



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LITTLE ROCK: Fourteen exceptional teachers have been named regional finalists for the 2011 Arkansas Teacher of the Year competition. All finalists will be celebrated at the second annual Arkansas Teacher of the Year Gala at the Governor's Mansion on Nov. 12, which will be televised live by Today's THV 11. At that time, the three runners-up and the winner will be named.

The regional finalists are:

- Blair Ballard, a fourth-grade teacher at Walnut Ridge Elementary School in the Lawrence County School District
- Vickie Beene, an 11th-grade English teacher at Nashville High School in the Nashville School District
- Julie Boyd, a second grade teacher at Hurricane Creek Elementary School in the Bryant School District
- Jeannette Dempsey, an Environmental and Spatial Technology teacher and a kindergarten Spanish teacher at College Hill Elementary IB World School in the Texarkana School District
- Oretha Faye Ferguson, a 10th-grade English teacher at Southside High School in the Fort Smith School District
- Karen S. Hart, a high school biology teacher at Jonesboro High School in the Jonesboro School District
- Kristy Parish, a kindergarten teacher at Westside Elementary School in the Searcy School District
- Mary Katherine Parson, a high school biology teacher at Central High School in the Little Rock School District
- Kathy A. Powers, a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School in the Conway School District
- Therese Thompson, a fifth-grade teacher at John Tyson Elementary School in the Springdale School District
- Rebecca Vaughn, a kindergarten teacher at Wedlock Elementary School in the West Memphis School District
- Maryann Walker, a third grade teacher at M.A. Hardin Elementary School in the White Hall School District
- Carolyn Whisenant, a kindergarten teacher at Mountain Home Kindergarten in the Mountain Home School District
- Emily Kathryn White, a kindergarten teacher at Monticello Elementary School in the Monticello School District

Thanks to grant money provided by the Walton Family Foundation, each of the finalists will receive \$1,000, with the Arkansas Teacher of the Year receiving an additional \$14,000. In addition to Walton Family Foundation and Today's THV 11, major sponsors for the event are: SMARTer Kids Foundation, Blue Bell Creameries, Delta Dental of Arkansas and Entergy Arkansas.

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.