



New Hampshire

Department of Education

***21st Annual
Celebrating Leadership in Education
Awards Ceremony***

Blue Ribbon Schools

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

2024 Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalists

2024 Teacher of the Year Finalists

2024 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year

November 30, 2023

DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester, Downtown

Program

Arrivals and Reception

Welcome

Frank Edelblut, Commissioner, Department of Education

Remarks

Valerie Sununu, First Lady of New Hampshire

Christian Cheetham, 2023 NH Teacher of the Year

Dinner

Recognitions

- ◇ 2023 NH State Finalists of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
- ◇ 2023 Blue Ribbon Schools
- ◇ 2024 NH Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalists, Finalists and Teacher of the Year

Remarks

Elizabeth Duclos, 2024 NH Teacher of the Year

The New Hampshire Department of Education is committed to helping students, parents, and educators (including teachers, principals, superintendents, and school communities) meet the educational needs of each student.

Message from Frank Edelblut

New Hampshire's Commissioner of Education

The field of education in New Hampshire is filled with talented individuals who are smart, highly motivated and deeply caring. Each one of you here tonight has embraced your students' curiosity and helped them explore unique learning environments that are guiding them to success. Your innovative learning approaches and methods, all in an effort to help your students thrive, is a testament to your commitment to teaching.

This is a special night as we commemorate our 21st Annual Celebrating Leadership in Education Awards Ceremony. For more than 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.

Those of you being recognized tonight have worked to drive and accelerate improved academic achievement by providing students with the tools needed to help them flourish both inside and outside of the classroom. We understand that it hasn't been easy. Still, you have remained highly adaptable in your approaches, serving as creative and innovative entrepreneurs, or may I say 'edupreneurs,' who are responding to the changing education marketplace.

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.

Thank you for rising to the occasion and serving as a role model to your fellow teachers. New Hampshire is lucky to have such vibrant and dynamic educators walking the halls of our schools and making such a profound difference for our students. 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.



2024 NH Teacher of the Year

Elizabeth Duclos

Pembroke Hill School, Pembroke

Teaching Experience: 16 years

Elizabeth Duclos was chosen as New Hampshire's 2024 Teacher of the Year for her incredible work ethic, insightful thinking, expertise in education and ongoing work to ensure that each student receives the support they deserve to succeed.

Duclos is a third-grade teacher at Pembroke Hill School, which serves students in preschool through fourth-grade in Pembroke. She has been an educator for 16 years, teaching grades one through four in public and private schools throughout her tenure.

New Hampshire is lucky to have an engaging educator who is devoted to creating young learners who feel their work has both meaning and importance. Duclos is committed to creating and delivering instruction that meets students where they are, challenges them to try their best and empowers them to grow as learners and individuals.

Duclos holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Family Studies from the University of New Hampshire and a Master's of Education degree in Elementary Education from the University of New Hampshire. She also completed a certificate program from Plymouth State University earning a certification as a K-12 Reading and Writing Specialist. In addition, she has served on the New Hampshire Association for the Education of Young Children.

Duclos understands that fostering a caring environment for her students is at the core of everything she does for her learners. She values and respects their ideas and encourages them to take risks and become leaders in her classroom. Duclos creates a positive sense of community where students collaborate to build knowledge, skills, and strategies. She is honored to have been chosen as the 2024 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year from a talented group of more than 300 nominees.

2024 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Finalists

Ritu Budakoti, *Keene Middle School*

Ritu has been teaching for 11 years, and is currently serving as an educator at Keene Middle School. She strives to create a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and engaged in the learning process. Those who know her best describe her as the perfect role model of a dedicated educator, adding she is caring, compassionate and professional.

Sean Donahue, *Mckelvie Intermediate School, Bedford*

Sean has been teaching for 15 years, and is currently serving as an educator at McKelvie Intermediate School in Bedford. His mission is to ensure that students feel valued in their knowledge and skills, and to help them feel empowered to become productive members of society. Those who know him best say his ability to teach math is a gift, adding he is an inspiring team player and athlete.

Gregory Parker, *Manchester Memorial High School*

Gregory has been teaching for eight years, and is currently serving at Manchester Memorial High School. One of his priorities is for students to trust him, find comfort in his classroom and utilize him as a resource in both academic and emotional issues. Those who know him best describe him as humble and honest, adding he has a creative mind and calm bravery that makes him stand out.

