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## Uintah High English Teacher Named Utah Teacher of the Year

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah State Board of Education today named Aaryn Snow Birchell, an English teacher at Uintah High School in Vernal, as 2018 Utah Teacher of the Year.

Birchell, of Vernal, was presented with a check for \$10,000 and will compete with her fellow teachers of the year in a national competition. She will meet with fellow teachers of the year at a national conference, meet with the President in Washington, D.C., and attend space camp in Alabama next summer.

Davis High School band director Steven R. Hendricks was named first runner up and received a check for \$3,000. Jenny Atcity, the fifth and sixth grade lead teacher at Montezuma Creek Elementary in the San Juan School District, was named second runner up and received a check for \$2,000.

A committee with representatives from the Utah State Board of Education, school principals, school teachers and 2017 Utah Teacher of the Year Valerie S. Gates selected Birchell from among local teachers of the year for the honor. All 26 local teachers of the year were honored at a banquet at the Marriott Salt Lake City University Parkway.

“Every teacher cares about their students, but I have never met another educator who works as hard as Mrs. Birchell to show it,” said former student Danielle Heaton. “Aaryn Birchell goes above and beyond to provide real-life support for the students under her care. From meaningful assignments, to celebrations of reaching goals, to being a true and constant support for struggling teens, to many other facets of her selfless efforts, she truly lives up to the honor is it to be called ‘teacher.’”

“Public education is the incredible hope of this country that cannot be diminished,” Birchell wrote in her application. “The deep curiosity of the human being must be nurtured and given a place to flourish no matter where that being is planted. Humanity is our greatest resource and we must invest and nurture all the beauty of potential as we send these souls to the world that needs their best.”

Birchell succeeds Gates, who is an English language development and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) teacher at Salt Lake City’s West High School.