

# The Learning Curve

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Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

## Bibb County Public Schools' Teacher of the Year

Teachers, administrators, and community representatives gather to honor the outstanding teachers of every school



Last year's Teacher of the Year, Porter Elementary Music teacher (left), announces and congratulates the new Bibb County Teacher of the Year, Alexander II Elementary Math teacher Jennifer Doss.

Excitement hung in the air as teachers, principals, friends, families, and honored guests poured into the Macon Centreplex for the annual Bibb County Teacher of the Year Banquet. For the first time ever, they were arriving only knowing who the top five finalists were.

Under the direction of Education First, the Bibb Association of Educations (BAE), and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) in partnership with the Bibb County Public Schools, the calendar for the selection process was reworked last year. Not only was the County's Teacher of the Year being announced on this night, she could now get her application submitted in time to be eligible for the honor of being named the Georgia Teacher of the Year.

So with anticipation building in the weeks prior, school employees across the county jumped at any chance to attend: almost 500 people showed up, packing the Centreplex Banquet Hall from wall-to-wall, to find out who would represent Bibb County at the state level.

"This is an amazing turnout," Education First Executive Director Julie Pennybacker said, looking around at everyone congratulating each school's Teacher of the Year. "This amount of support for outstanding teachers speaks very highly of the school system here in Bibb County."

"We're here to honor those teachers who you have selected as going above and beyond in their profession," said Master of Ceremonies Calandra Wright, Morning and Midday Anchor for 13WMAZ. "Congratulations to each and every one of you."

After Morgan Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> grader Adagio Allen led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Central High School Color Guard presented the colors, and an outstanding meal catered by the Centreplex, the ceremonies began, and teachers moved to the edge of their seats.

"This is just so exciting," said PAGE Membership Representative Wendy Pooler, who helped plan the event. "It's so great all these people are here."

Featured speakers this year were Superintendent Sharon Patterson and the Georgia Teacher of the Year Dr. Brenda Shuman-Riley. Patterson thanked every teacher for their support of the school system and their dedication to student education, and Shuman-Riley spoke of the importance of teaching and what it has meant to her throughout her life.

Each school's Teacher of the Year was called forward to be honored with a standing ovation and the presentation of a personalized gift. As each was called forward to receive their gift, their school would stand and cheer, proud of their Teacher of the Year and the work they accomplish each and every day.

Education First, BAE, and PAGE, to honor the top five finalists, produced a video highlighting each of them with tributes by their principals and fellow teachers and how proud they are to be representing their schools and possibly their county. As the video finished, the tension in the air grew; this is what everyone in the room was waiting for.

This past year's Teacher of the Year, Porter Elementary Music Teacher Sherry Meyers, took the stage. "It has been such an honor serving this past year," she told them with tears in her eyes. As part of the committee selecting her successor she says "this teacher truly embodies what a Teacher of the Year should be."

"I'm very pleased to say this year's Teacher of the Year is Jennifer Doss from Alexander II Elementary!" Her sentence is not even done before the Alexander II tables are jumping up and cheering, Doss on her way to the podium with tears in her eyes, and the rest of the room on their feet applauding.

"Thank you very much," she told the audience. "This is such a great honor."

Doss, who is lead math teacher at the school, helped the department create a school-wide pacing

guide for learning facts and mastering basic skills, establishing tutoring for at-risk students, and modeling hands-on activities for classroom teachers. She works personally with low-performing students

For her own professional development, she is a member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and PAGE, she is currently waiting on her results for her National Board Certification, she has made presentations at the Georgia Council of Teachers of Mathematics conferences, she obtained a gifted endorsement in 2004, earned her masters in early and middle grades math and science in 2003, and is constantly improving her mathematical knowledge through professional journals, taking on-line course, and auditing math classes.

"We are so proud of Mrs. Doss," said Principal Penny Smith, as Doss left the Centreplex in a limo ride provided by the Downtown Macon Rotary Club. "She is the epitome of a Teacher of the Year."

Sponsors of this year's banquet were MidSouth Federal Credit Union, Georgia Power, BAE, Georgia College & State University, the Medical Center of Central Georgia, PAGE, Shurling & Co., and Wesleyan University.



(above) Dr. Brenda Shuman-Riley, Georgia's Teacher of the Year, talks to the audience about the joys of teaching.



(left) Superintendent Sharon Patterson congratulates Jennifer Doss on receiving this top honor.