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Eight in the Running for 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year *Governor Terry McAuliffe to Announce State's Top Teacher on October 19*

Eight teachers today learned of their selection as 2016 Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year during surprise classroom visits, school assemblies and announcements by their division superintendents — and in the case of a Poquoson English teacher — Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples.

“The teachers recognized today embody all of the qualities that make Virginia teachers so special,” Staples said after announcing the selection of Poquoson High English teacher Lauren Osborn as the 2016 Region 2 Teacher of the Year. “They are dedicated to the academic success and well-being of their students, and they are leaders in classroom innovation.”

The other seven 2016 Regional Teachers of the Year announced are as follows:

- Christopher Averill, a history teacher at Cosby High in Chesterfield County (Region 1)
- Stacey Rice-Lee, an English teacher at Northumberland Middle in Northumberland County (Region 3)
- Kimberly Scott, an English teacher at Franklin Middle in Fairfax County (Region 4)
- Kenneth White Jr., a theater arts and public speaking teacher at Jefferson Forrest High in Bedford County (Region 5)
- Natalie DiFusco-Funk, a fifth-grade teacher at West Salem Elementary in Salem (Region 6)
- Ruthanne Cole, a science teacher at Bland County High in Bland County (Region 7)
- Edward McCann Jr., an agricultural education teacher at Appomattox County High in Appomattox County (Region 8)

The teachers were selected from among candidates nominated by school divisions in each of the state's eight superintendents' regions. The candidates submitted portfolios highlighting their accomplishments, educational philosophies and community activities.

A panel, including classroom teachers, representatives of professional and educational associations, the business community and 2015 Virginia Teacher of the Year Jaelyn M. Roller Ryan of Shenandoah County reviewed the portfolios and selected the eight regional teachers of the year. Next month, the panel will interview each of the eight teachers to select the 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year. The decision will be announced on October 19 in Richmond during a ceremony hosted by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

The 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year will be the commonwealth's nominee in the National Teacher of the Year Program. The recognition is given by the Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with the Voya Foundation and People to People Ambassador Programs. Two previous Virginia teachers — B. Philip Bigler, the 1998 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and Mary V. Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia Teacher of the Year — went on to be named as a National Teacher of the Year.

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