2024 DoDEA-Europe South District Teacher of the Year

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) - Europe South District proudly announces that Mrs. Marla Echols, a third-grade teacher at Rota Elementary School in Rota, Spain, has been selected as the 2024 Europe South District Teacher of the Year.

“Mrs. Echols is a dedicated and caring educator who embodies the heart of teaching. Her passion for teaching and guiding all children to do and be their very best is evident not only in her classroom, but also as she collaborates with her colleagues and partners with parents and community members,” said Europe South District Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Arrington.

Mrs. Echols has over 17 years of teaching experience, and since 2009, her DoDEA teaching assignments include Okinawa, Japan, Fort Knox, Kentucky, and of course, Rota, Spain.

An undergraduate Elementary Education major with an emphasis in remedial reading at Tougaloo College, Echols later earned a Master of Education in Elementary Education from Mississippi College.

Mrs. Echols believes educating students must go beyond academics; social emotional wellness is essential for students to thrive both academically and personally. She affirms every learner through the motto: “I BELIEVE I can. I KNOW I will…SUCCEED,” which she fervently imparts to her learners at the start of each school year. “Upon entering the Learning N.E.S.T. (Nurtured Enthusiastic Successful Teaching), students feel valued, loved and encouraged to tap into the authentic version of themselves,” said Echols.

The DoDEA Teacher of the Year Program recognizes and honors exemplary Pre-K through high school teachers. The process begins at the nomination level where teachers may be nominated by peers, administrators, parents, students or community members. Each District Teacher of the Year is selected by a district panel using specified criteria to review District teacher of the Year applications. Eight teachers will be named District Teacher of the Year for 2024. Each District Teacher of the Year is invited to apply for the DoDEA Teacher of the Year.

The National Teacher of the Year program, run by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), identifies exceptional teachers nationwide, celebrates their effective work in and outside of the classroom, amplifies their voices and empowers them to take part in policy discussions at the state and national levels.
The year of service for the 2024 District Teacher and the 2024 DoDEA Teacher of the Year will begin on January 1, 2024, and run through December 2024. The selection is made months before the term starts to allow the DoDEA candidate and other candidates from the 50 states and territories time to participate in the National Teacher of the Year program, which selects a finalist in December. The current (2023) DoDEA Teacher of the Year's term runs through the end of December 2023.

DoDEA plans, directs, coordinates, and manages Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade education programs for school-aged children of Department of Defense personnel who would otherwise not have access to a high-quality public education. DoDEA schools are located in Europe, the Pacific, Western Asia, the Middle East, Cuba, the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico. DoDEA also provides support and resources to Local Educational Activities throughout the U.S. that serve children of military families.