



2021 Utah Teacher of the Year FINALISTS

Announcement will be made October 1st!

Utah State Board of Education

Utah's 2021 Teacher of the Year Finalists

John Arthur

John Arthur teaches 6th grade at Meadowlark Elementary, a Title I school in Salt Lake City, Utah. His students have gained national recognition as advocates for children and immigrants thanks to the music videos they create together and share on their YouTube channel, 9thEvermore. Arthur allows his students to take the lead in their work, coaching them as they craft their content and providing a platform for their work.

After receiving a Bachelor of Art in English from the University of Utah, Arthur discovered his love for working with kids while substitute teaching in elementary classrooms. Inspired by the students he met, he earned a Master of Arts in Teaching and Master of Education from Westminster College. He is now a National Board Certified Teacher entering his 8th year in the classroom. Arthur holds endorsements in K-6 Special Education (mild/moderate disabilities) and English as a Second Language to ensure that he meets the needs of every student he teaches. He has presented at conferences and spoken on panels for organizations including the National Association for Multicultural Education and the Utah Education Association and delivered the keynote address at the Leadership and Inquiry for Turnaround Conference at the University of Utah. A fierce believer that educational equity is both necessary and attainable, Arthur serves on the Advisory Committee on Equity of Educational Services for Students for the Utah State Board of Education. He also works with preservice teachers as an adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education at Westminster College.



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Amy Grgich

Amy Grgich is a true Minnesotan with a Western kindergarten kick! Since Mrs. Grgich is quite a mouth full for her young students, she is affectionately known as Mrs. G. Mrs. G. graduated from Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota with her Bachelors of Science and a Specialty in Pre-Primary.

Her passion for teaching started in high school when she would sneak out of study hall and head to the elementary school to help teach third grade. Her love of education began when she also realized that her theatrical talent could be used within the classroom. She began her creative talent thirteen years ago in 2008, teaching kindergarten at Stansbury Park Elementary, Stansbury Park, Utah. Each school year, she is transformed into a variety of characters such as Johnny Appleseed, a penguin from Antarctica, a 100-year-old granny, The Lorax, a mad scientist among many others in hopes of inspiring her students in learning.

Don't be fooled by her years in education, she is quick to find the next best hands-on learning tool. Mrs. G. is constantly researching and exploring what will keep her kindergarteners actively learning and growing in all developmental areas. She is passionate about each individual student and what they bring to the classroom. Mrs. G. refers to her students as her school family! Her class evolves within a learning environment filled with encouragement, empathy, acceptance of differences, and most of all, love! She makes each student feel loved and that's what Mrs. G. is all about!



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Emma Moss

In Emma Moss's classroom, students are immersed in a World War I battlefield using innovative virtual reality, elbow-deep inside a computer dissection, creating apps that solve real-world problems and engaged in civic discussions. Above all, she helps them see different perspectives and to be kind no matter what.

After switching majors, Moss describes teaching as finding the place she fits in the world. She graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Science in Social Science Teaching and minored in Teaching English as a Second Language. Moss began teaching at Eastmont Middle School in Sandy, Utah, where she now inspires students in 7th-grade history and 8th-grade digital literacy.

Beyond her classroom, Moss was one of five selected to update Utah's digital literacy standards. She is on Eastmont's leadership team, a Canyon School District (CSD) New Teacher Mentor, a Utah State Board of Education instructor, a representative on CSD's Digital Leadership Taskforce, and a nominated presenter at Open Educational Resources' (OER) national Social Studies conference. In 2020, Moss was Utah's Association for Career and Technical Education New Teacher of the Year.

Moss's colleagues call her an outstanding teacher, and even more significant than her teaching abilities are her commitment to learning and love for students. Moss has an innate capability to inspire the most reluctant learners, because of how she sees them – as bright, resilient, and full of promise. As a third-year teacher Moss is described as having the wisdom and savvy of a veteran and enthusiasm of a rookie.



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Ryan Wells

Ryan Wells, or better known by his students as Señor Wells, is a Utah native with a profound passion for teaching his students at Taylorsville High School. Over the course of his career, Wells has fought for equity by building one of the strongest, most equitable AP Spanish programs in the state of Utah and has worked closely with Taylorsville's Latinx community to increase AP enrollment, foster a college-going culture, and create an inclusive environment for students of all backgrounds.

Wells aspires to close the racial opportunity gap and challenge systemic inequities that pervade schools across the country. Wells embraces an asset-based approach to education by celebrating the diversity of thought, culture, language, and experience that each student brings to class.

"I was a trouble-maker and hanging around the wrong crowd," wrote Wells's former student, Jojo Rivera. "I hated going to school and misbehaved in every class, but AP Spanish was the only class that motivated and intrigued me. His teaching style is unique and friendly to students of all backgrounds." Rivera continued, "With my low G.P.A. and underrepresented background, I felt like the whole world was against me--typical pessimistic high-school mentality. Señor Wells not only became my teacher, but he became a mentor and a friend. He pushed me to achieve greatness and success."

Wells teaches Spanish 4 and AP Spanish to all grades at Taylorsville High School in Taylorsville, Utah. Wells holds bachelor's degrees in Spanish and International Studies, a master's degree in World Languages, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Utah.

