



For Immediate Release

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Contact: [Michael Yaple](#)

(609) 376-9072

Camden County Educator Named New Jersey State Teacher of the Year

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education today announced that Kimberly Dickstein, a high school English teacher at Haddonfield Memorial High School, has been named the 2019-20 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year.

“Teachers play a critical part in enriching the lives of New Jersey’s future leaders,” said Governor Murphy. “I applaud Kimberly for her dedication and commitment to prepare our students with the tools and support they need in order to succeed, not just in the classroom, but in the real world.”

“I commend Kimberly for her vision and her ability to not only make learning interesting, but *meaningful* to students,” said Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet. “We are proud to have this highly respected and fiercely dedicated educator represent New Jersey as its State Teacher of the Year.”

Kimberly, who was raised in Camden County, earned her bachelor’s in English and Political Science from Rutgers College in 2008 and her master’s degree in English Secondary Education from Rutgers University in 2009. For the past 11 years as an English teacher at Haddonfield Memorial High School, she has made reading an active experience for her students, connecting assigned texts with performances and service activities.

At Haddonfield Memorial High School, Kimberly advises extracurricular activities such as Model United Nations, Stand With Camden, and the Shakespeare Troupe. Last year, her students competed on the national stage at the English Speaking Union’s National Shakespeare Competition.

One of the hallmarks of Kimberly’s focus is intertwining classroom and personal experiences with the community:

- Kimberly’s call to public service occurred in high school, after losing her best friend to cancer. Finding so few resources to improve the quality of life for hospitalized teenagers, her friend’s parents established the Alicia Rose Victorious Foundation to create teen lounges, activities and events for adolescents with life-threatening illnesses. Over the past 17 years, Kimberly has been closely involved with the foundation, which has provided over \$2.5 million to support programs for teens battling cancer.
- As a teacher, Kimberly and her class attracted media attention by helping a former child soldier from South Sudan. After studying a book about the trauma endured by a child soldier, Kimberly’s class connected with a former child soldier in South Sudan, Garang Buk Buk Piol, who

shared his experiences via Skype. In speaking with Buk, they discovered he didn't have the funding needed to attend a master's program at Emory University. The students and community, led by Kimberly, crowd-sourced more than \$80,000 to support his education.

- One of the people who helped connect Kimberly with Buk, the former child soldier, was Phil Hughes, who had volunteered with the Peace Corps and started a business that supports small-scale farmers in Africa. Kimberly and Phil remained in touch and became close, and on Saturday they were married in the courtyard of the school where she teaches. They invited anyone from the Haddonfield community to attend.

"You could not have chosen a finer, more deserving educator for this award than Kimberly Dickstein," said Lawrence J. Mussoline, superintendent of the Haddonfield School District. "Kimberly has one speed: 100 m.p.h. She instills confidence in her students every day. She delves deeper than most into inquiry, and in the case of caring about and raising money for a former child soldier in Sudan, she brings content to life for her students. We are lucky to have her on staff and New Jersey is lucky to her as the 2019-20 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year."

"Kimberly exemplifies the love of teaching that we see among New Jersey educators," said Kathy Goldenberg, President of the State Board of Education. "Her enthusiasm isn't contained just to her classroom; it encompasses her whole school community. I look forward to her continued contributions, where she will have the opportunity to share her passion with the entire state."

She was named by South Jersey Magazine in 2017 as a South Jersey SuperWoman; Camden County awarded her the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Medal in 2019; and in 2019 was recognized as a Princeton University Distinguished Secondary School Teacher.

"I have always felt the call to public service, and I can think of no better way to serve than in the classroom," said Kimberly. "Being named New Jersey State Teacher of the Year is not only a great honor, but also a call to action. It is my hope to share this platform with as many educators as possible so that we can celebrate and recognize the great work happening in classrooms across the state."

In her role as State Teacher of the Year, Kimberly will work with the New Jersey state Department of Education, give presentations around the state highlighting her passion for education and drive for success. She will also be attending national conferences with other State Teachers of the Year.

The other five New Jersey State Teacher of the Year finalists will be recognized at a State Board of Education recognition ceremony in December. The finalists received the highest scores on their applications and their interviews with a distinguished panel of representatives from the state's education associations and other stakeholder groups. The finalists are: Leah Jerome, 11th-12th grade social studies teacher for the Pascack Valley Regional High School District, Bergen County; Bryan Lowe, 5th grade teacher at Valley Road Elementary School, Clark School District, Union County; Yanelis Cabaleiro-Rempusheski, preschool special education teacher at School No. 3, Belleville School District, Essex County; Tracy Demarest, preschool-kindergarten special education teacher at the William Roper School, Woodstown-Pilesgrove School District, Salem County; and Jennifer Caputo, 5th grade teacher at the Helen Morgan Elementary School, Sparta Township School District, Sussex County.

Additional information can be found on the [Governor's Educator of the Year webpage](#).