



NEWS RELEASE

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2018 Teacher of the Year:

Gwinnett search committee narrows field to six finalists

Six Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) teachers have been announced as this year’s finalists for the Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year (TOTY) title. The finalists for the 2018 honor are **Ebony Flott of Camp Creek Elementary School, Dr. Doug Doblar of Head Elementary School, Cheri A. Nations of North Gwinnett Middle School, John Chvatal of Brookwood High School, Michelle Jones of Gwinnett Online Campus, and Amy Crisp of Norcross High School.**

A selection committee, comprised of GCPS educators, narrowed the field from 25 semifinalists who had been selected from an impressive list of 138 local school TOTYs. The committee which includes former teachers of the year, local school administrators, and central office support staff, now has the difficult task of selecting the 2018 Teacher of the Year. That announcement will be made at a banquet on Thursday, **November 9, 2017**, at the Infinite Energy Center, located at 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth. The program begins at 6:30 p.m. All 138 local school Teachers of the Year will be recognized that evening.

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THE 2017-18 FINALISTS

Ebony Flott, 4th Grade Teacher, Camp Creek Elementary School

(15 years in education, all with GCPS)

Ebony Flott believes that every student is full of potential, and that it is her role as a teacher to help them reach it, exceed it, and, hopefully, love every minute of it. Mrs. Flott is unequivocal when she says every student... she means every single student. She explains, “I make an effort to put whatever supports are necessary in place to help students meet or exceed my high expectations.”

Mrs. Flott started her career at Stripling Elementary School in 2003 as a 4th grade teacher and later as a literacy coach. She transferred to Lilburn Elementary School in 2007 where she taught 3rd and 4th grade students before transferring to Camp Creek



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Elementary in 2013. Mrs. Flott earned a bachelor's degree from Georgia State University, a master's degree from Lesley University, and an education specialist's degree from Valdosta State University.

**Dr. Doug Doblar, 4th and 5th Grade Math and Science Teacher,
Head Elementary School**

(15 years in education, 11 with Gwinnett)

Dr. Doug Doblar says two years ago when he was a Technology Coordinator at Britt Elementary School, he thought he had the best job in Gwinnett County Public Schools. He adds, "I worked at a school I adored, in a community I adored, with a principal I adored." But after teaching math and science at Head Elementary for two years



—the school he attended as a student— he has changed his mind. Due to his love for his work at his new school, Dr. Doblar says "... it turns out that I may have only had the second best job in Gwinnett County after all."

Doblar counts himself fortunate to have worked with outstanding teachers and mentors and admits that his teaching philosophy is based on what he learned from teachers he has worked with over the past few years. He explains, saying, "While I learned countless practices from my time with them, I can sum up my teaching philosophy into three main beliefs: 1) Engagement is paramount; 2) Change frequently and immediately; and 3) Time should vary, not mastery."

Dr. Doblar started his teaching career in GCPS in 2003 at Dacula High School where he taught math to 9th and 11th grade students. From 2003 to 2006, he taught 8th grade math at Lilburn Middle School. From 2006 to 2010, he taught Technology in Education at Indiana University's School of Education. From 2010 to 2015, Dr. Doblar was a Tech coordinator (K-5) at Britt Elementary School before moving to Head Elementary in 2015.

Dr. Doblar has a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia, a master's degree from Georgia State University, and a Ph.D. from Indiana University.

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**Cheri A. Nations, STEM (Science Enrichment) Teacher,
North Gwinnett Middle School**

(4 years in education, all with GCPS)

Cheri Nations says her greatest accomplishment is that her class has become the most requested in the school, just three years after she started teaching it. The STEM science enrichment teacher makes personal connections with all her students which, she says, is one of the keys to keeping students engaged. She adds, “I think that it is integral to learning for students to feel comfortable in my classroom, to ask questions, take risks, and make mistakes. I want my students to enjoy science because it is amazing.”



Mrs. Nations started her career in 2004 as a kindergarten paraprofessional at Head Elementary School before taking the same position at Puckett’s Mill Elementary School in 2008. In 2013, she became a STEM teacher (K-5) at Puckett’s Mill before moving to North Gwinnett Middle School in 2014. Mrs. Nations has a bachelor’s degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

**John Chvatal, AP and Gifted Biology Teacher,
Brookwood High School**

(12 years in education, 11 with Gwinnett)

When John Chvatal entered college, he expected to work for an environmental firm or the EPA following graduation. However, after some encouragement from a school basketball coach, and listening to his gut, he had embraced his calling by his sophomore year.



Mr. Chvatal believes his role as an educator has to be to “counteract the ever-present negativity spread by social media with contagious enthusiasm every day.” He says, “I fully believe in cultivating an environment that thrives on a positive mindset and continually strives to allow students to see what they are truly capable of achieving.”

Prior to joining Brookwood High in 2007, Mr. Chvatal was a teaching assistant at Georgia Institute of Technology, and, before that, a Biology and Physical Science Teacher at Windsor Academy. He has a bachelor’s degree from Mercer University and master’s degrees from the Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia State University, as well as a specialist’s degree from Valdosta State University.

**Michelle Jones, Mathematics Teacher, Grades 9-12,
Gwinnett Online Campus**

(10 years in education, all with GCPS)



Michelle Jones believes teaching is more than just relaying material to young minds. She says, “It is about making a lasting connection with students while encouraging academic success. Not only do I look at my job as one of an educator, but as one of a mentor, motivator, and listening ear.” Mrs. Jones believes her greatest contribution to education is her focus on the failure rates in the 9th and 10th grades. She adds “Trying new ideas at the 9th and 10th grade levels has given me opportunity to increase the graduation rate for these students.”

Mrs. Jones started her career as a math teacher at Grayson High School in 2008 before moving to Gwinnett Online Campus where she continues to teach high school math. She has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Georgia, a master’s degree from Piedmont College, and a specialist’s degree from Piedmont College.

**Amy Crisp, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)- Language Arts,
Grades 9-12, Norcross High School**

(18 years in education, all with Gwinnett)



Amy Crisp says students come to the classroom with their own unique talents and strengths. As an educator, she sees her role as helping them unlock the potential they may not even know they have. She says, “The more I know about my students as individuals, the more they know I care and the more I can make learning relevant and help them envision a future they might not even know exists.” One of her greatest joys is having students visit to discuss books with her.

Mrs. Crisp started her career at Norcross as an ESOL teacher in 2000. She has a bachelor’s degree from Furman University, a master’s degree from Georgia State University, and a specialist’s degree from Piedmont College.

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As the final element of the judging process, the selection committee will complete classroom observations and conduct interviews with the six finalists. Committee members will look for original teaching methods, study the teacher’s teaching

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philosophy, review special class projects the teacher has initiated, and consider the influence the teacher has had on the teaching practices of his/her colleagues. They also will review each teacher's educational degrees and civic activities.

Based on their findings, committee members will select an elementary, middle, and a high school Teacher of the Year. As the only middle school finalist, Mrs. Nations will be Gwinnett's 2018 Middle School Teacher of the Year. The Elementary and High School level winners will be announced during the banquet on November 9. One of the three level winners will be named Gwinnett's 2018 Teacher of the Year. The district winner will be selected from among the three level winners and will go on to represent GCPS in the Georgia TOTY competition.

GCPS would like to thank this year's sponsors for their support of great teachers and for making this celebration of outstanding teaching possible.

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Pictures of the six Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year finalists are available upon request.