



2009 MARYLAND'S "TEACHER OF THE YEAR"

**William Thomas, 10th Grade Teacher
AP & LSN Government
Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School, Prince George's County**

William Thomas, a Social Studies teacher specializing in local, state, and national government, and Advanced Placement government at Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School in Prince George's County, has been named the 2009 Maryland Teacher of the Year.

Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick made the surprise announcement at an evening gala that included Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, former Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, Congressmen John Sarbanes and Chris Van Hollen, members of the State Board of Education, and hundreds of educators, parents, business, and community leaders.

Mr. Thomas, a graduate of State University of New York at Albany and Bowie State University, holds a degree in Social Studies and a master's degree in Reading Education. Mr. Thomas credits his success to the efforts of his parents who did not go beyond high school, but strongly encouraged him to pursue a college degree, and encouraged nightly Bible reading which later led to his passion for reading and teaching others. He found himself intrigued by the connections between the Bible, ancient and modern history, as well as social issues. These connections led him to his desire to teach history and government.

Two of Mr. Thomas' teachers, both football coaches who taught U.S. History and Sociology, also had a profound influence on him. Having coaches as teachers changed his perception of teachers, and he admired their ability to change roles in the classroom. His teachers' dual roles helped him to realize that teachers were also people with normal lives outside of the classroom. Furthermore, it allowed him to see himself as a teacher.

"Choosing Maryland's Teacher of the Year is never an easy task, and this year's nominees were some of the best ever," said Dr. Grasmick. "William Thomas equates classroom teaching to art. His desire to sculpt the minds of our students, carefully crafting each individual based on his or her own unique qualities, helped him stand out. He does not view teaching as a stepping stone to another area in the profession and when asked repeatedly to enter into administration - Mr. Thomas acknowledges that the work of administrators is vital to the successful functioning of a school system - he responds by saying that he can not give up his life's calling. This is one reason he is certainly well worthy of our celebration."

"Education is the foundation of our society and I play one of the most critical roles in this process," said Mr. Thomas. "I have been allotted a set number of days each year in which to impart a prescribed amount of information. Each lesson is vital to each student because it becomes a building block to the foundation. Educators from pre-K through the collegiate level work to add his or her blocks to the foundation. It is truly an honor to be a part of this process."

As the Maryland Teacher of the Year, Mr. Thomas will receive an Apple computer, \$9,000 in cash awards, a week at National Space Camp, a 4-day trip to the Teacher of the Year Conference in

Dallas, Texas, a SmartBoard and supporting materials from SMARTer Kids Foundation valued at \$15,000, and a \$25,000 Saturn Aura from the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association. He also will be honored by the President at the White House in April 2009. Mr. Thomas will now go on to the National Teacher of the Year competition, which will be announced next April.