



# EDUCATORS OF DISTINCTION

## BULLOCH COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

### RICHARD MCCOMBS

STATESBORO HIGH SCHOOL • ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE TEACHER



My name is Richard McCombs, and I teach environmental science at Statesboro High School. I received two bachelor's degrees, one in geology and one in education, from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. I hold a master's degree in educational leadership from Florida Atlantic University. I have been a teacher for 24 years, 10 of those at Statesboro High School.

Before I began a career in teaching, I had several different opportunities to teach people, and those led me in the right direction. For instance, as a teenager, I became a merit badge counselor with the Boy Scouts of America. Teaching young people helped me understand the importance of building relationships quickly. Later, I began tutoring college students in geology, and I realized my ability to break down information so that others could comprehend it. During my college years, I was also a lieutenant in the Army National Guard. I began constantly learning and teaching new material to squads of 10-15 battalions of 200-300 soldiers. These experiences helped me realize my ability and passion for teaching.

In my classroom, students have multiple opportunities to become involved in their education outside of the classroom. I believe it gives them a feeling of ownership that allows them to better enter a classroom and learn from you. From chess on Monday afternoons, Science Quiz Bowl on Tuesday mornings, SECME engineering on Tuesdays after school, Science Olympiad on Thursdays, to Science Fair on Fridays, my weeks are busy mentoring and supporting students. I believe teaching is more than a job; it is a higher calling which requires dedication to consistently improve one's teaching methods. That is why I strive to offer different and exciting opportunities in and out of the classroom.

My true reward is when I help influence students to become involved in extra-curricular activities. One lesson I've learned throughout the years, is that there is no insignificant teachable moment. I realize now that you never know when a student will remember something they were taught years ago, and how they remember their teachers as being a helping hand when one is needed. Whether in extra-curriculars or in the classroom, my goal is to be that teacher who is there for students.

**Editor's Note:** McCombs is a five-time teacher of the year receiving the coveted accolade at all three schools he's served during his 24-year career: Pahokee Middle Senior (twice) and Lake Worth Community High Schools in Florida and SHS (twice). He received the honor previously as the 2009 designee in 2007. He was also a top-three finalist for the SECME National Teacher of the Year.

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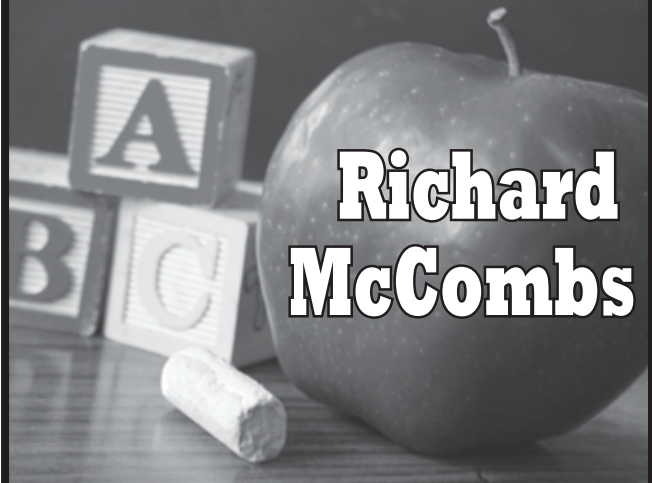
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