



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*Johnny Key, Commissioner*

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CONTACT: Kimberly Friedman

PHONE: (501) 683-4788

[kimberly.friedman@arkansas.gov](mailto:kimberly.friedman@arkansas.gov)

## **Stuttgart Teacher Named 2016 Arkansas Teacher of the Year**

**LITTLE ROCK** — Meghan Ables, an English teacher at Stuttgart High School in the Stuttgart School District, was named the 2016 Arkansas Teacher of the Year at a surprise event today at the school. Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Johnny Key honored Ms. Ables at the event.

“Several months ago, 15 exceptional Arkansas teachers were selected as Arkansas Teacher of the Year Regional Finalists,” Hutchinson said. “Each of these finalists exhibited strong teaching skills, exemplary leadership and an unmatched dedication to their subjects and students, but one teacher stood out above the rest. Today, it is my great honor to announce Meghan Ables of Stuttgart High School as the Arkansas Teacher of the Year. Congratulations, and thank you for making a difference in the lives of Arkansas students.”

“I congratulate Ms. Ables on being named Teacher of the Year,” Key said. “Because of the outstanding applicants this year, it was a difficult decision; however, Ms. Ables’ excellence and leadership in and out of the classroom resulted in her receiving this honor.”

Ables currently is an 11th-grade English/literacy and journalism teacher. Because of her contribution to learning, student test scores have dramatically improved during her tenure at the district. Ms. Ables also serves as a leader at her school, having conducted professional development activities for using literacy techniques in the classroom. She has been a team leader and presenter for the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), provided Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) training to faculty, and is writing a book on literacy and grammar.

A native of Stuttgart and a graduate of Stuttgart High School, Ables received a Bachelor of Science in Journalism in 2002 from Arkansas State University at Jonesboro, where she received the Wilson Award for outstanding performance in the Journalism Department.

Her teaching career began in 2003 at Stuttgart High School when she was asked to coach the softball team and cheerleading squad and teach journalism. This led to her completing the Arkansas Department of Education's non-traditional route to becoming a licensed teacher. Over the course of her 12 years as a teacher, Ms. Ables also has taught physical education and 9th-grade English and journalism.

Ables has received multiple awards, including the Stuttgart Public Schools Teacher of the Year 2015-2016 and the 2015 Most Inspirational Teacher at Stuttgart Schools. She also was recognized as EAST Teacher of the Month and honored at an LDC training for student growth in literacy scores.

Active in the Stuttgart community, Ables traveled with a church mission team to Russia. As an advisor for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, she has planned charity fundraisers to support Dana's House, a home for children awaiting adoption. Ms. Ables and her journalism class partnered with Arkansas Children's Hospital as well as her local police and fire departments to raise awareness about safe driving. She also is a member of the Arkansas Reading Association.

Ables received a \$1,000 award from the Walton Family Foundation, a long-time supporter of the ATOY program, when she was named one of 15 regional finalists. She was then selected as one of four state finalists. The foundation today presented her with an additional \$14,000 award. SMART Technologies of Canada also awarded Ables the 2016 Teaching Excellence Award, which includes technology products for her classroom.

The ATOY program is part of the National Teacher of the Year program, which began in 1952. The national program recognizes teachers around the country for their teaching excellence.

Arkansas law provides for the Arkansas Teacher of the Year to take a year of paid administrative leave for professional development purposes. Ables also will serve as a non-voting member of the Arkansas State Board of Education.

For more information about the program, go to <http://www.arkansased.org/divisions/communications/teacher-of-the-year>.

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