2024 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Semi- Finalists

- **Heather Burkett**, Hampstead Central School, Hampstead
- **Jacqueline DeFreze**, Rye Elementary School, Rye
- **Kimberly Dorman**, Colebrook Academy and Elementary School, Colebrook
- **Justine Dube**, Lamprey River Elementary School
- **Erin Hollingsworth**, Gilmanton School, Gilmanton
- **Anna Jennison**, Beech Street School, Manchester
- **Jennifer Lambert**, Groveton Elementary School, Groveton
- **Caitlin Lomando**, Mt. Pleasant School, Nashua
- **Jennifer Menken**, Hooksett Memorial School, Hooksett
- **Robert Pooler**, Hollis Upper Elementary School, Hollis
- **Natalie Sears**, Manchester Central High School, Manchester
- **Sarah Strauss**, Clark-Wilkins Elementary School, Amherst
- **Scott Thibodeau**, Pembroke Academy, Pembroke
- **Andrea von Oeyen**, Oyster River Middle and High Schools, Durham



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.

NH PAEMST 2023 State Finalists

Joanne Goelzer, is an experienced educator with more than thirty years in teaching, specializing in earth and physical science, at Coe-Brown Northwood Academy. Her colleagues and community respect her for dedication to the students and their learning, her mastery of the content, her use of effective instructional practices, and for her lifelong desire to learn and explore new topics. Beyond the school day, her passion for science and science education has found, Joanne serving on the NH Department of Education's Professional Standards Board, holding multiple roles on the NH Science Teachers' Association Board, and in serving through WebbAlign as a panelist and facilitator of assessment evaluation.

Karen McCallion, has over 17 years of teaching experience in science at Epping Middle/High School. Here, Karen is recognized as a dedicated teacher, well versed not only in her teaching to a diverse range of students, but also for being well-versed in curriculum design with incorporated tiered support and universal interventions to support students in their learning. Beyond the classroom, Karen collaborated with others in her district in creating authentic performance assessments within the PACE pilot program.

Sandra Swiechowicz is the sole integrated computer science teacher at Raymond High School. With two decades of experience, Sandra is known for her dedication and commitment to her students and school community. She is also known for her strong work ethic, being a critical thinker, and in having a strong foundation in all academic areas, including career-ready technical skills. Along with her work at Raymond High School, Sandra has participated in a state-wide committee through the NHED in looking at Work Study Practices for the state, participated on a NHED and NEASC reaccreditation committee, and in the Marine Corps Educators' Workshop.



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.

2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools

New Hampshire is pleased to announce its 2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools. The U.S. Department of Education describes the common threads of each school:

National Blue Ribbon School leaders articulate a vision of excellence and hold everyone to high standards. They demonstrate effective and innovative teaching and learning, and the schools value and support teachers and staff through meaningful professional learning. Data from many sources are used to drive instruction and every student strives for success. Families, communities, and educators work together toward common goals. What is true nationally is also true for New Hampshire, and the three awardees for 2023 truly shine across any metric against which a school could be measured.

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

Mary C. Dondero School, led by Mrs. Katherine Callahan, has a 73% rate of proficiency in reading, and a 63% proficiency rate in math. It is a school that fosters kindness and respect both within its walls and out into the community. The families are deeply connected to the work and goals of the students, and the students in turn connect and communicate with each other. All value open-minds and hard work.

Riddle Brook School, led by Mrs. Molly McCarthy, has an 84% proficiency rate in reading and an 88% proficiency rate in math. The school seeks to reach out to the wider community, holding itself and its students accountable for learning together, being respectful and safe, and taking the risk to be inspired. This school truly opens its arms to all students, welcoming back its graduating seniors for a huge round of applause in June and keeping students with special needs with grade-level peers as much as possible throughout the day.

Rye Elementary School, led by Mrs. Michelle Pitts, has a reading proficiency rate of 85%, and a math proficiency rate of 82%. The school builds an environment of learners who develop as individuals, in groups, and as a part of the larger world. The focus of this engaged school is broad as well as personalized, helping students to dig into problems without giving up while helping them to care for each other and the environment.

New Hampshire is grateful for the hard work of these and all of its schools, and it is an honor and affirm the Blue Ribbon Schools' exemplary high-performing status.

