

LaRose principal Tonya Cooper rewarded for student peer progress

By Jane Roberts

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

Tonya Cooper, principal at LaRose Elementary and soon to be head of Chimneyrock Elementary, pocketed \$1,000 this week because her students learned more in one year than 95 percent of their peers across the state.

She's planning an end-of-year party to reward the children and staff with perhaps \$1,000 worth of ice cream.

"I am extremely proud of our faculty and staff; they pull together every day to make sure district expectations are being met," said Cooper, finishing her seventh year at LaRose, located at Danny Thomas and Crump.

On Monday, the Education Consumers Foundation gave \$36,000 to 18 Tennessee principals in a ceremony in Nashville.

LaRose -- the only Memphis school honored -- had the third-highest score in West Tennessee among schools where the principal has been on the job at least five years. The scores are based on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

First place and \$3,000 went to Lynne Shuttleworth, principal of Lincoln Magnet Elementary in Madison County; second place and \$2,000 went to Patricia White, principal of Walker Elementary in Hardin County.

"We want to award principals that have been at a school long enough to have an effect on performance. Five years is what we consider the minimum," said J.E. Stone, founder and president of the foundation.

Stone compares value-added to a speedometer.

"This data tell you how fast students are moving in your school. Combined with the mile-marker information (standardized test scores), value-added can tell you how much kids in your school typically advance in one year," Stone said.

The concept has become so important in the national discussion on education that many states -- including Tennessee -- will soon tie teachers' pay to their individual value-added scores.

"Just like children need nutritious food and exercise to grow, we have to be very intentional about the type of information we expose them to," Cooper said. "We have to make sure they have the instruction and experiences to ensure maximum growth as far as their academic potential is concerned."

Tennessee won \$500 million in Race to the Top funding this spring partially because it has the most sophisticated database for calculating the scores.

It's also the reason the ECF awards all its value-added incentives in Tennessee.

"Other states do have value-added systems, but because the information goes out to the public, it is filtered," said Brett Pawlowski, foundation spokesman. "Tennessee is one of the leaders in getting unfiltered information out, so we have reliable information to work with."

Value-added scores are not skewed by economic and social differences because they compare each student's progress to her or his previous achievement.

"You can find schools that have pretty high (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program) scores, but are awful on value-added," Stone said. "These kids are being allowed to coast along, and their communities are hiding behind the fact that they have good demographics."

In four years, state officials say, 90 percent of Tennessee teachers will be strong enough to produce one year of academic gain per year.

Today, about 70 percent are.

Among Memphis public elementary schools, 36 of 106 schools do not see a year's gain per year, according to the ECF website, education-consumers.org.

-- Jane Roberts: 529-2512



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Walker Elementary Receives Statewide Praise

Wednesday, April 28, 2010 04:25 PM | Staff Reports



Hardin County, TN – Tennessee State Representative Vance Dennis (R-Savannah) today congratulated Walker Elementary and Principal Patricia White for winning second place in the state's annual Value-Added Achievement Awards.

Winners are chosen from each of the state's three grand divisions in both the elementary and middle school categories.

"Walker Elementary and Ms. White deserve a pat on the back for winning this award," said Representative Dennis. "This accomplishment shows that Walker Elementary has excelled academically, and I am very proud to represent some of the brightest students in the state."

The Value-Added Achievement Award is a recognition program to identify and reward principals of the most effective elementary and middle schools in the state. Schools are selected on the basis of their 3 year average value-added gains in reading and math; to be eligible for the award, principals must have served in a school for at least five years. Winning principals receive a certificate, flag, and up to \$3,000 at a ceremony held at the state capitol each spring.

The legislature placed more emphasis on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) in the state's overhaul of public education during an Extraordinary Session in January.

The emphasis on TVAAS scores is largely credited as a major component of Tennessee winning over \$500 million in the federal government's "Race to the Top" competition.

Rep. Dennis represents the 71st House District, which encompasses Hardin, McNairy, and part of Decatur Counties.

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Photo submitted: Dr. Shannon Grooms, center, was recognized as one of the most effective principals in Tennessee on Monday by the Education Consumers Foundation. With him are Dr. Connie Smith, left, Assistant Commissioner of Education, Division of Accountability, Teaching, and Learning, and Dr. John Stone, right, ECF president.

