



# Loudoun County Public Schools Media Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ASHBURN, Va.** - Virginia Council of the Social Studies has recognized two Loudoun County Public School (LCPS) history teachers who distinguish themselves in teaching history.

Dr. Laura Brown, Belmont Ridge Middle School history teacher, is the recipient of the 2024 Betsy Barton Teacher of the Year Award. The award, named in honor of the renowned educator Betsy Barton, recognizes excellence in social studies education and celebrates educators who have made significant contributions to the field.

Dr. Laura Brown's dedication, innovation, and passion for teaching have set her apart as an exemplary educator. Throughout her tenure in the classroom, Dr. Brown has demonstrated a commitment to fostering a deep understanding of history among her students. Her innovative teaching methods, engaging lesson plans, and tireless efforts to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment have left an indelible mark on the education community. In addition to her classroom accomplishments, Dr. Brown has actively contributed to the broader social studies community through her involvement in professional development programs, curriculum design initiatives, and collaborative projects with fellow educators.

James Erik Sassak, Blue Ridge Ridge Middle School history teacher, is the recipient of the 2024 Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Excellence in Teaching Award.

Sassak's commitment to teaching social science contributes to his mission to impart social studies curriculum through engaging lessons, interactive activities and collaborative projects that foster independent thinking and strategic skills. Beyond the curriculum, Sassak is recognized for modeling leadership in his educational endeavors as he demonstrates a commitment to excellence in his teaching methods and cultivating positive environments for academic mastery.

"We are thrilled to honor James Erik Sassak with this prestigious award. His impact on the education community and, most importantly, on the students he serves is commendable. Mr.

Sassak exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding educator, and we are proud to recognize his achievements," said Kimberly Hammers, vice president of the Virginia Council for the Social Studies.

The Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes and honors a Virginia social studies educator striving to advance civil rights and civil liberties. Nominees inspire students to be fully informed about the civil rights and civil liberties assured by the Constitution. They empower students to take informed action in response to injustices and to be responsible contributing members of our democracy. This year's award recipient will be honored at the VCSS conference.

Dr. Brown and Mr. Sassak will be recognized for their outstanding contributions to social studies education at an award ceremony on March 1 at the VCSS Conference in Farmville, Virginia, at Longwood University.

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