

News Release: Benjamin D. Foulois CPA Educator Named Teacher of the Year

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For Immediate Release

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UPPER MARLBORO, MD – Amanda Espina, visual arts teacher at Benjamin D. Foulois Creative and Performing Arts Academy, has been named the 2016 Prince George's County Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made during the school system's annual Teacher of the Year Celebration at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt.

Espina has spent her ten-year career serving students in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), starting as an interrelated arts teacher at Overlook Elementary School in 2006. She transferred to Benjamin D. Foulois in 2009, where she serves students from across the county who take part in the school's Creative and Performing Arts specialty program.

"With a renewed focus on integrating art throughout our curriculum, I am thrilled that one of our outstanding visual arts teachers has been selected as this year's Teacher of the Year," said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer. "Having such talented teachers in our classrooms is key to our success in raising academic achievement."

"Ms. Espina exemplifies the qualities I believe to be necessary in a teacher," said Matthew McCrea, principal of Benjamin D. Foulois. "She works constantly to invest her students in the goals of the visual arts program, a program that she has built from the ground up as a founding teacher at Benjamin Foulois. Her students' results demonstrate the excellence she has guided them to."

Ridgecrest Elementary fourth-grade teacher Mary Rowley was runner-up for the award; Brandie Cole from Judith P. Hoyer Montessori and Cullen Waller, also from Benjamin Foulois, were finalists.

"I am honored to have this opportunity to celebrate all of the outstanding nominees for Prince George's County Teacher of the Year," said Board Chair Segun C. Eubanks, Ed.D. "These individuals possess the qualities that define a great teacher: knowledge of the subject matter, dedication to students, the ability to inspire, strong leadership skills, and a 'star quality' that is noticed by everyone around them."

Espina was nominated by her peers not only for her professional skills, but for her devotion to her work, love of children, and support of colleagues. Espina is a leader at her school, serving on a number of committees, including co-chairing the Character Education Committee.

Outside of her school, she works with the University of Maryland College Park to mentor new teachers, serves as the school district's Visual Arts Department Art Show Coordinator, and leads the Visual Arts Professional Educators Induction Program (PEIP), Fine Arts Summer Institute,

and numerous trainings on such topics as elementary art instruction, art exhibit preparation, arts integration, and curriculum development.

Her students' work has been featured at both local and state levels and has been recognized for excellence in the Youth Art Month Countywide Exhibit. Last year, the Prince George's County Board of Education named one of her students Best Student Artist. Always looking for new ways to highlight students' creative talent, she is currently partnering with the Continental Studies, a nonprofit group whose Arts and Humanities Division will provide a local gallery experience for students and exhibition of their work.

Espina trained in Maryland for her teaching career, receiving a bachelor's degree with a double major in art education and studio art from the University of Maryland, College Park. She also earned a master's degree in Arts Integration from the same university.

She will compete statewide with representatives from all 24 counties for the title of **2015-2016 Maryland Teacher of the Year** (http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/programs/recognition-partnerships/toy_1/), coordinated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The winner will be announced in the fall and represent Maryland in the national competition.

The following educators were also nominees for Prince George's County Teacher of the Year:

- Emory Andrews, Choir, Choral Studies, Piano, & Theory Teacher, Oxon Hill High School
- Kwabena Asomani, Technology Concepts Teacher, Thurgood Marshall Middle School
- Tracy Clark-Peele, 1st Grade Classroom Teacher, Hyattsville Elementary School
- Brandie Cole, Pre-K 3 - K Classroom Teacher, Judith P. Hoyer Montessori School
- Jennifer McGill Thompson, Visual Arts Teacher, Imagine Foundations at Morningside Public Charter School
- Amy Monjes, 3rd Grade Classroom Teacher, Hyattsville Elementary School
- Erin Morrison, Grades 3-8 Music Teacher, Samuel Ogle Middle School
- Tetsuo Ogawa, Japanese Teacher, Eleanor Roosevelt High School
- Shercora Parker, English/Language Arts Teacher, Gwynn Paurk Middle School
- Cullen Waller, Instrumental Music Teacher, Benjamin D. Foulois Creative and Performing Arts Academy
- Tamyra Wesley, 1st Grade Classroom Teacher, Imagine Foundations at Morningside Public Charter School