*Tuesday, April 27, 2010
(Last modified: 2010-04-27 15:36:40)*

Author: Duay O'Neil

Source: The Newport Plain Talk

NASHVILLE-Grassy Fork Elementary School Principal Dr. Shannon Grooms has been named one of Tennessee's top principals by the Education Consumers Foundation.

Grooms, along with 17 other school principals, received one of the foundation's annual Value-Added Achievement Awards in a ceremony Monday in Nashville.

"While teachers are often recognized for the impact they can have on student learning, any teacher can tell you that it takes a great principal to set the right goals and create a culture of performance: without that leadership, even the best teacher will be limited in what he or she can achieve," said Brett Pawlowski of DeHavilland Associates.

"These school leaders are considered the 'best of the best'," continued Pawlowski, "when it comes to advancing their students academically, as measured by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Superior school-wide performance reflects superior teaching, teamwork, and leadership. TVAAS measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gains in achievement earn the highest value-added scores."

"If every school was like those of our 18 winners, Tennessee would have the best education system in the country," said ECF President Dr. J. E. Stone. "Each of them shows what's possible when school leaders make student learning their top priority."

Also praising Dr. Grooms is Dr. Tim Webb, Tennessee Education Commissioner, who said, "I am pleased to join with ECF in

recognizing the educators and schools that are doing such an excellent job of advancing the knowledge and skills of their students. Tennessee is the birthplace of value-added assessment, and it continues to grow in importance as a tool for seeing how our efforts are impacting student achievement. I'm happy to be able to recognize principals whose superior work is reflected in their TVAAS results."

The 18 winners were selected from among Tennessee's 1300-plus public elementary and middle schools. Based on three-year value-added gains in Reading/Language Arts and Math, three top awards are given in two categories, Elementary and Middle schools, in each of Tennessee's three regions: East, Middle, and West.

Grooms received the third-place award in the K-8/Middle School category for East Tennessee. On Monday, he was presented a certificate, a banner, and a \$1,000 cash award by Dr. Connie Smith, Assistant Commission of the Division of Accountability, Teaching, and Learning for the Tennessee Department of Education.

Cocke County Director of Schools Manney Moore accompanied Grooms to Nashville for the ceremony.

Grooms will soon finish his ninth year as Grassy Fork's principal. He and his wife Kathy have two children, Will, a fourth-grader, and Sarah Beth, a first-grader. Both children attend Grassy Fork Elementary School.

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Two local principals receive leadership awards

By Staff reports
JohnsonCityPress.com
webstaff@johnsoncitypress.com

Two local school principals have been awarded the annual Value-Added Achievement Award from the Education Consumers Foundation for educational leadership in Tennessee's public school systems.

Earning second place in K-8 middle schools in East Tennessee was Indian Trail Middle School's principal Tammy Pearce.

Third place in the East Tennessee elementary category went to Teresa Leonard, the principal at Boones Creek Elementary School.

The awards were presented to three schools from the categories of middle school and elementary school in the three divisions of Tennessee - East, Middle and West. A total of 18 principals were chosen for the awards More than 1,300 Tennessee public schools were considered.

According to a news release by the ECF, Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. The ECF award is based on TVAAS performance.

Additional information about all the winners, including school performance charts, is available at www.education-consumers.org.

The winning principals each receive a certificate, a banner and a cash award: \$3,000 for first place; \$2,000 for second place; and \$1,000 for third place.

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Alapo: Education reporter keeps busy

By Lola Alapo

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

Anybody else need a vacation? Just wondering because I sure do!

It's been quite a year on the K-12 education beat, which means it's kept me in a job. (I'll give that a "yay!")

Here's a recap of some of the major education news in the first five months of 2010 in no particular order:

- * A shooting at Inskip Elementary School that left two administrators injured.
- * Tennessee was one of two states to win the first round of the Race to the Top federal grant. The state will receive a whopping \$500 million for education reform, which will be split among school districts.
- * Bill Phillips, Knox County Eighth District school board member, resigned under fire.
- * Knox County school officials select a location for a new Southwest Knox County elementary school.
- * A Farragut High School parent asked the school system to remove a biology book from use because of the text's definition of creationism as a biblical myth. The school board will continue discussion on the matter this week.
- * The Knox County school system faced a \$19 million budget gap. To help close the deficit, Superintendent Jim McIntyre suggested that teachers give up raises for next year, but teachers rejected the proposal. The school board this week is discussing McIntyre's recommendation for a balanced budget, which is expected to include some teaching position cuts.

