



Warren County Board of Education
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Warren County Schools Announces 2026-2027 District Teachers of the Year

McMinnville, Tenn., December 16, 2025 - Warren County Schools is proud to announce the 2026-2027 District Teachers of the Year, recognizing three outstanding educators whose dedication, innovation, and deep commitment to students represent the very best of teaching in Warren County. Each winner was selected from a competitive pool of nominees and honored in one of three grade bands: PreK-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

Together, these educators model the district's vision, "Engage every mind. Grow every learner. Empower every future."

PreK-4: Ms. Rachel Livesay, Eastside Elementary, 4th Grade ELA

Rachel Livesay is known for transforming her fourth-grade classroom into a place where confidence grows, skills deepen, and students achieve beyond what they believed possible. A high-achieving educator with a strong record of student growth, Livesay teaches with a blend of high expectations, individualized support, and intentional encouragement. She begins each year by analyzing student data and uses those insights to tailor instruction, provide targeted interventions, and help students make significant gains, like the former Level 1 student she guided to a Level 3 on TCAP through focused reading and writing support.

Her students consistently credit her for helping them understand how to think, write, and communicate with clarity. Through her structured approach to reading comprehension and writing, students develop skills they carry into every stage of their growth.

Beyond her classroom, Livesay has profoundly shaped school culture by founding Eastside's Elementary Beta Club for grades 4-5, now celebrating its 10th year. Under her leadership, students have earned more than 60 awards at the state level, participated in service projects that benefit the community, and grown into confident, responsible leaders. She also creates meaningful links between curriculum and community through local field trips, partnerships with historians and agencies like TVA, and her involvement in the Midway Community Center.

Her work ensures learning doesn't stay confined within school walls, it becomes a lived, meaningful experience that connects students to the world around them.

"Ms. Livesay is an exceptional teacher who brings dedication, expertise, and genuine care to her classroom each day. She builds strong, positive relationships with her students, who are always

eager to participate and engage in her lessons. Her deep understanding of the standards and curriculum is evident, and she consistently works to ensure every student experiences success. Ms. Livesay is a shining example of what excellent teaching looks like,” said Eastside Elementary Principal Rex Crabtree.

5-8: Ms. Lynette McKinley, Warren County Middle School, 6th Grade Science

Lynette McKinley is a beloved and influential educator whose impact extends far past the walls of her sixth-grade science classroom. To her, student success is measured not only by mastery of content but by the enduring relationships that last well into adulthood. Former students, now doctors, lawyers, linemen, teachers, and community members, still reach out to share how her classroom shaped their lives. Many return to update her on their careers, introduce their children, or share how they still use their middle school science notebooks in college-level courses.

Her classroom is a place where every student feels like the teacher’s “favorite.” She greets each child at the door, builds confidence through relationships, and creates learning experiences that feel relevant and exciting. Whether students are tracking weather patterns, exploring ecosystems through virtual field trips, identifying kudzu on campus, or meeting with a National Weather Service meteorologist, McKinley ensures students see science as something that connects to the real world.

Her leadership extends beyond instruction. As a longtime mentor and team leader, she has helped cultivate a generation of effective teachers, many of whom have gone on to earn Teacher of the Year honors themselves or move into school leadership roles, including assistant principal positions. Her support has strengthened school culture and contributed to WCMS earning Level 5 status.

Her influence is cyclical, lasting, and transformative for colleagues, for the school, and for thousands of students.

“Ms. McKinley is an educator who brings science to life for all students she serves. She uses her strong content knowledge and teaching experience to provide meaningful, hands-on learning experiences for every student,” said WCMS Principal Caleb Shehane. “She also leads and supports other educators by sharing effective, engaging instructional practices beyond WCMS. She has presented professional learning across the district and served as a content leader within the science department. Ms. McKinley consistently meets students’ diverse needs and ensures all students are actively engaged in learning.”

9-12: Ms. Linda Parris, Warren County High School, Culinary Arts

Linda Parris brings a rare blend of expertise, creativity, and heart to the Culinary Arts program at Warren County High School, transforming her classroom into a professional environment where students build confidence, craft, and character. Her instruction extends far beyond recipes. She uses culinary arts as a vehicle to teach perseverance, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and pride in one's work.

Under her leadership, students evolve from recipe-followers to innovators. Parris measures success when students begin predicting her next step, suggesting ways to improve techniques, or confidently teaching a peer. This shift from imitation to independent, professional thinking is at the core of her instructional approach. That transformation shows in student accomplishments: her very first Jr. Chef team won the Tennessee state championship, even adapting on the fly when a teammate fell ill. Her students also became the first group in WCHS history to advance to the Tennessee ProStart Invitational, demonstrating discipline and skill at a statewide level. She has coached FCCLA competitors who finished in the national Top 10, evidence that her students can apply classroom learning to authentic, high-pressure challenges.

Parris also leads two student-run food enterprises that function as real businesses. Students design menus, manage operations, and serve customers with minimal teacher intervention, clear proof of the independence, professionalism, and readiness she cultivates. Many former students now work as chefs, entrepreneurs, and educators, including one who shared that Parris's belief in her potential inspired her to pursue a teaching degree.

Her influence on school culture is equally meaningful. Parris uses food to build community from press box meals at every home football game, to monthly staff birthday cupcakes, to the beloved sourdough cookies and croutons made from a starter she has carried throughout her teaching journey. Her classroom traditions create belonging, spark creativity, and connect students to their school in memorable ways. Projects funded through Innovative School Models (ISM) grants, including the Pioneer Kitchen On-the-Go food truck, provide students with authentic opportunities in service, hospitality, and entrepreneurship.

She also ensures learning reaches the broader community. Students submit entries to the county fair, earning ribbons and prize money while seeing direct connections to state standards. Local chefs and restaurant owners judge student-created recipes that become menu specials shared schoolwide. Students participate in multiple state-level competitions each year, preparing them for industry expectations and postsecondary opportunities. From classroom labs to countywide events, Parris shows students that their skills can rise and make an impact far beyond the kitchen.

“We’re so proud to celebrate Linda Parris being named 9-12 District Teacher of the Year at Warren County High School. Her leadership of the school’s Culinary Arts program has meant more than just cooking classes, she brings real-world skills, hands-on training, and a practical

path for students interested in hospitality and culinary careers. Under her dedication, students at WCHS don't just learn recipes, they learn responsibility, teamwork, and vocational readiness that can carry into post-secondary education or directly into jobs. Linda's recognition is a testament to how deeply she invests in the success and growth of both her students and the culinary program, raising the bar for what a high school vocational program can be," said WCHS Executive Principal Chris Hobbs.

"Our district is incredibly fortunate to have educators like Ms. Livesay, Ms. McKinley, and Ms. Parris, teachers who understand that their influence reaches far beyond content standards," said Director of Schools Dr. Grant Swallows. "They nurture curiosity, build confidence, and open doors for students that will shape the rest of their lives. Their commitment to excellence and their belief in their students enrich our schools in powerful ways. We are honored to recognize their contributions and thankful for the lasting mark they leave on Warren County Schools."

Each of these district-level honorees will now advance to the next stage of the selection process as candidates for the Tennessee Teacher of the Year program. They will represent Warren County Schools at the next level and compete among the best educators in the state.

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