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SREB, iNACOL Announce Finalists for National Online K-12 Teacher of the Year Award

ATLANTA — Five finalists for the second annual National Online Teacher of the Year Award for K-12 online learning were announced today by the two education nonprofit organizations that hold the competition, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL).

The 2011 SREB/iNACOL **National Online Teacher of the Year Award** recognizes an outstanding online teacher for exceptional contributions to online K-12 education. The judging committee evaluated 65 nominations of online educators in public schools and state virtual schools from 25 states to make the final selections.

The number of finalists was expanded from three to five this year upon recommendation of the judges. Selection of the finalists and the National Online Teacher of the Year was an extraordinarily difficult task, judges said, given that so many candidates epitomize excellence in the profession. Many of the nominees ably demonstrate they are teaching *real* courses to *real* students — and their students' growth and achievement are the true success stories.

The finalists are: **Kristin Kipp** from Jeffco's 21st Century Virtual Academy in Colorado, **Thomas Landon** from Virtual Virginia, **Dianna Miller** from Florida Virtual School, **Emily Parrish** from North Carolina Virtual Public School and **Andrew Vanden Heuvel** from Michigan Virtual School.

One of these five finalists will be named the 2011 National Online Teacher of the Year on March 10 in Atlanta, at the Excellence Dinner during the SREB's Education Technology Cooperative's Teaching and Learning Symposium. Sponsors of the award include Connections Academy LLC, Blackboard Collaborate!, Florida Virtual School, Pearson Foundation and SAS.

The 2011 National Online Teacher of the Year will receive a crystal Flame of Excellence and a day with Karen Cator, the director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education, plus a trip to the Virtual School Symposium sponsored by iNACOL, November 9-11 in Indianapolis. The winner also will be recognized during the iNACOL Annual Meeting and will be featured on the SREB and iNACOL websites. The other four finalists will receive special recognition at the awards banquet in March and other honors.

“By bringing these deserving teachers into the spotlight, this award is a powerful advocate for online learning,” said Myk Garn, the director of the Cooperative.

“This award recognizes teachers who represent excellence in student-centered online teaching. We are grateful to each and every one of the applicants, and we congratulate the second annual National Online Teacher of the Year Award finalists,” said Susan Patrick, president and CEO of iNACOL.

About the finalists

Kristin Kipp has been an online English teacher for three years at Jefferson County’s 21st Century Virtual Academy in Golden, Colorado, which serves high school students throughout the state. A nine-year teacher and resident of Evergreen, she currently teaches 11th- and 12th-graders and is instructional leader for the English department. Cited by her director for her exceptional competence and ability to “empower students, parents and fellow faculty toward the highest academic standards,” she also serves as a course reviewer/reviser and part-time adjunct English teacher with Colorado Online Learning.

Thomas Landon of Roanoke has been a teacher for 14 years, including four at Virtual Virginia as an online teacher of AP human geography to grades 9-12. Known for his creativity and ability to make learning fun, Landon first introduced the course three years ago to just a handful of students. Today it has “more than 130 enrollments and a waiting list,” said the supervisor for instruction and professional development. Landon’s work has helped raise his students’ scores on the AP exam in the subject “significantly above the national average,” he said.

An instructor at Florida Virtual School for the past six years, **Dianna Miller** of Dunnellon has taught social studies in a variety of subjects, including Advanced Placement (AP) microeconomics and macroeconomics. Called one of the “most effective educators I have ever known” by her principal, she has taken many leadership roles, including developing a new course curriculum in AP macroeconomics, and is “a true master in designing engaging learning experiences for students.”

An online math teacher for the past two years, 14-year teacher **Emily Parrish** of Advance, North Carolina, teaches credit-recovery geometry (a course she helped develop) and occupational studies Algebra I at North Carolina Virtual Public School. Known for her ability to connect with students, she also serves as department chair for credit-recovery math and science, where she helps identify each teacher’s strengths “and then coaches that teacher to be a better and more effective online teacher,” her division director noted.

Andrew Vanden Heuvel of Grand Haven, Michigan, teaches AP physics and astronomy at Michigan Virtual School, which reaches high school students statewide. In just two years of online teaching, he has been named the state’s online teacher of the year and been appointed as a NASA solar system educator and a consultant for *USA Today* Education, where he helps develop projects for teachers nationwide. He sees online teaching as a “new model for K-12 education” to meet the needs of students in an information-based society.

For more information about the award program and the work of the Educational Technology Cooperative, contact SREB Communications.

iNACOL, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, is a nonprofit organization based in Vienna, Virginia, that facilitates collaboration, advocacy and research to enhance quality K-12 online teaching and learning.

The Southern Regional Education Board, or SREB, based in Atlanta, was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to help leaders in education and government work cooperatively to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB has 16 member states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. More information is available online at www.sreb.org.