Meanwhile, my incoming e-mails have crossed the 1,000 mark more than once - actually, they've been there for a while. If you've written me and I haven't responded yet, don't worry, I will. It just might be awhile. If you've called me and it's taken me at least a week to get back to you, my apologies.

Pretty soon, I'll be getting on a plane to go see the world for a little while. But I'll be back. I just need to go recover somewhere that's not on this continent. Someone please let local schools know that I won't be here so they can take a break, too.

*

In other news, kudos to Carter Elementary School Principal Julie Thompson who, for the second year in a row, was among 18 principals recognized statewide for their leadership qualities by the nonprofit Education Consumers Foundation. They've earned the title of "most effective" elementary and middle school principals, based on value-added performance.

Also honored was Shannon Grooms, principal of Grassy Fork Elementary School in Cocke County.

Last month, Thompson earned second place in the East Tennessee elementary school division for the 2010 Value-Added Achievement Awards from Education Consumers Foundation. Principals are honored for their efforts in advancing students academically.

Grooms placed third in the East Tennessee K-8/middle school division.

Tennessee's value-added testing system gauges student progress year over year, regardless of external factors such as socioeconomic status, by using a statistical model that analyzes annual Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program scores.

Lola Alapo may be reached at 865-342-6376.



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TENNESSEAN COM

The Discovery School ranks first in Midstate

By Herald Staff • April 27, 2010

The Discovery School was recognized for achieving some of the highest scores in the state at a ceremony held at the state capitol on Monday.

And on Tuesday, the Dickson school celebrated the award at home when Principal Debbie Bogdan and Schools Director Johnny Chandler stood before the school body and applauded their achievements.

"This is a pretty good indicator that we have people doing great things at our schools," Chandler said.

The Education Consumers Foundation recognized the achievements of 18 schools statewide through its annual Value-Added Achievement Awards.

Bogdan was there to accept the award, along with Chandler. TDS placed fifth of all 771 elementary schools in Tennessee, and first in Middle Tennessee between the years of 2007-2009. Their previous ranking was 51st. As a result, TDS will be awarded a \$3,000 check.

Dickson Middle School also placed highly according to the ECF's data, placing ninth of all 525 state middle schools.

School leaders from across the state were honored for being considered "the best of the best" when it comes to advancing their students academically, as measured by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System.

TVAAS measures achievement gain in a way that

permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gains in achievement earn the highest value-added scores.

"If every school was like those of our 18 winners, Tennessee would have the best education system in the country," said ECF President Dr. J. E. Stone in a press release. "Each of them shows what's possible when school leaders make student learning their top priority."

The winners were selected from among Tennessee's more-than 1,300 public elementary and middle schools. Based on three-year value-added gains in Reading/Language Arts and Math, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards are given in two categories, Elementary and Middle schools, in each of Tennessee's three regions: East, Middle, and West.

Because the awards recognize high quality leadership, only schools where the principal has served for at least five years were considered.

"These 18 principals have produced superior results among their entire student bodies, regardless of factors like wealth or poverty," said Stone in a press release. "They're taking every student, no matter their starting point, and helping them fulfill their learning potential."

Additional information about the winners, including school performance charts, is available at www.education-consumers.org. Also posted there are "Recipes for Success" from each of the 18 principals and thoughts on what they have done as leaders to help their schools achieve.

The winning principals each received a certificate, a banner and a cash award ranging from \$3,000 for

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1st place, \$2,000 for 2nd place, and \$1,000 for 3rd place.

Herald staff writers Chris Gadd and D. Frank Smith contributed to this story.



Schools Director Johnny Chandler speaks at a special event at The Discovery School Tuesday recognizing the school and its students for improved testing scores. (Chris Gadd/The Herald)

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Greg Holder reflects on career

Staff

At the age of 21, Greg Holder began teaching. Now that he's 55, he plans to retire from a rewarding 34-year career in education, all spent in Lincoln County.

His first teaching experience was at the Elora School, where he taught third through eighth grades and coached basketball in 1976. Back then, there was no air conditioning in the building and certainly no computers.

"We were lucky to have a calculator at Elora," Holder said, remembering his first job.

As a teacher, he says it was the interaction with the children that he enjoyed most. He says it made him feel good when he could help a child learn something he or she would use all of their lives.

