

# Former NCO Inspires Fellow Teachers, Competes For National Teacher of the Year

By Meghan Portillo, NCO Journal

January 5, 2017



Former NCO and 2017 DODEA Teacher of the Year Kelisa Wing shows students the best websites to research the locations of their parents' past deployments. (Photo courtesy of DOD Education Activity)

As a noncommissioned officer, Kelisa Wing strove to inspire her Soldiers by her example, and today, she does the same for her students and fellow teachers.

Wing was nominated by one of her students and named 2017 Department of Defense Education Activity Teacher of the Year. Now, she will compete for the title of National Teacher of the Year.

Wing said she knows firsthand the damage that can be caused by an uncaring teacher. She vowed she would never let that happen to a student under her guidance and wants to inspire other teachers to do the same.

"My first-grade teacher never stopped to ask me what was going on in my life, never made that connection," Wing said. "She didn't really realize or possibly care that we were going through a very tumultuous time in our lives, struggling to pay bills, not having lights on, going to bed hungry and things like that, and that really impacted me for my entire schooling and now as a teacher. I don't want to be that teacher. I don't want to be that teacher who fails a student and doesn't stop to ask. I am always stopping and asking, 'What is going on? How can I help you? How can we be successful together?' I was so ashamed of the fact that I did fail that I never publicly admitted it – but that is why being DODEA Teacher of the Year means so much to me. Statistically, if you look at my background, I wasn't supposed to make it. But here I am, DODEA Teacher of the Year, and I can tell kids that even though life may issue you some hard knocks, you can still be successful."

As teacher of the year, Wing will take a semester-long sabbatical to work on a project of her choice. She plans to organize a leadership summit for DODEA teachers in September, as well as create a systematic teacher-to-teacher mentorship program within DODEA.

"I believe that by working with our leaders and teachers we can create something everybody will be happy with and that at the end of the day is going to impact student achievement, which is ultimately my mission," Wing said. "I want to close the achievement gap and empower students by empowering teachers."

Wing will find out in January if she is a finalist in the National Teacher of the Year competition. The top four finalists travel in the spring to Washington, D.C., where the president of the United States will announce the winner.

Wing's principal, Joan Islas, said she loves working with Wing and is proud to see her as DODEA Teacher of the Year. Wing definitely deserves to be National Teacher of the Year, she said.

"Kelisa has contributed so much to our school – to the students here as well as to the professional development of her peers," Islas said.

"Students don't fall through the cracks when they are under Kelisa's watch. That is for sure."

"The Army has really molded and shaped me into the type of educator that I am," Wing said. "Even working together with my fellow teachers. We are definitely better together, and that is something the Army taught me."