



March 31, 2005

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MIDDLE START LEADER NAMED ARKANSAS ‘TEACHER OF THE YEAR’

New York, NY — A teacher from Forrest City Junior High currently implementing the Middle Start comprehensive school improvement program was recently named 2005 Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

Pamela England, a veteran educator with 18 years experience and a current member of her school’s Middle Start leadership team, came to the Forrest City school district last year with ambitions to change students’ lives. “Teaching is a way of life. My day is not over at 3:45,” said this hardworking practitioner who was spotted by her school’s principal tutoring students before class which inspired him to nominate her for the award.

Ms. England, a girls’ softball coach and assistant girls’ varsity basketball coach; a mentor; and 9th grade math teacher at Forrest City Junior High, has overseen dramatic improvements of student achievement during her time at Forrest City. The year before she came to Forrest City, only 5% of students were able to score a proficient rating on the end-of-course geometry test. After one year of teaching, 87% of students in Ms. England’s class scored proficient or above in geometry. 78% percent of her students were proficient in Algebra I.

Ms. England started a tutoring program for kids before school, developed individual improvement plans for math students, and has immersed herself in professional development opportunities to better serve her students.

One of these opportunities has been participating on the school’s Middle Start leadership team which focuses on implementing the latest in proven middle-grades practices across the school. Through a partnership between Middle Start National Center at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the Foundation for the MidSouth, and Forrest City Junior High, Ms. England’s work on the Leadership team has helped the school implement best practices such as creating small learning communities, using data-driven decision making, and utilizing self-reflection and review so that students have improved opportunities to learn at high levels.

Ms. England also participated in Middle Start's Summer Learning Institutes two years in a row. The Institutes offer technical and professional assistance for teachers, as well as an opportunity to disseminate innovative techniques for engaging students and remaining academically rigorous while also being responsive to the unique developmental needs of young adolescents.

"Pamela England embodies the spirit of an extraordinary teacher with a focus on students and what they each need to learn at high levels. Extraordinary teachers like Pamela help realize the vision Middle Start is striving to achieve," said Partick Montesano, director of the Middle Start National Center at the Academy for Educational Development.

Ms. England received \$15,000 at a ceremony hosted by Arkansas' Governor Huckabee. She was chosen from four finalists out of 30,000 teachers in the state of Arkansas.

About Middle Start

The Middle Start initiative combines on-site coaching, professional development, and partner resources to strengthen student achievement in schools with middle grades. Guided by current research and practice emphasizing the developmental needs of young adolescents, Middle Start upholds the three goals that create the foundation for student success— academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and social equity— through small learning communities, team structure, effective curriculum, student-centered instruction, student assessment; reflective review and self-assessment; and sustainable partnerships. The Middle Start National Center at the Academy for Educational Development provides leadership and support to regional Middle Start partnerships and school networks. For more information visit www.middlestart.org or contact Lea Williams Rose (lwilliam@aed.org).

About the Academy for Educational Development (AED)

Founded in 1961, AED is an independent nonprofit organization committed to solving critical social problems in the United States and throughout the world. AED works with schools, school systems, families, and community-based organizations on comprehensive school and community improvement initiatives, as well as programs addressing specific education issues.

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