



250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
801.538.7500

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Contact: Mark Peterson, public relations director
(801) 538-7635 · mark.peterson@schools.utah.gov

East High Social Studies Teacher Named Utah Teacher of the Year

SALT LAKE CITY – Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction Larry K. Shumway today named Salt Lake City East High School Techniques for Tough Times/social studies teacher Leigh M. VandenAkker Utah's 2012 Teacher of the Year.

VandenAkker, of Salt Lake City, was presented with a check for \$10,000 and will compete with her fellow teachers of the year in a national competition. VandenAkker will also receive a SMART Board interactive white board from SMART Board Technologies, a classroom amplification system from Educational Technology Solutions, and a laptop computer from PC Laptops. She will meet with fellow teachers of the year in Dallas and meet with President Barak Obama in Washington and attend space camp in Alabama next summer.

Jared Berrett of Blanding, a technology, digital media and engineering teacher at San Juan High School in Blanding and Jennifer Bodell of South Jordan, a sixth grade teacher at Harry S Truman Elementary School in West Valley City were named as runners up and each received a check for \$4,000.

A committee with representatives from the Utah State Office of Education, principals, superintendents, the Utah PTA, the Utah Education Association and 2011 Utah Teacher of the Year Gay Beck chose VandenAkker from among 18 nominations sent in from local school districts and charter schools.

“Every so often I ask students ‘What teacher gets the most out of you, has the highest expectations, and has made the biggest difference in your life,’” said East High Principal Paul S. Sagers, Jr. “Inevitably, students quickly respond ‘Mrs. V.’ Her philosophy is to inclusively connect all students to school with a ‘whatever it takes’ attitude in order to make sure they graduate and leave with a rigorous and quality learning experience.”

“She gives students the greatest education of all – the skills to be successful in both academics and relations,” said East High PTSA President Melissa Mecham.

VandenAkker succeeds Alpine’s Highland Elementary School kindergarten teacher Gay Beck.