



Arkansas Department of Education

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education

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North Little Rock Educator Named 2023 Arkansas Teacher of the Year

LITTLE ROCK — Capri Salaam, a social studies teacher at North Little Rock Middle School, received a surprise of a lifetime today when she was named the 2023 Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

Salaam, a multi-classroom lead teacher, was one of four state semi-finalists for the award and was chosen by the ATOY selection committee for her innovative teaching practices, her ability to connect with students from diverse backgrounds, and her efforts to stay engaged with her students after they leave her classroom.

"Ms. Salaam's teaching skills, commitment to her students, and love for the profession are reflected in her creative and innovative efforts to meet her students where they are," Gov. Asa Hutchinson said. "From establishing an inviting culture for students by organizing cultural events throughout the year to ensuring students have access in high school to ACT preparation programs, financial aid workshops, and tutoring programs, Ms. Salaam's dedication extends far beyond the time she engages with her students in the classroom. She is very deserving of this honor."

"I am extremely excited to recognize Ms. Salaam as the 2023 Arkansas Teacher of the Year," said Arkansas Department of Education Secretary Johnny Key, who presented the award at the ceremony. "Her ability to bring history to life through creative lessons, combined with her ongoing love of learning and professional growth, are reflected in her students' success both in and out of the classroom. Ms. Salaam is the perfect person to receive this honor, and we look forward to working alongside her when she begins her tenure as Teacher of the Year."

Salaam began her career at the North Little Rock School District in 2015 and teaches social studies for grades seven and eight. She became a multi-classroom lead teacher in 2018 and teaches and provides support in instructional practices and classroom management for other teachers. Prior to joining the district, she was a teacher from 2013-2015 at Little Rock Preparatory Academy. In 2014, she was promoted to a third-grade lead teacher and collaborated with other third-grade teachers to identify best practices and innovative teaching strategies.

In addition to receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, Salaam has a Master of Arts in Teaching in Middle School Education from Arkansas Tech University in Russellville and a Master of Science in Special Education from Harding University in

Searcy. She is working on a Learning Systems Technology Education Graduate Certificate from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, with an anticipated completion date of 2023.

Salaam holds multiple teaching licenses, including Social Studies (4-8), English (4-8), and Special Education Resource ELA (7-12) licenses. She is a Google Certified Educator Level 1 and holds a Lead Professional Educator endorsement.

She is a member of multiple organizations, including the North Little Rock Parent Teacher Association, North Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association, and Arkansas Education Association. Salaam also is actively involved in her community. She is a member of the Junior League of North Little Rock and volunteers for Special Olympics, the Fellowship Baptist Church Special Needs Clothes Closet, and the North Little Rock Ole Main Clean-up.

When named a regional finalist, Salaam received a \$1,000 prize and an additional \$1,000 for being named a state semi-finalist. Today she received an additional \$14,000 award sponsored by the Walton Family Foundation and is eligible to become the National Teacher of the Year.

Salaam's one-year tenure as Arkansas Teacher of the Year will begin July 1, 2023. During that time, she will travel the state representing teachers and promoting her platform. Her focus will be on improving the mental health of students and ongoing social-emotional learning. Salaam also will serve as a non-voting member on the State Board of Education.

To learn more about the Arkansas Teacher of the Year program, visit <https://bit.ly/3Dmhf5S>.

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Pictured (l to r): ADE Secretary Johnny Key, 2023 Arkansas Teacher of the Year Capri Salaam, and North Little Rock School District Superintendent Dr. Gregory Pilewski

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