



## **Christie Administration Announces New Jersey 2013-2014 Teacher of the Year**

### ***Gloucester County Social Studies Teacher Kathleen Assini Selected From Among 21 County and State Facility Teachers of the Year***

**For Immediate Release**

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**Trenton, NJ** - The Christie Administration today announced the selection of Kathleen Assini, a social studies teacher in Delsea Regional Middle and High School in Gloucester County, as the New Jersey 2013-2014 Teacher of the Year. Commissioner of Education Chris Cerf and the State Board of Education honored Assini at a ceremony in Trenton.

For the past 11 years, Assini has taught eighth grade social studies classes, ranging from resource room to honors, as well as grades 10-12 history to students in an evening alternative program. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in social studies from Kean University in Union and a Master's of Science in Education, 21st Century Teaching and Learning, from Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, PA. She is certified in both elementary education and social studies.

"Every one of us is here today because of great teachers - and often we can point to just one teacher who changed our lives," said Governor Christie. "For many of her students, Kathleen has been that teacher. She has proven herself to be an outstanding educator and a role model for her students, and I applaud her on her selection as New Jersey's Teacher of the Year."

Education is a second career for Assini. She attended cosmetology school and worked as a hair stylist for more than 20 years while she and her husband raised two children. However, there were some clear signals early on that teaching was her calling. On school trips, the rowdiest boys were assigned to her because she was the one who could handle them. She also noticed that she was often the mentor and trainer for young cosmetologists. She followed her passion, and in three and a half years, she earned her bachelor's degree and K-12 teaching certificate while working at the salon and raising her children.

"Kathleen deeply believes that every one of her children, regardless of the challenges they face, can succeed and go on to do great things. That type of resilience and commitment often goes unnoticed, but is crucial to helping our students persevere," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "I am thrilled that Kathleen will join the Department for the next year, sharing her experience and her wisdom with us in Trenton."

"I would like to add my congratulations to Kathleen Assini on her selection as Teacher of the Year," said State Board Vice President Joseph Fiscaro, who presided over today's meeting. "Her dedication to all students, including the ones who need some extra care to earn their diploma, is the basis for her success in motivating each individual to achieve in school. Her work as a mentor and trainer enables her to assist her colleagues, as well as her students."

"I prefer the title 'learning coach' rather than 'teacher,'" explains Assini. "My teaching philosophy was strongly in place long before I stepped into a classroom as a teacher. The years spent training stylists and coaching young softball players taught me that I could not do things for people; I had to help them learn to do it for themselves using their own strengths and improving their weaknesses."

Assini first co-taught with a special education teacher, from whom she learned how to differentiate lessons to meet the student's individual needs. Her family experience included working with her son to overcome his drug addiction (he has since earned his Master's and now works as a counsellor who helps recovering addicts) - and that experience led to Assini's involvement with teen support programs such as Narateen, Challenge Day, Unity Day, and Natural Helpers/Peer Mediators.

She is heavily involved with training and mentoring, including serving as a trainer in the new educator evaluation system. She even volunteered to be one of the first teachers to be observed under the new system. Her expertise and insight has also been shared with the NJ Department of Education as a member of the NJ Teacher Advisory Panel Pilot. She is passionate about how educators can transform today's schools into institutions that provide students the knowledge they need to become college and career ready in the 21st Century.

Assini has had a lasting impact on both her students and her colleagues, according to her Superintendent, Dr. Piera Gravenor. "Educators like Kathy Assini are a rare treasure for their students and a source of pride and

dignity for the most noble of professions - teaching," she said. "At Delsea, we consider Mrs. Assini to be one of our shining stars whose light reflects on all of us and brings out the best in all who are touched by it."

Assini was chosen from a field of seven finalists who were selected from the County Teachers of the Year based on their written applications, as well as a videotaped lesson. The finalists then came to an interview before the panel that chose the State Teacher of the Year.

**About the Teacher of the Year Program** - The New Jersey Teacher of the Year award is selected and administered by the Department of Education.

The program is sponsored by three organizations and companies that provide valuable resources for the recipient teacher. Educational Testing Service will sponsor a six-month sabbatical from January to June 2014 worth approximately \$60,000. During this time, Assini 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 a rental car and travel expenses for Assini for a full year, while SMART Technologies will provide a SMART Board package.

New Jersey's Teacher of the Year program allows many talented teachers to be recognized. The process begins at the local level, where school and district-level teachers of the year are chosen. District Teachers of the Year have their applications submitted for competition at the county level.

The Department announced the [County Teachers of the Year](#) last month. Additional information can be found on the NJDOE's [Teacher of the Year web page](#).



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From left to right: Joseph Fiscaro, State Board of Education Vice President; Chris Cerf, Commissioner of Education; Kathleen Assini, 2013-14 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year and teacher in the Delsea Regional School District; Jill Bryfogle, Principal of the Delsea Regional Middle School; Piera Gravenor, Superintendent of the Delsea Regional School District; Melissa Williams, Assistant Superintendent at the Delsea Regional School District; Carolyn Ferrucci, District Supervisor; and Thomas Dowd, Interim Gloucester Executive County Superintendent.