

J. W. Norwood

The highest award anyone can receive from the Burleson Ex-Student Association is the J. W. Norwood Distinguished Alumni Award. The award is given each year to a Burleson High School graduate who has been out of school at least 20 years and has many positive accomplishments. The award is named for long-time teacher and administrator of the early school system in Burleson - J. W. Norwood. Mr. Norwood spent 41 years teaching with the last 35 also serving as Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Norwood was born August 18, 1889 in Pontotoc, Mississippi and came to Texas at the age of two and was raised in the Rendon community. Rendon did not have a high school so he lived with his sister and brother-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Sp P. McNair in Burleson. He graduated in 1907 from Burleson High School. He knew at an early age that he wanted to teach, so he enrolled in Polytechnic Preparatory School in Fort Worth followed by Polytechnic College until it became Texas Women's College; today, it is known as Texas Wesleyan University. He then attended Texas Christian University where he received his baccalaureate degree.

During this time he taught at several rural schools in Johnson and Tarrant counties including Village Creek, Oak Grove, Paradise and Mary's Hill. His teaching career was interrupted by WWI and he spent two years in France as a Sergeant in the U.S. Army. After the war, he returned to teaching and in 1920 he came home to Burleson as a math teacher and principal. He also continued taking courses at TCU where he received a Master's Degree and then became Burleson's Superintendent.

Mr. Norwood dearly loved sports. He took on the coaching responsibility of the girls and boys basketball teams. Burleson set all kinds of winning records in Johnson County with both of these teams.

Those who knew Mr. Norwood described him as being somewhat shy. He was known for having great respect for his students and they returned that respect to him. He was a strict disciplinarian but was known to be fair as well.

He retired in 1956 just before the city of Burleson began to grow rapidly. Parkinson's disease and glaucoma cut his retirement short. He died on January 31, 1967 and is buried in the Burleson Memorial Cemetery.