



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
**NEWS RELEASE**

**TOM TORLAKSON**  
 State Superintendent  
 of Public Instruction

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## State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Names California Teachers of the Year

*Sacramento County educator nominated for National Teacher of the Year honor*

SACRAMENTO—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson today named five outstanding educators as the 2014 California Teachers of the Year\*. He further named one of them as California's nominee for National Teacher of the Year.

"These outstanding teachers have my thanks and admiration for the work they do every day to provide our students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to succeed," Torlakson said. "They bring talent, dedication, and more to a job that is as critical as it is challenging—and even more rewarding."

The five 2014 California Teachers of the Year are:

- Timothy Smith, a ninth through twelfth grade Algebra I and AP Statistics teacher at Florin High School in Sacramento, Elk Grove Unified School District, Sacramento County. Torlakson nominated Smith as California's representative for the National Teacher of the Year competition.
- Angelo "Ang" Bracco, a sixth through eighth grade special education teacher at Solano Middle School in Vallejo, Vallejo City Unified School District, Solano County.
- Michael Hayden, who teaches choral music and music appreciation to high school students at Mira Costa High School, Manhattan Beach Unified School District, Los Angeles County.
- Linda Horist, a second grade teacher at Nohl Ranch Elementary School, Anaheim, Orange Unified School District, Orange County.
- Jessica Pack, a sixth grade language arts, social studies, and technology teacher at James Workman Middle School, Cathedral City, Palm Springs Unified School District, Riverside County.

Profiles and contact information for each teacher are attached.

The California Teachers of the Year Program began in 1972 to acknowledge the growing complexity of challenges faced by the profession and the need to promote collaboration among teachers to address challenges. The program is also designed to encourage new teachers to enter the field.

The competition is open to educators teaching pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. County offices of education nominate winners through their regional Teachers of the Year competitions. A state selection committee reviews candidates' applications and conducts site visits to evaluate the teachers' rapport with students, classroom environment, presentation skills, and teaching methods, among other criteria. The teachers are interviewed at the California Department of Education in Sacramento. The State Superintendent then selects the awardees.

The 2014 California Teachers of the Year, the finalists, and semi-finalists will be honored by Torlakson at a gala to be held February 3, 2014. The list of finalists and semi-finalists is attached. For more information on the award program, please visit the California Department of Education's [California Teachers of the Year](#) Web page.

\* Pictures of the 2014 California Teachers of the Year are at [Multimedia](#)

### Attachments:

## The 2014 California Teachers of the Year

**Timothy Smith**

**Ninth through Twelfth Grade Algebra I and AP Statistics Teacher  
California's representative for the National Teacher of the Year competition  
Florin High School  
Elk Grove Unified School District**

When I see students walk in the door or sitting down as class begins, I see the future. I owe it to them to prepare them the very best I can for that future. It takes each new class of students about three weeks to really begin to trust me and see that I will do anything to help them learn. Without that trust, learning will not occur.

*—Mr. Smith, from his 2014 California Teacher of the Year Application*

Smith has been teaching at Florin High School since 2001. Growing up on a small farm in northern Florida, he was the first in his family to graduate high school and prior to his start in teaching, he spent several years as a member of the Florida and California National Guard and pursued various jobs in the private industry.

His interest in teaching began while attending community college, where he pursued a two-week opportunity to substitute for his old fourth grade teacher. The experience was frightening, but made a lasting impression that followed him for years to come.

Fifteen years would pass by the time he decided to become a student again and complete his bachelor's degree. This would serve as the catalyst to reignite a passion for education that he carries in to the classroom every day. He seized every opportunity to be in the classroom, spreading his passion for education, and continues to help students reach their full potential.

Don Ross, principal of Florin High School, said Smith has an "outstanding reputation as an innovative instructor. He engages his students through multiple means including the use of technology. He holds his students to a high standard of performance and he facilitates their achievement of these standards by developing and executing rigorous and well-developed lessons."

