Josh Stumpenhorst, a sixth-grade language arts and social science teacher at Lincoln Junior High School in Naperville Community School District 203, was named the 2012 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Stumpenhorst was one of nine Teacher of the Year finalists at the 37th annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year held Oct. 22, 2011, in Normal. More than 200 educators from across the state were honored as part of the Illinois State Board of Education’s recognition program for teachers, administrators and school personnel.

As Illinois Teacher of the Year, Stumpenhorst competed for National Teacher of the Year and represented Illinois throughout the year, including trips to the White House and NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala. In August, he served with 2011 Illinois Teacher of the Year Annice Brave of Alton High School as grand marshals of the Illinois State Fair parade.

Stumpenhorst says he knew he wanted to be a teacher at a young age. He credits his upbringing, educational and athletic experiences with helping him realize the impact relationships play in every aspect of life. Stumpenhorst strives to ensure that his students establish positive and lasting relationships with peers and teachers. Now in his ninth year of teaching, Stumpenhorst is energized by his students. Their enthusiasm for learning inspires Stumpenhorst to deliver lessons that are engaging and connected to the real world.

Stumpenhorst graduated from North Central College and holds a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction. He is also National Board Certified in Early Adolescent Social Science. Stumpenhorst coaches basketball and track and works closely with the student council and computer club. Stumpenhorst is described by parents and colleagues as a passionate teacher who constantly develops innovative ways to motivate students. Parents also appreciate his ability to help students navigate the social and emotional challenges of junior high.

When administrators realized that the current grading system was not working, Stumpenhorst played a pivotal role in the transition to standard based grading. He read, researched, developed and sought feedback on a standard based grading model he designed. Armed with the thoughts of others, he set about retooling the system and sharing his analysis with team members. He helped colleagues understand the new process and encouraged them to participate in the creation of the end result.

Nearly 200 nominations for Those Who Excel were reviewed and scored three times by a selection committee comprised of administrators, teachers and school board members. The nine finalists for Teacher of the Year were interviewed and videotaped and those interviews were scored again before a final recommendation was made. Principals, faculty, parents and students submit letters on behalf of candidates as part of the nomination process.