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February 15, 2019

Fairfax educator named AITC Teacher of the Year

Chris Kniesly, a science teacher at Mark Twain Middle School in Fairfax County, has been named [Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom](#) 2019 Teacher of the Year.

The award recognizes a Virginia educator for incorporating agriculture into core curriculum.

Kniesly has established a school farm that includes chickens, aquaculture and hydroponics, which incorporate life science and biology. His goal is to provide students with an environmentally conscious introduction to agricultural concepts and to create real-life learning experiences. The school farm has an impact on all students at the school, but especially those in Kniesly's science classes.

"Chris uses his extensive school farm and garden as the jumping-off point for real-life, hands-on examples to demonstrate a variety of science concepts," noted Tammy Maxey, AITC senior education manager and president-elect of the National AITC Organization. "Through Chris' efforts, his students are gaining a greater appreciation for agriculture, as well as an improved understanding that food begins on the farm."

As Virginia AITC Teacher of the Year, Kniesly will receive a scholarship to attend the 2019 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference in June in Little Rock, Ark., and a \$500 award.

Virginia AITC also recognized Pamela Hall, a first-grade teacher at Windsor Elementary School in Isle of Wight County, as runner-up. Hall will receive registration to the 2019 National AITC Conference.

Agriculture in the Classroom is a national program that promotes greater understanding of agriculture through education. The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is a nonprofit organization that receives financial and administrative support from [Virginia Farm Bureau Federation](#).

Media: Contact [Maxey](#) at 804-290-1143.

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