One of his former students, John Fanning, will take the reins as principal at South Lincoln next fall. Holder has served as South's only principal, starting with the school when it opened in 1992.

After getting his start at Elora, Holder's career took him to Flintville Elementary School, where he stayed for two years. He then taught at Eighth District School, now Stonebridge Academy, and was later hired to serve as principal at Highland Rim School, where he served for six months.

After that, he went back to Eighth District where he remained for six years. Then, in 1992, as the new South Lincoln School opened, he became principal of that school and will remain there until the end of this school year.

As principal, it's the interaction with the staff and students he's enjoyed most.

"I'll miss that," he said.

Over the years, he has seen many changes in the school system. He said these days there is greater technology but much more paperwork than in the past.

He feels that the future challenges in education will be economic and "... staying in front of children with the technology."

"I've been very proud of South Lincoln," he said of the school he watched grow from its birth.

On Monday in Nashville, the school received a third place award for the Middle Region, Middle Division in Nashville. South Lincoln placed 16th out of 525 schools. The award, which Holder accepted on behalf of the school, was based solely on objectively measured achievement gain. The school was proven to be among the most effective of 1,300



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elementary and middle schools in teaching reading/language arts and mathematics.

Upon his retirement, Holder says he plans to garden with his wife, Sherry, do more hunting and fishing and raise cattle on their two farms. Sherry is also retiring from her teaching position at Highland Rim School, where she has taught mostly third grade for 32 years.



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Paper

South Lincoln, Holder make the grade

South principal among 18 honored for students' remarking learning gains

While teachers are often recognized for the impact they can have on student learning, any teacher can tell you that it takes a great principal to set the right goals and create a culture of performance. Even the best teacher will be limited in what he or she can achieve.

For this reason, the Education Consumers Foundation has recognized the achievements of 18 of the most effective principals from across the state through its annual Value-Added Achievement Awards.

Greg Holder, principal of South Lincoln Elementary School, is among the middle school principals in Tennessee who received the 2010 award. Holder received a third place award in the K-8/Middle Tennessee division.

The foundation presented these awards during a ceremony held in the state Capitol.

These school leaders are considered "the best of the best" when it comes to advancing their students academically, as measured by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System, according to the Education Consumers Foundation. Superior school-wide performance reflects superior teaching, teamwork and leadership.

"I was so happy when I was invited to attend the meeting in Nashville last week where South Lincoln Elementary was honored," said Dr. Wanda Shelton, director of Lincoln County Schools. "Being ranked in the top 10 middle schools in the state was exciting. Unable to attend, I asked the school's new principal, Mr. John Fanning, to attend with Mr. Holder and represent the Lincoln County Schools."

"We are all very happy about this award," she added. "The great students, parents, teachers and administrative support all helped this school excel and receive this honor. The entire school has worked hard to be the best that they can be, and I am so proud of them all."

State Rep. Pat Marsh congratulated South Lincoln Elementary School and Holder for winning third place in the state's annual Value-Added Achievement Awards.

"South Lincoln Elementary School and Mr. Holder deserve a pat on the back for winning this award," said Marsh. "This accomplishment shows that South Lincoln Elementary has excelled and is very proud to represent some of the brightest students in the state."

TVAAS measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gain in each year receive the highest value-added scores.

"If every school was like those of our 18 winners, Tennessee would have the best education system in the country," said ECF President Dr. J.E. Stone. "Each of them shows what's possible when a school focuses on student learning as their top priority."

Education Commissioner Dr. Tim Webb said, "I am pleased to join with ECF in recognizing the educators and schools that are doing such an excellent job of advancing the knowledge and skills of our students."

"Tennessee is the birthplace of value-added assessment, and it continues to grow in importance as a tool for seeing how our efforts are impacting student achievement. I'm happy to be able to recognize those whose superior work is reflected in their TVAAS results."

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Jacki Price, Literacy Leader at KES and Principal Sandy Williams.

Saturday, May 01, 2010

(Last modified: 2010-05-04 14:30:33)

Source: *The Rogersville Review*

By Bill Grubb
News Editor

NASHVILLE - Keplar Elementary School is certainly not ranked among the biggest schools in Tennessee but it is among the best - with the paper work to prove it.

Keplar, which usually has an enrollment of approximately 100 students, is celebrating a year of recognition following five years of continuing academic achievement and improvement.

In December 2009 the school received the Tennessee Title I Distinguished School award for "Closing the Achievement Gap," with a \$1,000 award also going to the school.

