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AND THE WINNERS ARE..... *Schools Honored for Excelling in the Basics*

May 8, 2006 - For what may be the first time in American public education, school principals are receiving awards for being the best in helping students improve their basic skills. The awards were presented by the Education Consumers Foundation to schools from across Tennessee at a ceremony today in the State Capitol.

“Schools that succeed in making large gains in student learning do so because of quality instructional leadership of the principal and hard working teachers in the school,” said Governor Phil Bredesen.

Tennessee’s value-added assessment system measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of initial differences among students. Schools whose students make the greatest annual gains in achievement earn the highest value-added scores; and superior schoolwide performance reflects superior teaching, teamwork, and leadership.

“Tennessee’s educational accountability system holds principals publicly accountable. These are the schools that are *demonstrating* that all children *can* learn,” said Dr. J. E. Stone, President of the Foundation.

Tennessee Education Commissioner Lana Seviere, representing Governor Bredesen, is helping present the awards.

“Every child has a unique learning style,” said Education Commissioner Lana Seviere. “Tennessee’s value-added assessment system provides our educators with a powerful tool to improve student learning.”

In all, 18 winners were selected from Tennessee’s over 1300 public elementary and middle schools. Awards based on 3-year value-added gains in Reading/Language Arts and Math were given for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in grades 4-5 and grades 6-8 within each of Tennessee’s 3 regions--East, Middle, and West.

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Because the awards were given in recognition of high quality leadership, only schools where the principal has served for 5 or more years were considered.

“There is no question that teachers do the front-line work in education; but as any teacher will tell you, successful teaching is impossible without support from the principal,” said Stone. “There is more to education than basic skills, but schoolwide effectiveness in Reading/Language Arts and Math is indispensable and it reflects the principal’s priorities. Most of the students who later drop out or find themselves ill prepared for college have weaknesses in these areas—weaknesses that undermine for a lifetime. All of us owe a debt of gratitude to these building-level leaders for their vital but often unheralded work. We are proud to honor them.”

Additional information about the winners, including a "recipe for success" from each principal is available at www.educationconsumers.com/awards/06awards.html.

The winning principals received a certificate and a cash award: \$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second place, and \$1,000 for third place. A complete list of the winners is included with the news release. Complete details of the selection process are available via the Foundation’s website: www.education-consumers.com.

“Tennessee has the most sophisticated and mature educational accountability system in the country,” said Stone. “It permits people to see for themselves how a school is performing. If every school in Tennessee were as effective as our winners, Tennessee would lead the country in education.”

The Education Consumers Foundation is a nonprofit consumer organization. It gathers and disseminates information about education policy and practice on behalf of parents, taxpayers, and their elected representatives.