



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 4, 2026
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: Principals, Chief Talent Officer/Staff Involved with Educator Recognition
From: Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Teaching and Learning Services
Deadline: April 10, 2026

2026 Exemplary Educator Recognition Program

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) invites school administrators to recommend up to three outstanding elementary (grades PreK-5) educators for the 2026 Exemplary Educator Recognition Program. This program alternates each year in honoring outstanding elementary and secondary educators. This year we are seeking elementary educators (grades PreK-5) who:

- have a positive impact on their students, colleagues and the school community;
- possess a clear vision for quality teaching and learning; and
- may be a candidate for recognition at the county, state, and national level.

Honoring educators promotes a culture that publicly recognizes excellence and fosters greater pride in the education profession. The NJDOE encourages administrators to consider exceptional educators with diverse backgrounds to ensure honorees represent the full diversity of New Jersey.

Recommending Exemplary Educators

Administrators can recommend up to three elementary teachers, specialists, and principals from New Jersey public school districts (including charter schools and renaissance school projects) who have:

- taught for at least five years and are considered early to mid-career educators;
- demonstrated exceptional teaching and leadership abilities; and,
- received a rating of effective or highly effective on the latest final summative evaluation.

Administrators must complete and submit the online 2026 Exemplary Educator Recognition Program Recommendation Form for each exemplary educator nominated. This form can be found on the [New Jersey Department of Education's Homeroom webpage](#) and clicking on "Exemplary Educator." Each administrator will then need a *district-level Exemplary Educator account* assigned by their district's Homeroom Administrator.

Completed recommendation forms must be submitted online by 4:00 p.m. Friday, April 10, 2026. For full criteria and recommendation form information, please refer to this [information sheet](#).

Recommendations are confidential and should not be shared with the candidate. If a recommended candidate is selected as an Exemplary Educator, the recommender will receive a certificate of recognition in November 2026 via mail to share with the awardees at that time.

Contact Information

For questions, please contact the educator recognition team at educatorrecognition@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
NJ LEE Group
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools