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SREB, iNACOL Announce Finalists for National Online K-12 Teacher of the Year Award

ATLANTA — Three finalists for the National Online Teacher of the Year Award for K-12 online learning were announced today by the two education nonprofit organizations that hold the competition, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL).

The SREB/iNACOL National Online Teacher of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding online teacher for exceptional contributions to online K-12 education. This year's judging committee evaluated 39 nominations of online educators in public schools and state virtual schools from 26 states to make the selections.

The finalists are: **Leslie Fetzer** from North Carolina Virtual Public School, **Tracy Seiler** from the South Carolina Virtual School Program, and **Asherrie Yisrael** from Georgia Virtual School.

One will be named 2012 National Online Teacher of the Year on March 1, at the Excellence Awards Gala during the SREB Education Technology Cooperative's Symposium on Virtual Teaching and Learning, to be held at the Atlanta Airport Marriott Gateway. The announcement will be webcast live, courtesy of award sponsor Blackboard Collaborate. Additional sponsors include AT&T, Connections Learning, Florida Virtual School, Pearson Foundation and SAS.

The 2012 National Online Teacher of the Year will receive a crystal Flame of Excellence and a trip to the Virtual School Symposium sponsored by iNACOL, October 21-24 in New Orleans. In addition to numerous speaking appearances in support of online learning, the winner will be recognized during the iNACOL Annual Meeting and will be featured on the SREB and iNACOL websites. The other two 2012 finalists will receive recognition and other honors at the gala in March.

"This award was created to recognize that online teaching is different. It's innovative — and it's growing," said Myk Garn, director of the Cooperative. He noted that course enrollment in America's state virtual schools alone topped a half-million in the last school year, up 19 percent. "These teachers not only succeed, they excel at connecting, challenging and guiding students, using new tools and new teaching styles that go beyond the traditional classroom."

"We extend our congratulations to the finalists of the third annual National Online Teacher of the Year Award, which recognizes the critical role of teachers in providing next-generation, individualized approaches to learning that propel our K-12 students toward success in higher learning and beyond," said Susan Patrick, president of iNACOL.

About the finalists

Leslie Fetzer of Holly Springs, North Carolina, has taught online biology to grades 10-12 at North Carolina Virtual Public School for the past three years. As both a credit-recovery biology teacher and an occupational course of study (OCS) blended learning biology teacher, Fetzer is “completely student-centered” and “approaches online instruction with innovation and motivation,” said her chief academic officer. The nine-year teaching veteran was 2011 Teacher of the Year at North Carolina Virtual Public School, which serves 45,000 students statewide.

An online instructor since 1998, **Tracey Seiler** of Columbia teaches Latin 1 to grades seven through 12, as well as high school honors Latin, AP Vergil and related courses in the South Carolina Virtual School Program, which reaches about 5,200 students. As a Latin course developer and teacher, Seiler has helped realize the potential of online teaching for serving students in schools that cannot afford a Latin program.” Noted by her instructional program manager as both “an online learning leader and advocate,” Seiler is helping the University of South Carolina design the online summer 2012 AP Latin endorsement course and serves as her team’s leader at SCVSP.

An online high school science teacher, **Asherrie Yisrael** has taught Advanced Placement (AP) and regular physics, forensic science and physical science to grades nine through 12 at Georgia Virtual School since 2008. Based in Atlanta, Georgia Virtual School serves more than 10,000 students across the state. Cited by her supervisor of instruction as “a magnificent instructor who always goes the extra mile,” the Covington, Georgia, resident was 2010-2011 Teacher of the Year at Georgia Virtual School and recently became the Science Department Chair, where she will supervise and provide feedback to teachers as well as teach students.

For more information about the award program and the work of the Educational Technology Cooperative, contact Beth Day in SREB Communications at (404) 879-5544.

iNACOL is the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership association based in the Washington, D.C., area with more than 3,100 members. iNACOL is unique in that its members represent a diverse cross-section of K-12 education from school districts, charter schools, state education agencies, nonprofit organizations, colleges, universities and research institutions, corporate entities, and other content and technology providers. See www.inacol.org.

The Southern Regional Education Board, or SREB, based in Atlanta, was created in 1948 by Southern governors and legislatures to help leaders in education and government work cooperatively to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB has 16 member states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. More information is available online at www.sreb.org.