



Virginia 2008 Teacher of the Year

2008 Virginia Teacher of The Year:



Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr., has taught in Norfolk Public Schools since 2000. He currently teaches Earth Science and Teen Leadership at Norview High School. He earned his B.S. at Old Dominion University and his M.Ed. at Cambridge College. Mr. Smigiel is also an active member of the Education Association of Norfolk and the Virginia Education Association. He has written and received two grants that support Norview High School's Small Learning Community and its goal of decreasing teen delinquency.

Mr. Smigiel believes that community service is part of a well-rounded education. Since his first year of teaching, Mr. Smigiel has found ways to add aspects of community service to his curriculum. In his Earth Science class, he taught his students to be good stewards of the environment by becoming involved in a neighborhood litter pick-up campaign. All students involved in his Teen Leadership class participate in volunteer service. One of his classes raised more than \$1,200 for Operation Smile, a group that provides medical services to children with facial deformities; another class raised more than \$1,000 to repair a degraded cemetery next to the school.

Mr. Smigiel's commitment has made real differences in the lives of his students. One student wrote, "Before I met Mr. Smigiel, I was involved in drugs and in gangs. I was one of the kids they considered a failure...the kind of kid you would see locked up. Meeting Mr. Smigiel changed the course of my life because he taught me...to bounce back when something bad happens and he showed me ways to improve my grades. Mr. Smigiel has been the one that I could go to, and he is always there for me when I need him the most. He believed in me when no one else did."

[See October 30, press release](#)

Every year, the Department of Education selects eight talented and effective educators to represent their peers as Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year. One teacher is selected from each of the department's eight administrative regions after first being recognized by their schools and school divisions.

One of the eight regional winners is subsequently honored as the Virginia Teacher of the Year and represents the commonwealth in the National Teacher of the Year selection process.

