



Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

For Immediate Release

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POUDRE SCHOOLS TEACHER CHOSEN AS COLORADO FINALIST FOR PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING AWARD

Elissa Pitts, a high school mathematics teacher at Poudre High School in Fort Collins, has been selected as a Colorado Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

Pitts, a 24-year veteran teaching in the Poudre School District, is now one of three Colorado mathematics teachers eligible to receive a PAEMST award for the 2020-2021 awards cycle, the nation's highest honor for U.S. K–12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teachers. The awards program is administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

State Finalists represent the most outstanding teachers Colorado has to offer and serve as both a model and an inspiration to students and fellow teachers. This is Pitts' second time being honored as a State Finalist.

"I am honored to be named as one of Colorado's PAEMST finalists," says Pitts. "In over two decades of teaching, I have learned from countless mentors, colleagues, and students and I know that I still have much to learn," Pitts says, humbly. "I hope that this recognition can represent the work that all teachers have done this year to provide education to students in the midst of the many challenging situations we have faced." In her application, Pitts stressed how she tries to take fresh approaches to make math useful for students. "I know that math education can open the doors to many career opportunities, allow students to be flexible in the workplace, and help them better understand the world around them." Pitts's principal, Kathy Mackay, highlighted the work Pitts does to help all students. "Reaching kids who can't see higher education in their future is difficult. That is why Elissa tries to identify struggling students even before they walk through our doors," says Mackay. "Elissa collaborates with middle school teachers to make sure students are correctly placed and given proper support."

Each year, a national committee of prominent mathematicians, scientists, mathematics/science education researchers, district-level personnel, and classroom teachers recommends up to 108 teachers to receive PAEMST awards. Up to two teachers—mathematics or science—from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Territories as a group (comprising American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and schools operated in the United States and overseas by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) receive the award. Teachers who are selected as PAEMST awardees receive a trip to Washington, D.C., where they attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities. They also receive a \$10,000 award from NSF, a Presidential certificate, and join an elite cohort of award-winning teachers who can influence state/jurisdiction and national STEM teaching.