VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA IS FOR LEARNERS

MARY V. BICOUVARIS

2021 VIRGINIA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2021

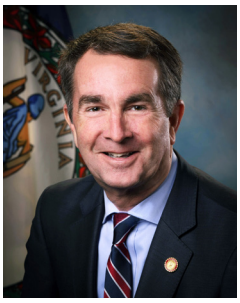
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CELEBRATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT

OCTOBER 8, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Welcome



73rd Governor of Virginia
Ralph Northam

We are proud to honor this year's eight regional teachers of the year in the Commonwealth for all that you do to empower and engage our students. Each of you embodies the qualities of educational excellence that our students need to thrive in their academic careers. Even with the recent challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to be impressed with your resilience and sincerely appreciate all of the hard work that has gone into ensuring that learning can equitably and safely continue. While things are very different in education right now, one thing remains the same—teachers are the driving force behind building a brighter future.

First Lady of Virginia
Pamela Northam

Teaching is such a rewarding profession that takes both courage and heart. As a former educator, I understand the unique impact teachers have on the lives of every student they encounter, which in turn makes an even greater positive impact on the communities you serve. You don't just lead instruction, you also build meaningful relationships to connect with your students and help them build a strong foundation that will last beyond their academic careers. We are grateful that you choose to go the extra mile every day for Virginia's students. You truly hold the future in your hands!

Secretary of Education
Atif Qarni

I am so excited to congratulate our 2021 regional teachers of the year! Each of you represents the best of the best across the Commonwealth's public education system in a variety of grade levels and content areas. As a former classroom teacher, I commend you for your unwavering dedication and commitment to continuously find creative and innovative methods for engaging all students in rigorous instruction. We cannot thank you enough for all that you do to make a lasting impact on our students and their futures.

President, Board of Education
Daniel A. Gecker

On behalf of the Virginia Board of Education, I salute our 2021 regional teachers of the year! This honor is bestowed upon each of you for your tireless efforts to inspire our students to reach their highest academic potential. You set a tremendous example for our young people and serve as a shining representation of all of the amazing teachers across the state. Your passion and dedication to the education profession deserve to be recognized. Our mantra, Virginia is for Learners, couldn't exist without all of you!

Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. James F. Lane

Educators are so vital to our students and their academic progress – especially now more than ever. Teachers of the Year serve as educational ambassadors, not only for your schools and school divisions, but also for the Commonwealth. As state superintendent of public instruction, I am proud to recognize you as our eight outstanding educators who represent the regions throughout our state. I extend my personal gratitude to you for rising to the challenge and answering the call to maximize the potential of ALL of our future-ready learners. Congratulations to all of you on this amazing achievement in your career!

Dr. Mary V. Bicouvaris
(1939 - 2001)

1989 Virginia
Teacher of the Year

1989 National
Teacher of the Year

Teacher of Government and
International Relations
Bethel High School
Hampton City Public Schools

Born in 1939 in war-torn Greece, Dr. Mary V. Bicouvaris developed a love for democracy and a love for teaching—qualities that became her trademarks. After securing a teaching degree in elementary education in Greece in 1958, she came to the United States and earned her bachelor's degree in secondary education from The Ohio State University in 1963, a master's degree from The College of William and Mary in 1970, and a doctorate from Old Dominion University in 1994. She began her teaching career in Hampton, Virginia, in 1963, even before she was an American citizen. What accounted for her success was a sense of dedication coupled with an ability to teach students of different learning abilities.

In her role as National Teacher of the Year, Dr. Bicouvaris communicated a simple but powerful point:

"My message to America would be one of pride, hope, and promise in the educational system of a nation that sent the first man to the moon and which has yet to reach its greatest potential. I speak of the need to reach a national consensus on what is good for America's children and what is needed for this country to maintain its position on the world stage."

Dr. Bicouvaris spoke about the challenges we face in continuing to strive for excellence in education. She expressed the hope that all American children will be given the opportunity to become literate in their own culture and at the same time develop an international perspective that will enable them to work, lead, and thrive in a global community.

October 8, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Welcome

Dr. James F. Lane
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Virginia Department of Education

Introduction and Recognition of Special Guests

Dr. James F. Lane

Congratulatory Remarks

The Honorable Atif Qarni
Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Virginia

Greetings from the Virginia Board of Education

Daniel A. Gecker
President, Virginia Board of Education

Comments from the 2020 Virginia Teacher of the Year

Andrea Carson Johnson
2020 Virginia Teacher of Year

Announcement and Celebration

Introduction and Recognition of the 2021 Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year

Dr. James F. Lane

Musical Salute

"Be a Hero"

Performed by **Lucy Hansen**
Accompanied by **Paul Deiss**

Recognition of Sponsors

Dr. James F. Lane

Congratulatory Remarks

First Lady of Virginia, Pamela Northam
Governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam

Announcement of the 2021 Virginia Teacher of the Year

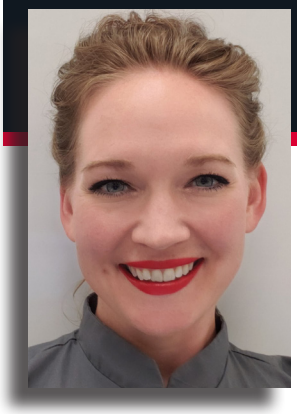
Dr. James F. Lane

Closing Remarks

Dr. James F. Lane

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 1** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

SARAH FRANCES JUREWICZ



The Region 1 Virginia Teacher of the Year is **Sarah Frances Jurewicz**, a Culinary Arts I and II Baking and Pastry Arts teacher in grades 11 and 12 at the Chesterfield Career and Technical Center in Chesterfield County Public Schools. Mrs. Jurewicz, or "Chef J" as she is known by her students, earned her degree in Baking and Pastry Arts at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, in 2002, and she became licensed and endorsed to teach Food Occupations in 2008. Mrs. Jurewicz is beginning her 16th year of teaching.

Mrs. Jurewicz is actively involved in many professional, civic, and community organizations. She is currently a member of the Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and serves as an advisor at the Chesterfield Career and Technical Center. Since 2007, Mrs. Jurewicz has served as a recreational cooking and baking class instructor and hosts private food classes in her classroom, the "Bake Shop," as a way to create positive team-building exercises for public and private groups. In addition, she has organized and catered several school-based programs, including the Senior Citizens Prom where students prepare and serve desserts for 300-plus senior residents of the county. In collaboration with other technical education programs, each spring Mrs. Jurewicz also coordinates the Arts & Eats event that is open to the public to celebrate students' success and share project-based learning initiatives.

