



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2017
N-35, 2016-17

CHANCELLOR FARIÑA ANNOUNCES 2017 BIG APPLE AWARD WINNERS

Record High 7,800 Nominations Submitted by Students, Families, School Staff, and Community Members to Honor Outstanding Teachers

NEW YORK – Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced the winners of the fifth annual *Big Apple Awards*, honoring 19 recipients and celebrating the incredible work of New York City public school teachers. *The Big Apple Awards* are a citywide recognition program open to all full-time teachers in New York City public schools and recipients were selected from a pool of over 7,800 nominations.

“As a former public school parent, I’ll always remember the teachers who inspired my children and brought their classrooms to life,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “*The Big Apple Awards* are about celebrating those teachers and thanking them for going the extra mile to help their students, engage parents, and support their colleagues. I want to congratulate this year’s recipients and the countless other teachers across this City who make a difference in their students’ lives every day.”

“A great teacher can change a student’s life, and *The Big Apple Awards* are an incredible opportunity to celebrate the City’s many talented educators,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “This year’s recipients represent the thousands of incredible educators who go above and beyond to motivate their students, and move their school communities forward. I congratulate all the incredible teachers receiving this great recognition and applaud the nominees from schools across the City.”

The 19 award recipients include 17 classroom teachers, one arts educator and, for the first time, a physical education teacher. For the second year, Chancellor Fariña and Deputy Chancellors surprised teachers in their classrooms and presented them with awards. The visits allowed students and school staff to join in celebrating the outstanding work of their teachers.

The Big Apple Awards are made possible, in part by support from the Fund for Public Schools. In particular, The Fund has partnered for a fifth year with Lincoln Center Education, which works with the DOE on several arts education programs, to sponsor the Arts Education Award. The Physical Education Award, a new category this year, was made possible with inaugural funding from the New York Road Runners, a longtime DOE partner that provides fitness and wellness programs to over 800 of schools across the city.

The Big Apple Awards ceremony is the culmination of a rigorous process that includes community nominations, principal and colleague recommendations, applicant essays, an interview, and a classroom observation. Nominees came from over 1,480 schools across the City. After an initial screening, more than 1,000 nominees were invited to submit an application that included essays as well as principal and colleague recommendations. Candidates were reviewed based on their ability to demonstrate exceptional success in three key competency areas aligned with the *Framework for Great Schools*: impacting student learning, demonstrating strong instructional practice, and contributing to their school community. Following a review of the applications, 250 teachers were selected as finalists by their superintendents.

A board of judges – comprised of DOE officials and representatives from the United Federation of Teachers and Fund for Public Schools – selected 19 award winners, with Lincoln Center representatives supporting the selection of the arts winner and New York Road Runners supporting the selection of the Physical Education teacher. The ceremony will be held on June 22, 2017 at the Tweed Courthouse.

Next school year, the 19 recipients will serve as Big Apple Fellows, and they will have the opportunity to meet monthly with one another, becoming leaders and ambassadors for their profession. Recipients will also be invited to serve on the Chancellor's Teacher Advisory Group, which meets bi-monthly to further impact policy across the DOE.

“I would like to thank and recognize all of the teachers who get up every morning and look to help, assist and teach our children” said **Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan**. “I commend Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña for bringing new leadership, dialogue and respect for our teachers and our public workers.”

"Congratulations to the 2017 Big Apple Award winners," said **NYC Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm**. "Our public schools are home to the best educators in the world. By working to ensure that students are college and career ready, these teachers take an active role in shaping the future of our society. I join Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña in applauding the outstanding commitment to public education demonstrated by this year's award recipients."

"Brooklyn is a borough filled with A+ educators, and this year's Big Apple Award winners reflect our incredible teaching talent. I congratulate and thank our seven star teachers for their commitment to inspiration and innovation, bringing the best out of our children," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“Teachers have one of the hardest jobs and are some of our most dedicated public servants,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Congratulations to all of the teachers selected to receive this prestigious award, and especially to the five Manhattan teachers who have each done so much to provide our students not only with knowledge but with support and opportunities.”

“Our borough and our city have so many great teachers, and the Big Apple Awards are just one of the many ways we can recognize and honor the dedicated educators who work hard each and every single day to make our public schools more dynamic learning environments for our

children. I am thrilled to stand with Chancellor Fariña and the entire Department of Education to recognize today's honorees," said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.**

"Teachers' work is invaluable in shaping our future generations," noted **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. "I want to congratulate all of this year's winners, especially P.S. 45's Julia Satt. Thank you all for your hard work, and I applaud your unwavering commitment to our children."

