



26th
Annual

BLAST AWARDS 2020

and the **WINNERS** are.....

Big Bend/ Leon Association for Science Teaching



Award Nominees being Presented:

❖ Excellence in Science Teaching ❖

Recognition for significant contributions to science education through instruction, innovation, professional development, community involvement and leadership.

*This year we have **nominees** for **Excellence in Science Teaching** in two categories: high school, and elementary....*

The winners in these categories will be announced right here... keep reading!

Since we cannot tell you about each excellent nominee in person, we will introduce each of them to you here.....

Excellence in High School Science Teaching Nominee



David Madden - Maclay High School

Mr. Madden's students often come into his physics course convinced that it is a difficult subject. He views this as a challenge to find new ways to make physics relevant and interesting to his students and to keep them engaged and learning. One method is using his YouTube Channel, Madden Science, where he posts science videos. Some are unrelated to class topics, more like analysis of topics and ideas he finds interesting. Videos like these can help facilitate questioning skills, data collection and better understand scientific phenomena. He also live-streams and records all of his test reviews, allowing students to refer back to them if they can't attend or need to review recent coursework. Mr. Madden is committed to being a life-long learner. He recently participated in the NOAA Teacher at Sea program, spending 2 weeks on the RV Pisces. This experience contributed to his planning for AP Environmental Science Course this year. Mr. Madden's co-workers note his willingness to support colleagues, as he ably filled the void left when a long-time and much beloved teacher retired. Mr. Madden has dedicated his life to science education and is the kind of science teacher every kid hopes they get, and every young science teacher hopes to become.

Excellence in High School Science Teaching Nominee



Danielle Taylor – SAIL High School

Ms. Taylor always puts her students first and makes learning happen in an engaging and interactive way. Her principal writes that her motivation and ability to connect with students are commendable. She is an inspiration for the students at SAIL High School and in the local community. While standing outside her door before classes, students flock to her asking questions about science in their world. As a school-wide study exercise, she placed harmless colored markings on the carpenter bees around campus. This allowed students to role-play the work of entomologists by tracking the range and specific behaviors of the individual bees. Another popular project that she just finished were memes based on aquatic organisms. Students researched interesting facts and turned them into art projects, most of them bringing in a sense of humor to the science. Ms. Taylor also coordinates school-wide professional development opportunities. She is also recognized among her peers as an excellent leader. Ms. Taylor maintains her passion in science through membership of the American Association of Chemistry Teachers. She exhibits a growth-focused mindset and is always willing to go above and beyond for SAIL students.

Excellence in Elementary Science Teaching Nominee



Carolyn Cotton - Astoria Park Elementary School

Ms. Cotton was nominated because she has exhibited the quality of excellence in teaching science in Leon County Schools. Her classroom is always full of STEM-related activities, such as constructing atoms, circuits, displays of heat transference, and other concepts that illustrate fifth grade science standards. She took the initiative to plan with her team and lead the collection of data from the mid-year benchmark test to guide instruction. Ms. Cotton displays a stellar work ethic and believes in developing every student's potential. She stays late and comes early, and is always prepared to take her students out among the stars. As a rising young professional in the area of science, she has shown that young girls are able to excel in STEM studies. She has inspired a generation of young girls to think that science is cool, by example in her teaching, and in her research of breast cancer for a published article on the subject.

Excellence in Elementary Science Teaching Nominee



Jeanette Villa - Woodville Elementary School

Woodville's principal writes that Mrs. Villa is "exactly the kind of teacher who deserves to represent my school." She is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and brings a one-of-a kind-spirit to her classroom every day. Mrs. Villa's recent move to 5th grade science led to her focus on increasing student performance and engagement in the classroom. She plans diligently for her own class lessons, but also collaborates with other teachers and grade levels to help provide all students with quality instruction in Florida's science standards. She frequently uses hands-on experimentation coupled with high level questioning and content area reading. Due to her efforts, students are showing notable academic progress. Mrs. Villa is a leader and often leads trainings and professional development for her colleagues, and also heads up the school's Sci-Fri afterschool club. One of her students says that they always have a great time, and that Mrs. Villa is "The best teacher there is because she is the absolute best!"



and the Winners are.....

David Madden

Jeanette Villa

Big Bend/ Leon Association for Science Teaching

Congratulations!!!!



Awards being Presented today:

Nominees in these categories all receive an award.

❖ **Seed Pearl Award of Promise**

Recognition for teachers with five or fewer years of experience who demonstrate an interest and aptitude for teaching science.

❖ **Excellence in Science / Student Award**

Recognition for juniors and seniors from area schools who excel in science.

❖ **Service to Science Education**

Recognition for those individuals and organizations who have given an exceptional amount of support to science education through time, talent, or monetary means.