Sarah's talent and enthusiasm for teaching have been recognized on more than one occasion. She was named Chesterfield County Teacher of the Year in 2016. She received the R.E.B. Award for Teaching Excellence Grant and won a month-long trip to Austria, Switzerland, and France to find the origin of ingredients commonly used in baking and pastry arts. Sarah has participated in CBS local television segments. Local television personality Nikki-Dee Ray visited her "Bake Shop" to film the segment, "Nikki-Dee Can You Be Me?" during which Ms. Ray immersed herself in a day in the life of one of Chef J's baking students. In addition, while participating in the CBS television segment, "Building Better Minds," Sarah was interviewed about the baking and culinary tutorials on the YouTube channel she created for the public during quarantine. The creation of her virtual tutorials has encouraged her students and their families to cook and bake at home. At the end of each video, she reminds all her viewers "remember to cook with your family, and make sure your neighbors are fed."

Even with all of her success, Sarah did not always feel comfortable and confident in the school setting. Sarah explains that she spent much of her childhood feeling "three steps behind" her classmates. That changed during her junior year of high school when she was assigned to Chef Mark Kimmel's class in the Chesterfield Career and Technical Center's Culinary Arts program. Under his tutelage, Sarah found the value in failure and discovered her talents. Chef Kimmel taught his students to apply and celebrate mathematics, science, history, art, and literature with robust enthusiasm through food, and it was through his instruction that Sarah felt valued. The kitchen was a safe haven for all students, whether they were poor, rich, advanced, or had special needs. They felt powerful, and they were given the right to thrive and take ownership of their own education. Years later, Sarah applies those lessons she learned from Chef Kimmel in her own classroom. For several years, Sarah taught at James River High School before transferring to the newly built sister campus at the Career and Technical Center to teach Baking and Pastry Arts. When Mr. Kimmel retired, Sarah set out to restore his kitchen to the former glory she remembered. The greatest moment of her teaching career was moving all of the boxes and books into her new kitchen and turning to face Mr. Kimmel, her mentor of over 20 years. He removed the kitchen's keys from his pocket, placed them in her hands, and said, "It's yours now." Many tears were shed, and long, heartfelt hugs were exchanged the day she made it back to where she first found her value. Sarah spent the past 15 years ensuring that students are not defined by their accommodations, struggles, grades, appearance, or background. Instead, they are embraced for their character and celebrated for their willingness to come to school each day ready to grow and create something new in themselves without fear of failure.

A fellow teacher, C. Randy Early, stated, "...Chef Jurewicz is a beacon of excellence in education; from her credentials as an expert teacher and chef, to her strengths as a collaborator, to creatively engaging students and the community at large, Chef Sarah Jurewicz stands out as the best in Chesterfield County. What makes Chef Jurewicz stand out from Anthony Bourdain, Julia Child, or Jacques Torres you may ask? They, like most chefs, are largely known for being individualists. This is not the case when it comes to Chef Jurewicz, as she consistently develops and demonstrates opportunities for collaboration. Whether you call her Chef, Chef J, Chef Jurewicz, or Sarah... one thing you cannot call her is 'cookie cutter'....her depth of professional knowledge, ability to successfully collaborate, build, and maintain ongoing connections with students, families, faculty, and community partners, and her drive to find unique ways to deliver content through the development of programs and the use of technology..."

Sarah's mentor, Mark Kimmel, wrote, "...Her talents in pastry are superior, and she loves to pass that knowledge on to the students she loves and who love her. She has used the internet to continue to teach her students...by doing YouTube videos that she created in her kitchen and creating those for her students in these uncertain times. Her public events have been nothing but professional and have taught her students so much about the culinary field. We are so proud of her and all that she accomplished."

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 2** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

ALISA TYNCH SMITH

Alisa Tynch Smith, a high school Spanish teacher in grades 9-12 at Jamestown High School in Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools, is the Region 2 Teacher of the Year. Ms. Smith earned a bachelor's degree with a major in Spanish and a minor in Education from William and Mary, and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Virginia. Ms. Smith then earned a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (C.A.G.S.) in Educational Administration and Leadership from Regent University.

Ms. Smith has 20 years of teaching experience and since 2015, has taught Spanish I-IV at Jamestown High School. Prior to joining the Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools, she taught Spanish at Oregon State University, as well as at Christopher Academy and Churchland High School, both located in Portsmouth, Virginia. Ms. Smith has been honored as the division teacher of the year in both public school divisions in which she has taught.
Ms. Smith is a member of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, the Foreign Language Association of Virginia, and the National, Virginia, and WJCC Education Associations. Ms. Smith is extremely active in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and currently serves as Vice President of the PTAs at both Hornsby Middle School and Matoaka Elementary School and as the Teacher Liaison and Reflections Chair at Jamestown High School.

Alisa grew up in an Air Force family that lived in various states and countries which began her fascination with international studies and languages. When Alisa embarked on her college journey, she knew exactly what her career path would be. As a lifelong learner, Alisa continued her education, earning advanced degrees before deciding to raise a family. While at home raising her five children, Alisa continued to make a difference by teaching Spanish online to Native American students through an innovative pilot program at Oregon State University. Additionally, she taught Spanish weekly to elementary students at a local private school.

Alisa fondly remembers her most impactful teachers throughout her life, and even though she models various teaching strategies from these past teachers and mentors, her primary teaching beliefs originated from her mother. Alisa's mother taught students with disabilities for over 30 years. Her mother's ability to connect and build relationships with her students and colleagues left a lasting impression on Alisa. Reflecting on her beliefs and philosophies as a teacher, Alisa fosters relationships with her students and through these relationships has the opportunity to help them grow to their potential.

Alisa has enjoyed many professional achievements and successes in her career, but she considers her greatest educational accomplishment to be the relationships she continues to build with students, faculty, colleagues, support personnel, and families. These connections afford Alisa the opportunity to make a difference in the school community and are the contributions that Alisa holds dearest to her heart.

