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KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

Two KPBSD educators are Teacher of the Year finalists

Soldotna, October 22, 2016—KPBSD is so proud! Two of the three finalists for the Alaska Teacher of the Year make a difference every day in our district. Join us to celebrate Stephanie Cronin, Seward High School, and James Harris, Soldotna High School, who are finalists chosen by a team of educators from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

“These finalists for teachers of the year represent their profession and remind us of the many great teachers in Alaska,” Commissioner Johnson said in a statement. “We see a common thread of teachers who are enthusiastic about their subject and about learning. They relate to students and place a priority on creating a healthy community in the classroom. They are leaders in their school and community.”

Stephanie Cronin, Seward High School

Stephanie Cronin has been teaching mathematics and engineering at Seward High School for 17 of her 19 years in the profession. A leader in our district and the community, she serves on committees for effective instruction, teacher evaluation, professional development, assessment, curriculum, and educational technology, the school site council, and the local Native Youth Olympics.

“Of course Ms. Cronin is a finalist for the Alaska Teacher of the Year!” said Trevan Walker, principal. “Her genuine love of teaching compels her to continue to learn and grow within the profession. This growth has made her a teacher-leader in technology integration among her colleagues at Seward High and as a member of the KPBSD effective instruction committee. Most importantly, however, is that Ms. Cronin is a caring and compassionate human. Her Positive Math Attitude (PMA) is more than a catch phrase or mantra—it is a philosophy that permeates every interaction she has with her students and they love her for it.”



KPBSD: ONE DISTRICT, FORTY-FOUR DIVERSE SCHOOLS

The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to develop productive, responsible citizens who are prepared to be successful in a dynamic world.

ANCHOR POINT COOPER LANDING HOMER HOPE KACHEMAK SELO KENAI MOOSE PASS NANWALEK NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NINILCHIK PORT GRAHAM
RAZDOLNA SELDOVIA SEWARD SOLDOTNA STERLING TUSTUMENA TYONEK VOZNESENKA

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Cronin says her greatest contribution to education is her impact on students, which is based on respectful, close relationships. Her passion is to show students the beauty and possibilities of mathematics. One student wrote that Ms. Cronin planted the seed that it's okay to be excited about mathematics. "She increased my positive math attitude exponentially," the student said, mathematically. She is a leader in Seward High School's technology-heavy hybrid model, which offers students many ways to earn credits, videotaped lectures to make the most of class time, and online parallels to courses so students have some control over where and when they learn.

"Ms. Stephanie Cronin is clearly one of the best teachers in our district," said Sean Dusek, superintendent. "Her excellence stems from the positive relationships she establishes with all of her students and her ability to make math relevant for her students. I am proud that she is a finalist for the Alaska Teacher of the Year award and believe this honor is well deserved."

James Harris, Soldotna High School

"I feel incredibly honored to be considered a finalist for the 2017 Alaska State Teacher of the Year Award, and proud to teach in the best district in the state," said James Harris. "I am absolutely thrilled to be thought of highly enough by my colleagues and the Department of Education and Early Development to be considered as a finalist. I wouldn't be half the teacher I am without amazing colleagues who constantly challenge and inspire me, or without the support of administrators who work so hard to create an environment for both students and teachers to grow. One of my favorite aspects of teaching, aside from the fun we have in class, is working with so many supportive parents who hold a deep value and respect of education and the opportunities it provides. Finally, no one makes me a better teacher my students. I thank my students for challenging me, using strong verbs, and making me thankful every day for my life on the Kenai."



James Harris is a 12-year professional, and has taught English at Soldotna High School for seven years. A published writer, editor, and college educator, he chairs the English department and professional development at his school, and coaches youth hockey. Harris said he overcame a tumultuous childhood with the help of several teachers who could see the goodness and potential in him. He says, "Through literature I hope to help my students empathize with the human story, open themselves up to the joys, sufferings, motivations, disappointments, and triumphs of others, and thus achieve a kinder and more complex understanding of themselves."

Once students graduate, they start the stories of their own lives. Harris said he uses every skill, experience, talent, and tool at his command to give his students what they need to face their life choices armed with literacy, empathy, and a deeper sense of what they can contribute to our human community.

"Mr. James Harris is one of the best teachers in our district," said Sean Dusek, superintendent. "He implements rigorous and relevant instruction into his classroom every day. The students know he cares about them as individuals through his personalization efforts and how he engages them in goal setting

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and individual improvement. It makes me proud that he is a finalist for the Alaska Teacher of the Year award and I believe this honor is well deserved.”

Overall, it is very exciting that two of the three Alaska Teacher of the Year finalists are educators in the KPBSD. They are both excellent representatives of the teachers in our district and I am proud to have them working with our children every day.”



James Harris; Stephanie Cronin; KPBSD Superintendent Sean Dusek



Tony Graham, Soldotna High School principal; James Harris

Link: [October 22, 2016: Commissioner Johnson Announces Finalists for Teacher of the Year](#)

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