2026-2027 Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026

What is the Teacher Award Program?

Founded in 1899, the VFW highly supports the education of America's youth. VFW and its Auxiliary have developed a slate of programs dedicated to helping America's educators. VFW Citizenship Education programs stimulate interest in America's history, traditions, Americanism, civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

Teachers care deeply about America and its children. They're concerned about the perpetuation of America's noblest traditions and highest ideals. Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve? Now you can.

Why Should I Enter?

VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. The national awards include $1,000 Smart/Maher award for each of the top K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses, $1,000 award for each winning teacher's school, commemorative plaques and all-expense-paid trip to the VFW National Convention.

Who is Eligible?

All current certified/licensed teachers in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national VFW winners are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

How are teachers nominated?

Fill out the official entry form contained on the next page, and provide a one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience (for example: resume, references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo if available.

Please submit your completed entry form signed, along with the required documentation to your local VFW Post. Visit vfw.org/FindaPost for Post locations or call VFW Programs Department at 816.756.3390 ext. 6287 to find the Post nearest you.

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2026. It is the responsibility of the nominator to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Citizenship (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what extent does the teacher encourage and/or model good citizenship and community involvement?

Innovation (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, how much innovation (new ideas, new tools, new resources, and new approaches) does this teacher utilize in the classroom? Does this teacher's effort reflect an ongoing desire to stimulate the students with new things?

Resources (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what degree has this teacher demonstrated an ability to identify and utilize new and exceptional resources to fund, facilitate and provide materials for his or her classroom? Does this teacher tap into outside agencies, organizations and individuals to acquire materials and expertise in the classroom? As an example – bringing speakers, finding in-kind and monetary donations, or utilizing local opportunities like museums, field trips and local events.

Passion (1-25 points): On a scale of 1-25, to what degree does this teacher appear to be passionate about the profession of teaching? Are they regularly seeking to upgrade their skills? Do they try and find ways to encourage their students? Do they take a personal interest in their student's individual success?

If you have any questions, please call Mary Spencer, 816.756.3390, ext 6287 or ***mspencer@vfw.org.***

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

Alternative Contact: Name, Title

Phone Best time to call

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2026-2027 Official Entry Form
Teacher Award Competition

Please tell us who you are nominating—below in box.

_____
Name: First, M.I., Last

_____
Address

_____
City, State, Zip

( )_____ _____
Phone Email

_____
Grade Level (K-5, 6-8, or 9-12)

_____
School Name

_____
School Address

( )_____ _____
School Phone School Email

Person Nominating Teacher

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this teacher has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Teacher Award Competition.

_____ _____
Post Commander's/Chairperson's Signature Post #

_____
VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairperson's Signature (If Applicable)

_____
Post Address

_____
City, State, Zip

_____
VFW Post Email

No. of teachers participating _____

No. of winners advanced to District _____

Amt. of Post /Aux. scholarship awards $_____

Amt. of Post /Aux. additional expenses $_____
(banquet, pins, etc.)

To Be Completed by the VFW District (If Applicable)

I certify that the teacher named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Teacher Award District Competition and is our entry into the Department judging.

_____
District Chairperson's Signature Dist #

_____
Address

_____
City, State, Zip

( )_____ _____
Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the teacher named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Teacher Award Department Competition, is our entry into the National Judging.

_____
Department Chairperson's Signature

(____)_____ _____
Daytime Phone Email

The winner ☑ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries will begin at the local VFW Post level. Individual nominees may submit their entry directly to the Post. This VFW Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One Post winner can be submitted for each level, and to District by Nov. 15. If your Department does not have a District judging, then submit to your Department Headquarters by Jan. 1. Otherwise, one District winner, at each level, may advance to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions: First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to find your local VFW Post. Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in. If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit vfw.org/ContactUs and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at mspencer@vfw.org.