



For Immediate Release

September 19, 2007

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**Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year Named
During Surprise Classroom Visits
*All Eight in the Running for State Top Teacher Honor***

Eight educators learned of their selection today as the Virginia 2008 Regional Teachers of the Year during surprise classroom visits made by Department of Education representatives.

"In addition to representing their regions, these educators being recognized today represent the more than 98,000 Virginia teachers who inspire and encourage students to achieve at increasingly higher levels and work to ensure that every child is successful in the classroom," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy K. Cannaday Jr. "Our teachers work to make certain that Virginia's children benefit from a high-quality education that will prepare them to be successful in our global economy."

The 2008 Regional Teachers of the Year announced are:

- Tabitha L. Strickler, an English teacher at Colonial Heights High (Region 1)
- Thomas R. Smigiel Jr., an earth science instructor at Norview High in Norfolk (Region 2)
- Charlotte T. "Dee" Strauss, a marketing education teacher at King George High (Region 3)
- Suzanne W. Lank, a literacy instructor at Matthew Maury Elementary in Alexandria (Region 4)
- Susan P. Stanbery, a mathematics teacher at Heritage High in Lynchburg (Region 5)
- Susanne M. Dana, a chemistry instructor at Blacksburg High (Region 6)
- Erin O. Wigginton, a social science teacher at Pulaski County High (Region 7)
- Wanda R. Bass, a special education instructor at Prince Edward County High (Region 8)

The eight teachers were selected from among candidates submitted by their school divisions. The candidates prepared and submitted portfolios highlighting their professional accomplishments, educational philosophies and community activities. A panel of representatives of professional and educational associations, the business community, and 2007 Virginia Teacher of the Year Susan W. Evans of Rural Retreat reviewed the portfolios.

The panel will interview each of the eight Regional Teachers of the Year on October 26 to select the 2008 Virginia Teacher of the Year. The decision will be announced that evening during a celebration in Richmond.

The 2008 Virginia Teacher of the Year will be the commonwealth's nominee in the National Teacher of the Year program, a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, and sponsored by ING Foundation. Two previous Virginia teachers have gone on to become National Teacher of the Year: B. Philip Bigler, the 1998 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and Mary Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia Teacher of the Year.

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