



New Hampshire

# Department of Education

## 20th Annual Celebrating Leadership in Education Awards Ceremony

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*NH State Finalist of the  
Presidential Award for Excellence in  
Mathematics and Science Teaching*

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*Blue Ribbon Schools*

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*2023 Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalists*

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*2023 Teacher of the Year Finalists*

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*2023 Teacher of the Year*

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December 8, 2022  
Murphy's Taproom and Carriage House  
Bedford, NH

# Program

Arrivals and Reception

## Welcome

*Frank Edelblut, Commissioner, Department of Education*

## Remarks

*Valerie Sununu, First Lady of New Hampshire*

*Sara Casassa, 2022 NH Teacher of the Year*

## Dinner

## Recognitions

- ◇ 2022 NH State Finalist of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
- ◇ 2022 Blue Ribbon Schools
- ◇ 2023 NH Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalists, Finalists and Teacher of the Year

## Remarks

*Christian Cheetham, 2023 NH Teacher of the Year*

Teachers make a world of difference in the lives of children. The New Hampshire Department of Education's Teacher of the Year program celebrates the strength and resilience of all educators and their unwavering commitment to excellence.

## Message from Frank Edelblut

### New Hampshire's Commissioner of Education

This is a special night as we commemorate our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrating Leadership in Education Awards Ceremony. For the past two decades, the New Hampshire Department of Education has been saluting the efforts of educators statewide and celebrating their accomplishments.

Each year we are inspired by the numerous stories of teachers who are going above and beyond their duties and working tirelessly to help their students overcome challenges and master skills they'll need to thrive. While this daily and important work is often overlooked, we are here tonight to honor your dedication, patience, and perseverance.

The New Hampshire Department of Education annually honors exemplary educators through various recognition programs. The goal of these awards is to amplify teacher voices and empower educators to take part in critical conversations regarding decisions affecting students, teachers, and education as a whole.

With so much attention placed on the field of the education in recent years, we know that the work of teachers has not been easy. But tonight, we are here to cast a positive spotlight on New Hampshire's incredible field of educators – those who are working every evening to grade papers, spending their summer vacation finalizing lesson plans and returning emails from parents in the early morning hours. You are noticed, and your commitment is applauded.

For those educators sitting in this room tonight, your energy is infectious. Thank you for battling on throughout the pandemic when traditional methods of instruction may have been challenged. And thank you for serving as a role model to your fellow teachers. It is clear that you are determined to create paths to bright futures.



## New Hampshire Teacher of the Year

Each year, since 1952, New Hampshire schools have taken part in the State and National Teacher of the Year program. Educators are selected from any New Hampshire state-approved or accredited school, pre-kindergarten through grade 12, if they are planning to continue in an active teaching status. The purpose of the program is to select a teacher who is capable of speaking for and energizing the teaching profession, and representing the positive contributions of all teachers statewide. The Teacher of the Year serves as a leader and ambassador for all the outstanding teachers devoted to the highest level of student learning. This individual has the respect and admiration of their colleagues, as well as:

- Is an expert in their field who guides students of all backgrounds and abilities to achieve excellence
- Collaborates with colleagues, students and families to create a school culture of respect and success
- Deliberately connects the classroom and key stakeholders to foster a strong community at large
- Demonstrates leadership and innovation inside and outside of the classroom walls that embodies lifelong learning
- Expresses themselves in an engaging and articulate way, and
- Is committed to improving education.

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### 2023 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Semi- Finalists

- Amanda Bridges, James Faulkner Elementary School
  - Mikella Eichen, Atkinson Academy
  - Bonnie Heath, Hampton Academy
  - Carmen Kosow, New Searles Elementary School
  - Cathi Stetson, Oyster River High School
  - Julie Verde, Saint Thomas Aquinas High School
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## 2023 NH Teacher of the Year



### Christian Cheetham

Alvirne High School, Hudson

Teaching Experience: 7 years

Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Christian Cheetham teaches high school Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) classes at Alvirne High School in Hudson, New Hampshire. He has taught at Alvirne since his retirement from the United States Air Force in 2015. His military career spans 31 years starting as an enlisted soldier in the Army National Guard and culminating as an Air Force intelligence officer and squadron commander. He is a veteran of Operations Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom. Cheetham holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and Master of Science in International Relations from Troy University, Alabama. Cheetham was integral in leading Alvirne's AFJROTC program to earn certification as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, at the time the first Air Force program in New Hampshire to earn such certification. Cheetham incorporates his extensive leadership and military experience into his classroom. He loves teaching the soft skills of leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and resiliency. He values involvement in the Alvirne community and has served as the girls' varsity basketball coach, faculty member to the Alvirne CTE renovation committee, and led faculty professional development book studies. Cheetham has a love of literature and art, and he strives to incorporate literature, poetry, film, and music into his classes to broaden the experience for his students.

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### 2023 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Finalists

- Susan Bradford, James Masticola Elementary School
  - Jennifer MacLeod, Hollis Brookline Middle School
  - Curt McDermott, Goffstown High School
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## Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST)

The PAEMST is administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on behalf of the White House. Established by Congress in 1983, the Presidential Awards are the nation's highest honors for teachers of mathematics and science. As New Hampshire state finalists, these recipients are now in the running to be selected at the national level.

The award recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession, as well as acknowledges educators who are models in both their classrooms and in their communities. In addition this award provides positive examples for peers and students alike. The teachers receiving these awards are recognized for greatly improving their students' understanding in science, engineering, mathematics, and computer science for exemplary teaching, and for demonstrating educational goals that help them maintain positions of professional leadership. The goal of the program is to encourage highly capable individuals to enter and remain in the STEM teaching field.

The competition alternates each year between teachers of grades K-6 and grades 7-12. After an initial selection process at the state level, a national panel of distinguished scientists, mathematicians, and educators recommends teachers to receive a national PAEMST award. Winners at the national level receive a \$10,000 award from the NSF, as well as a trip for two to Washington, D.C., for a week of professional development activities and celebratory events.

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### NH PAEMST 2022 State Finalist

#### Susan Leifer

Mast Way Elementary School, Lee, NH

Teaching Experience—12 years

Susan Leifer is an experienced educator who is in her seventh year as the technology integrationist at the Mast Way Elementary School in Lee, NH. She is valued at the school as someone who has the

knowledge and skills of STEM concepts and effectively works at integrating these into the general curriculum as well as in her own classes. Susan is described by her colleagues as a hard worker who is a 21st century teacher, of both students and other teachers, leading my example with patience, creativity, humor, and unmatched professionalism. Beyond the school day, Susan supports and provides activities for students, teachers, parents, and community members; a favorite of which is the annual Coding and Cocoa event.

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## Blue Ribbon Schools

Since 2002, schools singled out for national honors will now reflect the goals of our nation's new education reforms for high standards and accountability. The No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private K-12 schools that are either academically superior in their state or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

### 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools

- Enfield Village School, Enfield
- Hanover High School, Hanover
- The Birches Academy of Academics and Art Chartered Public School, Salem

The mission of the Department of Education is to provide educational leadership and services that promote equal educational opportunities and quality practices and programs that enable New Hampshire residents to become fully productive members of society

