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Five named finalists for WKU distinguished educator awards

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Western Kentucky University has announced the 2021 finalists of the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences' Distinguished Educator Awards, which includes a few LaRue County Schools educators.

"While it's hard to believe we're rounding out a year of non-traditional instruction, our teachers have felt every shift and change that came with our new 'normal'," said Corinne Murphy, dean of WKU's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, in a news release. "Our teachers adapted and persevered through every roadblock and moment of uncertainty, showing that education, while considered very traditional in nature, is just as nimble and innovative as the other professional fields that made sharp pivots during the 2020 year."

The release said each award celebrates the individual and significant contributions educators make to the teaching profession.

From elementary education to teacher mentorship, the university recognized the following finalists in LaRue County based on their "inspiring and specialized solutions in the classroom":

- Innovation: Rachel Smith, Hodgenville Elementary School
- Teacher mentor: Chelsie Walsh, LaRue County Middle School
- Physical education: Tim Gross, LaRue County Middle School
- Elementary (P-5): Monica Spencer, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
- Secondary (9-12): Chris Thomas, LaRue County High School

Other categories included diversity, literacy, visual performing arts, special education and middle grades (6-8).

Western Kentucky University will announce category winners next week. Each winner will receive a \$200 cash prize and a commemorative plaque. Additionally, the university will feature a perpetual plaque in Louie B. Nunn Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame honoring winners for years to come.