



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

JACK O'CONNELL

State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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STATE SCHOOLS CHIEF JACK O'CONNELL NAMES FIVE OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS AS CALIFORNIA TEACHERS OF THE YEAR FOR 2008

Los Angeles Unified School District teacher nominated for National Teacher of the Year

SACRAMENTO – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today named five remarkable educators as California Teachers of the Year for 2008. Of the five, O'Connell nominated one to compete for the National Teacher of the Year honor.

Andee Aceves teaches third grade at San Altos Elementary School in Lemon Grove in the Lemon Grove School District (San Diego County). **Lewis Chappellear** teaches engineering design at James Monroe High School in North Hills in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles County). **Michael Allen Long** teaches a combination fourth and fifth grade at Carmela Elementary School in Whittier in the South Whittier School District (Los Angeles County). **Gregory McFall** teaches U.S. History at Johnson Middle School in Westminster in the Westminster Elementary School District (Orange County). **Tamara "Tammy" Reina** teaches English and U.S. History at East Mesa School in San Diego in the San Diego County Office of Education.

"I congratulate these five outstanding teachers who represent the best and the brightest in California," O'Connell said. "In recognizing them, their creativity, focus, and enthusiasm, we celebrate the essence of what teaching is, and that is being given the opportunity to change lives. These teachers have proven time and again that such change is not only possible but essential to the future success of California's children as productive members of society."

O'Connell has nominated Lewis Chappellear to represent California in the National Teacher of the Year competition. The winner will be selected in the spring by a panel convened by the Council of Chief State School Officers. All candidates for the National Teacher of the Year program will be honored at a White House ceremony.

More...more...

The California Teachers of the Year program began in 1972 to pay tribute to the state's educators, the growing complexity of challenges that confront California's schools, and the need to promote collaboration among teachers to meet those challenges.

California continues to face a critical teacher shortage. The program plays a pivotal role in drawing new, talented people into the field. The Superintendent selects five people each year who will best represent California's teachers and symbolize the profession's contributions to quality education by focusing public attention on noteworthy accomplishments of teachers.

The competition is open to educators who teach pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. County offices of education nominate winners of their regional Teacher of the Year competition. A state selection committee reviews the candidates' applications and conducts site visits to evaluate the teachers' rapport with students, classroom environment, presentation skills, use of teaching methods, among other criteria. Following interviews held in Sacramento, the State Superintendent then selects the awardees. They will be honored in January in Sacramento at a dinner made possible by donations from corporate sponsors.

Eleven semifinalists will also be honored.

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Attached is a brief introduction to each of the California Teachers of the Year 2008.

Andee Aceves
San Altos Elementary School in Lemon Grove
Lemon Grove School District

Andee Aceves teaches third grade at San Altos Elementary School in Lemon Grove in the Lemon Grove School District (San Diego County).

“Mrs. Aceves is a pioneer for her family and a role model for her students,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. “Raised by non-English speaking grandparents, she experienced the disconnect that still exists today for a great many of California’s children between home and school, a place where she said she felt like an ‘uninvited, but tolerated guest.’ Mrs. Aceves brings to the classroom a valuable perspective that allows insight and a better understanding of her students’ needs, abilities, and challenges.”

In Mrs. Aceves’ application for the California Teachers of the Year Program, she wrote:

“Unlike many of my colleagues who have always intended to teach and come from a long line of educated family members, I have a different perspective. I know that not all students have equal access to resources. I understand that loving, caring parents cannot always help with homework. I even recognize the strength of the unruly child who comes to school despite the chaos he/she lives in. I *was* that bright, skeptical, and belligerent child in the class; the student that teachers talked about with disparagement in the teacher’s lounge. My personal teaching style reflects a willing acceptance and consideration of skeptical students and their families. I teach to make a difference in their perception of school and to remove those barriers that interfere with learning.”

Mrs. Aceves graduated from the University of California, San Diego in 1979 with a Bachelor of Art’s degree in Sociology. She has earned a multiple-subject teaching credential from San Diego State University in 1992, and a Master’s degree in math curriculum from San Diego State University in 2003.

She can be reached at the San Altos Elementary School, 619-825-5787.

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Lewis Chappelear
James Monroe High School in North Hills
Los Angeles Unified School District
(California's nominee for National Teacher of the Year)

Lewis Chappelear teaches engineering design at James Monroe High School in North Hills in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles County). He is also the school's IMPACT crisis coordinator.

"I am honored to recognize Mr. Chappelear not only as one of California's best teachers, but also as one of America's finest as I nominate him for the nation's top tribute," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. "He thoroughly understands this century's demand for intelligent, skilled workers and our students' need for relevant, in-demand skills. Mr. Chappelear is an inspiring, motivating teacher who challenges his students to think about the future, then takes them out into the community and shows them what it will take to achieve their goals."

