

Louise Smith, NBCT

2024 Mississippi Teacher of the Year

Louise Smith, a **National Board Certified Teacher** from Gautier, Mississippi, has served as band director of Gautier Middle School. She earned a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master of Education with an emphasis in administration and leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Smith strives to make an impact beyond the walls of her classroom. To achieve this goal, Smith is a National Education Association (NEA) Teacher Leadership Initiative alumnus and has served as a state coach. NEA Today featured Smith in an August 2020 cover article titled Helping Students and Educators Recover from Covid-19 Trauma because of her work dealing with teacher stress and mental health. U.S. News and World Report profiled Smith in May 2021 as one of the professionals who made a difference during the pandemic. Smith's foundational belief is that music literacy is literacy.

Her work exemplifies this. Because of her commitment to teaching students to read music, her students have achieved success at regional and state level stages. Smith also passionately believes that teachers are fundamental to student success as part of their proverbial village. Raised by a single mother, with teachers, particularly her band director, standing in the gap and becoming mentors and lifelong friends, Smith is a proud product of her village and encourages teachers to see their critical importance in the lives of children.



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