

East St. Louis District 189 leaders receive State Board of Education's highest honor

October 31 2017 10:36 AM



EAST ST. LOUIS - A five-member team of East St. Louis District 189 leaders tasked with turning the once struggling school system into a place where students can thrive and grow will be honored by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Members of the District 189 Office of School Turnaround -- Devon Horton, Jennifer Brumback, Roshanda Johnson, Lelon Seaberry and Lauren Thomas -- have been chosen to receive the ISBE's Those Who Excel award in the team category. The State Board of Education presents awards in three levels of recognition: Award of Excellence, Award of Merit and Award of Recognition. The District 189 team earned the highest honor -- the Award of Excellence.

"I charged Deputy Superintendent Devon Horton with developing a system for managing and monitoring progress in key areas of importance across the building and district level," said District 189 Superintendent Arthur Culver. "This systemization was critically important for us as a means to inspect what we expect on a regular basis.

"Devon Horton and his Office of School Turnaround team is systematically changing our culture to one that values the use of data to drive instruction and that values coaching and public practice," Culver continued. "This team is providing intensified supports to building administrators and the framework by which they can lead their staff in producing transformative whole school outcomes."

Illinois State Superintendent Tony Smith said the District 189 Office of School Turnaround is a great example of what can be accomplished through organization and determination.

"The Those Who Excel award recipients show us how educators can unite communities and change students' lives. These educators showcase the dynamic work happening in schools across Illinois," said Smith. "Their efforts make the difference for students. I cannot thank our educators and educational leaders enough."

Horton, Deputy Superintendent at District 189, said he and his teammates are thrilled to receive accolades. But he said it is important to remember that the reason his team has been successful is because it has helped to give East St. Louis School District students the opportunity to be successful.

"Our daily work is all about ensuring that students receive high quality instruction," Horton said. "For our team with the Office of School Turnaround, this is accomplished by supporting a competent and growth-focused teaching staff. While the award commends our systems-level work, the end-user or benefactor of our efforts is not the district or teacher, it is the student."

Candidates for Those Who Excel recognition are nominated by local school district leaders and members of school communities. A committee of peers, organized by ISBE, chooses the award winners. The committee includes representatives from statewide education organizations, as well as former award winners.

ISBE honored the outstanding educators at the banquet on Saturday, Oct. 28, at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Normal. The 235 honorees included educators from across multiple categories, including classroom teachers, school administrators, and student support personnel.

Sydney Stigge Kaufman, Director of Strategic Partnerships for District 189, said the success of the Office of School Turnaround is inspirational who everyone who works to make the school system a better place.

"We are elated that the Illinois State Board of Education is recognizing the profound impact of our District 189 Office of School Turnaround," Stigge Kaufman said. "Our district's motto for this year is 'Committed to Excellence' and ISBE has recognized our improved teacher effectiveness and substantive student academic improvement by bestowing the highest honor - the Those Who Excel Award of Excellence to the Office of School Turnaround."

Culver said the mission of the team – and of every employee of District 189 – is only starting to be realized.

"We believe that students can be successful in a rigorous academic program," said Culver. "Their zip code will not determine their destiny."