

SMART/MAHER
VFW NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION TEACHER AWARD
CHAIRPERSON'S
GUIDE



Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Chairperson's Guide



HONORING THOSE WHO TEACH

The VFW launched the Smart/Maher National Citizenship Education Teacher Award in 1999 to recognize certified teachers for promoting citizenship education. Three teachers, one from each level (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) may be selected as department winners. Each department award winner and their school will receive a National Citation. Visit this link for more information and for an entry form: vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/teacher-of-the-year.

Eligibility

Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates for this award. For example, do you know a teacher who plans field trips to city hall or organizes community volunteer projects? Maybe you know an instructor who invites veterans into the classroom to discuss their military experiences. Perhaps you are familiar with a teacher who fosters the development of democratic values and beliefs through special projects. If you know of such a teacher, honor them today. All current certified/licensed teachers in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national winners are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by themselves, fellow teachers, supervisors, family members or other interested individuals.

Deadlines

Post judging should be completed and their winners entries sent to the District by Nov. 15. If your Department does not have a District judging, then submit to your Department Headquarters, and/or Dept. Chairperson by Jan. 1. Department judging should be completed and their winning entries submitted to VFW National Headquarters by Feb. 1 by completing a VFW Department Teacher Award Request Form. Department Adjutant/Quartermasters will receive a link to get this form after their judging. The Post chairperson must be sure to send the original entry form for the winners along with a one-page resume as a minimum, or up to five pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience, (such as, resume, references, news articles, etc.,) and a good quality head and shoulders photograph, if available.

Judging

Select competent and unbiased judges. A panel of at least three to five judges is recommended. The VFW chairperson should be present at the judging to provide assistance but should not be one of the judges. Prior to the judging, the chairperson should review all entry forms to ensure they adhere to the rules.

Judges should grant points based on four criteria with the potential of 100 points as follows:

1-25 points - Does the teacher teach and/or model good citizenship and community involvement?

1-25 points - An innovative approach to teaching citizenship.

1-25 points - Development of resources to teach citizenship education.

1-25 points - Passion for teaching citizenship education.

NOTE: *Judging sheets are available on later pages.*

Running the Program

Here are some important points to remember when conducting the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award Program.

- Know the program procedures and judging guidelines thoroughly.
- Develop a good working relationship with your Post's Auxiliary chairperson.
- Contact schools early and make a point of explaining the importance of the program to the principal.
- Send a news release to your local media with the names of your winning teachers (see website for sample).
- Recognize your participants (both winners and judges) with official VFW awards - see the official VFW Store catalog (or visit vfwstore.org for ideas.)
- Forward your winning Post's entries to the District, if applicable, or Department as soon as the competition is finished.

Winning Entry Checklist

Here's what your Post needs to have to your District, if applicable, or Department:

- ✓ Winning teacher's entry form.
- ✓ Teacher's one-page resume as a minimum or up to five pages, including the resume, as a maximum of documentation of their teaching experience, such as resume, references, news articles, etc.
- ✓ Good quality head and shoulders photograph of the teacher, if available.

Reporting Guidelines

VFW Post, District and Department reporting must be completed on the VFW Programs Dashboard Tool as of Aug. 1, 2026.

Jan. 15 is the deadline for District reports to be submitted and the deadline for Department reports to be submitted is Jan. 31.

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



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, 816.968.1187
mspencercer@vfw.org*

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: Name, Title

Phone

Best time to call

Alternative Contact: Name, Title

Phone

Best time to call

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



Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026

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

TEACHER'S AWARD JUDGING SCORE SHEET

TEACHER'S NAME	CITIZENSHIP (1-25 Points)	INNOVATION (1-25 Points)	RESOURCES (1-25 Points)	PASSION (1-25 Points)	TOTAL (Possible 100 Points)

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?

DATE _____ POST# _____ GRADE LEVEL ☐ K-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-12

JUDGE'S NAME (Please Print) _____

JUDGE'S SIGNATURE _____

NOTE: Judges should be carefully selected, preferably from individuals who have classroom experience and understand the challenges of teaching. They should never have any affiliation with the nominees or the schools where the nominees teach. While it may be necessary to use VFW and its Auxiliary members, it is preferred that judges come from outside our ranks to avoid the appearance of impropriety. During the judging, the chairperson should facilitate and observe but refrain from offering his or her observations on the candidates. The judges are encouraged to discuss the candidates but must arrive at their own numerical evaluation using the grid above. Make sure all judges are kept aware of the progress of the teachers they have judged and are invited to any awards presentations.