

Melissa Collins

2023-2024 TN Teacher of the Year

John P. Freeman Optional School



Melissa Collins has been an elementary school teacher at John P. Freeman Optional School in Memphis, TN, for 21 years, where she is constantly amazed by her students' curiosity about the world around them. She is an expert in teacher leadership and voice, and she is an advocate for global learning, STEM education, and high standards. To help ensure that all children have access to a caring and committed teacher, she has mentored several teachers through the National Board process.

Melissa is the recipient of several awards and honors, including the 2020 National Teacher Hall of Fame inductee, Sanford Inspire Teacher Award, Harriet Sanford Award, National Board Fellowship Program, the 2018 Global Teacher Prize Finalist (Top 50), the Queen Smith Award, the Stephen Sondheim Award, the Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the National Science Teaching Association Sylvia Shugrue Award, and West Tennessee Teacher of the Year. She is a proud National Board-Certified Teacher.