

Meet the Teachers Nominated for the Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award

We are introducing you to the teachers who were nominated for The Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award leading up to the announcement of the winner in April.

Parents, students and colleagues nominated teachers and each ACPS school principal then chose one nominated teacher from their school to move on to the ACPS finalists round.

Last year, ACPS was delighted to name [Molly Freitag](#), T.C. Williams AP World History Teacher, as our ACPS Teacher of the Year Awardee.

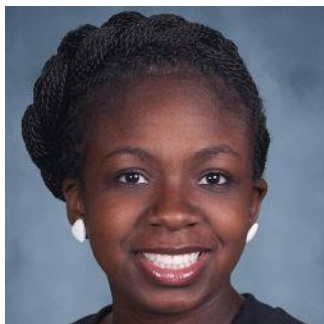
Please be sure to congratulate these special teachers when you see them!



Wanda Allen
Kindergarten Teacher
Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy

Allen has been a teacher with ACPS for 23 years, the last 17 of which have been at Lyles-Crouch. An integral part of the Lyles-Crouch community, Allen has served as the kindergarten team leader, lead school mentor, leadership team liaison and division-wide kindergarten-prep coordinator.

Ms. Allen readily shares her expertise, resources and physical presence wherever she is needed in the school and throughout the division. She creates a class where each student feels safe and secure, where high expectations are the norm, where failure is not an option and where ‘I can’t is not acceptable,’” said Principal Patricia Zissios.



Reka Barton
English Partner Teacher Dual Language Program
Grades 2 and 3
Mount Vernon Community School

A product of Alexandria City Public Schools, Barton returned to her roots to continue her teaching career and has been teaching at Mount Vernon for the past four years. Barton has been trained in bilingual

literacy, the Reader's and Writer's Workshop and presents at conferences on bilingual education. She serves as a Reading Lead Educator and collaborates with the literacy and Spanish literacy coaches to provide turn-key professional development for staff. She is also an active member of the Instructional Council at Mount Vernon, is an advocate for the Young Scholars program and leads an after school sewing club that she started at the school.

She is one of the most effective and enthusiastic teachers I have ever observed. With her students, she instills joy and a love of learning in two languages. She skillfully plans, assesses and responds to the diverse needs of children at varying levels of English proficiency and cultural backgrounds. She has also taken the leadership to collaboratively plan with her Spanish partner teacher and her grade-level team as they undertake the complex process of facilitating learning in two languages," *said Dual Language Program Coordinator Barbara Acosta.*



Freda Brew
Math Teacher
Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center (NVJDC)

Brew began her teaching career in a very low-income community in Ghana West Africa and embraced the roles of mentor and tutor, fulfilling her childhood dream of becoming a teacher. She was one of only six female students in her class in the Kwam Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, where she earned her bachelors degree. After earning credentials that would enable her to teach in Virginia, she has been with ACPS at the NVJDC since 2013.

We are very fortunate to have Freda on our faculty. Ms. Brew has a superb reputation as a teacher and a reliable colleague. She possesses all of the qualities of an excellent educator. Freda executes her work with superior professionalism and demonstrates sincere compassion for her students," *said Principal Jeanette Allen.*



Christine Goodman
Third Grade Teacher
William Ramsay Elementary School

Goodman knew early in life that she wanted to be a teacher. Despite pulls in other directions along the way, her heart led her back to teaching. Goodman joined ACPS four years ago as a long-term substitute teacher at Ramsay and went on to become a full-time teacher and has grown her leadership skills by participating in the Literacy Cadre, Writing Teacher Leader, Student Council, Teacher Mentor, TAG Cohort, Beyond Learning Disability Cohort and Teacher Leadership Program.

Ms. Goodman is a patient, nurturing and consistent educator that holds her students accountable for their learning and celebrates their success. She always takes her students' diverse backgrounds, readiness levels and experience into account when planning her instruction and never allows previous academic experience to stand in the way of their achievement in the classroom," said Principal Michael Routhouska.



Martha Grutza
Physical Education Teacher
Samuel Tucker Elementary School

With Tucker since 2007, Grutza has elevated the status of health and physical education through the implementation of a rigorous, standards-based curriculum. PE is not an “extra” at Tucker – it is taught, assessed and celebrated as critically as core content. She has also been an exemplary leader at Tucker helping to shape the school culture. Grutza serves on Tucker’s Leadership Team, is an Encore Team Lead, coaches Tucker Runners on Track (TROT), is the PTA secretary, plays a key role in writing family life curriculum and she contributes to Safe Routes to School Grant efforts. She also initiated a wildly popular after school running program and its culminating event – our Annual Tucker 5K.

Ms. Grutza is a driving force behind the can-do spirit that makes Tucker a special place to learn and work. Martha has initiated many school and community-wide programs which have enhanced the total school program for hundreds of kids during her decade of service here,” said Principal Rene Paschal.



