



# STAFF RECOGNITION RECEPTION

May 2, 2023

## CONGRATULATIONS!

The Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District is proud to honor our 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year and Educational Services Professional Award Recipients!

WELL DONE!

# CONTENTS

<b>bridgewater-raritan teacher of the year award recipients</b> .....	1
<i>Meghan De La Rosa</i> .....	2
<i>Kathryn Kaye</i> .....	3
<i>Abigail Goldstein</i> .....	4
<i>Tammy Miller</i> .....	6
<i>Robert Cirino</i> .....	7
<i>Danielle Caulfield</i> .....	8
<i>Matthew Swinsburg</i> .....	9
<i>Deborah Ronning</i> .....	11
<i>Carmelina Geiger</i> .....	12
<i>Sarah Martin</i> .....	14
<i>James Olivola</i> .....	15
<b>bridgewater-raritan educational services professional award recipients</b> .....	17
<i>Maryellen Filep</i> .....	18
<i>Katherine Rayburn</i> .....	19
<i>Gretchen English</i> .....	20
<i>Sharon Fargo</i> .....	22
<i>Linda O'Brien</i> .....	23
<i>Theresa Torraca-Sheats</i> .....	24
<i>Shawn Danus</i> .....	25
<i>Alice Piscadlo</i> .....	27
<i>Kinjal Barad</i> .....	28
<i>Kelley Beahan</i> .....	29
<i>Erin Lowman</i> .....	30

# BRIDGEWATER-RARITAN TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS





***Meghan De La Rosa***

Adamsville Primary School  
English as Secondary Language Teacher

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We are honored to announce that Ms. Meghan De La Rosa is Adamsville Primary School's Governor Educator of the Year for the 2022-2023 school year. She has worked in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District for the last 11 years as a bilingual and ESL teacher. For the past six years, Meghan has been a 4th grade ESL teacher.

Meghan is one of the most caring and understanding educators anyone would ever encounter. She goes above and beyond to support all her students. Many Adamsville students speak another language, 29 different languages to be exact, and Meghan is often found, when not delivering instruction, in the main office or with the nurse translating to our Spanish-speaking families. She has assisted in parent-teacher conferences, parent workshops, and student social groups.

For many of our families, Meghan is one of the first individuals to help build the connection between the home and school. Meghan describes connecting with families by speaking their language as a gift. She has gotten to know many of our families' stories, and helped them through some difficult times.

Meghan states, "My students are my motivation. I love watching their faces when a new idea clicks, when they are loving what they're learning, and when they're sharing their lives with me. It is an amazing feeling watching each student grow throughout each school year. Teaching gives me the opportunity to share the world with my students. I love being able to shape growing minds, while also being able to learn new things myself. Adamsville is a diverse, loving and accepting community. Our students are

proud of who they are and where they come from. I love listening to their stories about traditions and celebrations from their culture. How lucky are our students that they get to grow up knowing so many different backgrounds.”



***Kathryn Kaye***

Bradley Gardens Primary School  
Special Education Teacher

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It is a sincere privilege to announce Mrs. Katie Kaye as Bradley Gardens Primary School’s Teacher of the Year. A strong contender for the title for several years, Katie has been making a positive and lasting impact on our students since 2002. She earned her BA in Social Work, her first career, prior to earning a Master in Education with a certificate in special education from La Salle. Besides teaching literacy in Philadelphia for two years, she has spent the last 19 years in Bridgewater, with a home at Bradley Gardens.

If flexibility had a mascot, I’m sure it would be Katie. She has co-taught in most grades and has also served as a resource room teacher in the building. Katie’s room has been relocated almost every year and yet, she sets up her new location with a smile and a passion for creating an environment that supports our students in the critical areas. Katie mentors novice teachers every year, offering support and guidance in special education. She is a respected and trusted member of the staff, so much so that when teachers are told they will co-teach with her, they literally jump for joy! Katie serves on the SCIP team and has presented workshops to staff over the years.

