

Educator Recognition Best Practices

School and District Overview

Background

Educator recognition programs play an important role in celebrating and elevating Tennessee teachers to receive the appreciation they deserve. The [Educator Recognition Guidebook for Districts](#) provides detailed resources and best practices from across the state to support schools and districts in coordinating their own educator recognition processes at the local level. These resources include sample materials that districts may use to jumpstart their recognition programs. This document highlights key takeaways from each section of the guidebook.

Creating School- and District-Level Selection Processes

The [Educator Recognition Guidebook for Districts](#) highlights common methods of selection. The following best practices can strengthen the effectiveness of any selection process structure:

- Selection should be conducted by a representative committee that has received advanced preparation and training for their participation.
- All nominees and applicants should be notified about their status after the selection process is complete.
- All district-level awardees should receive prompt critical feedback and support to edit their application in preparation for the state selection process.
- Applicants and nominees who are not selected as the school- and district-level nominees should receive feedback upon request.

Celebrating School- and District-Level Awardees

The celebration component, if planned strategically, is truly what transforms Tennessee's recognition programs into powerful recruitment and retention tools. By celebrating awardees, we not only show our appreciation, but we also encourage respect and admiration for the teaching profession from students, families, and community members.

The [Educator Recognition Guidebook for Districts](#) provides 18 ideas for celebrations across several price points and planning levels in addition to the following best practices:

- **Treat your teachers – but get creative!** Try to incorporate your teacher's unique interests and needs into your celebration and appreciation – whether it's a personalized gift basket, a special parking spot for the year, or a substitute for a day.
- **Involve your students, families, and community members in the celebration.** Making sure to include a wealth of stakeholders in the celebration efforts can show educators how great of an impact they make. Potential partners include local chambers of commerce, county commissions,

Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, and other local organizations.

- **Share the news!** Sharing the good news of your school or district Teacher, Principal, or Supervisor of the Year announcement through social media and news media not only makes awardees feel like celebrities, but it also positively highlights the great things going on in your school or district to a much wider audience.

Supporting School- and District-Level Awardees in State Selection

Awardees often need extra encouragement and support to enter the region-level application process. By supporting your district-level awardee, their chance of succeeding at the region level increases.

The [Educator Recognition Guidebook for Districts](#) provides several ideas for candidate support in addition to the following best practices:

- Empower awardees with clear communication about next steps.
- Provide prompt, critical feedback to awardees to help them improve their application.
- Pair awardees with a mentor to support them in editing their application and preparing for region-level selection.

Engaging School- and District-Level Awardees

By developing and implementing a strong selection process, you have identified educators and leaders who can become powerful advocates, ambassadors, advisors, and champions for your school, district, and community. Continued engagement with awardees demonstrates appreciation and affirmation of their expertise.

The [Educator Recognition Guidebook for Districts](#) provides several ideas for engaging awardees in addition to the following best practices:

- Ensure engagement opportunities allow for awardees to feel heard and valued.
- Set clear expectations and norms.
- Provide sufficient advanced notice prior to any engagement opportunities.

Opportunities for Additional Support

To explore the guidebook more deeply, the department will also offer a three-part webinar series. Educator recognition contacts can register [here](#) to attend any of the webinar sessions below. All webinars will be recorded and available on the Educator Recognition website.

- **Nov. 19 from 10-11 a.m. CST:** Selecting School- and District-Level Awardees
- **Dec. 3 from 10-11 a.m. CST:** Celebrating and Engaging School- and District-Level Awardees
- **Dec. 10 from 10-11 a.m. CST:** Supporting School- and District-Level Awardees in State Selection

For additional information about each of the department's educator recognition programs, please visit our [website](#). With any questions regarding the department's educator recognition programs, please contact Janelle Brown, project manager for educator effectiveness, at Janelle.Brown@tn.gov.