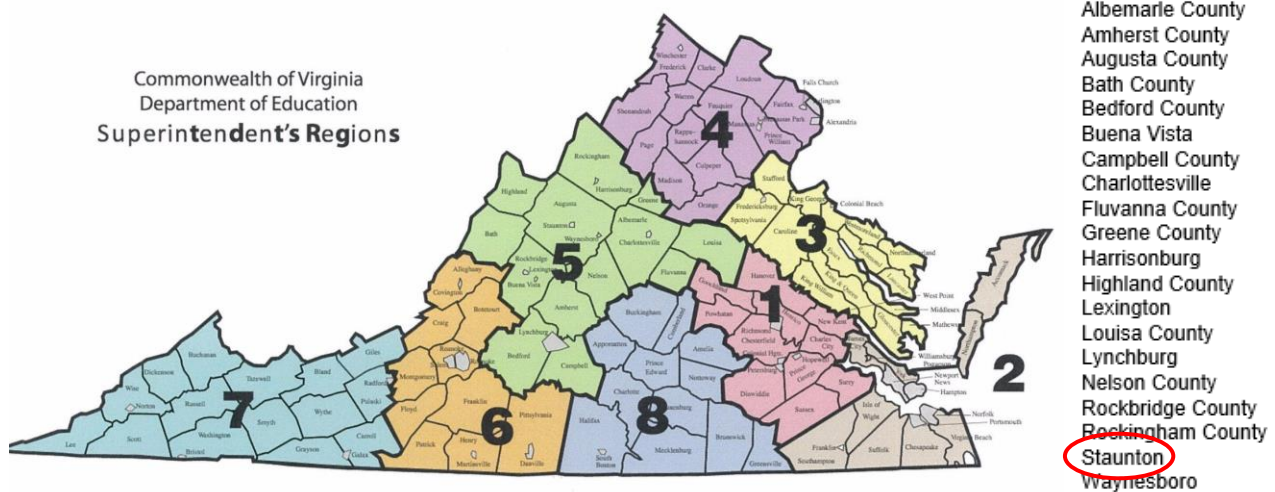


**September 18, 2020** – SCS Teacher Receives Distinction as the 2021 Region V Teacher of the Year

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### SCS TEACHER RECEIVES DISTINCTION AS THE 2021 REGION V TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Eight teachers across the commonwealth were simultaneously surprised by one of the most prestigious announcements possible for educators. Mrs. Lisa Cooper, 1st grade teacher at Bessie Weller Elementary, was among them, selected as the 2021 Region V Teacher of the Year. Region V includes 20 school divisions.



Mrs. Cooper has been a teacher for the past 11 years. During that time, she has been recognized with distinguished awards for teaching excellence, including 2009 Teacher of Promise, 2014 Buena Vista Teacher of the Year, 2020 Staunton City Teacher of the Year, and now 2021 Region V Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Cooper has been a contributor on literacy committees and authored and shared the grade 5 literacy curriculum for the division. She has worked with such groups as Girls on the Run and Community Garden Service Project.

Mrs. Lisa Cooper was originally selected by her peers and colleagues for the Bessie Weller Teacher of the Year, and she was then selected by a SCS panel as Staunton City Teacher of the Year. An application was submitted to the Virginia Department of Education in the spring, which included essays highlighting accomplishments, educational philosophies, and community activities, as part of the selection process.



At 1:00 today, Mr. Rich Fletcher, principal at Bessie Weller Elementary, called all staff together to the cafeteria for the surprise announcement. They sat waiting for what they thought was a “faculty meeting” --- there was even an “agenda” posted for the meeting. Once all staff had assembled, Mr. Fletcher began by explaining, with the school closure from the previous spring, the staff had not had a chance to fully celebrate Mrs. Lisa Cooper, 1st grade teacher, as being selected the Staunton City Teacher of the Year. Mr. Fletcher shared these statements about Lisa:

- “Mrs. Cooper’s classroom is the epitome of a community. Students are engaged and learning; students treat each other with kindness; and student-teacher relationships are built on trust and respect.”
- “Every student will learn in Lisa Cooper’s classroom; she will accept nothing less. She engages students in conversation about their learning and what the outcomes will be at the beginning of and throughout the lesson. Students know at all stages of their learning what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will show they have learned it. Instruction is challenging and prepares students for future learning. And when it comes to no child being left behind, this is more than important to Lisa Cooper - it is a mission. She develops individualized plans for any child who is not meeting the benchmarks, and she expertly organizes her learning environment to give these students additional one-on-one support.”

When Mr. Fletcher revealed that Mrs. Cooper was *also* named the Region V Teacher of the Year, the staff erupted with cheers, applause, and congratulatory remarks. Executive Director of Instruction, Stephanie Haskins, commented about why Lisa stands out among so many educators across the state: “Lisa is not only an exceptional teacher, but she is an inspiration to us all! She earns the respect of her students, families, and colleagues through her sincerity, motivation, and mostly her grit. In her essays to the state, she shares obstacles she overcame to become an educator. She *wants* to make an impact for others and is driven to make it happen. This same dedication is shown every day in her classroom. Mrs. Cooper’s calm demeanor, high expectations, and mutual respect allow her to connect with *all* students and families.”

Mrs. Cooper has written how her own life experiences have impacted why she became a teacher and what she brings to teaching every day: “I wanted to have an impact on children just the way that my teachers had helped me to overcome an obstacle that I thought had been insurmountable. It took many years before this dream was fulfilled and brought to fruition, but every sacrifice, sleepless night, and struggle endured was worth it. . . Throughout my educational career, I strive to build and maintain meaningful relationships with each child. I want them to know that they are important. They are loved. They are cared for. This is what matters to me. The relationships forged during the course of the year, and ones that carry over past the school year into the future are one of my most significant accomplishments.”

Dr. Garrett Smith, Superintendent summarized Lisa’s contributions by stating: “I had the privilege of visiting Mrs. Cooper’s first grade class several times last year. If I had to sum up the experiences in one word, it would be ‘magical’. Students were always eager not only to demonstrate what they’d learned, but to recognize and celebrate their classmates’ accomplishments as well.”

Mrs. Cooper will participate in an interview for the 2021 Virginia Teacher of the Year on October 1, and a final decision about the Virginia Teacher of the Year will be announced in early to mid-October.

Refer to the [video link](#) for congratulatory remarks from leaders across Virginia, including; Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Virginia; Dr. James Lane, State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Dan Gecker, President of the Virginia Board of Education; and Ralph Northam, Governor of Virginia, and Pamela Northam, First Lady of Virginia.