



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:
Richard Vespucci
Jon Zlock
609-292-1126

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Six New Jersey Teachers Named Finalists for Presidential Awards

Six New Jersey secondary school teachers have been named finalists in a national program designed to recognize exemplary teaching in mathematics and science. All six participated in the 2003 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

The teachers who received national awards in secondary mathematics are: **Nancy Ciandella**, Gloucester County Institute of Technology, Gloucester County Vocational-Technical Schools; **Ellen LeBlanc**, High Technology High School, Monmouth County Vocational-Technical Schools; and **Linda Wisneski**, Morris Hills High School, Morris Hills Public Schools.

The teachers who received national awards in secondary science are: **Tina Held**, Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science, Ocean County Vocational-Technical Schools; **Luisa Marcos**, Union Hill High School, Union City Public Schools; and **Marilyn Steneken**, Sparta Township Middle School, Sparta Township Schools.

"These prestigious awards are reserved for teachers who are outstanding examples of educators who combine their knowledge of the subjects with the ability to inspire their students and colleagues," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "We at the Department take great pride in praising such wonderful examples of teachers who care about their profession and about their students. We share in the pride that their schools, districts and families have for their accomplishments."

Nancy Ciandella has taught math at the Gloucester County Institute of Technology since 1989. She began her career as a math teacher 23 years ago in the Howard County Public Schools, Maryland. She earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics education from Mary Washington College in Virginia, and her master's from Rowan University.

Ciandella is her district's project coordinator for an interactive mathematics program funded by the New Jersey Statewide Systemic Initiative, and she has presented workshops on the topic of interactive math. She is a member of several professional organizations, including the national and state councils of Teachers of Mathematics.

Ellen LeBlanc has taught a variety of math courses, including advanced placement calculus, pre-calculus and trigonometry, at High Technology High School in Lincroft since 1991. She also served as the school's math curriculum coordinator from 2000 to 2002. She earned her master's degree in mathematics from Teachers College (Columbia) in New York City and her bachelor's degree in mathematics from Rutgers College. Her awards include High Technology Teacher of the Year, in 1996-97.

Linda Wisneski has taught various math courses for the Morris Hills Regional School District since 1985. Her job includes staff development for the Mathematics Department, organizing and presenting sharing sessions, assisting math teachers in exam development, textbook selection, and use of technology in the math classroom. She began her career in 1972 as an algebra and general math teacher at Parsippany High School.

Wisneski holds a master's degree in computer education from St. Peter's College and a bachelor's degree in K-12 mathematics education from Montclair State College. She has presented at many conferences and workshops for professional organizations. She counts a Best Practice Award from the Department of Education among several honors she has received during her career.

Tina Held has been a member of the teaching staff of the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science of the Ocean County Vocational-Technical Schools since 2001. She is responsible for developing an in-depth, "hands-on" marine and environmental curriculum. Her activities at the school include promoting applied studies, independent research and community service projects for her students.

Held taught marine and environmental studies at Manasquan High School from 1995-2001 and from there,

developed a marine science curriculum and instruction as part of an advanced university preparatory program at Princeton University before assuming her current position. She earned her bachelor's degree from Richard Stockton College and has completed graduate programs in K-12 biology at Rider University and marine studies at the College of the Atlantic, Maine. She was nominated for an outstanding teaching award from Princeton University and has been recognized for her skill in scuba diving.

Luisa Marcos began her career in private industry and later entered the field of education through the alternate route with the Union City Public Schools in 1985. She has held several positions in Union City since then and most recently has taught advanced placement chemistry, chemistry, biology and general science at Union Hill High School. She left the district from 1996 to 2000 to teach similar courses at High Tech High School in North Bergen.

From 1994-96, Marcos taught two-week chemistry and one-week biology institutes under the Teacher Outreach (TORCH) Program, sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry from St. Peter's College and Fairleigh Dickinson University, respectively. She has participated in many professional development activities and has conducted many presentations in science education. She has been cited for excellence in teaching by her school district and recently received the Jersey Journal Every Day Hero Award in the Teachers Who Inspire category.

Marilyn Steneken has taught seventh grade life science at the Sparta Middle School in Sussex County since 1999. Prior to that, she held a similar position at the Jefferson Township Middle School. She began her teaching career 31 years ago as a middle school physical science teacher in Ringwood. She earned her bachelor's degree from Montclair University and holds teaching certificates in secondary science and elementary education.

Steneken holds a master's degree in teaching from Marygrove College and has taken many post-graduate courses in science and technology related topics throughout her career. Her awards include a New Jersey Best Practice for her instructional program, "Raising Trout in the Classroom." She is also a past recipient of a Governor's Teacher Recognition award.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching is the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science in grades K-12. The National Science Foundation began the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 1983 by inviting each state to nominate math and science teachers for consideration in the national program. In alternate years, the program honors teachers in grades K-6 and 7-12. Teachers must have taught science or mathematics for at least five years.

Statewide panels of science and mathematics educators review classroom videos and professional development activities in selecting the state finalists. National panels later select presidential awardees from among the state finalists.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching is one of myriad education initiatives the DOE and the Gov. James E. McGreevey Administration supports. Teacher quality and celebrating examples of best practices are two top priorities and a major component of the Governor's 21-point plan for education.

For more information on the McGreevey education agenda or more information about education matters, please visit: www.state.nj.us/education. For more information about the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, please contact the DOE Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.