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## **Idaho Educator to Serve at National Level with the Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program**

(BOISE) – One of Idaho’s top STEM educators has been selected as a member of the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship (AEF) Program. Idaho math educator Natalie Woods has been selected alongside 14 other STEM educators nationwide to apply their talents and experience in the classroom to federal, congressional and executive branch offices.

The fellowship provides a unique opportunity for accomplished K-12 STEM educators to serve in the national education arena. Fellows spend 11 months working in federal agencies or in U.S. congressional offices, applying their expertise, knowledge and classroom experience to national education programs and/or education policy efforts. The program is managed by the Department of Energy alongside federal partners that provide placement opportunities for the Fellows.

Woods currently teaches advanced mathematics at Thunder Ridge High School in Idaho Falls and was a recipient of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) in 2023. Her participation in the AEF Program will allow her to significantly expand Idaho students’ access to college and career-aligned classroom learning.

“I will be participating in professional development with national organizations and agencies aligned to the Department of Defense STEM, engaging with leaders across government, industry and academia,” said Woods. “Across these efforts, my goal will be to translate cutting-edge defense technologies into standards-aligned learning experiences that inspire and prepare Idaho’s next generation of scientists and engineers.”

She will also support national programs such as CyberPatriot, StellarXplorers and the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS), will participate in DAF outreach initiatives like STEMtoSpace and STEMtoSky and will engage students at local and national STEM events, such as the upcoming Thunderbirds air show at Joint Base Andrews.

“Giving educators a voice at the highest level means better policy, better programs and increased impact in educational communities nationwide,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction

Debbie Critchfield. “I’m so proud of Natalie for continuing to be a shining example of the incredible talent that Idaho has in its classrooms and wish her the best as she puts her skills and talents to work at the national level as an Einstein Fellow.”

In the past, AEF participants have made outstanding contributions to education programs and policies at the federal level, including:

- designing new elements and implementing major components of national STEM education programs;
- initiating collaborations and partnerships among federal agencies;
- drafting legislation and advising on policies that seek to improve K-12 education in the United States;
- collaborating with agencies to further advance policies within the federal government; and
- establishing and evaluating national and regional programs centered on school reform and teacher preparation in STEM education.

Applications for the 2026 – 2027 cohort of Einstein Fellows are open through November 13. Applicants can find more about the program, including eligibility requirements, program benefits, application requirements and more on the AEF website at <https://science.osti.gov/wdts/einstein>.

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