Ms. Smith is a leader within her school. Among the organizations she sponsors are the Spanish Club, the Spanish Honor Society, the Junior Class, the United Way Campaign, and the Alumni Association. She has been awarded numerous grants to fund innovative programs over the years. Through these grants, she has developed initiatives to connect her students with the community in the form of a mentorship program for high school and elementary students and bilingual workshops for Hispanic families. Furthermore, Ms. Smith coordinates the teacher mentor program and is a key player with the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team. Her efforts within the MTSS team have led to new initiatives that positively impact the culture of her school. One such initiative that Ms. Smith led is what she calls, "the Power of Positivity," where praise is used for all students, not just the high-achieving students. In addition to providing positive support and praise to each student that Ms. Smith teaches, she also sends a positive note home to the parents. She has witnessed how this praise has a great impact on student confidence and overall motivation in school. Alisa described a rewarding experience involving one of her students. The student struggled to maintain a D average on most days, and she was suspended from school frequently. Alisa always believed in the student, and a year after graduation Alisa was invited to the first birthday party of the student's son. As she stood in the kitchen at the party, she a read a familiar note on the refrigerator, one that she had written to this student several years prior. The student's father stated that they kept the note because it was the only positive message the student ever brought home from school. That day, Alisa realized the power of positive feedback, even if just in the form of a note home.

Ms. Smith took her philosophy of positive reinforcement to her MTSS team to improve overall school culture, and she developed and implemented the faculty- and student-of-the-month programs. The school's employees appreciate having an avenue to acknowledge deserving students and are grateful to be recognized themselves. Students honored are not only those who are high achieving, but those who meet milestones. Since the honorees are recognized in the school's newsletter and on social media, community members see this positivity too.

Alisa's principal at Jamestown High School, Howard Townsend, wrote, "Alisa Smith represents the highest standards of professionalism, instruction, and caring for educators. ...She is a life-long learner that ignites the passion for knowledge in students. She empowers others around her, and there is always a crowd of students at her classroom door."

One of Ms. Smith's current students, Lily Sines, wrote, "If I had to write down a list of everything that I have learned from Mrs. Smith, the world would be out of paper. The most significant trait that Mrs. Smith carries is her compassion for each and every one of her students. She has inspired me to apply to my dream school, given me hugs when I needed them, and most importantly, she is the reason why I want to be a teacher. Somehow, she makes everyone feel special."

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 3** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

KIMBERLY (KIM) DAWN CANNON

Kimberly (Kim) Dawn Cannon, a sixth-grade teacher of United States History at Stafford Middle School in Stafford County Public Schools, is the Region 3 Virginia Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Cannon has taught in her current position in Stafford County for five years, but she has a total of 13 years of teaching experience. Mrs. Cannon earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Mary Washington in 2000, and a Master of Arts in 2004 from George Mason University. Prior to teaching in Stafford County, Mrs. Cannon taught middle school History and English for Spotsylvania County Public Schools.

Kim has always known that she wanted to be a teacher. Nothing in her life has excited her more than teaching. Throughout her entire childhood, Kim never swayed from this determination until her senior year of high school when her father asked her to reconsider teaching as a profession. He told her the heartbreaking story of his experience in school and having trouble learning to read. He shared how he would act up and get into trouble so no one would ever learn the truth. When he was in middle school, he had a teacher he liked and thought he could trust, so he asked her if he could stay after school so she could tutor him to read. Her response was not what he expected; she told him that if he would behave, stay quiet, and sit in the back, she would pass him. Feeling demoralized, he later dropped out of school, and he was only 17 when Kim was born.

Kim was stunned and had never known that her father did not graduate from high school. Kim felt heartbroken and could not understand why a teacher would betray him in such a way. At that moment, Kim explained that she could never reconsider her dream, and she promised him that she would do everything in her power not to become that type of teacher. Since Kim began her career in 2000, she has dedicated every day of her teaching to fulfilling that promise to her father. She is never satisfied with any lesson because she knows it can be better, more meaningful, and have a greater impact. She is dedicated to and loves all of her students, but she spends a lot of time with students who struggle because she always sees her dad in their eyes and understands that there is always a reason why they have challenges.

In an effort to give back to her students, Kim has created different after-school clubs over the years to provide a safe place for students. She has found that building relationships with students is crucial to understanding their needs, encouraging their talents, and fostering their self-esteem. Her most accomplished after-school club has been the "Random Club." The Random Club welcomes all students and allows the students each week to decide on the activities in which they will participate. Examples of activities include freeze tag, indoor sports, popcorn and a movie, gaming, etc. Last year, the club had grown to include over 100 students, and Kim had to recruit several teachers to assist.

Kim is passionate about equity and as a member of the leadership team, she saw first-hand the impact of inequities across the division and state. Kim remembers the day the Governor announced that schools would be closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Kim remembers how devastated she and her colleagues felt, but she immediately went to work on how best to continue educating her students. Kim believed that equity was the biggest hurdle in the division's efforts to continue education for all, and how they tackled it would define her school and division during the crisis. As team lead, Kim began collaborating, brainstorming, and navigating the new technology platforms that her division would be using to provide virtual instruction. Kim coordinated and created lessons through Google Classroom, led Professional Learning Communities, created homeroom lists to log which students had computer and internet access, and worked with division staff to distribute computers. Kim wrote, "When I began this journey of examining equity for our county this year, I had no idea how much this concept would impact me. Covid-19 has changed the way I view access and equality inside and outside of the classroom. It has been the biggest issue in education for a long time, but Covid-19 has shined a light on the consequences of inequity."

Jeffrey Howard, assistant principal of Rodney E. Thompson Middle School in Stafford County, wrote, "In my thirty-eight years with Stafford County Public Schools, I have been blessed to watch many educators work their craft, but Kim stands out in my mind as perhaps the very best. She has the ability to turn a regular classroom into a compelling theater that takes the students on a journey of learning that will remain with them for a lifetime. In addition to her classroom charisma, she is a wonderful resource to parents and colleagues alike. She is never too busy to lend a helping hand, and she is always on a quest to find new and innovative ways to help her students engage in learning."