Laura Koss
Music Teacher
Matthew Maury Elementary School

Koss has been a music teacher with ACPS for the past 10 years, initially at Jefferson-Houston, then at James K. Polk, and now Maury Elementary. Her talents as a music educator are applauded both within the school and in the community, where she works in concert with community organizations to build and enhance her music program. She is known for her dedication to music education and her drive to continually learn more and apply what she learns with her students. In addition to teaching music, she leads the PBIS committee and the school leadership committee.

She knows how to hone in on a student’s strengths, address their weaknesses and she gets to make music every day. Her students know that music is a place where they can explore, create and be fully engaged and challenged, no matter what their proficiency level is when they enter her class. They know the thrill of working on a piece of music and bringing it to life through practice

and performance. Ms. Koss provides an environment where all students feel empowered and supported to grow,” said Principal Lucretia Jackson.



Heather Rosner
Music Teacher
George Mason Elementary School

Rosner has been with ACPS since 2010 and has taught music at Cora Kelly, Mount Vernon and Jefferson-Houston before settling in at George Mason Elementary School. Her “contagious energy” is credited with attracting even the most difficult to reach students. By making music accessible to everyone, she has grown the music department to 160 students with one hundred percent participation of students in grades four and five.

The music program is an elective for students in fourth and fifth grade, so the fact that all choose to participate speaks to the amazing passion and extraordinary qualities Ms. Rosner has as a teacher. Kids **want** to practice their instruments because she makes it such fun. She connects the kids to the music and encourages them to do their best in fun and engaging ways, not just in her classroom, but in all of their classrooms,” said Joy Cameron, parent of a fourth grade student.



Dr. Beverly Vick
First Grade Teacher
Douglas MacArthur Elementary School

Dr. Vick has been with ACPS for 21 years. She came to MacArthur in 2006 by way of Jefferson-Houston and Patrick Henry Elementary Schools. Dr. Vick has served on many leadership teams, including curriculum development, shared decision-making and faculty councils. She has demonstrated her commitment to the community through her involvement with the Sunshine Team, which builds community in the school and supports colleagues in times of trouble; the Giving Tree program she runs each year to collect new hats, gloves, coats and boots for local homeless shelters; her work with the Boys-to-Men mentoring group; and her pride and joy, the American Girl Literacy Club, which focuses on building self-esteem, friendships and resiliency.

Dr. Vick understands the individual needs of students, encourages their talents and fosters their self-esteem. Within her classroom, she differentiates her instruction to meet the diverse needs of her students. She connects with each student’s parent to further her understanding of each child. She has courageous conversation with colleagues related to cultural competency and racial awareness impacting how we all interact with students and their families. She supports children’s

social, emotional and academic development, regularly integrating the arts as a means for students to develop other parts of themselves,” said Principal Rae Covey.



Veronica Jackson
Orchestra Director
Francis C. Hammond Middle School

Veronica Jackson has been making music at Francis C. Hammond Middle School for the past five years and brings more than 26 years of experience in music education to her role. Known for sharing, demonstrating and creating musical excitement among her students, Jackson is a reflective practitioner and enthusiastic instructional leader when interacting with students and teachers. Jackson collaborates with teachers from ACPS elementary schools, George Washington Middle School and schools within neighboring districts to develop musical performances that are fun, engaging, and appropriate for the student’s level of language and ability, while also stretching them academically.

“Mrs. Jackson’s leadership qualities are evident among colleagues through her willingness to build and cultivate effective professional relationships. Mrs. Jackson is a solution-oriented professional who strives for excellence in all that she does. She is committed to instilling in the ACPS and Alexandria community a love of and respect for music. She has consistent, high expectations and focuses relentlessly on improving performing arts teaching and learning in her classroom. The results of her hard work are having a total school impact,” said Principal Pierrette Hall.



Laura Jurewicz
National Board Certified Teacher of Literacy
Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology

Laura Jurewicz launched her teaching career at Cora Kelly seven years ago, where she has served as an EL teacher and a reading specialist. She is National Board Certified, has her EL endorsement and a reading specialist endorsement. Known for her gentle and caring ways, Jurewicz always takes time to talk with students one-on-one when needed and helps them work out solutions for whatever is troubling them. An enthusiastic literacy champion who is passionate about supporting her students as much as she can, Jurewicz tutors students three days a week. She also plans and implements professional development for staff in literacy and English Language strategies.

“Laura models what education should be. Teachers should support their colleagues to learn and grow together, share tools and effective strategies, and provide encouragement and praise. Laura models all of these characteristics. She is passionate, collaborative, extremely knowledgeable, reflective and generous. I believe great leaders strive to not only grow personally, but help to share their knowledge and expertise with others. Laura is an inspirational leader at Cora Kelly and a colleague I look up to as a mentor,” said Amy McFarland, kindergarten teacher at Cora Kelly.



