



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe

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Office of the Governor

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Governor McAuliffe Announces Selection of 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year

RICHMOND – Governor Terry McAuliffe tonight announced the selection of Natalie DiFusco-Funk, a fifth-grade teacher at West Salem Elementary in Salem, as the 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year. The announcement took place during a reception at the Executive Mansion in Richmond.

“Natalie is recognized by her peers, by her principal, by the superintendents of her region — and now by the commonwealth — as the best of the best,” **Governor McAuliffe said**. “As the 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year, Natalie will represent the tens of thousands of outstanding classroom educators whose creativity, content knowledge and love of teaching have made Virginia’s public schools among the best in the nation.”

DiFusco-Funk said she knew she wanted to be a teacher on her first day of school as a fifth grader. “There was no other career path for me, and it was literally a dream come true when I began my career 12 years ago,” she said.

The reception at the Executive Mansion followed a Virginia Department of Education ceremony honoring all eight 2016 Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year who were in the running to be named as the commonwealth's top teacher. The other seven regional teachers of the year are as follows:

- Christopher Averill, a history teacher at Cosby High in Chesterfield County (Region 1)
- Lauren Osborn, an English teacher at Poquoson High in Poquoson (Region 2)
- 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 "Spence" White Jr., a drama, stagecraft and public speaking teacher at Jefferson Forrest High in Bedford County (Region 5)
- 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)

"These teachers represent diverse regions and disciplines but they share a zeal for teaching and for unlocking the potential of their students," **Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said.**

"Selecting a single teacher from a group such as this is a daunting task," **Secretary of Education Anne Holton said.** "But Natalie is an outstanding choice and will be a great representative of all of the commonwealth's teachers."

DiFusco-Funk is a 12-year veteran of the classroom and is in her fifth year as a fifth-grade teacher at West Salem Elementary. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Education and Master of Education at Boston College. DiFusco-Funk earned National Board Certification in Literacy in 2013. In 2010, she completed the Boston Marathon to raise funds for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

"Natalie is an exceptional teacher and a consummate professional who positively changes the lives of young people and facilitates the growth and development of her colleagues," **Salem Superintendent H. Alan Seibert said.**

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