One of Mrs. Cannon's former students, Sarah Miller, stated, "It is not often that in my 16 years of schooling that I have experienced a teacher who completely changed the trajectory of my life...Kim Cannon was one of those people for me when I was in middle school. Beyond being one of the most interesting teachers I had, Ms. Cannon also worked to engage with and mentor students on a more personal level. I had issues writing papers and I never quite did a good job... until Ms. Cannon sat down with me and worked through it until I felt confident in what I was doing. She encouraged me to apply to Governor's School even though I was not sure about my ability to get in. Four year later, I have graduated from Governor's School at Riverbend and am enrolled in my last semester at the University of Virginia School of Architecture. Even though I cannot remember things from half of the classes I have taken in college, I will never forget my time in Ms. Cannon's eighth-grade English class."

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 4** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

LISA MARIE RODE

Lisa Marie Rode, a sixth-grade classroom teacher at Kings Glen Elementary School in Fairfax County Public Schools, is the Region 4 Virginia Teacher of the Year. In 2007, Ms. Rode graduated summa cum laude from Longwood University earning a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Liberal Studies. She has 13 years of teaching experience, all of which have been in her current position.

Hands-on building and creating as well as the integration of technology are passions for Ms. Rode; she incorporates these concepts into her classroom daily through both analog and digital resources to include the use of a wide variety of computer applications, building materials, robotics, and physical computing devices. Lisa serves as a CS for All Teacher Community Ambassador, and she is a member of the Computer Science Teachers Association. She also is a member of the International Society for Technology in Education and is an Educator Member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Ms. Rode is a Raspberry Pi certified educator and Google Certified Educator Level 1.

Ms. Rode is involved in many extracurricular activities and serves as a manager and coach for the Fairfax Falcons Paralympic Sports Team, which is a youth wheelchair basketball team. In collaboration with her husband, they rebuilt, expanded, and developed a nationally ranked youth wheelchair basketball program for the Northern Virginia/DC metro region. Ms. Rode volunteers and leads a Robotics/Coding Club for elementary and middle school students at the James Lee Community Center Computer Clubhouse. She teaches students how to code in Scratch and build and program a variety of robots as well as how to use 3D modeling. She also served as the lead for a Girls Coding Club at the Kings Glen Elementary School SACC program, where students designed assistive technology for students with disabilities in her division.

Lisa believes that teachers are lifelong learners and should share their passion for learning with their students and communities. She believes that all students can learn and should be provided opportunities for high-interest, relevant applications to concepts. She believes in the power of learning by building and coding. In 2014, Lisa started a Raspberry Pi afterschool robotics club to teach students programming, engineering, and problem solving skills. After seeing the power of teaching physical computing and computational thinking skills, she began to integrate more technology and robotics into core content lessons. Over the past six years, she has transformed her classroom into a makerspace where all students are given opportunities to show their understanding of content in multiple ways. The use of robotics, programming, 3D modeling and printing, and other resources are accessible to all students for use in core content lessons as well as student-led projects.

In 2018, Ms. Rode developed a professional development course for teachers at her school to learn about ways to integrate physical computing and computational thinking strategies into classroom instruction. She has led several presentations about the integration of robotics into core curriculum at national education and computer science conferences. Lisa has worked as a curriculum developer for two educational robotics companies, helping to design and write curriculum as well as debug new robots and software. Lisa also worked with McGraw-Hill Education data scientists as the curriculum lead designer for the Mars Rover Design Challenge. Through the Mars Rover Design Challenge course, students work in teams to learn mathematics concepts through hands-on activities based on a mission to Mars, offered through Harlem Educational Activities Fund elective classes in Harlem and Brooklyn, New York. Students in the course built and programmed a robot to autonomously explore a planet and collect data. As the curriculum lead designer, Lisa supported teachers through a combination of calls and co-teaching. Lisa has also worked as a contractor to review a Google product through a pedagogical lens.

Ms. Rode is passionate about learning and as a leader and innovator for Kings Glen Elementary School, she works closely with grade-level teams and school administrators to teach other teachers, as well as students and families. She has been instrumental in establishing a weekly professional development opportunity for school staff to help demonstrate and practice new strategies for teaching remotely. She also has worked collaboratively with teachers in the CS for All Teachers Community to share and discuss strategies for distance learning supports. Ms. Rode believes the transition to distance learning, despite its challenges, has helped build stronger relationships in the school community, strengthen teamwork among teachers, and pushed teachers to utilize different strategies to help support and encourage students. The lack of a traditional classroom has made everyone think of new ways to inspire the students and keep them engaged and motivated.

Sam Elson, Principal at Kings Glen Elementary School, wrote, "As Mrs. Rode's supervisor for the last 13 years, I have seen her grow into one of the finest educators with whom I have ever had the privilege to work. Humble and modest as can be, Mrs. Rode's passion for the academic and social-emotional success of her students is palpable. Incredibly strategic and thoughtful, every instructional decision is made with a plan in mind, with the singular goal of mastery through total student engagement. The focused creativity, individualized mentorship, and utter joy in Mrs. Rode's teaching is unsurpassed, unstoppable, and unimaginable. Whether Mrs. Rode is in her classroom teaching her students, in the computer lab leading a 10-week staff development session for her colleagues, presenting at international conferences and conferences across the United States, or in the gym coaching her champion wheelchair basketball team, Lisa Rode is a master teacher in every way.... truly the best that [Fairfax County Public Schools] and Virginia has to offer!"

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 5** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

LISA ST. CLAIR COOPER

The Region 5 Virginia Teacher of the Year, **Lisa St. Clair Cooper**, is a first-grade teacher at Bessie Weller Elementary School in Staunton City Public Schools. Ms. Cooper completed a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mary Baldwin College in 2009. Ms. Cooper has 11 years of teaching experience.

Ms. Cooper grew up in poverty, and she had an absentee father. At the age of 15, while in the ninth grade, she became pregnant. Her dreams of becoming a veterinarian rapidly disappeared. Isolation became normal, and instead of finding comfort in school, it soon became a place to avoid. Lisa was the subject of never-ending criticism and rude comments from classmates. However, her view of school changed when the teachers at Lisa's high school banded together, embraced her, and provided encouragement, support, and love. School was no longer a source of loneliness, but rather a haven away from the chaos at home. At lunchtime, her German teacher ate with her each day, providing a much-needed social outlet. A caring and sympathetic guidance counselor helped her with college applications and testing fees, as well as began a social group for high school mothers. The government teacher provided transportation and a kind ear when needed. Both her mathematics and English teachers were compassionate and caring. These teachers went above-and-beyond what was expected of them to ensure the success of one student.