Katie writes, “There are so many aspects that make me feel fortunate to be a Special Education teacher! First, is the relationship that I form with my students. Working with students in small groups and one-on-one, not only do I get to truly understand their strengths and needs, but I also get to know them on a much deeper and more personal

level. Second, is the relationships that I have established with classroom teachers at every grade level, whether through co-teaching or collaborating about a shared student. I feel so very lucky to have been a part of the Bradley Gardens family for almost 20 years!”





***Abigail Goldstein***  
Crim Primary School  
Grade 2 Teacher

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Abby Goldstein has been teaching at Crim Primary School for the past eight years. Her bright presence is felt in many ways at our school. Abby’s greatest gift is how she finds beauty in the most challenging students. The students in her classroom know that Abby cares deeply for them and will always encourage them to be the best version of themselves. She has a way of turning a group of "spirited souls" into a respectful, lovely class of friends. She has the perfect balance of high expectations for her students and also allows for fun.

Abby serves as an exemplary model of a dedicated and inspirational teacher. She is highly skilled in all areas of teaching, and is an expert at small group, differentiated instruction. She recognizes students have different styles of learning, discussing, contributing and participating in a classroom environment. Likewise, Abby knows how to reach each student on various levels, whether it be to provide additional support to struggling learners or provide opportunities for enrichment to challenge those in need of more. As a passionate advocate for all of her students, Abby seeks out the knowledge and support of colleagues until she can ensure that she is meeting the needs of every child in her classroom. Her constant desire to make her classroom a welcome place for all learners to achieve is truly remarkable. Her commitment to authentic



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student learning can be seen throughout her classroom and within the student work showcased.

Abby is involved at both the school and district level. Not only does she make a difference in her second grade classroom, but she serves on the STEAM Expo Committee, the School Improvement Panel, the Student Recognition Committee, the Scheduling Committee, the Crim Professional Leadership Committee, and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. As a co-chair of the Sunshine Committee, Abby takes the lead on instilling a sense of belonging and pride amongst her colleagues. Abby has helped to improve the morale among staff at Crim with innovative ideas, creative projects and fun activities. Abby regularly offers mini-courses after school through the PTO. She seeks to offer varying courses throughout the year as an opportunity to get to know many students, aside from just the students in her individual class. She is able to foster relationships with prior and current students as well as develop relationships with students who may be in her class in the future. In addition to taking on these responsibilities, Abby hosted a student teacher in the Fall, showing her desire to reflect on her own practice and grow professionally. In this role, Abby combined her talents of mentoring, planning, organizing, and providing meaningful feedback to empower this future teacher, just as she does with her students.

Abby exemplifies what it means to be a true educator. She values social and emotional learning, promotes respect and empathy, and teaches students valuable life lessons. Abby is the reason that students in her class are excited to go to school each and every day, and the reason that students leave school with a smile on their faces. Colleagues, parents and students speak highly of Abby, and I know that Abby is proud to serve as a teacher along with other members of her family. She is an asset to Crim School, and our learning community is proud to have the opportunity to endorse Abby Goldstein as our 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Goldstein shared, “When I interviewed for my first teaching job, I immediately felt like I was home when I walked through the doors of Crim Primary School. While my exact position at Crim has changed so many times over the past eight years, the one thing that has remained the same year after year has been working with incredible colleagues, families, and students. I feel so grateful to be part of the Crim Community. My students are my favorite part of each day and the reason why my classroom is my happy place. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to have loving parents and wonderful teachers who fostered a passion for lifelong learning and helped me to become the best version of myself. I try my best to share that same passion with my students and to help them become their best selves. A quote by Rita Pierson motivates me each day. She states, ‘Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them,

who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”



***Tammy Miller***

Hamilton Primary School  
Grade 4 Teacher

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Hamilton Primary School is proud to recognize our colleague Tammy Miller as Teacher of the Year. In her 17th year as a teacher in Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District, Tammy is known to all at Hamilton School as a committed, creative, and friendly 4th grade teacher, who is highly dedicated to her students, their families, and her colleagues.