"Lincoln Center Education is thrilled to support the Big Apple Awards for the fifth straight year. Through this program we have not only been able to honor extraordinary arts teachers in New York City, but also partner with them to learn from their exceptional classroom skills," said **Russell Granet, Executive Vice President of Lincoln Center Education, Community Engagement, and International**. "We congratulate this year's winner, James Harrington, and we look forward to collaborating with him to improve and expand access to arts education for all New York City public school students in the future."

"At New York Road Runners we are fully committed to improving the health, confidence, and lives of the children who take part in our youth programs, but it is with the dedication of the teachers involved in our program, like Rose Newman, that make reaching these young runners possible," said **Rachel Pratt, senior vice president for youth and community services at NYRR**. "Ms. Newman's implementation of NYRR Mighty Milers at PS 118 is the perfect example of how running and general fitness can seamlessly be incorporated into the school day, and truly benefit its participants both in the gym and in the classroom."

This year's *Big Apple Award* recipients come from all five boroughs, and teach a range of subjects and grade levels. The recipients are:

Danielle Bocchino (5th Grade Teacher, P.S. 215 Morris H. Weiss, Brooklyn)

Mrs. Bocchino has taught at P.S. 215 for 14 years and holds her students to rigorous standards, rewarding them with "conversation coupons" when they use accountable talk. Mrs. Bocchino stresses the importance of student independence because, she believes, "It is important to let them do the work." At the beginning of this year, just 17 percent of her students were meeting fifth grade math standards; by mid-year, 86 percent were meeting the standards including 34 percent who were exceeding them.

Corinne Cornibe (High School Math Teacher, Academy for Young Writers, Brooklyn)

"I want my students to be creators – to design, innovate, and problem-solve their way to a better future," said Ms. Cornibe. She started a robotics program and later establish an Advanced Placement Computer Science program that have ignited students' passions and interest in learning. 73 percent of last year's graduating class took a course in computer science, robotics, or both.

Yocasty Diaz (Middle School Math Teacher, I.S. 219 New Venture School, the Bronx)

Ms. Diaz has worked at I.S. 219 for 16 years and describes her classroom as "a center of investigation, discovery, and risk-taking opportunities." Ms. Diaz utilizes project-based instruction focusing on meteorological science to expand her students' horizons by exposing them to professions that they otherwise might not have had access to.

Keira Dillon (5th Grade Gifted & Talented Teacher, P.S. 163 Alfred E. Smith, Manhattan)
Over her ten years at P.S. 163, Ms. Dillon has exposed students to great works of philosophy and art. Her goal: “to offer enriching academic and social opportunities that mirror this amazing city.” Ms. Dillon believes in building cross-curricular connections and her students conduct a weekly song analysis through a Socratic seminar.

Adriana DiScipio (English as a New Language Teacher, P.S. 230 Doris L. Cohen, Brooklyn)
Ms. DiScipio is now in her 11th year of working with often newly arrived English Language Learners at P.S. 230. “I perceive my students’ linguistic diversity as a strength and a resource.” Beyond her classroom, Ms. DiScipio serves as a Learning Partners Program Model Teacher, sharing work around language learning and vocabulary development with her school community.

James Harrington (High School Art Teacher, High School of Art and Design, Manhattan)
In his 11th year teaching at the school he graduated from, Mr. Harrington strives to live up to his own teachers’ legacy as mentors who saw their students as artists. Relating to his students, Mr. Harrington reflects, “I became a teacher to pass on the gift of art to a new generation, just as it was passed on to me.”

Leslie Lehrman (High School English Teacher, Fordham Leadership Academy for Business and Technology, the Bronx)
Ms. Lehrman explains that she left her career in magazine publishing to “combine my passion for reading and writing with my love for children.” As a Master Teacher, Ms. Lehrman acts as the department lead, guiding vertical alignment of instructional strategies, and helps to lead a professional learning community, collaborating with colleagues to develop and deliver monthly professional development aligned with schoolwide goals.

Jessica Martell (5th Grade Teacher, Central Park East II, Manhattan)
Ms. Martell works in an ICT setting and became a teacher to combine her love of New York City with her belief that every student is entitled to a quality public education. This year, each of her students has grown at least two reading levels, and Ms. Martell has fulfilled her goal of ensuring “all students see themselves as capable and brilliant readers and writers.”

Nash Matute (Reading Recovery Teacher, Archer Elementary School, the Bronx)
Ms. Matute has taught in New York City public schools for seven years and serves as a Reading Recovery teacher for a group of first grade students. She is “driven by the never-ending room to grow and develop.” Ms. Matute also serves as an instructional coach for her school’s upper grades and has implemented a schoolwide teacher and peer conferencing system for teachers to assess and build relationships with students.