When Lisa was a senior in high school and her daughter was two years old, the guidance counselor offered her a paid position at the elementary school working in a kindergarten class. This experience, combined with the compassion and love from her teachers, fueled Lisa's desire to be able to help change the lives of children. She wanted to have an impact on children in the same way her teachers had helped her to overcome obstacles that she thought were insurmountable. Achieving her dream took many years, but Lisa has now spent 11 years as a classroom teacher, and she considers her passion for literature a major contribution to each student's education.

Throughout her educational career, Lisa has strived to build and maintain meaningful relationships with each child. She wants all students to know that they are important and loved, and she ensures that they receive the care they need. The relationships that she builds with students are what matters most to her. Lisa believes that these relationships build the foundation for students' successes and achievements. Only when these connections are solid and genuine do the countless hours aligning curriculum and creating engaging resources and lessons matter.

Last school year, when Lisa began teaching a narrative unit, she told her students that they were going to become authors in the first grade. She received a wide range of responses from the students. Some students were extremely excited, while others stated they could not be authors, because people who write books are "grown-ups." This was disheartening to Lisa, as the children were already forming opinions about their abilities, and they were placing self-imposed barriers in front of themselves. She felt that it was her job to remove these obstacles and provide a clear pathway for their success. Throughout the unit, she met with students, held individual writing conferences, and supported their writing. She began seeing a shift in the students' attitudes. At the end of the unit, she witnessed that her students had developed confidence. Lisa believes all students can be successful, and this is one testament to the relationships she has built with each of her students.

Rich Fletcher, Principal of Bessie Weller Elementary School, wrote, "Recently, in a parent conference, I shared with some parents that of my 29 years in education...Lisa Cooper is one of the top teachers with whom I have ever worked and had the pleasure of knowing. Rarely have I worked with someone whose quality of instruction and ability to engage parents rise to the level of Lisa's. Ms. Cooper's classroom is the epitome of a community. Students are engaged and learning, students treat each other with kindness, and student-teacher relationships are built on trust and respect. Every student will learn in Lisa Cooper's classroom, and she will accept nothing less. Ms. Cooper spends a tremendous amount of time and energy creating a high quality education experience for her students and parents and also makes time to contribute to building a positive school wide community. What sets Lisa Cooper apart from other teachers is the way she expertly and seamlessly weaves together a challenging, authentic, engaging, and memorable education experience for her students and families – one that rises to the level of extraordinary. I believe she is a role model for all educators."

Stephanie Haskins, Executive Director of Instruction for Staunton City Public Schools, wrote, "... [Lisa] is an inspiration to us all! She earns the respect of her students, families, and colleagues through her sincerity, motivation and mostly her grit. She wants to make an impact for others and is driven to make it happen. In a recent news interview on a local television station, Lisa explains how she cared for her children and attended college during the day and worked in a factory at night to get through school in order to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. That same dedication is shown every day in her classroom. Lisa plans for success! Lisa's contributions have been both school and division wide, as she has authored literacy curriculum for the entire division and has shared all resources. Her willingness to give to her colleagues is amazing. We are so proud to recognize her as our Staunton City Schools Teacher of the Year..."

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 6** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

ANTHONY SWANN

Anthony Swann is the Region 6 Virginia Teacher of the Year. Mr. Swann teaches fifth grade at Rocky Mount Elementary School in Franklin County Public Schools. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Averett University in 2007 and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Regent University in 2014. Mr. Swann has taught elementary school for 13 years.

When Anthony was 11 years old, he decided that he wanted to become a teacher. He was influenced by his fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Jerretta Wilson. When Anthony was a student in her class, he was taken to a foster home abruptly in the middle of the school day. Before Mrs. Wilson allowed social services workers to take Anthony, she hugged him and whispered in his ear, "Anthony, everything is going to be all right." Those words stuck with Anthony throughout his foster care experience, and he stayed in foster care until the age of 21.

In order to escape the trauma of rejection by both of his parents, Anthony resorted to playing school every single day. Playing school gave him a sense of safety and peace, and it allowed him to see that he did not have to grow up to be like his parents. He desired to make something of himself, and he wanted to give children what he never had – compassion and a positive role model. Anthony believes some of his greatest contributions have come from the lasting impression that he has made on students' lives beyond the classroom. Students he previously taught reach out to him and share the impact he made on their lives. One student sent Mr. Swann a message congratulating him on winning the Teacher of the Year honor for the division. The student told Mr. Swann to continue to make an impact on this generation, because he definitely remembers the impact he made on his life. Mr. Swann gives hope to the hopeless, and he lets his students know that if he can overcome adversity, they can too.

Mr. Swann not only teaches content; he provides life skills lessons and mentoring beyond the classroom. In 2019, he established a program, "Guys with Ties" at his school. The program is for fifth-grade boys, and Mr. Swann provides lessons on the importance of integrity, honesty, and respect. The students are required to "dress to impress" twice a month and participate in 45-minute lessons. Anthony schedules guest speakers and motivators to present to the students several times a year.

Anthony also is an active member of the group, "Advocates for Education." The primary purpose of this group is to provide parental support, information, and access to materials so parents are equipped to help their children at home. Anthony, along with other educators in the school division, hold meetings with parents at various churches throughout the community, as well as visit parents in their homes.

In 2018, Anthony was approached by his principal to develop a schoolwide character education initiative, "Cooperative Culture." Mr. Swann served on the development committee, along with teachers, the school counselor, a family liaison, and the building-level administrators. Anthony served as the teacher representative for grades three through five. Since the implementation of the program, the assistant principal reported a decline in disciplinary referrals throughout the school compared to previous years. This new curriculum encourages teachers to give "positive wildcat referrals" to students for achieving great things. Overall, the "Cooperative Culture" program helped contribute to the improvement of the school culture and change student and teacher interactions.

Mr. Swann considered two of the major issues facing students today: trauma and economic hardship. Mr. Swann wrote, "Many students deal with a lot of trauma even before walking through the school doors. This trauma definitely affects students' learning. Instead of focusing on learning, some of the students are more focused on what they are going to eat, which house they have to stay at due to their parents being divorced, or whether or not someone will be home when they come home from school."

