



2025 Kansas Teacher of the Year Team

KANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Elizabeth Anstine
9-12 Business
 Leavenworth USD 453
 Leavenworth Sr. High School
 2012 10th Ave.
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KANSAS REGIONAL TEACHERS OF THE YEAR



Whitney Aves
Grades 9-12 Family and Consumer Sciences
 Hutchinson USD 308
 Hutchinson High School
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Erik Stone
5 to 8 Band, Vocal Music
 Wichita USD 259
 Gordon Parks Academy
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Benjamin Eckelberry
Grade 1
 Shawnee Heights USD 450
 Tecumseh North Elementary School
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Maegen Stucky
Grade 5
 McPherson USD 418
 Roosevelt Elementary School
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Ryan Mellick
9-12 Industrial Technology
 Bonner Springs-Edwardsville USD 204
 Bonner Springs High School
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Olivia Winegeart
Grade 2
 Derby USD 260
 Paul B. Cooper Elementary School
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 Wichita, KS 67216
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Amber Pagan
Pre-K
 Shawnee Mission USD 512
 Nieman Elementary School
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Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.



For more information, contact:

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2025 Kansas Teacher of the Year Team Biographies

Elizabeth Anstine - Kansas Teacher of the Year

Elizabeth teaches a variety of business marketing, entrepreneurship, and finance courses at Leavenworth High School (Leavenworth USD 453) and is best known for her leadership and mentorship roles. She serves as DECA advisor, where she cultivates an inclusive program that consistently produces internationally ranked students and plays a pivotal role on the ReDesign and Building Leadership Teams, where she collaboratively develops strategies geared towards enhancing student achievement.

Whitney Aves – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Whitney Aves is a dedicated family and consumer sciences teacher from Hutchinson, KS with a passion for teaching valuable life skills to her students within four career pathways. Aves has made a profound impact on countless students' lives throughout her eight years of teaching at Hutchinson High School (Hutchinson USD 308).

Benjamin Eckelberry – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Benjamin Eckelberry is a first-grade teacher at Tecumseh North Elementary (Shawnee Heights USD 450). Eckelberry has received a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, as well as an Early Childhood Endorsement from Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska. Above all else, Eckelberry values his connections with his students as an educator and strives to cultivate a classroom where students feel safe, loved, and capable of tackling any challenges in their way.

Ryan Mellick– Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Ryan Mellick, an industrial arts teacher at Bonner Springs High School (Bonner Springs-Edwardsville USD 204) has been with the school district for the last 10 years. Mellick has been teaching ever since he graduated from Central Missouri State University in 2007 with his Bachelor of Science in Technology Education. Ryan has taught a variety of industrial art classes, space and aeronautics, architecture, automotive, theater technology and carpentry.

Amber Pagan – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Amber Pagan is in her 18th year of teaching and her fifth year teaching Prekindergarten at Nieman Elementary in Shawnee Mission USD 512. Amber holds endorsements in Early Childhood Education, English for Speakers of other languages, and Reading. She is passionate about early childhood education and works to ensure that caregivers have the tools they need to help their children.

Eric Stone – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Erik Stone is the Director of Bands, Vocal Music Teacher, and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) Elective Teacher and Site Coordinator at Gordon Parks Academy in Wichita USD 259. He teaches fifth grade through eighth grade students. Since graduating with his Bachelor of Music Education with an emphasis in Special-Instrumental Music Education and a master's degree in music education from Wichita State University, Mr. Stone has had tremendous success working with students at all ages.

Maegen Stucky – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Maegen Stucky is an empathetic and wholehearted elementary school educator, bringing eighteen years of expertise to her classroom. She currently teaches fifth grade at Roosevelt Elementary School in McPherson USD 418 and has taught third-5th grades throughout her teaching career. Stucky has taught in a variety of classroom configurations including Fourth/5th multi-age, looping, and straight grade level classrooms.

Olivia Winegeart – Kansas Regional Teacher of the Year

Olivia Winegeart is a second-grade teacher at Paul B. Cooper Elementary in Wichita (Derby USD 260) who is deeply committed to public education as a means to dismantle systemic barriers and bring equitable opportunity to all students. She builds community through restorative relationships and is deeply passionate about evidence-based teaching practices. Winegeart is a ten-year teacher veteran. She received her Bachelor of Science in Education at Oklahoma Christian University and began her career as a first-grade teacher in her hometown of Edmond.