Katie McArdle (Elementary Autism Teacher, P.S. K231, Brooklyn)
Ms. McArdle has spent the past 14 years teaching New York City students on the autism spectrum. “After college, I stumbled upon a graduate program focusing on students with severe and multiple disabilities, and as soon as I began, I knew I had found my niche.” In her classroom,

each students' unique learning style is respected and nurtured. Mrs. McArdle's primary focus is on developing her students' self-awareness, self-control, and self-advocacy.

Faye Michalakos (6th Grade Math Teacher, Hellenic Classical Charter School, Brooklyn)
Ms. Michalakos ties all of her instruction to real world examples and experiences for her math students. Understanding the "why" of math is critical to her students' success, and Ms. Michalakos builds partnerships with parents and families through schoolwide engagement events. In the classroom, she insists upon students using math vocabulary and accountable talk, and prepares them to facilitate their own Socratic seminars and to monitor their own progress by writing themselves "glow and grow" notes.

Carmen I. Morales (TASC Preparation Teacher, East River Academy, Rikers Island)
Ms. Morales has spent the past 25 years at East River Academy working with incarcerated students. She often "sneaks" hopeful and inspiring messages into their work to keep them engaged, and cultivates a physical learning environment which is uniquely suited to the social emotional needs of students on Rikers Island.

Patrick Murphy (Special Education Teacher, P.S. 199 Maurice A. Fitzgerald, Queens)
Mr. Murphy has inspired students to consider engineering careers after starting a Lego Robotics program. He believes in tapping into his students' interests and passions to drive instruction, saying, "I became a teacher because I love the art of learning." Individual student conferences also help him monitor student progress and create monthly goal sheets aligned to rigorous academic standards.

Rose Newman (Physical Education Teacher, P.S. 118 Lorraine Hansberry, Queens)
"My Physical Education class is a place of moving and learning," said Ms. Newman. She is the first PE teacher to receive a Big Apple Award, and her goal is for students have fun while learning about health-related fitness, skills, and character. She also sets specific goals that can be tracked during the year, and students are expected to spend at least 50 percent of class time engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and complete at least 1,000 steps during each lesson, as measured by the use of pedometers.

Rosario Orengo (Middle School Social Studies Teacher, The Urban Assembly Unison School, Brooklyn)
"I wake up every morning excited to do this work," said Ms. Orengo. For her, the work of being an educator means creating a safe environment, in which her students feel comfortable taking academic risks and sharing their own confusions and misunderstandings. Focusing on conversation and discussion, she uses high-interest readings and integrates connections to current events to motivate her students, and helped introduce restorative practices to the school community.

Elaine Rodriguez (Dual Language Middle School Math Teacher, M.S. 322, Manhattan)
Ms. Rodriguez said she "practices an open-door-at-all-times policy and welcomes positive thinking and mistakes from students, parents, administrators and visitors." In her dual language classroom, Ms. Rodriguez models instruction in Spanish for one week and then continues the curriculum in English the following week.

Julia Satt (2nd Grade Special Education Teacher, P.S. 45 John Tyler, Staten Island)

Ms. Satt has taught at P.S. 45 for ten years in an ICT setting, focused on educating the whole child, responding to each student's unique behaviors and needs, and using restorative circles to promote equity of voice. A significant portion of Ms. Satt's students have made two years' worth of reading, writing, and math progress in just one year.

Diana Shteynberg (Pre-K Teacher, Shorefront YM-YWHA, Brooklyn)

Raised in a family of educators, Ms. Shteynberg's goal is to guide students to be "self-initiating and self-directed learners" and to "grow from dreamers to doers." Ms. Shteynberg seeks to create a welcoming environment and an atmosphere of trust for every child and family, and builds strong parent partnerships, offering positive and constructive feedback. At the end of last year, every student in Ms. Shteynberg's class was able to enter Kindergarten without the ESL program due to excelling in language and literacy.

Binh Thai (6th Grade Humanities Teacher, University Neighborhood Middle School, Manhattan)

Mr. Thai began his teaching career 17 years ago as a member of the inaugural cohort of the New York City Teaching Fellows. Mr. Thai implements a 360-degree feedback process in his classroom: students receive feedback from each other as well as from their teacher, and Mr. Thai uses an online form to solicit feedback on his instruction directly from students.

Members of the public, including NYC DOE alumni, who wish to support the Big Apple Awards through a donation to honor the teachers that inspired them, can do so through The Fund's website at www.fundforpublicschools.org/bigapple.

###

Contact: Chancellor's Press Office (212) 374-5141