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CONTACT: Edith Wooten
ewooten@nea.org; 202-822-7834

San Jose Educator Named Finalist for National Education Award

*Jennifer Thomas to be Recognized by the NEA Foundation at its Annual Salute to Excellence
in Education Awards Gala in February*

WASHINGTON, DC (September 19, 2012) – Jennifer Thomas, an instructional coach and English language arts teacher in the San Jose Unified School District in San Jose, CA, will receive [The Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence](#), \$10,000, and recognition as one of the nation's top educators at the NEA Foundation's [Salute to Excellence in Education Gala](#) to be held on Feb. 8, 2013 in Washington, DC.

[The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence](#) are given annually at the Foundation's black tie event that attracts 850 national leaders from the public education, philanthropic and business sectors, and is known as the Academy Awards of public education. The awards recognize, reward, and promote excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession.

“Thomas has been selected for this award by her peers because she has attained the highest teaching standards, as shown by her exemplary instruction, advocacy for the profession, attention to diversity, leadership in professional development, and engagement of parents and community,” said Harriet Sanford, President and CEO of the NEA Foundation. “Honoring these educators is our way of thanking them for their excellent work.”

Thomas was nominated for the award by the California Teachers Association (CTA), the state's National Education Association affiliate.

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“Ms. Thomas is a leader who advocates, through her teaching and work for her local, for all students struggling through the hard reality of California’s economic challenges,” said Dean E. Vogel, President of the California Teachers Association. “The focus of her career as a teacher has been equal access for all students, where innovation is necessary to ensure that underserved students have and experience the educational rights that have been denied to them. I am pleased to have the honor to support her and her boundless advocacy for our students and our profession.”

The four other finalists are:

- **Kellie Blair-Hardt**, special education teacher, Metz Middle School, Manassas, VA;
- **Melissa Collins**, second grade teacher, John P. Freeman Optional School, Memphis, TN;
- **Julia Marshall**, teacher interventionist and literacy coach, Rosewood Elementary International School, Rock Hill, SC;
- **Leslie Nicholas**, language arts teacher, Wyoming Valley West Middle School, Kingston, PA

In addition to the recognition, students and educators at the awardees’ school will receive digital arts training from the Pearson Foundation. Video profiles of the awardees will be produced during the trainings and featured at the awards gala.

The NEA Foundation and the National Education Association jointly present the awards with support from NEA Member Benefits, the Horace Mann Companies, the Pearson Foundation, and California Casualty.

Note: A headshot and profiles are attached. [Download a video](#) of interviews with all five recipients.

The NEA Foundation

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