

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #208 (2004-2005)

April 11, 2005

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DENALI AWARD RECIPIENTS - WINTER 2005

*ASD Goal: Establish and maintain a supportive and effective learning environment by continuing to retain, recruit and train highly qualified staff.*

PERTINENT FACTS:

To Alaskans, Denali means "great one," and the Anchorage School District is proud to have employees that display greatness in the areas of achievement, service and dedication. Twice each year, a committee of Anchorage School District employees selects six co-workers and a team of colleagues that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to its mission of educating students for success in life.

The certificated Denali Award winners for Winter 2005 are Julie Bryant, Scenic Park Elementary teacher, James Spartz, King Career Center health occupations instructor, and Bonnie Vaughn, West High School technology teacher.

Julie Bryant has been employed with the District for 4 years, two of which have been at Scenic Park Elementary School. In a letter of recommendation, Scenic Park parent Rosemary Fish notes, "Ms. Bryant is a master at integrating instruction. She has groups of students conduct literature circles on informational books about a given subject. She plans age appropriate books for their discovery, which expands their vocabulary, contextual analysis and word consciousness." Ms. Fish goes on to say that Ms. Bryant "is in constant communication with parents of her students and always has ideas and/or suggestions to help her students. She is a fantastic teacher and a very positive part of our lives."

James Spartz is the health occupations teacher at King Career Center and is planning to retire this June after 31 years with the district. Mr. Spartz is described by one of his fellow co-workers as "the epitome of the exemplary teacher who has dedicated his life to serving students and helping them achieve the highest possible standards in their academic lives." KCC Principal Guy Okada says, "Jim makes connections with

every student by reaching into their lives and drawing them into his class and embracing an educational philosophy that is inclusive and personal.” Mr. Okada goes on to say, “Every student in Jim’s class says how challenging the course was and how much encouragement and support they received from him. He truly is an outstanding educator who deserves recognition for all that he has done for his students, school, district and community.”

Bonnie Vaughn is a career technology teacher at West High School. She has been with the district nearly five years, all of which have been at West High. Ms. Vaughn is the department chair for the Career/Technology Department and has helped unite the department in upgrading technology, addressing departmental needs and outlining reachable goals for the department. According to Colette Marshall, Curriculum Assistant Principal at WHS, “Bonnie’s leadership, positive outlook and concern for staff and students’ needs at our school are most definitely recognized and appreciated.”

The two classified/support staff members receiving Denali Awards are Jeanne Hackenberger of East High School and MaryAnn Lisenby of King Career Center.

Jeanne Hackenberger is the financial data control clerk at East High School and has 28 years with the Anchorage School District. East High School’s principal, Michael Graham, remarks that Ms. Hackenberger is “one of the most dedicated, hard working, and productive employees in the district.” He notes, “while Jeanne keeps East High operating smoothly in more ways than any one individual knows, her ability to do so is no secret. Other high school principals and administrators regularly come to her with questions and problems, and send their financial data control clerks to her for training as well.” She is “the best of the best”, Graham says.

MaryAnn Lisenby has been the administrative assistant at the King Career Center for nearly 14 years and will be retiring in June after 23 years with the district. She is considered the “CPU at KCC that keeps things humming along at the speed of light. KCC Principal Guy Okada notes, “MaryAnn is our office manager who keeps the office running efficiently and effectively. She creates and manages our master schedule, handles our student activity accounts, and schedules all class activities.” He goes on to say, “MaryAnn’s name is synonymous with KCC as her responsibilities and connections within the district touch so many people.

The Denali Award for administration goes to Gail Opalinski, Executive Director, Middle School Education. Ms. Opalinski plans to retire this June after 33 years with the Anchorage School District.

“Gail Opalinski has been a tireless advocate for middle school students and programs in the district,” writes one mid-level administrator. “She is a resource for every aspect of middle school education, sorting out options and leading us to find quality choices in the areas of curriculum, social emotional programs and

extracurricular activities.” Another mid-level administrator notes, “Gail has supported, encouraged, lead and challenged us to do what is truly best for our students. In 2003, she received the annual Safe and Drug Free Schools Youth Advocate Award for her dedication and hard work for students. “ Another administrator says, “Gail maintains the highest standards of professional conduct and personal ethics, thus guiding others to emulate such standards, including excellence in instruction, academic achievement, communication with the public, and engagement in promoting ASD’s mission and goals.

The Service High School’s Seminar School faculty are the recipients of the Denali Team Award.

Since 1992, the Seminar School has operated as an alternate learning option at Service and a model of success for the district. The Seminar School is a multidimensional program that combines a rigorous curriculum with civic responsibility and individual determination. When it comes to Service High’s Seminar School, principal Lou Pondolfino acknowledges the 10 faculty members that make up the Seminar School believe strongly in what they do. They have an “equally deep interest in their subject areas and their students’ well-being.” There is a genuine concern the teachers have for each student in the program, and the fact ensures that everyone reach their maximum potential. The time they invest goes well beyond expectations. . I am thoroughly impressed with their talents, dedication and vision and am honored to be working with them, commends Pondolfino.

It is recommended that the School Board recognize these Denali Award recipients, and all of the nominees, for the example of excellence that they set for the entire Anchorage School District community.

Attachment

CC/ME/LN

Prepared by: Lori Nakanishi, Communications Specialist

Approved by: Michelle Egan, Director, Communications

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WINTER 2005 DENALI AWARD NOMINEES

Certificated:

Julie Bryant, Scenic Park Elementary\*  
James Spartz, King Career Center\*  
Bonnie Vaughn, West High School\*

Classified/Support:

Jeanne Allen, Training & Professional Development  
Theodis Austin, South High School  
Jeanne Hackenberger, East High School\*  
Ann LeRue, Goldenview Middle School  
Cindy Lelake, Mears Middle School  
MaryAnn Lisenby, King Career Center\*  
Pahoua Ly, Bartlett High School  
Denise Martinez, West High School  
Celeste Tischer, North Star Residential Treatment Center

Administrator/Principal:

Gail Opalinski, Middle School Education\*  
Cheryl Huber, West High School

Team:

Aquarian Charter School Staff  
ARS Development Team  
Fire Lake Elementary Special Education Team  
Safe & Drug Free Schools Team  
Service High's Seminar School Faculty\*  
West High JROTC Instructors  
West High Language Arts Department

\*award recipients

Denali Award Nomination Review Committee:

Rhonda Gardner, No Child Left Behind Coordinator  
Kathy Griffith, Web Content Specialist, Communications Dept.  
Lori Nakanishi, Communications Dept.  
David Sharrow, Risk Management  
Jean Ward, Chugach Optional  
Jeff Wood, Chief Information Officer