



NJDOE News

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For Release: October 3, 2007

State Board of Education Recognizes October Student of the Month

Now a sophomore at Raritan Valley Academy in Piscataway, Eleidie Torres has struggled in school since she was a young child. Frequently absent, held back in second grade, a gang member by seventh grade, Torres was arrested in 2005 and placed in a Juvenile Detention Center.

It was then that she realized she'd have to take a different path, school officials said.

"She looked me in the eye and said she wanted to change," said Raritan Valley Academy Principal Tia LaPiana. "She said she wanted to go to school, get her high school diploma, go on to college and pursue a career in the music industry. She promised to quit the gang and give up drugs. I believed her."

Since January 2006, Torres has been an exemplary student at Raritan, a special education services school in Middlesex County. She is a leader, a contributing member to her class, and a role model for her peers. For these reasons, she was honored today by the State Board of Education as the October Student of the Month.

"We know that students come from all walks of life," said President Ronald Butcher. "Eleidie has shown her school community, and the Board, that students deserve second chances and if they put in hard work and believe that an education is a key ingredient, they can succeed."

"Sometimes, we honor students for their many activities and school commitments," said Lucille E. Davy, Commissioner of Education. "Sometimes we honor students for a particular performance or speech. And sometimes we honor students who show a determination to make something of themselves when it matters the most. Eleidie has come a long way, and we're proud of the choices she's made to turn her young life around."

Torres works in the academy's school office, where staff secretaries said they are impressed by her attitude, willingness to work hard, and attention to her job. In the eyes of her principal, she is a "natural born leader."

"Graduation and a diploma are realistic expectations now," LaPaiana said. "The success she has experienced has bolstered her self-esteem and made her goals attainable."

Each month during the school year, the State Board of Education honors an outstanding student or group of students for outstanding work, commitment to academics or athletics, or for being a leader in the school community.