



TOP 10 FINALIST

# Andria Zafirakou

UNITED KINGDOM

Andria teaches at Alperton Community School, a secondary school academy in the inner city borough of Brent. It's no easy task. Brent is one of the most ethnically diverse places in the country and 130 languages are spoken in its schools. Its pupils come from some of the poorest families in Britain, many sharing one house with five other families, many exposed to gang violence. Children arrive at the school with limited skills and already feel isolated from staff and one another, making engaging with them all the more vital, but all the more difficult.

The odds were stacked against her succeeding, but Andria has defied them. Working as an art and textiles teacher and as a member of the senior leadership team tasked with earning the trust of her pupils and their families to understand the complex lives they've come from, she redesigned the curriculum across all subjects from scratch - carefully working alongside other teachers - to have it resonate with her pupils. She helped a music teacher launch a Somali school choir and she created alternative timetables to allow girls-only sports that would not offend conservative communities, leading the girls' cricket team to win the McKenzie Cup.

Learning the basics of many of the 35 languages in Alperton's pupil population, Andria has been able to reach out to her once marginalised students to earn their trust and, crucially, establish relationships with their parents. Thanks to her efforts, Alperton is now in the top 1 to 5% of the country in terms of qualifications and accreditations. This is a colossal achievement given how low the students' starting points were and how rapidly they progressed during their five to seven years at the school, a point recognised by the national inspection team.

Introducing real life situations in maths classes helped Alperton's maths department win the TES 2017 maths team of the year. In her own art classes, Andria has creatively redesigned the curriculum, even bringing in an "Artist in residence" to promote inspiration and help pupils cope with the responsibilities of their complex home circumstances. As a result, Alperton has been awarded specialist school status in visual arts.

Andria is proud when her students go on to university, get jobs and set up their own businesses. Andria's determination to move beyond an identikit school curriculum has seen Alperton awarded the Institute of Education's Professional Development Platinum Mark, an honour fewer than 10 British schools have ever achieved.

**SUBJECT:**  
Art and Design,  
Textiles



GLOBAL  
TEACHER  
PRIZE  
VARKEY FOUNDATION

**#BestTeacher**  
globalteacherprize.org