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John Sevier among top ET schools

By Matthew Stewart | matts@thedailytimes.com

NASHVILLE — John Sevier Elementary School was named Monday as one of East Tennessee's top three elementary schools

The school won third place among East Tennessee's elementary schools in the 2012 Value-Added Achievement Awards. The Education Consumers Foundation (ECF) recognized the achievements of Principal Rick Wilson and 17 other principals whose students had made the most academic gains, according to the Tennessee's Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), during a ceremony at the Tennessee Supreme Court



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TVAAS measures achievement gain in a way that permits schools to be compared regardless of the makeup of their student body. Instead of ranking schools by how their students simply score on a standardized test, the accountability system provides information to teachers, parents and the public on how schools are doing in helping each child make academic gains each year

ECF presented first-, second- and third-place awards in two categories: elementary and middle schools in each of Tennessee's three geographic regions. Winning principals receive a certificate, banner and cash award

John Sevier Elementary School will receive \$1,000 for its third-place award

In previous years, ECF selected winners on the basis of their three-year average TVAAS scores in reading/language arts and math. The organization changed its ranking model this year to reflect a more comprehensive approach to student achievement

Currently, ECF's rankings are being made using schools' letter grades for reading/language arts, math, science and social studies. Each school's reading/language arts and math scores are double-weighted to reflect the importance of these areas

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ECF calculates a “grade point average” and uses a complementary measure — the new three-year average Literacy/Numeracy Growth Index — as a secondary factor!

School officials pleased

John Sevier’s award was the second state recognition this school year

In September, the school was one of three finalists in the first State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) Prize’s elementary division. The SCORE Prize honored schools that have most dramatically improved student achievement in spite of the challenges they face.

“Both recognitions validate the great teaching and leadership at John Sevier Elementary School,” said Director of Schools Stephanie Thompson. Rick (Wilson) is focused on the big picture and advancing the entire system. He stresses the importance of sharing best practices and resources, challenging each other, helping each other and improving our school system. Not to mention, he’s a quality leader who has developed the skills of his teachers. “John Sevier has a lot of less experienced teachers, and it takes a good leader to move any staff to the next level. We congratulate the faculty, staff and students for their accomplishments.

Assistant Director of Schools Mike Winstead emphasized the school’s high scores in achievement and academic growth.

“This award is a great example of how you can show gains with high-achieving students,” Winstead said. John Sevier is focused on producing results that show both student gains (with value-added scores) and outstanding student achievement (with straight-A’s on the school report card).

John Sevier Elementary School was one of fewer than 20 Tennessee elementary schools that received all A’s in achievement and value-added data this school year, according to the state Report Card. The state has 755 elementary schools.

Reflection of entire system

Wilson wanted to publicly thank system-level administrators and his fellow principals for their support.

“We wouldn’t have been able to attain this award without the collegiality in our system,” he said. “We’re always sharing things with each other that ultimately make their way back into our classrooms. In many ways, this award is a reflection of our entire system!”

Wilson was also humbled to know the school’s success stories are posted on ECF’s website. As a principal and educator, that’s what it’s all about for me. Educators from across the state can pick things up and learn new ways to help their children. If our success helps one child in another district then it’s all worth it.

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