In Mr. Chappelear's application for the California Teachers of the Year Program, he wrote:

"Today's classrooms lack relevance. In the past 20 years, the number of jobs that require an associate's degree or specialized certification has jumped from 20 percent to 60 percent...Learning is about sharing and having an ability to change. Our educational institutions should be more about dynamic growth than static factory models. Our classrooms should not sit like desolate islands far from any collaboration, surveying, or idea sharing with others. Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members should all have their doors and minds open – let the sharing begin."

Mr. Chappelear earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biomedical engineering from Boston University in 1994, a Master of Science degree in mechanical engineering from Columbia University in 1995, and a California Clear Teaching Credential in math, physics, and electronics in 2001. He received a National Board Certification in 2005.

Mr. Chappelear can be reached at James Monroe High School, 818-892-5622.

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Michael Allen Long
Carmela Elementary School in Whittier
Los Angeles Unified School District

Michael Allen Long teaches a combination fourth and fifth grade at Carmela Elementary School in Whittier in the South Whittier School District (Los Angeles County).

“Mr. Long is an extraordinary teacher who puts in long hours both in and out of the classroom as he instills in his students a love and respect for education, especially for the written word as his parents had instilled in him,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. “He finds fulfillment in knowing that he has taught students to write, a skill, he says, with the ‘capacity to give voice to the masses.’”

In Mr. Long’s application for the California Teachers of the Year Program, he wrote:

“The issue of failing writing scores is not new to public schools in the United States, especially among upper grade students. However, experts are baffled by the fact that students, who are making gains in reading and other aspects of language, simply cannot seem to make the grade when it comes to composition. I believe this trend threatens the geo-political success of our future leaders, and if they are to become globally competitive, they must be able to master the written domain. Technology will change, as will the needs of the job market. The need for competent writers, however, will always exist, increasing simultaneously with the demands of the information age.”

Mr. Long earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies in 1994 and Master of Art’s degree in Education in 1999, both from Biola University, where he also received a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. He received a Cross-cultural Language & Academic Development certificate from the University of San Diego in 2005.

He can be reached at Carmela Elementary School, 562-941-5443.

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Gregory McFall
Johnson Middle School in Westminster
Westminster Elementary School District

Gregory McFall teaches U.S. History at Johnson Middle School in Westminster in the Westminster Elementary School District (Orange County).

“Mr. McFall truly believes in his students and in their ability to succeed. But before students can succeed in school and in life, he feels that educators must break the pattern of generational poverty that is contributing to the widening of the achievement gap,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. “Mr. McFall is committed to finding what works for his students with limited social and cultural experiences and building upon their accomplishments, one success at a time.”

In Mr. McFall’s application for the California Teachers of the Year Program, he wrote:

“I feel educators can effectively break the cycle of poverty to equip and prepare students for college and a career. To diminish the effects of poverty in education, teachers must root the community’s fundamental ideas into our schools to increase economic opportunities for our students and their parents. We must seek out corporate and community leaders to embrace the school and model cooperation. We must look carefully at the school culture and the school recreational programs, and align our school practices with the positive influences within the community to ensure we are providing educational equity for all students. Only through mutual relationship of community, district, and school can we break the effects of poverty on education and take steps to guarantee high achievement for all students across the nation.”

Mr. McFall earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology at California State University, Fullerton in 1990 and a Master of Arts degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Concordia University in 2007. He received a teaching credential from National University in 1997 and is a Highly Qualified Teacher.

He can be reached at Johnson Middle School, 714-379-0784.

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**Tamara “Tammy” Reina
East Mesa School in San Diego
San Diego County Office of Education**

Tamara “Tammy” Reina teaches English and U.S. History at East Mesa School in San Diego’s all-male East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

“Ms. Reina is not only an outstanding, thoroughly committed teacher, she is mentor, counselor, confidante, and, sometimes, parent to young men – many of whom are serious juvenile offenders,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell. “Yet she is a steadfast supporter of her students and a true believer in their potential. Beyond the razor wire and sliding steel doors, Ms. Reina gives books to students who’ve never read one and hope to those who’ve never had any.”

In Ms. Reina’s application for the California Teachers of the Year Program, she wrote:

“My students are frequently going through some of the most difficult periods of their lives. Often times, life in the unit and court dates are reminders of the mistakes they have made and struggles yet to come. My classroom is a place where they cannot only escape the stress of their current situation, but can feel a sense of pride in their academic accomplishments as well as hope in their future. When I watch their eyes begin to light up with hope as opposed to the protective indifference they so often bring with them initially, I know that I must foster and protect that hope, because for these students in the beginning stages, hope is fragile.”

Ms. Reina earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work at San Diego State University, San Diego in 1992 and a Master of Arts in Education at National University in 2002. She received a multiple subject teaching credential from National University in 1998.

She can be reached at the East Mesa School, 619-671-6500.

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