Recently school officials made another trip to Nashville to receive another award, the Value-Added Achievement Award, presented to Principal Sandy Williams on the basis of the three year value-added gains in reading and math. The school also received a \$3,000 award from the Education Consumers Foundation.

Keplar Principal Sandy Williams, along with Director of Hawkins County Schools Charlotte Britton, Federal Projects Director Reba Bailey and Elementary Supervisor Beth Holt joined with Tennessee Department of Education representatives at an April 26 ceremony sponsored by the Education Consumers Foundation to celebrate the latest recognition.

The school is ranked first in the category of East Tennessee elementary schools and second in the state among 771 elementary schools based on the mathematics, reading/language arts three year average value-added scores.

The awards are based on test scores, particularly the improvement in the socio-economic groups. Keplar, with a poverty rate of greater than 50 percent, has demonstrated high achievement rates for all their students, according to school system officials.

In addition, the school has proven effectiveness in teaching and learning in the reading curriculum, using research-based instructional strategies in all classrooms, has shown many opportunities for all students to achieve, and has established partnerships with their parents, families and the community.

"Teaching is a science," Williams said. "It is our belief that education is not one size fits all."

While accolades are coming to the school now, the work has been ongoing since 2003. Staffers have been attending 90 hours of professional development each year of the six years involved in the Reading First initiative has been credited for conversion in the school culture.

"The biggest factor in making changes to our school has been the willingness and openness of the staff to make needed changes. Everyone has spent many extra hours working to learn new information, making immediate changes in the classroom," said Jacki Price, Keplar's Literacy Leader states.

Observing visitors in the classrooms became common events as teachers from other schools in Hawkins County, Reading First state consultants, as well as the Keplar leadership sat in classes to observe new strategies used by the teachers and students.

Williams noted that her students have taken "ownership for their achievement and have a higher expectation for themselves." Some of her students receive two and one-half hours of reading instruction a day, giving every student that opportunity to be successful. Many of those students attend school tutoring and the summer enrichment programs. Williams also said parent involvement is a key component of the school's success.

"Parents are very proud of our accomplishment. They see day in and day out how hard our staff works to provide a quality education for their children," she explained.

Price notes that Patty Rider, the Hawkins County Parent Engagement Coordinator has initiated activities that have helped parents become more knowledgeable about what their children need to know to be successful in school, and this has increased the actual involvement of the parents.

"The kids come first," Williams said. "Academic growth is a success, no matter the degree of growth."

Amber Davidson, 2009-2010 Teacher of the Year at Keplar, said she is glad to be a part of the faculty and credits Price with guiding the faculty for success of their students.

"I feel honored to be a part of such a wonderful school," Davidson added.

Dr. Julie McCargar, Executive Director of Federal Programs for Tennessee, applauded schools, such as Keplar, for setting high expectations for their students, plus giving them "the necessary tools and resources to reach those goals."

"These schools will serve as a model for the nation of what works so more students can benefit," McCargar said.



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'Bell to bell' teaching earns Holston Valley Middle School award for test scores

By Rick Wagner

Published May 9th, 2010

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Tennessee schools that want to do well on value-added scores, take heed: Teaching “bell to bell” has worked well for award-winning Holston Valley Middle School.

Those are words of advice from Jess Lockhart, principal at HVMS. He and the school recently won \$3,000 for being the best value-added test score middle school in East Tennessee, and it also placed fourth across the state.

Lockhart's school was among four in Northeast Tennessee that won honors from the Education Consumers Foundation for improvements, putting them among 18 statewide recognized in Nashville at the Tennessee Capitol on April 26.

Among elementary schools in East Tennessee, Principal Sandra Vicars-Williams at Hawkins County's Keplar Elementary won first place, while Washington County's Boones Creek Elementary Principal Teresa Leonard placed third.

Among K-8 and middle schools in East Tennessee, first place went to Lockhart at HVMC, while second place went to Johnson City's Indian Trail Middle School Principal Tammy Pearce.

The winning principals each received a certificate, a banner and a cash award: \$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second place and \$1,000 for third place.

When the call first came and the man on the other end of the line asked how the “hardest working principal in East Tennessee” was doing, Lockhart said he thought a salesman was on the other end trying to sell him some program to improve TCAP scores.

