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Local Teacher Earns Prestigious Teaching Award from Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth

March 26, 2018

BALTIMORE—Kathleen Jalalpour, a teacher at Keys School in Palo Alto, Calif., was one of 10 teachers from around the country honored recently by the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) for excellence in teaching students with advanced academic abilities.

Jalalpour was honored during the Sarah D. Barder Fellowship Conference, held Feb. 23-24 at The Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, Calif. This was the 30th anniversary of the conference, which brings new and past fellows from around the country together to share ideas and best practices about educating bright students.

“CTY’s mission is to discover, engage, and challenge even the brightest students to aim higher and learn more every day,” said CTY executive director Elaine Tuttle Hansen. “The Sarah D. Barder Award celebrates educators who share this commitment and documents the impact of teaching for high achievement on young people who often struggle to find the opportunities and encouragement they need.”

Jalalpour has taught math to students in fifth through eighth grades for more than 20 years. She facilitated the adoption of the Singapore Math Program at her school and has published a book and hosted numerous workshops and school trainings on introducing the program to students. She says that being a patient person and working in a school that supports teacher independence allows her to teach math curriculum at a pace that fits the individual needs of every student in her class. Claire, the sixth grader who nominated Jalalpour for the award, describes her as “an exceptional role model.”

This year’s Sarah D. Barder Fellowship Conference theme was “Whole Teacher, Whole Child,” and the program emphasized how to promote a healthy classroom. Teacher honorees shared stories about challenges that stand in the way of a healthy learning environment, such as

students' increasing dependence on devices and its effect on their ability to focus on schoolwork; poverty and other household stressors students bring to school with them; and the expectation for teachers to be in constant contact with families. Expert speakers offered techniques through which to manage these challenges through empathy, mindfulness, self-care, stress reduction, and more.

CTY director of research and conference co-host Amy Shelton said the biggest takeaway for teachers was that supporting each other and taking care of themselves is as important as their interactions with students.

Nominations for the Sarah D. Barder fellowships come from students in CTY's summer and online courses who live in California, Nevada, and Maryland. Nominated teachers are invited to submit an essay describing their teaching philosophy, and a panel of Johns Hopkins educators then selects educators from this group for recognition as Sarah D. Barder Fellows.

Sarah D. Barder, an educator, philanthropist, parent, and friend of CTY, endowed the fellowship in 1988 as a way of recognizing talented teachers of academically advanced students. More than 480 educators have been honored as Sarah D. Barder Fellows to date. For more information about the fellowship, visit cty.jhu.edu/news/events/barder/.

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About the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth

A nonprofit at one of the nation's premiere universities, CTY identifies academic talent in the world's brightest K-12 learners and supports their growth with accredited summer, online, and family programs, services, and resources designed to meet their needs.