Seed Pearl Award of Promise



Kelly Kazwell - Chaires Elementary School

Ms. Kazwell wasn't a science teacher to start. Initially, her responsibilities involved teaching reading and math. But she always found a way to incorporate science and teach the students reading through science, and used this connection to build rapport with her students. This helps her teach even the most advanced concepts to students and is truly marvelous to observe. Ms. Kazwell never shied away from science and made sure to spend an equal amount of time teaching science and providing the students with hands-on experiments that she knew would make a greater impact. Her classroom is a place where students feel comfortable and look forward to visiting since her passion and enthusiasm for science are contagious. She has a gift for sparking classroom discussion, generating enthusiasm, holding students' attention and making the day's lesson memorable.

Seed Pearl Award of Promise



Emma McDonnell - Hartsfield Elementary School

Ms. McDonnell's love for science complements her excitement for teaching it. She often incorporates hands-on investigations in her centers and seeks to build on students' prior knowledge. They get to investigate science concepts by using scientific methods that include gathering and recording data, making predictions, developing hypotheses, and seeking evidence-based explanations. Her use of technology brings concepts to life and makes learning truly become fun. Ms. McDonnell also looks for opportunities to collaborate with community organizations. She has partnered with ReThink Energy Florida and the University of Florida Extension Office, both of which came to visit her after school STEAM club. Ms. McDonnell has also helped Hartsfield Elementary to become the first EcoSchool in Leon County as designated by the National Wildlife Federation. Often her students can be seen around the campus planting and helping build wildlife habitats. She has also provided professional development assistance to fellow teachers and staff, and has shared lessons focusing on promoting the environment.

Seed Pearl Award of Promise



Jacob Truett - Cobb Middle School

Mr. Truett is a consummate professional and his even-keeled nature adds a productive energy in the classroom. During collegial conversations and interactions, he exudes a confidence and capability with thoughtfulness and maturity. In his classroom he generates engaging and supportive lessons that benefit all of his students. He takes care to make connections with each student and fosters relationships that encourage student to put forth their best effort each day. He effectively nurtures each student's confidence, maintaining an environment of safety which enables them to step outside their academic comfort zone and take chances that lead to learning and growth. Mr. Truett also supports his students by attending sporting events, offering before school help, and participating in ongoing professional development. His positive influence is felt throughout the school and is positively influencing the culture of Cobb.

Excellence in Science / Student Award



Clea Hannahs – SAIL High School Senior

Clea has been the top performing student in her AP Physics class this year. She has a strong work ethic and superior foundation in science and math. Her skills allow her to quickly grasp the interaction of variables in functions and to manipulate formulas to her advantage to solve problems. She is also very strong with data analysis, using statistical tools in Excel to validate her claims and hypothesis. Clea is so skilled scientifically, using extensive data collection to reduce uncertainty and minimize sources of error. She even returns to her science class outside of regularly-scheduled times to rerun experiments until she has reliable data and confidence in the results. She ran a test to transmit sound on a light wave to the room next door, measuring the acceleration of gravity precisely to three decimal places. Clea is a motivated student, loves to learn, and is not satisfied with a superficial explanation in researching a topic. Clea wants to improve the world with her skills and her SAIL teachers believe she is heading in the right direction to make this happen.

Excellence in Science / Student Award



Essence Nobles – Amos P. Godby High School Senior

Essence is one of the stellar physicists in her physics honors class. She is the epitome of a hard worker and does not hesitate to go over and beyond what is necessary to complete a task. She brings a great energy to class as well as a positive attitude. Essence's persistence in her quest for physics knowledge does not go unnoticed. Her passion for learning physics has driven her to become a leader in the classroom. She does not hesitate to assist her fellow peers in breaking down Physics problems and is always willing to lend a helping hand. Other than being an awesome physicist, Essence is also a student athlete. Her drive to excel as an athlete has only complemented her striving for excellence in the study of Physics. She lets no obstacle stand in her way. Her infectious smile and attitude, eagerness to learn, willingness to help others and going above and beyond as a physics student will no doubt contribute to her future success.

Service to Science Education Award

Michele Madison



Farming the Future

Michele is an integral part of science programs in many of our area's critically lower performing schools. There, she provides agricultural studies content and support to inner-city students. Her program gives students opportunities to learn where our food comes from -- an essential necessity, not often studied in the classroom. Students can count on her as she shares her passion for her work in agriculture. Her organization, Farming the Future, serves several school sites across three Panhandle counties. The programs include using aquaponics agricultural systems as a hands-on learning experience in the fields of agriculture, science, and engineering. This gives students a platform for considering science-related occupational routes. Ms. Madison also led a "farm to table" project, with students responsible for harvesting various crops then provided to their school cafeterias for lunches. Remaining produce was also donated to Second Harvest as an outreach project. Both the Big Bend and the world at large benefit from Michele's energy and dedicated enthusiasm.



**Congratulations to all....
nominees and winners!!!**

**Thank you for all you do to
promote quality science
education! We look forward to
hearing more about your future
accomplishments!**

**Until we can meet again,
and honor you in person,
.....keep being wonderful!**



Our Thanks to these longtime supporters and active 2019-20 BLAST Board members.

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