HEADLINE: Haywood Countyteacher named NCCAT 2024 Empower NC Beginning Teacher of the Year

CULLOWHEE –Abigail Bentley, a teacher at Pisgah High School in Haywood County Schools, was named the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) 2024 Empower NC Beginning Teacher of the Year in a special ceremony at the John W. Bardo Fine and Performing Arts Center on the campus of Western Carolina University Thursday February 15th.

The award was presented for the fifth time, with finalists from across the state in attendance.

Bentley is described as an effective communicator who stands out for their commitment to covering standards, increasing student achievement, and creating productive learning environments. Their dedication to aligning teaching with high academic standards has significantly contributed to our students’ growth and success,” shared a colleague.

Her mentor describes Bentley’s use of kinesthetic motions to help students retain learning. She notes that Bentley also uses her experiences to engage her kids with real life comparisons. An administrator shared, “her professional teaching efforts have made a huge impact on our school.”

NCCAT is thankful for the opportunity to celebrate the teaching profession, according to NCCAT Executive Director M. Brock Womble.

“NCCAT is so proud of all these finalists – all are shining examples of the teaching profession and bring talent and expertise to the classroom each and every day, for the benefit of North Carolina students,” Womble said. “Ms. Bentley encourages each of her students to set high goals and create pathways for them to achieve excellence. Ms. Bentley and Ms. Samantha Shaw along with our other finalists will be outstanding ambassadors for North Carolina teachers, students, and schools.”

The runner-up is Samantha Shaw, English teacher at Carrboro High School City Schools. A student noted Shaw went above and beyond to give them precise feedback and told me “see you are smart. You are smarter than any test. You know this.” Another student shared, “I never would have thought about how I learn before. I just wanted the A. Now, in English, I want to learn.”

The 2024 NCCAT North Carolina Beginning Teachers of the Year finalists are:

•              Bethany Wilson- Ashe County Schools

•              Margaret "Maggie" Allen- Asheville City Schools

•              Kaitlyn "Katie" Adams- Brunswick County Schools

•              Cassidy Upton- Burke County Schools

•              John Calabrese- Cabarrus County Schools

•              Hannah Creed- Caswell County Schools

•              Samantha Shaw- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

•              Sade' Mangum- Cumberland County Schools

•              Danielle "Dani" Fisher- Edenton-Chowan Schools

•              Halaina Montoya- Envision Science Academy

•              Kenyona "Ken" Bethea- Guilford County Schools

•              Abigail "Abby" Bentley- Haywood County Schools

•              Lauren Schneider- Henderson County Schools

•              Laura Jones- Hoke County Schools

•              Savannah Travis- Lincoln County Schools

•              Megan Strong- Montgomery County Schools

•              Nicholas "Nick" Tirpak- Mount Airy City Schools

•              Madison Ayers- New Hanover County Schools

•              Allyson Sarnowski- Northeast Academy for Aerospace & Advanced Technologies

•              Camryn Story- Pitt County Schools

•              Sydney Smith- Roanoke Rapids Schools

•              Austin Herlocker- Stanly County Schools

•              Alivia Salvagni- The Expedition School

•              Karen Dusterberg- Wake County Schools

•              Sarah Irick- Wayne County Schools

•              Elizabeth Dancy- Wilkes County Schools

•              Holly Johnston- Wilson County Schools

**The NCCAT Beginning Teacher of the Year will receive:**

•              $5,000 cash prize

•              Participation for the winner in a GoGlobal NC trip in 2025

•              Instructional supply funds for the teacher's school

•              A piece of fine jewelry from Diamonds Direct

**The Runner-up will receive:**

•              $2,000 cash prize

**The Finalists will receive:**

•              Travel expenses and substitute costs paid for regional finalists to participate at NCCAT.

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NCCAT supports teachers and impacts students with high-quality professional development. Increasing teacher effectiveness is fundamental to improving public education. NCCAT provides teachers with new knowledge, skills, teaching methods, best practices, and information to take back to their classrooms. For more information about NCCAT’s professional development programs, visit www.nccat.org or call 828-293-5202.