



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 12, 2025, AT 10:30 A.M.**

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**Arkansans for the Arts Names Karyna Johnson 2025 Arkansas Fine Arts Teacher of the Year**

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (April 15, 2025)** – Arkansans for the Arts is proud to announce that **Karyna Johnson**, music specialist at Otter Creek Elementary in Little Rock, has been named the **2025 Arkansas Fine Arts Teacher of the Year**. A surprise celebration honoring Johnson will take place at **Otter Creek Elementary on Monday, May 12, at 10:30 a.m.**

Now in its **second year**, the Arkansas Fine Arts Teacher of the Year program recognizes one outstanding full-time fine arts teacher in the state who exemplifies excellence in arts education and goes above and beyond to enrich students' lives through the arts. The award includes a **\$1,000 cash prize** and a commemorative certificate.

This year, **53 fine arts educators from across Arkansas** were nominated for the award, representing a wide range of disciplines including music, visual art, dance, theatre, literary arts, and art history. An independent panel selected Johnson from this exceptional group of candidates.

"We are thrilled to recognize Karyna Johnson as this year's Fine Arts Teacher of the Year," said Jean Lacefield, Chairwoman of Arkansans for the Arts. "Her dedication to music education and her deep commitment to her students' well-being and growth truly embody the spirit of this award."

Johnson, a University of Central Arkansas graduate, has taught music for over 15 years, including seven years in Denver Public Schools and eight years in the Little Rock School District. She is the music specialist at Otter Creek Elementary, where she also serves as parent and family engagement coordinator, elementary music PLC team lead, and president of the Central Arkansas Orff chapter of AOSA. She is nationally and internationally recognized for her work in inclusive and trauma-informed music education, including a presentation at the International Music Educators Convention in Greece.

Beyond her own classroom, **Karyna is a tireless advocate for her fellow music educators across Arkansas**, generously sharing resources, offering mentorship, and collaborating to strengthen music programs statewide. Her commitment to seeing others succeed is reflected in her frequent professional development presentations and her leadership within the Central Arkansas music education community.

**Sarah Helm**, who nominated Johnson, shared:

“Karyna is a master educator. She uses the Orff Schulwerk approach to make learning joyful and accessible for all students. Her classroom is inclusive, trauma-informed, and academically rigorous. Students thrive with her because she believes in them and gives them every tool to succeed.”

This award honors Johnson’s exceptional contributions not only to her school and students but also to the broader educational and arts community in Arkansas.

For more information about the Arkansas Fine Arts Teacher of the Year program, visit [www.arkansansforthearts.org](http://www.arkansansforthearts.org).