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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Denise Lisac of Dillingham Named Teacher of the Year

JUNEAU – Denise Lisac, a K-5 reading teacher in the Dillingham City Schools, has been named Alaska's Teacher of the Year for 2014, State Board of Education Chair Jim Merriner announced today at a meeting of the Association of Alaska School Boards in Anchorage.

Tricia Kenney, a seventh-grade language arts teacher at Colony Middle School in Palmer, was named Alternate. Kenney will serve as Teacher of the Year if Lisac is unable to.

"It is a pleasure to recognize the contributions of Denise Lisac and Tricia Kenney to our state," said Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley. "They exemplify the knowledgeable, caring teachers in Alaska, who build a sense of community in their classroom and participate in the broader community. Congratulations."

Lisac has taught for 33 years, 30 of which were in the Dillingham City Schools. She holds a bachelor's degree from Northern Michigan University and has earned 77 credits in professional development from the University of Alaska.

Lisac believes that a strong sense of classroom community is necessary for students' success. Effective classrooms require collaboration among teachers, students and parents, she said. Lisac advocates for a nutritious breakfast and lunch program, recess, and physical activity.

"I believe that all children can learn when they are accepted for who they are and where they are in their educational journey," Lisac said. "It is essential that all students are recognized for their strengths and given credibility within the classroom and school. We all have different strengths and should be encouraged to develop them in a safe environment."

Tricia Kenney has taught for 12 years, 10 of which were in her current position. Kenney holds a bachelor's degree from Pennsylvania State University and a master's degree from the University of Montana with a secondary certification in special education.

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She has led a project in which middle school students published their stories. “Sharing our stories brings voice to how we make sense of who we are, who we once were, and what values, relationships, and experiences shaped us,” Kenney said. “Writing allows us to discover and tell our own truths.”

The Alaska Teacher of the Year may be called upon to speak at education conferences and participate in various statewide education working groups. The teacher is the Alaska nominee for national teacher of the year. The alternate teacher of the year would serve as Alaska teacher of the year if the latter were named national teacher of the year.

Additionally, the Alaska Teacher of the Year receives technology for his or her school, awards a college scholarship to a student, receives a scholarship to pursue an advanced degree, and attends an international space camp.

The Alaska Teacher of the Year and the alternate were chosen by a committee composed of members of major educational associations and the current Teacher of the Year, who is Christopher Benshoof of Fairbanks. The committee considered a written application, a video snapshot of the teacher in the classroom, and an interview.

For more information:

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