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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2004

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Local Plymouth Community Intermediate School Teacher Honored for Outstanding Teaching, Innovation

Science Teacher Warren Phillips Recognized as 2003 Presidential Award State Finalist

Washington, DC – Warren Phillips has experienced many successes over the course of his 29-year career as an outstanding science teacher, but nearly all of those achievements have been celebrated vicariously, through the accomplishments of his students. Now, after being named a state finalist for the 2003 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the nation's highest commendation of its kind, Phillips, a Plymouth, Massachusetts teacher, will be given recognition for his own efforts.

"I'm very excited. This is an honor," said Phillips, who is one of 233 finalists for the prestigious presidential award. Recipients of the 2003 presidential awards will be announced next month.

Established by Congress in 1983, and administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation, the annual presidential awards program identifies outstanding mathematics and science teachers nation-wide and in four U.S. territories. Each state can select up to three mathematics and three science teachers as state finalists, and from the field of state finalists a maximum of 108 presidential award-winners are selected.

Presidential award state finalists are among the most dedicated and innovative teachers of math and science, and Phillips, a Plymouth Community Intermediate School teacher, is certainly not an exception.

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"Warren Phillips is among the very best and brightest in education. I am honored every day to work with him," says Lyman Goding, principal of Plymouth Community Intermediate School.

Phillips says that he was influenced heavily by his seventh grade science teacher, who "absolutely impacted [Phillips] to become a teacher." Now, with his own class of seventh graders, Phillips tries to excite his pupils about science.

"I think the most important thing is to be a good motivator," Phillips says. "I try to make sure my kids like science when they're done here."

Phillips has a variety of techniques he uses to motivate his students, including a CD collection of science songs he has authored called " Sing-A-Long Science " .

"Kids learn in different ways, through verbal, tactile and auditory lessons," says Phillips. "A lot of kids can learn through music, so we sing songs. We have a TV studio and we produce TV shows. We use a lot of authentic learning tools."

Additionally, Phillips and his students do "real life" projects. Soon, Phillips and his students will construct an authentic working model of a rain forest, piggy-backing on their adoption of a real rainforest and their web-based project that allowed each student to design and build web-sites of rainforest animals.

"Science is actually doing things, not just reading from a book. We're constantly doing activities, real hands-on activities," says Phillips.

The goal of the presidential awards is to expand and model the definition of excellent science and mathematics teaching. Awardees will receive $10,000 from the National Science Foundation and take part in a weeklong series of professional development activities during recognition events in Washington, DC. All 2003 presidential awardees teach grades 7-12, but next year K-6 math and science teachers will be eligible for the award. The 2004 nomination forms and instructions are available at: www.paemst.org.

"We need a lot of money in resources to get a digital TV studio, and I hope I can secure the resources to make that happen for the kids," says Phillips. "There are so many excellent teachers in my building, and I hope we can get recognition for the great things we do here."