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Alvaton Elementary teacher receives state achievement award

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Amber Dwyer, a third-grade teacher at Alvaton Elementary School, poses with a certificate awarded by the Warren County Public Schools Board of Education on Sept. 28.

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Of the 22 recipients of the 2024 Kentucky Teacher Achievement Award, Alvaton Elementary's Amber Dwyer has likely been around the world the most.

Warren County Public Schools last week recognized Dwyer's award at a board meeting, with Alvaton principal Pauletha Butts calling her the "perfect person for the role."

Dwyer, who teaches math and science, said teaching has been her dream since the day she began kindergarten.

"I never wanted to be anything else," Dwyer said. "I just idolized my teachers growing up. I looked up to them so much. I wanted to be like them. I wanted to make a difference."

As an avid traveler, she has been to 89 countries and every continent except Antarctica. Dwyer said she's always trying to bring a bit of that experience into the classroom.

"We've skyped people I know from other countries. I'd use pictures from different national parks, things like that," Dwyer said. "I try to tie that stuff in as much as I can because some kids never get to go anywhere."

In addition to teaching, Dwyer sponsors Alvaton's BETA club, Academic Team and Leading Ladies Club. She serves as a new teacher mentor, a third-grade team leader and is a member of the Alvaton Elementary Advisory Council.

She hails from Butler County and received her bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Western Kentucky University, becoming the first of her family to graduate college.

Dwyer's career spans 19 years, previously working within Bowling Green city schools and in East Harlem before taking the position at Alvaton. Dwyer said her experience in New York was another way to innovate her teaching.

"It was a great experience for me, just learning about different kids and how to appeal to things they're interested in," Dwyer said. "Kids today aren't like they were 19 years ago, so you have to keep up with the new things they're interested in."

Dwyer prioritizes innovative lessons and building relationships with students, traits that stood out to Butts in her letter of recommendation for Dwyer.

"Ms. Dwyer's teaching philosophy can essentially be summed up in one word, 'relationships,' " Butts' letter stated. "From day one, and even before, honestly, she has tried to develop a positive rapport with any student she encounters at school."

In addition, Butts said Dwyer's unique instruction captures students' attention, such as her "owl pellet dissection lab, the fossil excavation lab, labs demonstrating chemical and physical changes, electric circuits lab and a Petri dish lab to see what surface in our school has the highest level of bacteria."

Most notably, Butts said, Dwyer doesn't seek recognition for what she does. Her satisfaction comes from seeing students innovate and grow.

Butts told the award committee that Dwyer “lives by the quote, ‘Be the person you needed when you were young.’”



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