Tammy embodies the skills and characteristics of an exemplary educator. She consistently shares her innovative ideas with her colleagues and acts as an informal mentor to many. Tammy also has a unique talent for questioning students in a manner that challenges them to dig deeper and problem solve independently. Adored by her students, Tammy is unfailingly empathetic, compassionate, and insightful. She is also well-organized and makes learning highly engaging for her students. Beyond the classroom, Tammy is an active volunteer in our school and in the local community, serving on various committees and frequently participating in PTO-sponsored events. Above all, Tammy exemplifies kindness, dedication, and patience every day.

Tammy states, “From an early age, I knew I wanted to work with children, I just didn't know in what capacity. It wasn't until I started substituting that I knew my passion was teaching at the younger level. Born and raised in Bridgewater, I had no doubt that I wanted to start my teaching journey in this community. I am proud to say that 18 years



later, I have cultivated my career at Hamilton School and now have the opportunity to raise my children in the Bridgewater-Raritan School District and the BR community. Teaching is by no means a glamorous job, and it certainly isn't an easy one; however, there is no greater reward than making a positive difference in so many young lives. Like many teachers, each year my students become my family. I refer to them as my kids, and together, we build a classroom of love, positivity, and respect. When I leave each day, regardless of it being a challenging day or a great day, I am confident in the impact I'm making in the lives of my students. Every day I am blessed to work with such wonderful people, both my students and my colleagues. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today. I am honored to be recognized as Teacher of the Year for Hamilton School and am thankful for this distinguished recognition.”



***Robert Cirino***

John F. Kennedy Primary School  
Health and Physical Education Teacher

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John F. Kennedy Primary School is proud to introduce Robert Cirino as the 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year. Mr. Cirino has spent the past seven years at John F. Kennedy Primary School and has been a teacher in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District for the past 15 years. Mr. Cirino is loved by his students because he gets to know each one and develops a great rapport with them. It is evident Mr. Cirino cares about all his students.

Mr. Cirino has a high level of enthusiasm that is palpable. He greets each student as they walk into the gym and makes sure they are all involved and engaged in activities. He is a kind and helpful colleague and always has something positive to say. On top of all this, Mr. Cirino has an incredible sense of humor that is contagious to anyone who comes in contact with him.

Mr. Cirino not only implements activities for PE, but he also spearheads school-wide events and activities. Students love his Halloween costumes and his school spirit.

Robert Cirino is an asset to John F. Kennedy School and the community. He is a team player who has the students' best interest at heart. He is well deserving of the Teacher of the Year award.

Mr. Cirino states, "My experience as a student in the Bridgewater-Raritan School District made me want to be an educator. I wanted to give back to the district that gave me so much."



***Danielle Caulfield***  
Milltown Primary School  
Grade 1 Teacher

Mrs. Danielle Caulfield is a Bridgewater resident who also went through the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District. She is involved in school activities, providing leadership and unity through her work with the Sunshine Committee. Danielle started substitute teaching in the District while she was attending Bloomsburg University working towards a degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. In February 2004, she was hired as a Kindergarten leave replacement teacher at Van Holten Primary School. She was then hired for a tenure track position for September 2004. Danielle began working as a 2nd grade teacher at Milltown Primary School upon its opening in 2005. Danielle has taught Kindergarten, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, and 1st grade. She later went on to receive her Master's Degree in Literacy and Reading.

Danielle is selfless, a master at differentiating, and has patience to spare. She teaches all children as if they are her own, never hesitating, never complaining, always determined to help them reach their potential.

Danielle states, “Like many educators I know, I have always wanted to be a teacher since I was a young girl. There was no question about what I wanted to study in college. I have had great teachers and mentors that have inspired me to be a teacher and I am extremely grateful. I remember one year in college we had to write a letter to a teacher that left a lasting impact on us. I wrote to my 8th grade science teacher. I felt this assignment was such a meaningful way to thank an educator that made a difference and I hoped that in my future I could affect my students that same way. I feel honored to accept this special recognition. I feel so blessed to work with amazing colleagues that have helped me grow professionally. The students I have had the chance to work with over the years have made me who I am today in the classroom. Their hugs, kind words, gestures, and growth make me love my job even more.”



Mrs. Caulfield is an instructional leader who has grown to embrace this side of herself. Our school and district are forever “better” thanks to her presence!



