

Virginia Department of Education

**2025 MARY V. BICOUVARIS VIRGINIA TEACHER OF THE
YEAR PROGRAM**

General Information and Application Procedures

**Application Due Date: Thursday, February 8, 2024
4:00 p.m., EST.**

E-mail completed application packet to TeacheroftheYear@doe.virginia.gov

For additional information contact:

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MARY V. BICOUVARIS VIRGINIA TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Overview

Since 1964, Virginia has participated in the National Teacher of the Year Program, a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In 2006, Virginia's Teacher of the Year program was renamed in honor of Dr. Mary V. Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia and National Teacher of the Year. The late Dr. Bicouvaris was a teacher of government and international relations in Hampton City public schools, and she was Virginia's first National Teacher of the Year.

The Mary V. Bicouvaris Virginia Teacher of the Year Program honors teachers who represent the best in teaching in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation. The program provides school divisions the opportunity to recognize outstanding teachers and to focus positive public attention on education and the teaching profession. Those who are selected as Regional Teachers of the Year, Teacher of the Year, or National Teacher of the Year become ambassadors for education and enjoy a lifetime of positive memories.

Qualifications

Individuals who possess **current renewable Virginia teaching licenses** with an endorsement(s) in the teaching assignment and who teach in Virginia public or accredited nonpublic schools are eligible to participate in the Mary V. Bicouvaris Virginia Teacher of the Year program.

The program is open to all teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, including library media specialists, school counselors, career and technical educators, mathematic specialists, and reading specialists, who hold a current renewable Virginia teaching license in the assigned teaching area. Individuals holding provisional, provisional (special education), provisional (career switcher), eligibility, or international educator teaching licenses are not eligible to participate.

Candidates should be teachers who are exceptionally skilled and dedicated and who are planning to continue in an active teaching status. Candidates must be willing to fulfill Teacher of the Year responsibilities. Candidates who accept administrative or supervisory positions will relinquish their eligibility.

Teachers selected should have the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues. Additionally, they should play active and meaningful roles in their communities as well as in their schools. Many candidates will have distinguished themselves as leaders in public education at the local, regional, and/or state levels. Candidates also should be poised, articulate, and knowledgeable about their teaching areas and education in general.

Numerous criteria are used in evaluating the nominees, including the abilities of the teacher in the classroom and in communicating their message to a broad audience. Candidates will be considered based on the following criteria developed by the CCSSO:

- Is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence;
- Collaborates with colleagues, students, and families to create a school culture of respect and success;

- Deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large;
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation in and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning; and
- Expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way.

Selection of Local Nominees

Virginia division superintendents are invited to nominate *one teacher* for state-level recognition. These nominees will then be considered for Regional Teacher of the Year awards, and the Virginia Teacher of the Year will be selected from among those eight Regional Teachers of the Year. In addition to participating in the selection of the Virginia Teacher of the Year, the program presents an opportunity to recognize outstanding teachers within the system. The selection procedures and guidelines within a school division are **local decisions**; however, the following suggestions are offered for local selection.

- All nominations should 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.
- Teachers retiring from the profession at the end of the school year should **not** be nominated because the teacher must be active during the following school year.
- Local recognition should be an integral part of the selection process. Recognition need not be elaborate but should involve public congratulations and appropriate awards to the teachers involved.
- Time needs to be allocated for the development of the nominee's portfolio for state submission. For that reason, the Department encourages school divisions to make their selections known to the teachers as early as possible, so the teachers have adequate time to prepare the necessary materials, gather letters of support, and develop the written portions of the portfolio.

Submission of Application

The Virginia school division superintendent must submit the complete application packet of the teacher selected to represent the school division. Completed application packets must be emailed to TeacheroftheYear@doe.virginia.gov. **Applications will only be accepted via e-mail.**

Please save the application in the following format: 2025 VTOY_ name of the school division, region number, and last name of the candidate. For example, “**2025 VTOY_Nottoway County_Region 8_McDaniel.**” Please use the same format and naming convention for the **SUBJECT** of the e-mail when sending the application. All application materials should be submitted as a single file and must be received by **Thursday, February 8th, no later than 4:00 p.m. EST.**

PART 2: 2025 APPLICATION (PORTFOLIO) PROCEDURE

An application packet (application, educational history and professional development activities, five narrative essays, and letters of support) must be submitted according to established guidelines. Candidates should present to VDOE a well-organized, professional portfolio that includes focus, unity, coherence, and correctness. This packet mirrors the expectations at the national level.