In order to build relationships with students, Anthony shares his personal experiences of having an alcoholic mother and an absent father. In an effort to connect with his students, he shares that he was in foster care. Outside of the classroom, Anthony has attended professional development on trauma-informed care, and he uses strategies from this training in his classroom.

Angela Cepelnik, a parent of two former students, wrote, "I first became acquainted with Mr. Swann approximately three years ago when he started teaching his first year of fifth grade at Rocky Mount Elementary. ...[W]ord quickly spread among my parent friends what a breath of fresh air Mr. Swann was to our school... I have been privileged to become acquainted with Anthony Swann, not only as my son's and daughter's educator, but as an extraordinary human being... Mr. Swann earns his students' and parents' trust and respect. He is a responsible young man who teaches his students to be responsible for their own actions. Mr. Swann is always fair. He shows care and compassion to everyone. And lastly, Mr. Swann is our favorite Rocky Mount Wildcat, because he is an outstanding example of excellence in citizenship for his display of honesty, integrity, and responsibility to his students and their families."

Justin Altice, Assistant Principal at Rocky Mount Elementary School, wrote, "I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Swann for three years as Assistant Principal at Rocky Mount Elementary School. Mr. Swann is the true example of a positive role model for all students. He takes pride in seeing his students succeed and seeing them grow into responsible citizens...Mr. Swann serves on numerous committees, makes contact with parents on a regular basis, and respects all students and staff each and every day. His classroom is a safe haven for many students, and parents constantly call the school to request Mr. Swann for the upcoming year. Mr. Swann's passion is education. He loves working with children and has had this passion since he was young. He is a true example of what a teacher should be and should strive to be!"

*2021 VIRGINIA **REGION 7** TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

SARAH (MEG) MOODY BIGGS

Sarah (Meg) Moody Biggs, a 29-year veteran, is the Region 7 Virginia Teacher of the Year. Ms. Biggs is an elementary reading teacher for grades 1 and 2 at High Point Elementary School in Washington County Public Schools. Ms. Biggs earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Child Development from Virginia Tech in 1990.

Sarah, also known as "Meg," is a Reading Recovery teacher who has 29 years of experience as a teacher of literacy. Meg was a struggling reader as a child, and several teachers spent extra time with her and gave her the special care that she needed to develop her strengths. This early experience with devoted teachers inspired Meg to become an educator. By the time she was in high school, she knew without a doubt that teaching literacy was her passion and desire. During her studies at Virginia Tech, Meg excelled in student teaching and immediately drew the attention of her cooperating teacher. Meg worked closely with reading teachers to plan and execute lessons for evening literacy nights. Her student teaching experience solidified what she knew in her heart was her purpose.

Meg began her teaching career in Virginia Beach and immediately saw herself in many of her struggling readers. She desired to have a greater impact on students and give them the foundation in literacy to become successful readers. During both her third and fourth years of teaching, Meg was nominated and awarded the title of Teacher of the Year for her division. During her sixth year of teaching, Meg was encouraged to apply for one of her division's Reading Recovery positions. Because reading is her passion, Meg was excited to apply and ultimately accepted the position. Teaching literacy is Meg's calling, and in this new position she was given the opportunity to help students who struggle, as she once did as a child, become successful readers. As a lifelong learner, Meg always seeks feedback, guidance, and collaboration from her colleagues. She records her lessons and invites others to observe her.

Meg is deeply involved in school activities. She has participated in many committees, serving as a member, coordinator, or chair. During school closures in the spring, Meg assisted many of her fellow teachers in creating and implementing virtual lessons for students. She strongly believes that serving as a team player, as well as collaborating and helping colleagues, is a true measure of success.

As a Reading Recovery teacher, Meg believes that specified, targeted instruction is the building block to successful reading and comprehension. Meg utilizes many techniques and instructional strategies to assist her students, including differentiating instruction, scaffolding, and teaching critical thinking skills. She believes in the importance of educators acknowledging that each student's path to learning is unique, and that every student learns differently.

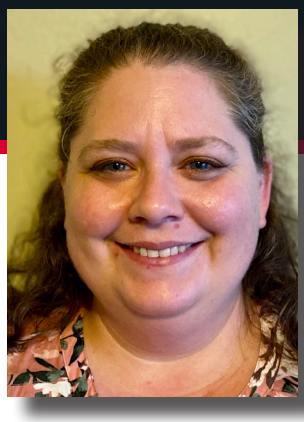
In her current position, Meg is fortunate to work one-on-one with students who struggle to read. Meg makes lasting impressions on students by building and maintaining relationships with them. Meg understands that students must feel comfortable in order to develop new skills, and they need to take ownership for learning.

Sherry King, Principal of High Point Elementary School, wrote, "As a result of her expert instructional delivery, motivational techniques, and compassionate care, lives are forever changed as reluctant and/or struggling readers become successful, life-long learners. Mrs. Biggs' greatest strengths lie in her interpersonal skills and strong work ethic. She applies her instructional expertise in the classroom setting with her own students, and serves as a division-wide consultant to her colleagues. She often guides data analysis discussions to identify student weaknesses, and develops appropriate strategies to address individualized student needs. In addition, Mrs. Biggs regularly provides professional development opportunities for teachers to promote the use of effective reading strategies. Her ability to relate to both students and colleagues is unmatched, and her contagious energy and shared leadership style encourage growth across all grade levels."

Janet Lester, Instructional Supervisor for Elementary Education, stated, "Reading is more than a fundamental skill. It is recognized as one of the strongest predictors of academic success, with proficiency by third grade considered a crucial step in a child's educational development. For this reason, reading instruction is a major focus of K-3 programs across the country. We are blessed in Washington County to a have a balanced approach to reading instruction...At the heart of Reading Recovery in Washington County you will find Meg Biggs. Meg serves as the 'go to' for other reading intervention teachers throughout the county and is considered a leader among her peers. Her strength lies in her knowledge of reading strategies and in her willingness to share this knowledge with others. Mrs. Biggs has unparalleled interpersonal skills. She develops purposeful relationships with parents and students as she encourages them to partner with her in supporting struggling readers...She creates an atmosphere of teamwork with families as they work together in a non-threatening way. I have witnessed this first hand...I watched a shy, struggling reader blossom into a strong, confident voracious reader, under the gentle and compassionate hand of Meg Biggs. Today, this young lady is an accomplished and successful third grader, reading well past her grade level and getting stronger each day. It was not only the targeted reading instruction that made the difference – it was the daily connection and reinforcement of a compassionate and caring teacher that gave her the confidence to be successful."