Matthew Ross
Fifth Grade Teacher
Jefferson-Houston School

Matthew Ross launched his teaching career as a physical education teacher in Prince George’s County, where he was later thrust into the role of teaching a challenging class of sixth graders. The experience forever changed his life for the better. For more than 16 years, Ross has worked in Title I schools and has spent the last four years at Jefferson-Houston as a fifth-grade teacher. In addition to his teaching duties, Ross is a member of the school leadership team, a leader on the International Baccalaureate team, a member of the PBIS team, and a summer school teacher.

“The high energy exuding from his classroom on a daily basis promotes higher-order thinking from his students. Under his guidance and instruction, student growth in reading has grown significantly as measured by the State SOL assessment. The students are eager to learn and the parents are truly happy to have their children in such a dynamic class, with an extraordinary teacher. Every moment is a learning moment in Mr. Ross’ classroom,” said Jefferson-Houston Principal Chris Philips.



Lorraine Predham Keir
English Learner Teacher
Charles Barrett Elementary School

Lorraine, who came to teaching as a second career, has a degree in International Relations and a life-long interest in other cultures, so it is no surprise that she chose to be an EL teacher. She has been teaching at Charles Barrett since 2008 and is known for taking advantage of every opportunity to grow professionally. According to her colleagues, “if there is a book club, webinar, online course or workshop, she either organizes it or actively participates in it.” She was an early adopter of the co-teaching model and worked with colleagues throughout

the division to bring EL co-teaching to Barrett and was the first elementary ACPS EL teacher to co-teach math. She has served on the school's leadership team since 2009, helped to establish and grow the school's book room, and has provided professional development for staff. She worked with the reading team to launch Family Literacy Night and won a grant to send literacy backpacks home with kindergarten and first-grade students in need.

"Knowing the school day is just a fraction of a day for students, Lorraine has worked with community agencies to secure food, furniture, summer camps, mentors, medical services and even birthday presents for families that are new to our school. When she is able to provide for a family, she often does so anonymously, seeking no credit but just the satisfaction of seeing the impact on her students at school in the future," said Barrett Principal Seth Kennard.



Bobbi Wade
First Grade Teacher
John Adams Elementary School

A teacher at John Adams for the past 13 years, Wade has been an educator for 15 years and is currently pursuing her National Board Certification. Wade works to stay current in her field, attending co-teaching workshops and running an inclusive classroom, which has led to a passion for specialized instruction. She has served as a team leader for the first-grade team for two years, serves as a mentor, participated in the school improvement plan and initiated a welcoming committee to support new teachers and returning staff.

"Bobbi is an amazing teacher. Her ability to build relationships with students is unparalleled and she has the most natural way of tapping into the hidden potential of each of her students. Bobbi is supportive and encouraging with her students, but at the same time challenges them to be the best versions of themselves. She uses morning meeting to create an atmosphere of warmth and trust in her classroom. Not only is Bobbi a standout teacher in the classroom, she is also a dedicated and active professional," said First Grade Teacher Lemore Fritz.



Krystal Webster
Kindergarten Teacher
James K. Polk Elementary School

Krystal Webster started as a paraprofessional at Douglas MacArthur 10 years ago and has spent the last three years at Polk. Webster is known by her colleagues to be the consummate team player. Working with other classes and grades through cross-

collaborative teams, she uses high-level content and learning strategies that address the needs of each student as an individual. Webster uses cooperative learning techniques that meet learners where they are. She has served as the Kindergarten Team Leader, a Kagan Cooperative Learning Strategist and supports the Girls on the Run program.

“Ms. Webster’s desire to foster independence, responsibility and self-esteem in her students is admirable and shows that her desire to fully grow each student goes well beyond academics. Ms. Webster expects a great deal from her students but does so in a fun, loving and supportive manner that makes her students want to work hard and be better. Throughout kindergarten, I watched my son become more responsible for himself, and more respectful of others, and I contribute a great deal of his growth to Ms. Webster’s teaching style and expectations in the classroom,” said Polk parent Meghan Holligan.



Georgette Yamialo
Third Grade Teacher
Patrick Henry Elementary School

A teacher for 14 years, Georgette Yamialo has spent her last three years at Patrick Henry Elementary School. Known for her unique teaching style that adds to the lives of her children academically, socially and emotionally, Yamialo has a talent for elevating students who are performing several grade levels below their current grade to on-grade-level within one calendar year. She works closely with EL and special education teachers to develop lessons that meet the needs of all students and ensures that all her lessons include attainable goals for every child. Yamialo’s impact can be felt far beyond the walls of her classroom. She has served as a mentor to colleagues, has led professional development trainings and has served on the school-wide intervention team, providing insight and assisting in making decisions for the benefit of the entire school. And, she has devoted time to promoting and participating in school-wide functions such as Literacy and Math Night events and has served on the school’s Intervention and Student Attendance Committees.

“Ms. Yamialo is a powerhouse! She is poised, hardworking, and committed wholeheartedly to instilling a love of learning not only in her students but in the entire Patrick Henry Elementary School community. We are fortunate to have her as a third-grade teacher. She has a passion and talent for teaching that has a tremendous impact on children each moment of the day that will last a lifetime,” said Principal Ingrid Bynum.