



East Baton Rouge Parish School System
1050 S. Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806
Phone (225) 922-5400 FAX (225) 226-7900
www.ebrschools.org

MEDIA CONTACT:
Sonya T. Gordon
Public Information Officer,
Department for
Communications &
Community Engagement
(225) 922-5611 office
(225) 328-4763 cell
sgordon@ebrschools.org

Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 14, 2008

****PHOTO OF REYNOLDS ATTACHED****

Westdale Teacher Is Finalist For State Presidential Award

Baton Rouge, La. – Principal Cheryl Singer can't say enough good things about Debra Reynolds and her ability to grab a student's attention and get them interested in learning at Westdale Heights Academic Magnet School. Reynolds is a whiz at teaching fourth graders math, which is why she was selected as one of Louisiana's 2008 Presidential Award for Excellence finalists in Mathematics Teaching.

The awards, known cumulatively as the **national Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching**, are sponsored by the National Science Foundation. The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will recognize Reynolds and other state finalists at a luncheon scheduled **October 16 at the Governor's Mansion**. She then goes on to compete at the national level.

In her recommendation letter, Singer said Reynolds is the leading indicator for the school's increased LEAP test scores in Mathematics. "In the last four years, our state test results show the evidence of her powerful and effective teaching abilities and strategies." (Fourth-grade) students scoring at the "proficient" level have steadily risen: 90 percent in 2005, 95 percent in 2006 and 96 percent in 2007."

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PRESIDENTIAL AWARD '08/2

The 2008 fourth-grade LEAP Mathematics results show proficiency at 99 percent with 70 percent of those taking the test at a “mastery/advanced” level. The state proficient levels for fourth-grade Mathematics were 61 percent in 2005, 62 percent in 2006 and 64 percent in 2007. “I give all the credit to Ms. Reynolds and her positive impact on children’s achievement,” Singer said. “This outstanding educator is deserving of special recognition.”

Reynolds has taught math at Westdale for four years. She is in her 26th year of her education career. In addition, she has completed the National Board Certification process, Mickelson ExxonMobil Math/Science Academy, Marilyn Burns Math Solutions and other programs. Reynolds has earned bachelor’s, master’s (education) and Education Specialist degrees. She also holds certification for Teaching the Academically Gifted and has been honored twice by her peers with the title Teacher of the Year.

“I am committed to the continued growth and development of my colleagues, my school and my profession and am, therefore, very open and receptive to new ideas,” Reynolds said. “As I learn new skills and strategies through professional development activities, I channel that knowledge to my students to help them become competent problem solvers in the real world.”

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Program was established in 1983 by the White House and is sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The program identifies outstanding mathematics and science teachers, kindergarten through 12th grade, in each state and the four US jurisdictions. Recipients serve as models for their colleagues and are recognized as leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education.

Eligibility is extended to classroom teachers who have at least five years experience teaching mathematics or science in grades K-12, and who anticipate a classroom teaching assignment during the following year. Nominees must be employed full-time by a Louisiana public or nonpublic school. (Teachers on approved leave qualify if they fulfilled the eligibility requirements during the previous year.) Nominees at the elementary level must be assigned at least half time during the school year as classroom teachers, teaching mathematics or science in a self-contained setting or as teaching specialists. Nominees at the secondary level must be assigned at least half time during the school year as mathematics or science classroom teachers. Teachers of computer science are eligible if their students receive mathematics credit for the classes. Past presidential recipients are not eligible for consideration.

The competition alternates annually between teachers of grades K-6 and teachers of grades 7-12. **For more information, call the school at (225) 926-5421.**

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