



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Susan Waggener was named the 2009 Teacher of the Year in a ceremony today at the State Capitol in Little Rock. Governor Mike Beebe and Education Commissioner Dr. Ken James presented Waggener, a mathematics and business education teacher at West Memphis High School, with \$15,000 in addition to other prizes. Waggener will represent Arkansas in the national Teacher of the Year competition in Washington, D.C., this spring.

“Our best teachers inspire students to study hard by creating a demanding but nurturing environment in the classroom,” Governor Beebe said. “Ms. Waggener provides that environment from the first time new students walk into West Memphis High School, and she will continue to spread that enthusiasm for education throughout the state as the 2009 Teacher of the Year.”

Fifteen teachers made it to the final stage of the state competition, with three being named runners-up:

- First runner-up **Jeffrey Harold Mosby**, a ninth-grade science teacher at Ramsey Junior High in Fort Smith.
- Second runner-up **Janet D. Watson**, an 11th- and 12th-grade science teacher at Bryant High School.
- Third runner-up **Sarah Perdue**, a fourth-grade teacher at Harp Elementary School in Springdale.

The other eleven finalists are:

- **Sandy Alexander**, a language arts teacher for fourth through sixth grades at Umpire Elementary School.
- **Teresa Bailey**, a kindergarten through fourth-grade physical education teacher at McRae Elementary School in Searcy.
- **Peggy Lea Carter**, a fifth-grade mathematics teacher at Ruth Doyle Intermediate School in Conway.
- **Teresa W. Garrett**, a kindergarten through sixth-grade librarian at Harmony Grove Elementary School in Camden.
- **Patricia Leah Hesse**, a gifted and talented teacher for kindergarten through 12th grade at Weiner Public Schools.
- **Jennifer Dillard Laurent**, a seventh-grade language arts teacher at Stuttgart Junior High School.

- **Cynthia Lynn Logan**, an eighth-grade mathematics teacher at Walnut Ridge High School.
- **Phyllis McCance**, a high school social studies and accounting teacher at Cedar Ridge High School in Newark.
- **Sherry Ratliff**, an 11th- and 12th-grade service learning teacher at North Little Rock High School-West Campus.
- **Jane Razaq**, a second-grade teacher at College Hill Elementary IB World in Texarkana.
- **Jennifer Touchstone**, an eighth-grade science teacher at Monticello Middle School.

All were recognized at today's ceremony, with the fourteen finalists receiving \$1,000. The cash prizes were made possible through a grant from the Walton Family Foundation.

"Several common themes can be found in the descriptions of these teachers," Dr. James said. "Those shared traits are genuinely caring for and about their students and, at the same time, holding all students to high expectations. Those are indeed two trademarks of outstanding teaching."

Waggener will be Arkansas' third Teacher of the Year to assume the active role prescribed by legislation passed during the special session of the 85th General Assembly. During the 2009-2010 school year, Waggener will have a year's sabbatical from the West Memphis School District to work in-residence at the Arkansas Department of Education. She will spend the year providing professional development and technical assistance to teachers around the state as well as serving as a non-voting member of the State Board of Education.

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The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.