



## Woodstown Middle School Language Arts Teacher Named New Jersey's State Teacher of the Year

*Chelsea Collins selected from among 21 County Teachers of the Year*

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** – The Christie Administration today announced the selection of Chelsea Collins, a sixth-grade language arts teacher from Salem County, as the 2015-2016 State Teacher of the Year. Education Commissioner David Hespe and the State Board of Education honored Collins and the other four finalists at a special ceremony in Trenton.

Chelsea graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations, and then earned her master's in elementary education from The College of New Jersey. During those years, she spent a semester at the University of Barcelona studying Spanish, international business, and Spanish architecture and painting.

As a teacher in the Woodstown-Pilesgrove School District since 2011, Chelsea left her mark on education at every level from her school to an international audience. Her expertise in reading has been recognized worldwide. Her work has been featured on NJTV's Classroom Close-Up, and she was co-author of a blog with education consultant Steve Barkley which was posted on his website. She enthusiastically shares ideas across the state through engagements such as the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association conference and the Department of Education's RAC7 Literacy Workshop. She also serves as the sixth-grade team leader in her school.

"I am always amazed at the energy and passion exhibited by our finalists for State Teacher of the Year," said Commissioner Hespe. "Chelsea is personally motivated by her own interaction with students and how she can improve her educational practices in teaching them, and she, in turn, inspires her students to learn."

Prior to her years at Woodstown Middle School, Chelsea gained experience teaching students in several grade levels where she worked at developing effective reading practices. She routinely uses assessments and data to improve classroom instruction, and differentiates instruction based on the needs of her students.

According to Chelsea, what drives her and inspires her is when students give back to their community as a result of her influence. She is thrilled when she gets a note from parents who can see progress that their children are making, and she says she is touched when her students express their love of learning and acknowledge her role in their progress.

In Chelsea's own words, "To me, my greatest accomplishments are in inspiring students to build their lives and their futures, and in showing that hard work and diligence will open doors and give them endless and limitless opportunities."

The finalists for the State Teacher of the Year achieved the highest scores on their written applications and videos, and then reported for an interview which consisted of a performance assessment and Q&A session. Besides Chelsea, the other four finalists who were recognized at today's ceremony were: Jennifer Clune, a K-2 special education teacher at Jeffrey Clark School in East Greenwich Township School District, Gloucester County; Michael Martirone, a ninth-grade social studies teacher at Egg Harbor Township High School in the Egg Harbor Township School District, Atlantic County; Darlene Noel, a third-grade teacher at Green Street School in the Phillipsburg School District, Warren County; and Kristine Shurina, an eighth-grade English teacher at Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School in the Bridgewater-Raritan School District, Somerset County.

### **About the Governor's Educator of the Year Program**

Last year, the New Jersey Department of Education integrated the Teacher of the Year Program with the Governor's Teacher Recognition Program to form the Governor's Educator of the Year Program. This program allows many talented teachers to be recognized. The process begins at the school level where teachers are selected through the Governor's Educator of the Year program. They then go on to compete at the county level

and are selected by panels representing a cross-section of administrators, teachers, parents, and county education association representatives convened by the Department's executive county superintendents.

Districts taking part in the Governor's Educator of the Year program have found that participation promotes a culture that recognizes excellence, creates a sense of pride within and among schools, and brings public attention to the work of excellent teachers. Additional information can be found on the Governor's [Educator of the Year web page](#).

A state-level panel of educators selects New Jersey's State Teacher of the Year based on a written application, video submission, and interviews with the top five finalists. The State Teacher of the Year will go on to represent New Jersey at the National Teacher of the Year competition.

The program has three sponsors that provide valuable resources for the New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. Educational Testing Service will sponsor a six-month sabbatical from January to June 2016 worth approximately \$60,000. During this time, Collins will work closely with the Department of Education on special projects. In her role as State Teacher of the Year, she will also give presentations around the state and participate in national activities, including meeting the President of the United States. The New Jersey Education Association will pay for the lease of a car for a full year and travel-related expenses, a \$500 clothing allowance and a gold ring. SMART Technologies will provide her with a full SMART Classroom package.