



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Morris County Educator Named 2026-2027 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education announced today that Hannah Olmo, a dance teacher in the Dover School District, Morris County, has been named New Jersey’s State Teacher of the Year for 2026-2027.

Hannah has spent eight years teaching at Dover High School in the Dover Public School District, where she built a four-year, scaffolded dance program centered on equity, creativity, and community.

“I was called to the field of education at a very young age. As a student, I yearned for a dance program in my own high school, and that experience inspired me to make it my mission to provide a free, equitable dance education to as many students as I possibly can,” **said Hannah Olmo**, who, as a 16-year-old growing up in the Midwest, formally requested her local school board add dance to the arts programs that were offered in her school. “At the very moment I was told no, I knew I wanted to be part of the movement to change that reality for other young dancers eager to chase their dreams. I believe dance has the power to build confidence, give students a space to express who they are and what they believe, and create a sense of community like no other.”

“Congratulations to Hannah Olmo for being named New Jersey’s State Teacher of the Year,” **said Governor Mikie Sherrill**. “Hannah is a credit to her profession, representing the best our state’s K-12 public school system has to offer. Through her creativity, dedication, and commitment to her students, she demonstrates the kind of excellence taking place in classrooms across our state every day. Our schools need teachers like Hannah, who help support our kids and give them the tools they need to thrive, both academically and beyond.”

“New Jersey has long recognized the arts as an essential part of a comprehensive education, making it especially meaningful to see a dance educator named State Teacher of the Year,” **said Education Commissioner Lily Laux**. “Hannah’s journey from aspiring teenage dancer to award-winning educator reminds us of the transformative power of deeply committed and passionate education professionals. Her leadership reflects New Jersey’s longstanding commitment to excellence in arts education.”

“Hannah embodies the qualities that define exceptional teaching: expertise, innovation, and a deep commitment to students’ success,” **said Kathy Goldenberg, President of the State Board of Education**. “As New Jersey’s State Teacher of the Year, she will serve as an ambassador for the profession, sharing her experience with educators across the state and helping strengthen connections within New Jersey’s educational community. Her story is a powerful reminder of the impact one teacher can have and an inspiration to those considering a career in education.”

Hannah received a bachelor’s degree in dance from Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts and a master’s degree in dance education from Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

The dance program that Hannah teaches at Dover High School serves approximately 100 students in academic dance courses and more than 80 students through extracurricular opportunities. Hannah also founded the Dance Club, the Heritage Dance Ensemble, and the high school’s first chapter of the National Honor Society of Dance Arts. She revitalized the Latin Mix Club at the high school as a culturally focused dance group. Under her leadership, students have received recognition at the Morris County Teen Arts Festival and the State Teen Arts Festival, and several have continued their dance education at the college level and beyond. In addition, Hannah produces the annual Spring Dance Concert, one of the district’s largest events, featuring more than 100 student performers and welcoming over 600 audience members each year.

“Mrs. Hannah Olmo has shown us that when an educator truly sees their students, a program can become so much more than what it was originally designed to be. What began as a dance program has become a place where students find their voice, build confidence, celebrate their culture, and, most importantly, feel a sense of belonging,” **said Luis Jaime, Superintendent, Dover School District.** “Hannah has created a space where students can be unapologetically themselves while discovering talents and strengths they may not have known they had. This is what exceptional teaching looks like: creating connections, opening doors, and giving students a place to call home within their school.”

“When you see Mrs. Olmo with her students, you can see how much she cares about them. She brings joy into the classroom, challenges students to give their best, and celebrates their growth along the way,” **said Johanna Ross, Principal, Dover High School.** “She reminds us that teaching is about so much more than the subject you teach; it is about the relationships you build and the difference you make in the lives of your students that extends far beyond the classroom.”

“Many of my students call the dance studio ‘home,’ and that is a phrase I never take lightly,” said Hannah. “If I can give my students a place where they feel seen and where they know they belong, then I know I am exactly where I am meant to be.”

In her role as State Teacher of the Year, Hannah will work with the New Jersey Department of Education and give presentations to colleagues and stakeholders around the state, speak with aspiring teachers, and visit classrooms throughout New Jersey to promote diversity in the teacher workforce and continual educational improvement. She will also take part in national conferences with other State Teachers of the Year.

Hannah was one of three finalists for New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. 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 other finalists are Melissa Arrambide, a second-grade teacher at Mountain Villa School in the Allamuchy Township School District, Warren County; and Jennifer Vogel, STEM teacher at Melvin H. Kreps Middle School in the East Windsor Regional School District, Mercer County.

Additional information can be found on the [Governor's Educator of the Year webpage](#). A collection of official images related to the 2026–2027 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year announcement is [available here](#) for media use.

