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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **HFAA Teacher Named Teacher of the Year**

The DaVinci Institute has named Harding Fine Arts Academy math teacher, Jennifer Burris, 2016 Oklahoma A+ Schools® 2016 Teacher of the Year. The DaVinci Institute is Oklahoma's Creativity Think Tank that promotes statewide creative renaissance through lectures, workshops, professional development, research and advocacy. The DaVinci Institute supports numerous creative K-12 enterprises including the Oklahoma A+ School initiative.

The DaVinci Institute and the Kirkpatrick Foundation joined forces to develop the Oklahoma A+ Schools®, whose school reform model which maintains that two-way integration of the arts in curriculum, play a central role in how children learn. This nationally recognized program is a division of Academic Affairs at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond.

"Beginning in 2010, DaVinci began the A+ Teacher Award which is awarded to an Oklahoma A+ School Teacher whose extraordinary creativity and integration of the arts into the curriculum exemplifies the purpose of the A+ Schools of nurturing creativity in every learner. Jennifer Burris certainly fits this description. She has been a leader in her school and in the OKA+ network as a whole. She is very student centered and uses the A+ framework to create instruction which meets each of their needs." Sandra Kent, Executive Director Oklahoma A+ Schools.

Jennifer, who is a graduate of Broken Arrow High School, received her Bachelor degree in Elementary Education from the University of Central Oklahoma. She has been teaching for Harding Fine Arts academy and is working on her Master of Arts in Educational Leadership (MAEL) degree Southern Nazarene University.

"Jennifer Burris' approach to the curriculum is always student focused and results driven, and it is not uncommon to hear students say, 'I've never liked math, but Ms. Burris' class is my favorite class!' said Barry Schmelzenbach, Harding Fine Arts Academy principal. "Her approach not only enriches her student's daily experiences, but it motivates them to achieve at levels even they never thought possible in a subject, like math, that typically deflates," he said.



The DaVinci Institute® will be honoring Ms. Burris for her creative endeavors at the Oklahoma History Center on April 1, 2016. Keynote speaker Mr. Scott Meacham, former State Treasurer and current CEO of I2E | Innovation to Enterprise, will speak on “Education for Innovation.”

Harding Fine Arts Academy is an Oklahoma City charter school that prepares high school students for college in an academically challenging, arts-integrated environment and has recently been named a 2015 Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.