**Two Chandler teachers listed among best in state**

**1 still in running for state's best instructor of year honor, prizes, national competition**

Two high-school teachers in Chandler Unified School District have been judged among the 10 best in Arizona, and one could win $10,000 cash, a $10,000 savings bond, an [Intel Corp](http://www.azcentral.com/community/chandler/articles/2011/10/26/20111026chandler-teachers-top-arizona1026.html). laptop and a trip to space camp in Alabama.

English teacher Cindy Pino, who is a department chair at Perry High School, is a finalist for the Arizona Educational Foundation's Teacher of the Year award.

Chemistry teacher Michael McKelvy at Basha High School was a semifinalist. He won $1,000 cash in the annual contest.

The winner will be announced Nov. 17 at the Arizona Education Foundation's banquet.

Pino and McKelvy were nominated by their principals. Both have been teaching or doing research for more than three decades.

Pino said she spent nearly all summer writing 10 essays required for the award.

"It was really intense," she said.

The toughest essay asked Pino to describe why she became a teacher.

"But it really was the wrong question. The question I answered was why I have stayed in teaching," Pino said.

She started teaching elementary-school students 31 years ago in Sierra Vista, her hometown. She moved to Connolly Middle School in the Tempe Elementary School District and then to McClintock High School in the Tempe Union High School District.

Pino went to Perry High School, located in Gilbert but part of the Chandler district, when it opened six years ago.

"I wanted a challenge of opening a new school," she said.

Pino teaches ninth grade honors English, 11th grade Advanced Placement English, manages the English Department and is the liaison for dual-enrollment students who take high-school classes concurrently with college courses.

In addition to the prizes, the teacher of the year winner will receive a full scholarship to Argosy University, an online university.

Pino, who has a master's degree in secondary education, said she wants to pursue a doctorate degree and teach at the university level if she wins.

"I would like to teach the teachers," she said.

Pino also would compete for the title of National Teacher of the Year, meet the president and receive professional speech training.

Even if she doesn't win the state title, Pino and the three other finalists for the award will receive $5,000, an [Intel](http://www.azcentral.com/community/chandler/articles/2011/10/26/20111026chandler-teachers-top-arizona1026.html) laptop, professional speech training and a scholarship for a 50 percent discount off Argosy University tuition.

Four finalists will be named Teacher of the Year Ambassadors for Excellence, serving as spokesmen for teaching, advocating for classroom excellence and speaking statewide to education, civic, government and professional organizations.

"There are so many good teachers out there. Every step in this process from being nominated to being chosen as a finalist has been amazing," Pino said.

"Representing teachers would be my biggest goal," she said.

In addition, all 10 teachers who were finalists and semifinalists will march in the upcoming Fiesta Bowl Parade. McKelvy said he was honored to be nominated and be chosen as one of the 10 semifinalists.

"I'm ecstatic I made it into the top 10," he said.

McKelvy is a former chemistry researcher at Arizona State University who began teaching at Basha High School five years ago.

He began a program at ASU called Science Is Fun, funded by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. He brought the program to Basha High, training nearly 100 AP chemistry students to work with elementary-school students.

"It's my personal soapbox. If we do not lead the world in innovation, the world will lead us," he said.