



Southwest Allen County Schools

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PRESS RELEASE:

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SACS Teacher Named Top Three Finalist for Indiana Teacher of the Year *Haverhill Elementary School Literacy Specialist Jean Russell selected for top honor.*

FORT WAYNE, IND., Sept. 21, 2015 — Southwest Allen County Schools teacher Jean Russell has advanced to the Top Three for Indiana Teacher of the Year. The Department of Education made the announcement Monday with a visit to Haverhill Elementary School.

“In Jean we see a real joy for teaching and a love of learning and a desire to lift our profession higher,” judge and past winner, Molly Seward, says. She and two other judges representing the Department of Education, all past Teachers of the Year themselves, spent the morning observing and evaluating Russell interact with students and teachers.

Russell will meet with Glenda Ritz, Indiana’s Superintendent of Public Instruction, in early October. The winner will be announced next month and go on to represent Indiana in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

“I am just so honored,” Russell says. “It’s a bit surreal, and the only way you can even be comfortable with it is just knowing you are representing such amazing educators in

the state. It's really not about you, but about this incredible opportunity to let everyone know about the awesome things that are happening in Indiana and in education."

As Haverhill's literacy specialist, Russell provides on-going professional development to the entire Haverhill staff in the areas of reading and writing. She also designs trainings, models in classrooms and provides a wealth of resources for teachers throughout the district. At Haverhill, Russell has helped create a "community of readers," where reading spills into the community through parents, students, teachers and community members.

"I couldn't be more thrilled for Mrs. Russell," Principal Jeanine Kleber says. "She's very deserving of the recognition of being in the Top Three for Teacher of the Year. She has a heart of a servant and a passion for teaching."

Russell, who has been teaching for 25 years, has spent the last 21 with Southwest Allen County Schools.

"One of the great things about Mrs. Russell is she would be the first to tell you she is not an outlier in Southwest Allen County Schools," Superintendent Dr. Philip G. Downs says. "She represents the passion and care our teachers bring every day, which is why we are so proud and happy for her recognition."

About Southwest Allen County Schools

Nationally recognized and locally known for its award-winning programs, high-quality staff, and strong parental and community support, [Southwest Allen County Schools](#) is dedicated to a shared mission of preparing today's learners for tomorrow's opportunities.

About the Indiana Teacher of the Year Program

The [Indiana Teacher of the Year](#) program began in 1957 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious state honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching. Its mission is to build and utilize a network of exemplary teachers who are leaders in the improvement of schools, student performance and the teaching profession.

Pictured from left to right: 2013 Indiana Teacher of the Year Suzanne Whitton, 2015 Teacher of the Year Kathy Nimmer, Jean Russell, SACS Superintendent Dr. Philip G. Downs, 2005 Indiana Teacher of the Year Molly Seward, and Haverhill Principal Jeanine Kleber.

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