



## Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

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**BLUFFTON, Ind.** – The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) today announced that Tara Cocanower, a world history teacher at Bluffton High School, has been named the 2023 Indiana Teacher of the Year.

“For many educators, becoming a teacher is a calling to serve others and make a positive impact on the world, one student at a time, and Mrs. Tara Cocanower is the embodiment of someone who was truly meant to be a teacher,” said Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education. “When you see the way she connects with her students, it is clear to those around her that in addition to maximizing student learning, she is positively impacting lives and preparing her students to do the same. By believing in her students and being a trusted mentor, she is empowering the next generation of leaders and, as she calls them, world changers.”

Named the 2021 Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District Teacher of the Year, Cocanower teaches world history and AP World History, in addition to leading Bluffton High School’s history club and serving as the history department team leader. Cocanower works to develop fun, engaging, and inclusive lessons that allow her students to learn history and develop their own worldviews. This year, her students achieved an 83.5% pass rate on the AP World History exam, where the state average is 48.1%.

Cocanower serves as Bluffton High School’s high ability coordinator and the school’s co-technology coordinator, where she works to introduce and support her fellow teachers in using technology to build more engaging and accessible lessons.

She also is a leader in her school by working to mentor first-year educators and hosting cadet teachers, encouraging Bluffton students to consider careers in history and education. This school year, Cocanower is partnering with a fellow Bluffton High School teacher to offer a new principles of teaching course, which introduces high school students to the education profession.

In addition to her teaching role at Bluffton High School, Cocanower serves as the head coach for both the girls golf team and the girls track and field team. She also organizes a



junior golf league and youth track meets to make sports accessible to all children in the community. Cocanower also leads a youth ministry in Bluffton with her husband, and serves on the board of Hope Missionary Pre-School.

Having served two years in the Peace Corps, Cocanower believes in living a life of service inside and outside of the classroom. Now in her 12th year of teaching, she provides opportunities for her students, who she regularly refers to as “world changers,” to actively serve in their community.

Prior to teaching at Bluffton High School, Cocanower taught middle school social studies for seven years. She received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern Indiana in 2007 in history and secondary education. A native of Bluffton, Cocanower is dedicated to helping open doors of opportunity for her students.

“Mrs. Tara Cocanower embodies the qualities of a highly effective educator while maintaining the necessary genuine authenticity to best connect her students with success,” said Bluffton-Harrison MSD superintendent, Dr. Brad Yates. “I have witnessed Mrs. Cocanower’s influence on my own children both in the classroom and on the golf course. Her lasting impact on students continues to be a bright spot in our profession as she is a true representation of an excellent teacher.”

As Indiana Teacher of the Year, Cocanower will work to help elevate the teaching profession in Indiana, as well as represent Hoosier teachers at the national level.

For over 60 years, the [Indiana Teacher of the Year Program](#) has worked to inspire, rejuvenate, and celebrate the teaching profession by recognizing outstanding teachers from across the state. The program encourages schools to nominate their local Teachers of the Year for this statewide honor. Finalists are selected from these applicants by a committee made up of former Teachers of the Year, IDOE staff, educational organization leaders, business and community leaders and representatives from higher education.

More information about the Indiana Teacher of the Year program is available [here](#). Cocanower’s high-resolution headshot and photos for her teaching can be found [here](#).