But then he learned the valued-added scores at HVMC had resulted in a \$3,000 prize. The three-year average valued-added part of TCAPs, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, for 2007-08-09, made HVMC the top value-added middle school in East Tennessee and fourth of 525 statewide.

“It's not an overnight thing to get this accomplished,” Lockhart said. “Our teachers honestly teach from bell to bell.”

He said the teachers at HVMS try to make up for lost time from picture days and other school events whenever they can.

But he said a class called Standards, started 14 years ago by then-HVMS Principal Mary Rouse, has given teachers the needed time to remediate students and address specific problems in math and language arts.

Rouse went on to be principal at East High School and work in the Central Office before her current job, principal at Valley Pike Elementary, a feeder school to HVMS along with Emmett Elementary. Lockhart said those two schools have done a good job preparing students for HVMS, which feeds into Sullivan East High School.

“We have stayed with it because it’s been a value instrument for us,” Lockhart said.

“Every school’s different. What works at one school may not work at another. The biggest thing is hard work and dedication.”

HVMS recently became a Title 1 school, a federal designation reflecting a higher number of students eligible for free or reduced-cost meals.

“They’re able to take these students and work with them and help them gain the gains they need to make and more,” Director of Schools Jack Barnes said. “That says a lot not just about Jeff and his leadership, but the staff there at Holston Valley Middle School.”

The statewide rankings can be viewed at www.education-consumers.org. To view, click on the School Performance Charts listed under the “TN Project” menu.

Letters: Carter Elementary teacher recognized

Staff Reports

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

While teachers are often recognized for the impact they can have on student learning, any teacher can tell you that it takes a great principal to set the right goals and create a culture of performance.

Without that leadership, even the best teacher will be limited in what he or she can achieve. For this reason, the Education Consumers Foundation is proud to recognize the achievements of 18 of the most effective principals from across the state through its annual Value-Added Achievement Awards. The foundation presented these awards during a ceremony held in the state Capitol on April 26.

Carter Elementary School's Principal Julie Thompson was among the 18 winners selected from among Tennessee's 1,300-plus public elementary and middle schools for the second year in a row. The award is based on three-year, value-added gains in reading/language arts and math.

These school leaders are considered "the best of the best" when it comes to advancing their students academically, as measured by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System. Superior schoolwide performance reflects superior teaching, teamwork and leadership. TVAAS measured achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gains in achievement earn the highest value-added scores. It can be very difficult to sustain continued growth.

Thompson, her staff, parents, students and volunteers are doing a great job. It is important that we recognize the progress and quality in public education which occurs at Carter Elementary.

State Rep. Harry Brooks

Knoxville



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Textme briefs: May 18

Staff Reports

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

History Day winners advance to nationals

One hundred students and two teachers won awards at the Tennessee History Day competition. The winners are eligible to represent Tennessee at the National History Day competition, which will be in College Park, Md., June 13-17. The event was held at the Legislative Plaza, the Tennessee State Museum and the Nashville Public Library and attracted more than 200 students from across the state. The participants were all award winners from district competitions held in Memphis, Murfreesboro, Knoxville and Chattanooga. It was coordinated by the Tennessee Historical Society with sponsorship provided by Humanities Tennessee and the Tennessee Department of State. Additional support is provided by The Memorial Foundation, National History Day, the History Channel and the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

Winners from Knox County include: Special Award for Best Projects in Women's History - Junior Division: Abby Huber of Greenway School in Knoxville, Senior Division: Blair Toedte and Tasha Saunders of West High School; Special Award for Best Projects in African American History - Junior Division: Logan Craig and Ashleanne Zachary of First Baptist Academy in Knoxville; Junior Individual Documentary - Second Place: Miriam Ryburne of Greenway School in Knoxville; Junior Group Documentary - First Place: Sophia Henderson, Graham Hardison, Brandon Babbitt and Riley Clem of Episcopal School of Knoxville, Second Place: Anne Batcheller and Alexa Ewan of Episcopal School of Knoxville, Third Place: Emily Conner and Lindsay Garner of Concord Christian School; Junior Individual Documentary - First Place: Kiyoko Reidy of Greenway School in Knoxville, Second Place: Emma McLeod of Greenway School in Knoxville; Junior Group Performance - First Place: Ashleanne Zachary and Logan Craig of First Baptist Academy; Junior Website, Individual and Group Combined - First Place: Tristan Hightower of Concord Christian School, Senior Group Exhibit - Second Place: Celeste McAlpin-Levitt, Rebekah Rhea, Katie Smith and Madeline Stinnett of West High School; Senior Group Documentary - Third Place: Blair Toedte and Tasha Saunders of West High School; Senior Website, Individual and Group Combined - Second Place: Jason Van der Merwe, a homeschool student from Knoxville; Senior Individual Paper - Second Place: Savannah Lockwood of West High School.