Portfolio Guidelines

All application materials (application, education history and professional development activities, essays, and letters of reference) must be saved in ONE PDF file. Please organize the materials in the following order:

- I. Application
- II. Educational History and Professional Development Activities
- III. Essays
- IV. Letters of Support

For the application and letters of support, electronic signatures are acceptable.

All applications must be submitted through e-mail. Portfolios (application packet) must be emailed to (TeacheroftheYear@doe.virginia.gov) **using the correct file naming convention no later than 4:00 p.m. EST, Thursday, February 8, 2024.**

The following naming convention must be used for the document title and for the subject line of the e-mail: “2025 VTOY_School Division_Region_Last Name of Candidate). **For example: 2025 VTOY_Nottoway County_Region 8_McDaniel**

Specific Sections of the Portfolio

- I. Application: The application (Attachment B) is the first page of the portfolio.** Signatures of the teacher, principal, and division superintendent are required on this form. Electronic signatures are acceptable. **All information must be completed on this form.**
- II. Educational History and Professional Development Activities: This section must be in outline form and limited to two pages, one side only, using a font size no smaller than 10. These two pages may be single-spaced.**
 - A. Education: Beginning with the most recent, list colleges and universities attended, including postgraduate studies. Indicate degrees earned, dates of degrees conferred, and dates of attendance.
 - B. Certifications: Beginning with the most recent, list professional certification(s), including the dates obtained and related training.
 - C. Experience: Beginning with the most recent, list teaching employment history indicating time period, grade level, and subject area.
 - D. Professional Associations: Beginning with the most recent, list professional association memberships, including information regarding offices held and other relevant activities.

- E. Community and Civic Involvement: Beginning with the most recent, list community or civic involvement, such as volunteer work, and other group activities at the local, national and international levels.
- F. Leadership: Beginning with the most recent, list personal professional development leadership activities and leadership activities related to the professional development of future teachers. Also, list professional development activities in which you participated (but did not have a leadership role).
- G. Awards and Other Recognitions: Beginning with the most recent, list awards and other recognition of your teaching.

III. Five Narrative Essays: Each essay in this section must be limited to the maximum word limit indicated below, one side only, using a font size no smaller than 10.

1. **Professional Biography (maximum 750 words):** *Please complete your professional biography in third person.* Describe the factors that influenced you to become a teacher. Describe what you consider to be your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education.
2. **Philosophy of Teaching (maximum 500 words):** Describe a project or initiative in which you have been involved that contributed to the improvement of overall school culture. What was your role, how did you collaborate with others, and what is the status of this project today? Please include evidence of student impact.
3. **Student Impact (maximum 500 words):** How do you ensure that education transcends the classroom? Describe specific ways in which you connect your students and the community. Please include evidence of student impact.
4. **Student Engagement (maximum 750 words):** Describe a lesson or unit that best defines you as a teacher. How did you engage students of all backgrounds and abilities in the learning? How did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson or unit?
5. **Education Issues and Trends (maximum 500 words):** What do you consider to be a major public education issue today? Describe how you demonstrate being a lifelong learner, leader, and innovator about this issue, and how it impacts students both in and outside of the classroom walls.

IV. Letters of Support: Include three letters of support in the application packet from any of the following: superintendent, principal, administrator, colleague, student/former student, parent, or civic leader. An effective letter of support contains evidence of personal knowledge of the teacher and an indication of the qualities that would qualify the candidate to be the 2025 Virginia Teacher of the Year. These letters must be included in your portfolio and saved in the final PDF portfolio. Do not send letters of support separately.

Limit each letter to one typed page. Letters may be single-spaced with a font size no smaller than 10 point.

Responsibilities of Teachers of the Year

The focus of Virginia's program is to recognize and promote excellence in teaching. The selected Virginia teachers will continue their classroom responsibilities, but also will serve as ambassadors throughout the commonwealth in communicating the many contributions of the classroom teacher. The teachers may make public appearances, collaborate with VDOE, conduct activities that help to meet the needs of local school divisions, and recognize teachers for the quality of their teaching and leadership.