



## **NJDOE News**

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### **Cape May County Educator is 1999-2000 Teacher of the Year**

Katherine Bassett, a library media specialist at the Ocean City Intermediate School, Cape May County, has been selected as the 1999-2000 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. Ellen Schechter, assistant commissioner for the Division of Academic and Career Standards, introduced Bassett at today's monthly meeting of the New Jersey State Board of Education.

"I am a firm supporter of the Teacher of the Year program," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "It is extremely important that we tell classroom teachers that the work they do to help our children learn and succeed makes a difference, and that we want to give special recognition to those teachers that symbolize what is best about our profession."

Bassett's 23-year teaching career has been almost exclusively at the Ocean City Intermediate School. She is a respected member of the staff who is often called upon for advice from her colleagues at the school. She has fully automated the 690-student school's library, and she works with almost every teacher in the building each year in helping students prepare research projects, core curriculum selection, and school activities that involve the community.

"The library program is a real force in our school and is constantly changing, providing me with new challenges and outlets for creativity," she said.

Bassett describes her philosophy of teaching as "educating the whole child. My concern is not that my children memorize the classes of the Dewey Decimal System, but that they understand the beauty of its organization and its flexibility in allowing for the addition of new subjects."

"I strive to help my pupils become critical and creative thinkers, rather than have them recite memorized facts," she said.

Bassett is a strong proponent of student self-pride and self-esteem, and is involved in many activities in the school and community to foster these aspects of student development. She also advocates mentoring type programs for students who suffer from low self-esteem to the point where they are at risk of dropping out of school - or lashing out at their colleagues. She also appeals to senior citizens to get involved with their local schools and share their experiences with students.

One of the new Teacher of the Year's favorite quotes is, "A school is four walls with tomorrow inside."

Katherine Bassett, a resident of Somers Point, Atlantic County, holds a bachelor's degree in library science from Millersville State College in Pennsylvania. She earned her master's degree in elementary education with computer specialization, and holds a baccalaureate certificate in computers in education, both from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University). She is a member of several professional organizations, including the American Library Association and the New Jersey Education Association. She has won state awards, including four New Jersey PRIDE awards and a 1999 Best Practices Award in Educational Support for her program, "A School Full of Readers."

As New Jersey Teacher of the Year, Bassett will be asked to be an advocate and role model for the teaching profession and will speak on behalf of the teachers in New Jersey. She will also represent New Jersey in the national Teacher of the Year competition, which is cosponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and Scholastic, Inc. The national winner will be announced in April 2000.

A panel of judges representing the state's education associations selected Bassett. The panel reviewed the applications of the 21 county teachers of the year and interviewed five finalists before deciding on Bassett.

NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS: [Attached is a list of the 1999-2000 County Teachers of the Year.](#)