2021 VIRGINIA ***REGION 8*** *TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

VICTORIA (VICKIE) GAYLE SWOAP SOYARS



The Region 8 Virginia Teacher of the Year is **Victoria (Vickie) Gayle Swoap Soyars**, a Geometry teacher at Park View High School in Mecklenburg County Public Schools. She has 15 years of teaching experience and is beginning her fifth year in her current position. Ms. Soyars earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from William and Mary in 2005 and a Master of Science with a concentration in Special Education from Longwood University in 2009.

Ms. Soyars began her teaching career as a special education teacher at Park View High School in 2005. For the next 11 years, she worked with students of varying disabilities, primarily in the content areas of mathematics and social studies. Her desire to improve her skills led her to pursue endorsements in both History and Social Sciences and Mathematics. In 2016, Vickie accepted her current position as a mathematics teacher at Park View High School.

Education has always been important to Vickie, as she comes from a family of educators. Upon graduating from Park View High School in 2001, Vickie attended William and Mary and majored in psychology. She returned to Park View in 2005 as a special education teacher. As a special educator, Vickie taught collaboratively with many teachers and served as a case manager for students with disabilities. Vickie learned the importance of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of each student, academically and socially. During this time, she developed an understanding of the importance of addressing the social and emotional needs of students to assist them in meeting academic requirements.

Vickie's classroom is a safe space for her students. Her students are engaged in active learning, such as participating in scavenger hunts or creating videos. The students apply what they are learning to real world scenarios by going on walks around campus to find examples of concepts being discussed in class. Beyond academics, her classroom is a space for students to feel comfortable and valued. Her students are encouraged to advocate for themselves.

Outside of the classroom, Vickie is active in many activities. She is a member of the Buggs Island Community Band. She has served as an assistant coach for the girls soccer team, color guard instructor for the marching band, tutor for remediation programs, coordinator of homecoming and senior night, and leader for multiple professional development sessions. She has worked with the Virginia School Consortium for Learning (VaSCL) and the Comprehensive Instructional Program (CIP) to develop test bank questions and curriculum. Recently, she has served as the lead teacher for the Park View High School Design VA Innovation Grant team. Each of these roles has provided connections with students, parents, and colleagues and has helped her expand her understanding of the social-emotional needs of the children in her classes.

Ms. Soyars provides quality academic experiences for her students, as well as opportunities for meaningful career-related experiences. She believes educators need to focus on college and career readiness skills. These are skills that will prepare students for success no matter what their post-secondary pursuits may include. An emphasis on personal responsibility, self-advocacy, and the 5 C's is important in Ms. Soyars' classroom, and she works constantly to help her students grow in these areas.

Wesley Swain, Director of the Governor's School of Southside Virginia and the former Assistant Principal and Principal of Park View High School, wrote, "From the time that I first met her, I knew that education was her calling... Vickie teaches the yearlong ... Geometry collaboration classes at Park View High School. Needless to say, this course load can be a challenge; however, Mrs. Soyars has risen to the challenge and is innovative in her teaching methods to reach her students. She understands that before she can teach her students mathematics, she must gain their trust and respect. Therefore, she takes the time to get to know her students and their individual personalities and interests so she can incorporate them into her teaching throughout the year. This knowledge also gives her a conversational starting point as she stands at her door and greets each student who walks in her classroom. Math can lend itself to be a 'drill and kill' subject, but not with Mrs. Soyars. On any given day, her students are actively engaged in their lessons by participating in whole class discussions, small group activities, escape room breakouts, scavenger hunts, DESMOS learning, and hands-on manipulatives to name a few. ...Mrs. Vickie Soyars is the perfect choice for Mecklenburg County Public Schools' Teacher of the Year..."

The Director of Bands at Cave Spring Middle School, Chris McDilda, wrote, "...Under [Ms. Soyars'] direction, the Park View Color Guard has received numerous awards and praise throughout Virginia year after year. Her work with Color Guard rivals that of even the most seasoned veterans in the industry. Countless hours were spent after school, on weekends, and during the summer with these students, yet she still maintained a very highly effective and successful academic classroom.
... In my opinion there is no better than Victoria Soyars as she takes the time to know her students and tailors her teaching accordingly. Her students take pride in everything they do inside of school and as members in everyday society.... Victoria Soyars is a World Class Educator..."

Ruth Ann Kinker, a parent of a former student of Ms. Soyars, wrote, "...Clichéd as it is, Mrs. Soyars goes above and beyond for her students. There have been times when I have picked up my son from practice at 6:00 p.m. There is Mrs. Soyars in her room, working on setting up the next day's lesson. When I stop to speak to her, Mrs. Soyars is bustling around in her room, all so her students will have a better opportunity to understand what she is teaching. During one such impromptu visit, Mrs. Soyars was on her way out the door to visit a student at home. She was concerned about him, she explained to me. He had so much happening in his life at the current time, and she wanted to check on him.... Yes, above and beyond is an overused cliché, but it epitomizes Vickie Soyars."

Sponsor Recognition

Platinum Sponsor
($5,000 and Above)
Dominion Energy Services, Inc.
Virginia Lottery

Silver Sponsor
($2,000 to $2,500)
Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen Law Firm
Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

Bronze Sponsor
($500 to $1,000)
Kroger
Virginia529
Virginia Education Association

Crystal Sponsor
(Up to $500)
Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia
Capital Interior Contractors, Inc.
Moseley Architects
Kings Dominion
Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Virginia School Boards Association

Sponsor Recognition

Special Gifts

Bunkie Trinite Trophies, Inc.
Kings Dominion
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Virginia Colleges and Universities

Averett University
Bluefield College
Bridgewater College
Christopher Newport University
Eastern Mennonite University
Emory & Henry College
George Mason University
Hollins University
James Madison University
Longwood University
Mary Baldwin University
Marymount University
Old Dominion University
Radford University
Randolph College
Regent University
Roanoke College
Shenandoah University
Sweet Briar College
University of Lynchburg
University of Mary Washington
University of Richmond
University of Virginia
University of Virginia's College at Wise
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia State University
Virginia Union University
Virginia Wesleyan University
Washington and Lee University
William & Mary

2021 Virginia Teacher of the Year Selection Panel

Dr. Laura Abel
Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)

R. Clayton Allen, Esq.
Malcolm McConnell, Esq.
Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen Law Firm

Dr. Steve Purcell
Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (VACTE)

Dr. Sandy Frederick
Virginia Middle School Association (VMSA)

Andrea Carson Johnson
2020 Virginia Teacher of the Year

Walter Bower
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP)

Dr. James Fedderman
Virginia Education Association (VEA)

Donna Colombo
Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers (VAPTA)

Tyrone Foster
Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA)

Valdivia Hall
Human Resources Officer

Dr. Patricia Zissios
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP)

Anne B. Holton
Virginia Board of Education

Dr. Nancy Bradley
Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia (ATE-VA)

Virginia Teachers of the Year 1964-2020

2020	Andrea Carson Johnson	Salem City
2019	Rodney A. Robinson*	Richmond City
2018	Michelle Cottrell-Williams.	Arlington County
2017	Dr. Toney L. McNair, Jr.	Chesapeake City
2016	Natalie A. DiFusco-Funk	Salem City
2015	Jaclyn M. Roller Ryan	Shenandoah County
2014	Melissa A. Porfirio	Fairfax County
2013	Kathryn B. Galford	Chesapeake City
2012	Margaret "Meg" A. Smith	Lynchburg City
2011	LaTonya E. Waller	Richmond City
2010	Catherine S. Webb	Giles County
2009	Stephanie A. Doyle	Roanoke City
2008	Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr.	Norfolk City
2007	Susan W. Evans	Wythe County
2006	Deborah S. Goforth	Spotsylvania County
2005	Joseph K. Hills	Fairfax County
2004	Laurie J. Sullivan	Arlington County
2003	Douglas C. Armstrong	Stafford County
2002	Ruth S. Grillo	Accomack County
2001	Cari L. Vickey	Stafford County
2000	Robin D. Smith	Buckingham County
1999	Linda B. Koutoufas	Virginia Beach City
1998	B. Philip Bigler**	Fairfax County
1997	Dan Kent	Loudoun County
1996	Barbara Huneycutt	Charlottesville City
1995	Cheryl Henig	Hanover County
1994	Suzanne Mears	Fredericksburg City
1993	Gregory Sullivan	Lynchburg City
1992	Lena Williams	Portsmouth City
1991	Joanne Groseclose	Smyth County
1990	Gloria Anderson	Franklin County
1989	Mary Bicouvaris***	Hampton City
1988	Jessica Pearman	Spotsylvania County
1987	Natalie Boykins	York County
1986	Anne VanDerwerker	King William County
1985	Jewell Alexander	Fairfax County
1984	John Pleacher	Arlington County
1983	Maureen O'Donnell	Fairfax County
1982	Gaye Adegbalola	Fredericksburg City
1981	Carol Yosafat	Roanoke City
1980	Jerrell Sober	Hopewell City
1979	Sandra Bowie	Virginia Beach City
1978	Mary Carson	Winchester City
1977	Johnny Johnson	Fredericksburg City
1976	Sarah Belpree	York County
1975	Elaine Magee	Frederick County
1974	Carol Tomlinson	Fauquier County
1973	Ernest B. Jordan, Jr.	Chesterfield County
1972	Virginia Rowe	Prince George County
1971	Mary Dodson	Prince William County
1970	Joan Pearman	Pulaski County
1968	Trixie Johnson	Greensville County
1967	Anna Rhodes	Virginia Beach City
1965	Mary Craig	Chesapeake City
1964	Gertrude Thaxton	Bedford County

*Rodney A. Robinson, 2019 National Teacher of the Year
**B. Philip Bigler, 1998 National Teacher of the Year
***Mary Bicouvaris, 1989 National Teacher of the Year

Virginia Department of Education

Dr. James F. Lane
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Department of Budget, Finance and Operations

Kent Dickey
Deputy Superintendent

Department of Teacher Education and Licensure

Patty S. Pitts
Assistant Superintendent

Alice T. Bryant
Department Secretary

Brian Mason
Information Technology Specialist

Office of Teacher Education

Tara McDaniel
Director of Teacher Education

Coyotita Wilhoit
Executive Secretary

Johnelle M. Torbert
Special Education Human Resources Development Specialist

Office of Professional Practices

Nancy Walsh
Director for Professional Practices

Tanya Kish
Professional Practices Specialist

Office of Licensure

Maggie M. Clemmons
Director of Licensure and School Leadership

Rosette Atkins-Brown
Executive Secretary

Crista M. Cole
Lisa A. Dadey
Elena Dremova
Susan Ellington-Sconiers
Morgan Maniglia
Lori L. Mann
Tinya Ryland
Licensure Specialists

Eleanor B. Joyce
Licensure Specialist
National Board Coordinator

Dana Burton
Edna J. Iverson
Whitney Muse
Emily Wenzel

Special Acknowledgments

Office of the Governor

Office of the First Lady of Virginia

Office of the Secretary of Education

School Divisions of the Eight Regional Teachers

Lucy Hansen, Soloist
Paul Deiss, Pianist

Virginia Department of Education
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Department of Policy, Equity and Communications

Virginia Public Media

Special thanks are extended to:
***Kenita Bowers**, Director of Communications and Constituent Services*
***Timothy Nuthall**, Multimedia Design Specialist*
***Charles Pyle**, Director of Media Relations*
***Kevin Foster**, Multi Media Specialist*
***Emily Dursa**, Web Services Manager*

The Virginia Department of Education
greatly appreciates the individuals and organizations
who offered their time and resources
to make this celebration possible.

We also extend our gratitude to those who are
joining this recognition and celebration.
Your participation shows your support for the thousands of
classroom teachers throughout the Commonwealth.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VIRGINIA IS FOR LEARNERS

The Virginia Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. The policy permits appropriate employment preferences for veterans and specifically prohibits discrimination against veterans.