for the roles of an outstanding teacher. I passionately fulfill the role of: Parent, Architect, Spokesperson, Surveyor, Instructor, Observer and Nurturer."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"My message to my colleagues would be to remember your passion and purpose every day you work in your classroom … Live that purpose from the first exciting day of the school year, to the exhausting last day of instruction."

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Sharon Morgan

Piedmont Elementary School
Piedmont Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"An outstanding teacher shows her love for her class by instilling confidence in them through personal connections, providing real world and engaging learning experiences, having high expectations for each child, and being known for her integrity both in the school and within the community."

Current Teaching Position

1st grade

Years of Experience

3 years in present position
17 years total

Educational Preparation

B.A. in Early Childhood Education, Oklahoma Christian University
B.A. in Elementary Education, Oklahoma Christian University

Philosophy of Teaching

"Allowing students to create and make decisions about their own learning with the support of their teacher leads to a deeper level of learning … As a teacher, I strive to utilize innovative strategies that lead to a deeper level of learning because I know that 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.' (-Confucius)"

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"[While on] my favorite 1st grade field trip to Oklahoma's Harn Homestead … I realized I was learning lessons that I can apply to teaching and life … These BRAVE ancestors were Busy in their daily Routine while being Actively engaged and managing Variables as they Explored new possibilities in their world. As educators, we must be BRAVE as well. Our children are worth it!"

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Kimberly Paxson

Shawnee High School
Shawnee Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"Like an artist creating a masterpiece, we as teachers get to play a crucial role in shaping and molding our student's future by assisting them in finding a passion as well as bridging our communities together."

Current Teaching Position

9th-12th Grade; Design Basics, Advanced 2D and 3D Art, AP and Pre-AP Studio Art

Years of Experience

2 years in present position
10 years total

Educational Preparation

B.A. in Arts Education, Oklahoma Baptist University
M.Ed. currently in progress, East Central University

Philosophy of Teaching

"Every time I step into my classroom, I am confident I can make a difference in a student's life. I can help them find the magic and that is why I teach."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"A good education is one that teaches the core subjects, but a great education is one that connects people more deeply to the world and opens them to new ways of viewing that world."

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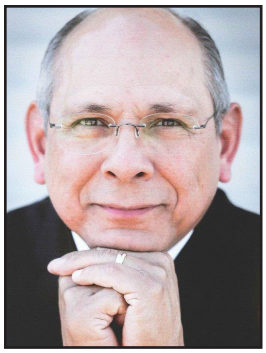

Jack Reavis

Muskogee High School
Muskogee Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"Any good teacher will have high academic and classroom standards, but an excellent teacher will know how to get a child to participate in one of the most important steps in the learning process: asking questions."

Current Teaching Position

11th-12th grade; AP United States History, AP United States Government and Politics

Years of Experience

10 years in current position
20 years total

Educational Preparation

M.A. in American Studies, Northeastern State University
B.A. in Educational Social Studies, Northeastern State University

Philosophy of Teaching

"[This] is what excellent teaching is about — helping make this world a better place and developing a student who does not merely regurgitate rote memorization for knowledge … but rather a student willing to keep an unfettered mind and a willingness to examine the facts which leaves the opportunity for change, for personal progress to become a more … self-actualized person."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"My message is simple: 'Timshel.' … Public education, an education that is offered to all, is the great and powerful equalizer in the struggle for our country to live up to the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence. 'Timshel!' We have a choice."

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Shawn Sheehan

Norman High School
Norman Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"I want my students to know that I'm authentic and that my stories of challenges and successes can be similar to theirs. It is my goal to serve as a role model to my students inside and outside of the classroom, so I place the most value on leading by example."

Current Teaching Position
9th Grade; Algebra I

Years of Experience
4 years in present position
4 years total

Educational Preparation
M.Ed. in Special Education, University of Oklahoma
B.A. in Journalism, Arizona State University

Philosophy of Teaching
"It's the art in what we do that provides the greatest rewards and it is so important that we teachers keep sight of that. It's at the core of what will attract people to our profession, what will keep teachers in our field, and what will keep kids excited about coming to school and pursuing knowledge."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message
"If I were selected as Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year, my message would be simple: find a way to rally around public education. We need to find a way to get all hands on deck to create positive changes for our education system in the long run."

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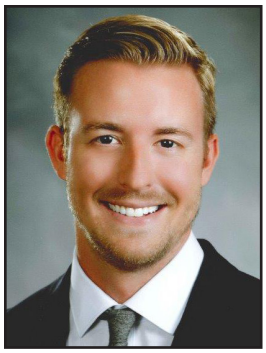

Ryan Walters

McAlester High School
McAlester Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

"An outstanding educator can transcend racism, poverty, and all other barriers that stand between a child and success. As educators we have the responsibility and the honor to give students something that can never be taken away: an education."

Current Teaching Position
9th-12th grade; AP World History, World History, United States History

Years of Experience
4 years in present position
4 years total

Educational Preparation
B.A. in Social Science, Harding University (Searcy, Ark.)

Philosophy of Teaching
"Students with grit and strong character values can lead successful, fulfilling lives and truly transform the world in which they live. Outstanding educators will provide their students with these treasured qualities."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message
"As teachers we must focus our efforts on our performance in the classroom. We must demand the best from ourselves by showing our professionalism and drive to embrace the most effective teaching techniques. We must display our professionalism by demanding academic excellence from our students."

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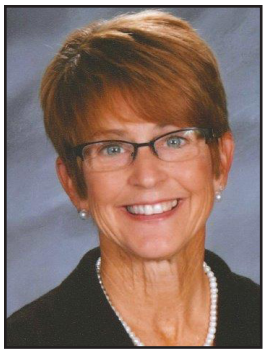

Susan Weaver

Highland Park Elementary
Stillwater Public Schools

2016 TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER

"I have a voice. I am excited. I accept the challenge to be part of the change."

Current Teaching Position

Pre-kindergarten

Years of Experience

5 years in present position
20 years total

Educational Preparation

M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction, Oklahoma State University
B.S. in Elementary Education, University of Oklahoma

Philosophy of Teaching

"My aspiration is to create a student-centered environment that values, supports and encourages students' unique gifts and allows those gifts to be shared to ensure optimal development for everyone."

Oklahoma Teacher of the Year Message

"Teaching is my calling. A calling I choose to accept each day to promote learning with presence and enthusiasm; a calling with no end and no completion."

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