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NEWS RELEASE (THIS WON'T GO OUT UNTIL after the Foundation's Announcement)

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Escambia County (FL) School District Announces 2022 Teacher of the Year

"I am inspired by my students and the mounds of potential they possess."

Superintendent Timothy Smith visited an elementary classroom today to surprise the district's new Teacher of the Year – Briana McCreary!

McCreary became a teacher in 2013 and currently teaches third grade at Montclair Elementary School. She has also taught Kindergarten and second grade. She holds an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education from Pensacola State College, a Bachelor's of Art in Elementary Education from Florida A&M University, and a Master's of Arts in Educational Leadership from the University of West Florida.

Dr. Smith presented McCreary with flowers and said, "We are so thankful for the incredible job that you do, the learning that your boys and girls experience, the dedication that you give everyday, everything that you put into your students and the success that you have as you lead your students! Congratulations!"



(Photo: Principal Hollie Wilkins, Teacher of the Year Briana McCreary and ECSD Superintendent Timothy Smith.)

Montclair's Principal, Hollie Wilkins, had this to say, "Ms. McCreary is every principal's dream teacher. Each year she creates a family environment with her class where students feel safe, encouraged, supported, and respected not only by Ms. McCreary, but also by each other. She encourages her students to strive for greatness and

develops leaders within her classroom. She has students leading small group instruction with other students and they take care of each other by supporting one another through difficult times. I can count on one hand how many discipline referrals Ms. McCreary has had in the FIVE YEARS I have been the principal at Montclair. She has shared her love

of continued learning with them and they too develop a love of learning through her example. Her students always make gains throughout the year with the majority of her class scoring proficient on FSA. Ms. McCreary has aspirations of becoming an administrator one day and any school would be blessed to have her as their assistant principal or principal.

As a life-long learner, McCreary uses what she has learned to be a better teacher.

"During my studies and research into the school-wide performance, I identified a trend in the school FSA performance in which the percentage of proficient female students was 82% lower than the percentage of proficient male students in mathematics," wrote McCreary in her application for Teacher of the Year. "This sparked my interest in creating an afterschool program, "She Counts," (still in effect) which would increase the interest and skill level in mathematics for female students within the testing grades. Through this program the students are conducting novel studies of females who have advanced in math or science, participating in S.T.E.M. projects, and being tutored on essential math skills."

McCreary has also been working to develop her leadership skills by mentoring new teachers and student interns and by leading the incorporation of new learning tools such as Thinking Maps within her school. She also worked to help teachers across the district with their Social Studies lesson planning. "I reconstructed the 2nd grade social studies curriculum maps for the school district. In building the new color maps I integrated the social studies curriculum into the reading curriculum, embedded lesson plans, correlated stories and online learning tools which matched social studies topics."

During her comments that she prepared in case she won, McCreary explains about a teacher's super power, "This superpower teachers possess allows us to look at each of our students and see the potential they have. It's a mix between being able to see the future and x-ray vision."

"For instance it may come in the form of seeing a child who is argumentative and talking back, but we don't see a troubled child, we see a defense attorney. Our role as educators is to identify that potential they have and then place a mirror in front of them to be able to recognize it for themselves," she added.

A cheerleader for Montclair and all of their students, she is on a team that organizes the school's FSA Pep rally to get the students excited about the Florida Standards Assessment and boosts their self-confidence through the repetition of positive affirmations. McCreary also connected with Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated.

"Three years in a row, I worked closely with the president of the local chapter to organize a bundle of supplies for students as they return to school and summer reading materials as they exit. I coordinated a large-scale school supply drive with the regional director of the organization by accumulating a list of supplies, finding companies/organizations to donate, and detailing the material exchange. The success of the project consisted of a multi-thousand dollar donation of school supplies and shoes given to the school," wrote McCreary.

She also shared a defining moment that illustrates the impact she has made on students. " (There was) A student I had in my afterschool program who struggled

academically and acted out negatively. During the afternoon sessions, there was a boost in the student's self-confidence after I helped her identify her strengths and abilities in math and science. Through She Counts, I was able to aid her in finding value in academics, enhanced her interest in learning, and developed her respect for other students she worked with. As a result, the negative behaviors she used to exhibit decreased. Through this and many other experiences similar to it, brought a realization that I am inspired by my students and the mounds of potential they possess."

As the school district's Teacher of the Year, McCreary will now represent Escambia County at the State level where she will have opportunities to network with Florida's top teachers and they will compete for possible selection as the state's Teacher of the Year. That selection will be announced this summer.

Media queries about Escambia County School District topics should be directed to Kim Stefansson, at 850-469-6219, kstefansson@ecsdfi.us Like ECSD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ecsdfi Go to Escambia Schools Public Relations on www.facebook.com/ecsdfi.public to see pictures of recent events. Visit ECSD's web page at www.escambiaschools.org
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