DoDEA Announces Elia Kenney as the 2023 Dr. Linda L. Curtis Educator of Promise Recipient

Ms. Elia Kenney, a music teacher at Ankara Elementary/High School (AEHS), has been selected as the 2023 Dr. Linda L. Curtis Educator of Promise.

Dr. Linda Curtis spent 35 years with DoDEA, starting as a teacher and ending her career as Principal Deputy Director and Associate Director of Academics. In every regard, she was a tireless advocate for elevating student achievement. The Dr. Linda L. Curtis Educator of Promise award celebrates and honors teachers who, in the first three years of their DoDEA career, have made an extraordinary commitment to helping students and consistently go above and beyond in the pursuit of continuous improvement.

“The legacy of Dr. Linda Curtis lives on through educators like Elia Kenney,” said DoDEA Director Thomas Brady. “As the first music teacher recipient of the Educator of Promise, Ms. Kenney represents a critical line-of-effort in our schools. Exposure to music education helps to stimulate students’ brains in unique ways that assists in the development of language, reasoning, and mathematic skills. Through her exemplary work at Ankara EHS, Ms. Kenney shows her deep commitment to military-connected students and her incredible potential as a teacher leader in DoDEA.”

Elia Kenney teaches secondary band, guitar, and elementary specials at AEHS in Ankara, Turkey. As a former DoDEA student, Kenney is thrilled to now serve as a teacher, sharing her love of music with military-connected kids. Her experiences as a military child shaped her worldview, inspiring cross-cultural curiosities that ultimately led to her teaching career. The community she found as a band student mitigated the challenges she experienced when repatriating after living abroad. These formative connections motivate her to provide a place for her students to share their voices.

“The benefits of music education can’t be overstated, it promotes improved listening and motor skills as well as increased self-confidence, discipline and social skills,” said Dr. Michelle Howard-Brahaney, DoDEA-Europe Director for Student Excellence. “No one knows this better than Ms. Kenney, she does an incredible job of instilling these values and skills into all her students. She is highly deserving of this recognition.”
Kenney’s favorite AEHS moments are hosting the USAFE Winds Aloft Woodwind Quintet and organizing student performances at the Ambassador’s Residence. Outside of AEHS, she presented at the annual European Music Educators Association (EMEA) conference in January 2023. Being a former military child, a DoDEA student, and serving our military-connected students. In addition, she serves as EMEA Membership Chair and facilitates the Europe-South Elementary Music District Focused Collaboration.

Kenney pursued a Bachelor of Music Education in Instrumental Music Education with an Anthropology Minor and Specialized Study in Oboe Performance from Florida State University (FSU). At FSU, she served as Student Coordinator for the College of Music peer-advising program honing her peer-to-peer leadership, problem-solving, and community-building skills. Cross-culture educational studies remained a priority, culminating in her applications for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Award to South Africa; she was named a semi-finalist for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 competition cycles.

Ms. Kenney was nominated for the Educator of Promise award by her Principal, Dr. Marian Leverette. "Ms. Kenney is equipped with a wonderful capability to build rapport with individuals of all backgrounds and ages, especially all our children here at our K-12 Unit school, said Dr. Leverette. “She has the capability to easily move forward to more advanced musical theory topics without compromising the quality of the transition, as a result, produce high-quality teaching output that instills in her students the desire to learn, try new things, and achieve.”

The Dr. Linda L. Curtis Educator of Promise program begins with nominations at the school-level with recommendations from a teacher’s peers or administrators. Panels in the three DoDEA regions (Europe, Pacific and Americas) review nominations and select a candidate from each of the eight districts. DoDEA Headquarters (Teaching & Learning Division) then reviews the district candidates and makes a recommendation to the DoDEA Director for approval.

Additional information about the Dr. Linda L. Curtis Educator of Promise Program, including points of contact, may be found on the DoDEA web site: www.dodea.edu/teachers.educatorofpromise.cfm 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 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.

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