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For immediate Release:

## GSCS 2018-19 Teacher of the Year Finalists Announced

Kathy Duke from Rehoboth Road Middle School, Rhonda Grubb from Crescent Elementary and Jennifer Wilson from Jordan Hill Elementary School are finalists for the district-wide Teacher of the Year (TOTY). The finalists were announced during the September 4, 2018, Griffin-Spalding Board of Education meeting held at the Griffin Region College and Career Academy (GRCCA).

Nineteen school-level TOTY applications were submitted and judged by an independent panel using a rubric to determine the three finalists. These three teachers will now participate in classroom observations and a personal interview before the district-wide Teacher of the Year is selected.



Kathy Duke has been a GSCS middle school educator for over 10 years. She currently serves as a seventh grade Life Science teacher, an Amp-IT-UP (Advanced Manufacturing and Prototyping Integrated to Unlock Potential) ambassador, grade-level chair and leadership team member at Rehoboth Road Middle School. Duke also helps with the school's fundraising efforts and parent involvement. Duke received her bachelor's degree in Middle Education from the University of Georgia and master's degree from Mercer University. Last fall, Duke was selected through the AMP-IT-UP program to spend a week on a research vessel in the Gulf of Mexico collecting data and doing research on the impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

In her application Duke wrote, "A good teacher is somewhat like a good recipe. We all know that good cooks change up a recipe a bit to make it their own. Being a teacher requires a similar twist. I feel rewarded when my students get excited about science. I love to see them really engaged, thinking and stretching themselves to find an answer. I encourage them to do this by the way I run my classroom. Starting with a problem and then figuring out ways to solve the problem is my favorite way of "hooking" them. I adore having discussions with them and never really giving them "the" answer but having them come up with it on their own! Those "aha" moments are what you live for in teaching. There is nothing more rewarding! I am still tweaking my recipe and I always will, just to make it a little better!"

"As a veteran teacher, Mrs. Duke still possesses a zest for teaching and being a life-long learner. Not only is she an extraordinary teacher but she is an innovator, mentor and leader. Her enthusiasm for teaching is contagious! Teaching has truly been a calling for Mrs. Duke as she promotes a love of learning, excellence, faith and respect among her peers and students," stated Rehoboth Road Middle School Assistant Principal Rusty Hudson.



Rhonda Grubb has been an educator for over 20 years. She began her career with GSCS in 2011 as a high school English and news production teacher. Currently, Grubb serves as the media specialist, parent liaison, webmaster, trainer, reading bowl advisor and CETV news producer at Crescent Elementary. Grubb holds a bachelor's degree in English Education from the University of Georgia, a master's degree in Instructional Technology/Media from Georgia College and State University and specialist degree in IT/Media from Valdosta State University.



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**JAMES D. SMITH**  
Superintendent

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In her application, Grubb wrote, "I have three big beliefs about teaching: allow students to learn by doing, set high expectations and make learning fun! A second grade student once told me, "Mrs. Grubb, can I tell you something? I like you but you are just TOO LOUD to be a librarian!" This student did not know it at the time but he had just given me a huge compliment. Honestly, my job would be much easier if I ran a quiet media center but it would not be nearly as rewarding and my students would not learn nearly as much. I firmly believe that students learn by doing and sometimes that process is noisy. I am a champion for making learning fun whenever possible!"

Crescent Elementary Principal Natalie Woods stated, "Mrs. Grubb instills in students a willingness to take risks and boldly approach each learning experience with an open mind. She extends student learning by facilitating book clubs, CETV Broadcast, Reading Bowl, Makers Space and more. Her innovative thinking empowers students to be creators. Her Future Ready mindset supports student-centered learning. Her enthusiasm for learning and rigorous instruction commands the attention of her students. She holds high expectations for students and keeps students engaged with her high energy and animated personality. Learning is never boring with her added creativity and enthusiasm."



Jennifer Wilson has been a music teacher for 15 years serving elementary, middle and high school students at both private and public schools. She is currently the music teacher at Jordan Hill Elementary. Wilson also helps with the school's Literacy Days competition, organizes music performances for PTO and special holiday programs and serves as the accompanist for the elementary and middle school Griffin-Spalding Honor Chorus events. For the district, she has edited and written nationally aligned middle school chorus curriculum, created Student Learning Objectives and served as a mentor to new choral teachers. She received her bachelor's degree in Music from Clayton State University and her master's degree in Music Education from the University of Southern Mississippi.

"As an educator, it is my goal to help all students reach their fullest potential by providing a classroom environment that is positive, challenging and allows for self-discovery. I truly love what I do and give my students all of my focus and energy. I strive every day to be a better teacher than the day before. My teaching motto is to do what you love, do it better every day, every hour and for every child."

"A lot of people teach, but not everyone has the ability to truly inspire students. It is a joy and a privilege to watch Mrs. Wilson's inspiration come to life day in and day out. If we could bottle up and sell Mrs. Wilson's talents, energy, creativity and the ability to create that enthusiasm in students, we would be rich indeed," stated Jordan Hill Elementary Principal Dottie English.

The GSCS 2018-19 school-wide Teacher of the Year recipients are:

Anne Street Elementary - Jasmine Brownlee	Orrs Elementary - Kela Jones
Atkinson Elementary - Natasha Davis	Carver Road Middle - Sidney Wilson
Beaverbrook Elementary - Kim Lee	Cowan Road Middle - Tara Riggs
Cowan Road Elementary - Anita Morgan	Kennedy Road Middle - Minyatta Bell
Crescent Elementary - Rhonda Grubb	Rehoboth Road Middle - Kathy Duke
Futral Road Elementary - Amy Murphy	Griffin High School - Dr. Marye Smith
Jackson Road Elementary - Demetric Parks	Spalding High School - Laurie Eurich
Jordan Hill Elementary - Jenny Wilson	A. Z. Kelsey Academy - Bettina Denson
Moore Elementary- Lynelle Andrews	Mainstay Academy - Libby King
Moreland Road Elementary - Jennifer Brantley	

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"We are so proud to recognize and reward these exceptional educators," said GSCS Superintendent James D. Smith.

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### **About GSCS**

The Griffin-Spalding County School System (GSCS) is an AdvancED accredited district serving 10,000 students in 11 elementary schools, four middle schools, two high schools, one alternative high school and the Griffin Regional College and Career Academy. The vision of GSCS is to be an agent of change, transforming our students into future-ready learners and contributing members of society. For more information about GSCS, visit [www.spalding.k12.ga.us](http://www.spalding.k12.ga.us), follow us on Twitter at @GriffinSpalding, visit [www.facebook.com/GSCSS](https://www.facebook.com/GSCSS), download the GSCS app or follow Sights & Sounds of GSCS on YouTube.



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