



Public Education Department

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR

Ryan Stewart, Cabinet Secretary

NEW RELEASE

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Two of NM's teachers win national awards for work in STEM field

Awards are highest US government honors

SANTA FE -- New Mexico's Public Education secretary today congratulated the two New Mexico educators who were 2019 National Awardees for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

- Melody Hagaman teaches computer science to ninth- to twelfth-grade students at Centennial High School in Las Cruces Public Schools.
- Jessica Esquibel teaches math at Taft Middle School in Albuquerque Public Schools.

Award recipients receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States, a paid trip for two to Washington, D.C., for events and professional development sessions, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation that may be used at the winner's discretion.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K–12 math and science (including computer science) teaching. The award recognizes those teachers who develop and implement a high-quality instructional program that is informed by content knowledge and enhances student learning.

Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science (including computer science) education. The National Science Foundation administers the awards on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

“I am so proud of the achievements these two teachers have attained; they deserve this distinctive national honor,” said New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart.”

“Having mentors like Ms. Esquibel and Ms. Hagaman helps to inspire our entire educator team and sets the bar where New Mexico needs to be to attract others to reach for the stars.”

Hagaman is the technology lead at her school and mentors all new computer science teachers in Las Cruces Public Schools. She holds a Master of Education degree in technology and a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Additionally, through her work with New Mexico State University’s (NMSU) CompThink, she mentors teachers and students who are interested in integrating computational thinking into their non-computer science courses.

Hagaman is a program manager and facilitator for Project GUTS (Growing Up Thinking Scientifically) and she collaborates with both NMSU and the University of New Mexico as a curriculum developer and facilitator. She has presented workshops at the University of Virginia’s Tapestry program, helping teachers in four states identify strategies for recruiting and retaining females and other underrepresented students in computer science. Hagaman is active as an officer in New Mexico’s Computer Science Teachers Association.

“On a personal level this award means a lot because I really have poured the last several years into broadening participation in computer science throughout the state and country—being awarded this honor validates the hard work others and I have put in,” said Hagaman. “It is so exciting to receive PAEMST recognition just weeks after giving birth to my first child and it’s my dream that he’ll grow up in a society where recognition and accolades for teachers are the norm.”

Jessica Esquibel has a Master of Education degree in instruction and has national board certification. She has taught math in Albuquerque Public Schools her entire career.

Esquibel has served as a department chair and level Tier 3 (highest level) regional instructor for many years. She has led monthly teacher technology studies for teachers in her district, bringing teachers together so they can learn from each other.

Esquibel also established a sixth grade math district professional learning center where teachers come together and share Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-aligned lessons and strategies.

“I thought being nominated for the Presidential Award was the highlight of my career,” said Esquibel. “I am truly honored to have been chosen to represent New Mexico. I took on the process of applying to become a Presidential Awardee as an opportunity to learn, grow and reflect on my teaching. This award has been a reminder to me of the importance of learning and growing to ensure all my students are provided with opportunities to discover and engage with high quality math instruction.”

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