Timothy Smith may be reached through Florin High School at [tcsmith@egusd.net](mailto:tcsmith@egusd.net) or 916-689-8600.

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## Angelo "Ang" Bracco

**Sixth–Eighth Grade Special Education Teacher  
Solano Middle School  
Vallejo City Unified School District**

My students are a reflection of me. If I am successful, they will be also. I view my students as being at the starting line of a journey. As staff, we are well trained in knowing what our students can and can't accomplish. After school, I have a parade of students that come to visit me. Many show me their daily grades. We spend time to discuss how we might improve their academics and other aspect of their lives.

*—Mr. Bracco, from his 2014 California Teacher of the Year Application*

Bracco was in law enforcement for 27 years as a police officer in San Francisco and Concord, both locales in which he was selected Police Officer of the Year.

After his retirement, he wanted to work with challenged youth and pursued his teaching credential. Hired on an "emergency credential," he began teaching a special education class at Solano Middle School, where he taught severely emotionally disturbed students. The class soon became a model and the program was acknowledged district-wide and attracted many newly-hired teachers, who came to observe and learn.

He has been at Solano Middle School for 14 years and has been the chair of the Special Education Department for 10 years. Bracco has earned a Special Education Credential and an Autism Spectrum Disorders Certificate.

Robert Russell, principal of Solano Middle School, described Bracco as "an exceptional teacher who has a genuine concern and interest in the education of our students (who) . . . are always engaged, comfortable, disciplined, and show Mr. Bracco a level of respect that very few teachers ever achieve. (He) consistently promotes excellent student achievement through highly effective use of the curriculum."

Angelo "Ang" Bracco may be reached through Solano Middle School at [abracco@vallejo.k12.ca.us](mailto:abracco@vallejo.k12.ca.us) or 707-556-8600.

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## Michael Hayden

### **Ninth–Twelfth Grade Choral Music and Music Appreciation Teacher Mira Costa High School Manhattan Beach Unified School District**

I believe without hesitation that all students can learn to sing beautifully. All my students contribute to the 'sound' of a Mira Costa Choir, a full, rich and mature sound that is well beyond their years. I want each student to find his/her voice, never hiding it, bringing out the confidence for which our choirs are known.

—*Mr. Hayden, from his 2014 California Teacher of the Year Application*

Hayden has been teaching music for 31 years. Since 2007, he has been teaching choral music and music appreciation to ninth through twelfth graders at Mira Costa High School.

Music has been a part of his life since his elementary days when he was introduced to choral singing. As his passion for music developed over the years, so too did his desire to become a teacher.

Following his doctoral studies at Michigan State University, he got his start as a graduate teaching assistant at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. It did not take long for his potential and influence as an educator to flourish and positively impact the students in his classrooms. Earning many awards and recognitions over the years, Hayden's true passion comes from the impact teaching has on his and his students' lives.

Ben Dale, principal of Mira Cost High School, describes Hayden as "teaching with surgeon-like precision, but having the heart of a giant. He demands excellence from his students, but shows empathy and understanding during the process. Michael is clearly in charge, but year after year, empowers emerging leaders through his collaborative teaching model. He presents a model of what we want all teachers to be, know, and do."

Michael Hayden may be reached through Mira Costa High School at [mhayden@mbusd.org](mailto:mhayden@mbusd.org) or 310-303-3814.

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## Linda Horist

### **Second Grade Teacher Nohl Canyon Elementary School Orange Unified School District**

Creative engagement strategies are instrumental to the way my classroom operates and student motivation is paramount to building a foundation for learning. From the moment a student enters the classroom, my message is, "you can do, be, dream and become anything you want to!" Find the joy in learning and you'll find the joy in yourself. This is the philosophy I constantly demonstrate to my students.

—*Ms. Horist, from her 2014 California Teacher of the Year Application*

Horist began her career in teaching in 1978 and has taught second graders at Nohl Canyon Elementary for the last 13 years

From an early age, Linda had a calling toward teaching. Large family gatherings are where she got her start, often found in the middle of the action, seizing every opportunity to spread the knowledge she had just absorbed from the environment around her.