Carter Elementary principal honored

Carter Elementary School Principal Julie Thompson was honored at the State Capitol for advancing her students academically as measured by Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System.

The Education Consumers Foundation recognized the achievements of 18 of the most effective principals from across the state through its annual Value-Added Achievement Awards. TVAAS measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of the student body. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gains in achievement earn the highest value-added scores.

Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of Knox County Schools, said, "The award for Mrs. Thompson and the Carter Elementary School community is certainly well-deserved as evidenced by the positive gains in student learning consistently achieved at this outstanding school."

In all, 18 winners were selected from among Tennessee's 1,300-plus public elementary and middle schools. Based on three-year value-added gains in Reading/Language Arts and Math, first, second and third place awards were given in two categories, elementary and middle schools, in each of Tennessee's three regions: East, Middle and West. The winning principals each receive a certificate, a banner and a cash award: \$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second place and \$1,000 for third place. Thompson was awarded second place in the Elementary School category in the East Tennessee region.

More information is available at www.education-consumers.org.



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Friday, May 21, 2010 |

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Akard students get star treatment

By [Mac McLean](#) | Reporter / Bristol Herald Courier

Published: May 19, 2010

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BRISTOL, Tenn. – In a scene straight out of a Hollywood red-carpet event, nine Akard Elementary School students stepped out of a limousine and had their pictures taken before they enjoyed lunch at the Volunteer Parkway Applebee's.

The students were among a group of 19 fifth-graders in teacher Kyle Loudermilk's English class who got the star treatment Wednesday because they improved their Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program – TCAP – writing test scores. The school's parent-teacher association paid for the event, which originated with a promise Loudermilk made at the start of the year.

"This is great," Akard Principal Garry Booker said as he sat next to Loudermilk during lunch. "It's good for the kids, and it's a good motivator. Any time you can raise test scores is always a good thing."

The achievement also came as a bit of good news to the school's parents and teachers, who after nearly 16 months of discussions learned the school will be closing for good next spring. The Sullivan County Board of Education decided to shutter the school as a cost-saving move.

Loudermilk made the promise to students if the class scored higher than a 4.1 on the writing test, which is graded on a scale of 0-6 and requires students to write an essay about a randomly chosen topic in 35 minutes.

"I studied for a while" to take the test, said 12-year-old Sierra Egbert, who added that the possibility of a free lunch and her first-ever limousine ride gave her "a little bit" of an incentive to work hard.

When they took the test this winter, Egbert and her classmates got an average of 4.3 on the writing assessment, which beat last year's average score of 4.1 and the school's three-year average of 3.9.

"My students worked diligently all year long preparing for the writing assessment we took in February," Loudermilk said as the first-year teacher congratulated his students on their hard work.

The writing assessment is part of a series of standardized tests fifth-graders take each year as part of TCAP. Other tests cover language arts, reading, math, science and social studies.

"As far as our writing scores go, I am very pleased with what's come back," said David Timbs, the school system's supervisor for testing and federal programs. Timbs did not want to comment further on scores until the state officially announces them this fall.

Students at Akard, off state Route 126 between Bristol and Blountville, aren't the only ones who have been recognized recently for beefing up their test scores. Last month, Holston Valley Middle School Principal Jess Lockhart received a special recognition for his school's value-added test scores, which measure a student's individual improvement on tests from one year to the next.

"We've been very proud of our students and teachers because they worked really hard," said Lockhart, whose school is off U.S. Highway 421, a few miles east of the Bristol city limits.

He said Holston Valley had the highest value-added test scores in math and language arts among a group of schools from East Tennessee; it was enough to win the school a Value-Added Achievement Award and a \$3,000 check from the Education Consumers Foundation. The school had the fourth-highest value-added test scores in the two subjects from the state's entire crop of 525 middle schools, Lockhart said.

"These 18 principals [who are receiving an award] have produced superior results among their entire student bodies," foundation President J.E. Stone said in an April 29 statement. "They're taking every student, no matter what their starting point, and helping them fulfill their learning potential."

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