# Superintendent’s Memo #277-19


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: December 6, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: National History Teacher of the Year Award

The Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, announces the annual National History Teacher of the Year Award.  This award honors exceptional teachers of American history across the country. One finalist from each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense schools, and the U.S. territories is selected annually. From these finalists, a national winner is recognized as the National History Teacher of the Year.

Any elementary or secondary school teacher (grades K-12) who teaches American history, including local and state history, as their primary subject within the framework of their school program and has demonstrated excellence according to the criteria governing the award is eligible for nomination. Nominees will be evaluated on the following criteria:

* At least three years of classroom experience in teaching American history;
* A demonstrated commitment to teaching American history;
* Evidence of creativity and innovation in the classroom; and
* Effective use of primary sources to engage students with American history.

Other notes about eligibility:

* Past state and national winners are not eligible;
* Self-nominations are not accepted; and
* Nominees must be planning to teach for at least one year following the award year.

All nominations must be submitted on the [Gilder Lehrman](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/national-history-teacher-year-nomination) website. Nominators must include contact information for the nominee and a short statement indicating why the nominee is an outstanding teacher of American history.  Nominations can be made by a student, parent, colleague, department head, principal, or superintendent.  The deadline for all nominations is Tuesday, March 31, 2020.

Shortly after they are nominated, all nominees will be contacted by email and will be invited to submit supporting material to the Gilder Lehrman Institute office to be considered for a state award.  The following supporting materials are required from each nominee:

* A current resume/curriculum vitae;
* One letter of support from a supervisor, colleague or other educational professional familiar with the nominee’s work.  The letter should address the award criteria;
* A one-page statement of the nominee’s philosophy of teaching and how it relates specifically to the instruction of American history;
* A sample lesson plan that can be completed in one or two class sessions, demonstrating the use of primary sources (no more than five pages); and
* A sample extended student project demonstrating use of primary documents, artifacts, historic sites, oral histories or other primary resources (no more than fifteen pages).

The deadline for nominated teachers submitting supporting materials to the Gilder Lehrman Institute is Thursday, April 30, 2020.  Nominees will be asked to send most items electronically.

Each state winner will receive a cash award of $1,000 and an invitation to participate in a Gilder Lehrman Teacher Seminar. Additionally, the winner’s school will receive a collection of classroom resources in honor of the state winner.

Winners will be selected by a panel of distinguished history educators under the supervision of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

For additional information, please contact Taylor Snow, English and History/Social Science Specialist, by email at Taylor.Snow@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3696.  Additional information on the National History Teacher of the Year program is available on the [Gilder Lehrman programs and events webpage.](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/programs-and-events/national-history-teacher-year)

JFL/TMS/pk