The family foundation had such a lasting effect on her that it has transferred into the way she has affected so many students throughout the years. Her classroom is modeled after her family, acknowledging that each student has his/her own distinct personality and style of learning. Through enduring connections with her students she aims to instill in every child a love of learning as a foundation to build on for future success.

Dominique Polchow, principal of Nohl Canyon Elementary School refers to Horist as the "WOW!" teacher, "Every year a new community of students and parents is forever changed by the greatness of this truly amazing and spirited teacher. Even before day one, she creates a special bond with her families, calling each student individually the night before the first day of school to personally greet them. Nohl Canyon is privileged to have such an educator extraordinaire."

Linda Horist may be reached through Nohl Canyon Elementary School at [lorist@orangeusd.org](mailto:lorist@orangeusd.org) or 714-997-6203.

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## Jessica Pack

### Sixth Grade Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technology Teacher James Workman Middle School Palm Springs Unified School District

For me, anything less than a passionate approach to education isn't enough. I am a change agent, constantly learning and changing as a professional in order to transform my classroom further and reach my students more effectively than ever before.

—Ms. Pack, from her 2014 California Teacher of the Year Application

Pack teaches language arts, social studies, and technology to sixth graders at James Workman Middle School, where she has worked for eight years.

She was influenced greatly by the teachers in her own life, using both the good and bad from every scenario as inspiration to develop her own effective teaching practices. Her goals for the classroom are to establish a memorable, extraordinary, and safe place for sixth graders to learn.

Pack has earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree from Washington State University. She is president of her local chapter for Computer Using Educators and she continues to be an active member in various associations and her community to help bolster a technology-rich learning environment for her students.

Omar Tinoco, assistant principal of James Workman Middle School, describes Pack as having "a keen ability to make lifelong learners in her classroom. When most teachers struggle with modifying plans to all learning styles, she excels in meeting each and every need of her students."

Jessica Pack may be reached through James Workman Middle School at [jpack@psusd.us](mailto:jpack@psusd.us) or 760-770-8540.

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## The 2014 California Teachers of the Year Finalists

County	Name	Subject	Grade Level	School	District
Alameda	Victor Doan	Honors Biology/AP Biology	9th-12th	San Leandro High School	San Leandro Unified School District
Los Angeles	Jesus Gutierrez Jr.	ESL 1, 2, 3, Guided Studies	9th-12th	Baldwin Park High School	Baldwin Park Unified School District
Los Angeles	Julie Ann McGough	Multiple Subject	5th	Victor Hodge Elementary School	Azusa Unified School District
Orange	Scott Bedley	Multiple Subject	5th	Plaza Vista School	Irvine Unified School District
San Diego	Cynthia Mason Jackson	Multiple Subject	8th	Hidden Valley Middle School	Escondido Union School District
San Diego	Crystal Rienick	Language Arts/English	10th and 11th	Valley Center High School	Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District

## The 2014 California Teachers of the Year Semi-Finalists

County	Name	Subject	Grade Level	School	District

Contra Costa	Cynthia Egan	Science	11th and 12th	San Ramon Valley High School	San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Los Angeles	Jill Tobin	GeoScience/Honors Biology	9th thru 12th	John Burroughs High School	Burbank Unified School District
Orange	Glen Warren	Technology & Information Science	7th and 8th	McPherson Magnet School	Orange Unified School District
Riverside	Ashley Hayball	Multiple Subject	4th	Amelia Earhart Elementary School of International Studies	Desert Sands Unified School District
Riverside	Lisa Stallings	Multiple Subject	1st	Coronita Elementary School	Corona Norco Unified School District
San Bernardino	Ben Cavanaugh	U.S. History/AP Government	11th and 12th	Rancho Cucamonga High School	Chaffey Joint Union High School District
San Bernardino	Michelle Caroccia	Multiple Subject	5th	Dona Merced Elementary	Central School District

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