



## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **GRISSOM AWARD GOES TO FAYETTE COUNTY EDUCATOR**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Today, the Kentucky Board of Education presented the seventh annual Dr. Johnnie Grissom Award to Dr. Soraya Matthews, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment for the Fayette County Public Schools.

The award recognizes those who exhibit leadership, commitment and service to promote high student achievement through instructional equity and in closing the achievement gap for all children.

Matthews was nominated by two individuals -- Melissa Cantrell, director of special education at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and Ramona Karsner, director of exceptional education service for Pulaski County Public Schools.

Both nominators describe Matthews as being a servant leader who has committed herself to being a lifelong learner. Prior to her role with the Fayette County Public Schools, Matthews served as the KDE's deputy director for the Kentucky School for the Deaf and School for the Blind, where she was supervised and mentored by Dr. Grissom.

Throughout her career, Matthews has remained committed to the pursuit of growth and achievement, equitable access, and high quality instruction for all students. Whether it be advocating for state funding for deaf and blind students, expanding career and technical education opportunities for these students, or working to expand teacher preparation programs and licensure programs for educators who teach in the deaf and blind communities, Matthews has maintained her commitment to ensuring an equitable education for all of Kentucky's children.

One nominator described Mathews as "courageous yet humble, unwavering yet adaptable, consistent yet compassionate, committed yet transformational, and dutiful yet a trailblazer".

The Dr. Johnnie Grissom Award was established to honor the work and dedication of the late long-time Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) employee, who served as an associate commissioner.

Dr. Grissom was employed by KDE from 1993 to 2010. She previously served as a director at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and as a teacher of special needs and gifted students in Red Springs, North Carolina.

#### **Past Winners of the Dr. Johnnie Grissom Award**

- 2009** Dr. Johnnie Grissom
- 2010** LaRue County School District
- 2011** Kathleen Reutman Bryant, executive director of Student/Community Services for the Boone County school District
- 2012** Dr. Elaine Farris, former Kentucky Department of Education interim commissioner, and then superintendent of the Clark Co. school district
- 2013** No award given
- 2014** Dr. Dewey Hensley, Jefferson Co. Chief Academic Officer; and Franklin-Simpson High School Principal

Tim Schlosser and the Student Support Team at Franklin-Simpson High School  
**2015** Taylor County Superintendent Roger Cook  
**2016** No award given  
**2017** No award given

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