



NJDOE News

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Four NJ Educators Are Presidential Award Finalists

Four New Jersey teachers have been named 2006 finalists in the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) competition, the nation's highest honor for math and science educators.

Each state establishes panels of science and mathematics teachers every year to nominate its PAEMST finalists. National panels will select Presidential Award winners from among the state finalists next spring.

New Jersey's 2006 finalists are:

- Jayne King, of Medford, who teaches 5th grade mathematics and social studies at Hartford School in Mount Laurel (Burlington County).
- Kimberly Mueller, of Cinnaminson, who teaches kindergarten at Florence L. Walther School in Lumberton (Burlington County).
- Christine Ward Diaz, of Hackensack, who teaches 5th grade science at East Brook Middle School in Paramus (Bergen County).
- Luella Vengenock, of Salem, who teaches 2nd grade at Alloway Township School (Salem County).

"These outstanding educators combine their knowledge of the subjects they teach with the ability to inspire their students and colleagues," said acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "We at the Department share in the pride that their schools, districts and families have for their accomplishments."

Jayne King has been an educator for 26 years. She has been teaching at Hartford School for the past 16 years, and is currently responsible for teaching math and social studies to 50 fifth graders as part of the school's two-teacher team arrangement, which she helped to pilot.

The math lesson she submitted for the competition sought to develop the conceptual understanding of the relationship between area and perimeter by using a landscape design problem featuring "Scruffy the Dog."

King received a BA in Psychology and a BS (cum laude) in Education from the University of Pennsylvania in 1974.

Kimberly Mueller, Lumberton Township's 2005-06 Teacher of the Year, teaches kindergarten and has worked at Walther School for 12 years. She holds a BA in early childhood and elementary education and a master's degree in education, both from Arcadia University in Pennsylvania, and a doctorate in educational leadership from St. Joseph's University.

Her submitted math lesson focused on the children's love of dinosaurs in order to reinforce and sharpen their understanding of mathematical concepts such as estimation, measurement, sorting, sequencing and problem-solving.

Christine Ward Diaz has been teaching for nine years, the last eight at East Brook Middle School. She teaches 5th grade in a team setting, where she is responsible for all of the science courses, along with one section each of mathematics and advanced mathematics.

The science lesson on the video she submitted was designed to help students develop and test theories about why light behaves differently when traveling through different types of lenses. The goal was to show students how to gather evidence to support their theories, or modify their existing theories based on new evidence.

Ward Diaz earned a BS in elementary education from the University of Scranton and an MA in environmental studies from Montclair State University. She has received both a Toshiba America Foundation grant and an ING Unsung Hero award, and was named her school's Teacher of the Year in 2004 -2005. She was recently selected to participate in the Department of Energy sponsored Laboratory Science Teacher Professional Development Program at the Jefferson Laboratory in Newport News, Virginia.

Luella Vangenock, who was also a New Jersey PAEMST finalist in 2001, has been teaching at Alloway Township School for 29 years. She holds a BA in elementary education from Radford College.

Her submitted science lesson focused on "Gardening Partners," a schoolyard habitat program she developed and coordinated. During the lesson, students used scientific inquiry and observation skills to discover places in the garden where they could find evidence of a good habitat for butterflies and other insects.

Vangenock was the recipient of a DuPont award in earlier this year which paid for her trip to the National Science Teachers Convention.

The PAEMST program was established in 1983. In alternate years, the program honors teachers in grades K-6 and 7-12. Candidates must have taught science or mathematics for at least five years.

Nomination forms for the 2007 selection process honoring middle and secondary school teachers, grades 7-12, are available online at www.paemst.org. Anyone can submit a nomination for an educator whom they feel is deserving of this award.

For more information about awards in education, please visit the DOE website:
<http://www.nj.gov/njded/educators/rpr/recognition/>.

For more information, please contact the New Jersey Department of Education, Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.