Kurt Russell, a high school teacher from Oberlin, Ohio, has been named the 2022 National Teacher of the Year. The award was presented to him at a White House ceremony on April 27.

Russell, age 50, has been a history teacher for 25 years at Oberlin High School, the same school he attended as a teenager. He teaches US history, African American history, and a course he created called Race, Gender, and Oppression. He also helped to develop a class about Black music around the world. "Students must see themselves in the classroom," Russell said. "It's important that my students see themselves as I see them—with unlimited potential and full of gifts."

In addition to teaching, Russell coaches the boys’ varsity basketball team and serves as the adviser for the school’s Black Student Union.

The National Teacher of the Year is named by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a nonprofit organization. Each year, the CCSSO chooses 56 State Teachers of the Year from hundreds of nominations. From that group, a 17-person committee selects four finalists and names one of them the national winner. This year, the other finalists were Whitney Aragaki, a high school science teacher in Hawaii; Autumn Rivera, a sixth grade science teacher in Colorado; and Joseph Welch, an eighth grade history teacher in Pennsylvania.

President Joe Biden, First Lady Jill Biden, and US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona honored Russell during the ceremony. "Student by student, the lives you change go on to change the world," said Jill Biden. Russell said he felt "excited, nervous, [and] humbled" by the award. "I’m just so proud to be a part of this profession," he said.

Russell plans to spend the next year speaking at events across the US and serving as an ambassador for other teachers. "There is not a profession...that has made or is making a bigger impact than teaching," he said.