



Tally Named MDE's 2021 Teacher of the Year

TUPELO, Miss. — Teachers are rarely speechless, but when the Mississippi Department of Education announced on a virtual celebration late Thursday afternoon Leslie Tally had been named the 2021 Teacher of the Year, emotions momentarily prevented the second-grade Lawhon teacher from speaking.

But when she regained her composure, the humble Tally gave all credit to her fellow teachers, administrators, students, the Tupelo Public School District and of course, her family.

She is third TPSD teacher to garner this accolade, which accounts for all 151 school districts in the state, joining Jackie Parker (Tupelo Middle School, 2000) and Zelma Conerly (Lawhon, 1986).

“I am firmly convinced God placed me in this place as an educator,” she said. “It’s hard for me to wrap my mind around this. I’m so blessed to teach alongside incredible teachers. I’m grateful to the Tupelo Public School District for its unyielding support of teachers, students and community. Lawhon has provided me incredible support. Without their support, I would not be in the situation I am today.”

National Board Certified and also a Teacher of Distinction recipient, Tally began her professional journey in 2011 teaching third-grade at Lawndale. Two years ago as a 2nd-grade teacher at Mooreville Elementary, she was tabbed the Lee County Schools Teacher of the Year.

“She’s one of the most humble teachers I’ve ever been around,” Lawhon principal Ian Shumpert said. “She is so caring for all students. She’s at the top of her class and a great asset at our school. We love her so much. She’s so awesome. We are blessed to have her with our Lawhon family.”

Tally will receive a \$5,000 stipend from MDE and will represent the state at various functions. She’s now eligible for national teacher of the year honors.

“It’s just the ultimate appreciation for the work that you do, appreciation from your peers and your community,” she said. “As a teacher, the greatest feedback and gift you can receive is knowing that you’re making a difference.”

In addition to Tally’s recognition, MDE named Tupelo Middle School principal Mark Enis its Mississippi Alternate Administrator of the Year, with Many Lacy of DeLisle Elementary in Pass Christian as the winner. If she is unable to fulfill her duties for any reason, Enis will take over her role.

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