***Matthew Swinsburg***  
Van Holten Primary School  
Grade 3 Teacher

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Mr. Matthew Swinsburg is a veteran teacher that displays the passion and enthusiasm of a first-year teacher. He has taught his entire twenty-three-year career in third grade at Van Holten Primary School. His knowledge of curriculum and instruction is deep. He presents curriculum in multiple ways that engages students in the learning process.



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Over the years, his teaching style and commitment to his students have earned him the greatest admiration of his students, their parents and his colleagues.

The success of any school year starts in the summer for Mr. Swinsburg. He will communicate with his co-teacher (if he has one for that year) to discuss ideas, plans or strategies for their classroom during the summer months. When the school opens to begin setting up classrooms, Mr. Swinsburg is always one of the very first teachers to arrive on campus. He begins preparing for the first day by organizing furniture, materials, and supplies for his students. New curriculum is reviewed with lessons and units developed to start the year. Mr. Swinsburg spends time examining student files to gather information to familiarize himself with his new students and their needs. He plans ice breaker and team building activities to build relationships between all members of his classroom community. When students enter the room for the very first time they are welcomed by Mr. Swinsburg. By the end of the first day, any nervousness that exists with students is gone and the excitement for what is to come builds.

Mr. Swinsburg is a leader among his third grade team. He leads the annual Chick Hatching project and has led our building Butterfly Garden. He lends a hand helping others on his team with understanding and applying new curriculum initiatives. He has had multiple co-teachers during his career. He has collaborated with each one as a 50/50 partner to create a positive professional relationship that supports student learning. Mr. Swinsburg participates with school PTO events such as our annual Van Holten Parent/Teacher Volleyball Game, Barnes and Noble Reading Night and Pasta Night.

As Mr. Swinsburg states, “It feels I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, although that’s not entirely true. When I was little I wanted to be a police officer or firefighter like many other little ones, but then it changed. I remember the exact moment. I was in ninth grade and got a part-time job working at the after-school program at John F. Kennedy School. It was then that it clicked. I knew I wanted to work with kids. Their everlasting energy and fun-loving attitude was incredibly contagious. In my high school yearbook they asked the seniors, where do you see yourself in 10 years? My response: Back here teaching your children. Luckily enough, that statement ended up being true. Here I am, back teaching in the same district I attended as a student. While the past 23 years has had its share of ups-and-downs, I wouldn’t change a thing. Every single day, I try to bring that everlasting energy and fun-loving attitude that I discovered when I was in ninth grade to my students. I want it to be contagious for them. Hopefully, by doing this, I’m paying it forward and inspiring my students to pursue their own interests with the same energy and positive attitude that I start with every day.”

Over the years, Mr. Swinsburg has connected with so many of his students. Whether it be a 5<sup>th</sup> grader or a senior in high school, every year students return to visit their special

third grade teacher. They come back for many reasons ranging from Mr. Swinsburg made learning fun, special activities in his classroom, taught them multiplication or helped them overcome a specific challenge. They all come back to say “Thank you” and wish Mr. Swinsburg well.

Good teachers can teach anybody. The great teachers can reach and teach the most difficult. They change people’s lives. Mr. Swinsburg is a great teacher! He has changed the lives of many students in his career, especially those that have needed him most. Mr. Swinsburg frequently rises to the challenges to change a child’s life forever, and the Van Holten School community is proud to recognize him as our Governor’s Teacher of the Year recipient for the 2022-2023 school year.



***Deborah Ronning***  
Eisenhower Intermediate School  
Grade 5 Teacher

Mrs. Deborah Ronning is a fifth grade teacher who has excelled in all of her professional responsibilities with style and class at Eisenhower Intermediate School. Deb is a true role model for her students. She makes learning enjoyable and meaningful and has her students’ best interests at heart. The classroom environment that she has created is one of the best at IKE. Mrs. Ronning has a wonderful natural rapport with her students and is the model for mutual respect. Deb has an enthusiasm for teaching, a love of children, and is a highly-respected and admired educator.

Mrs. Ronning has the core qualities of kindness, optimism, enthusiasm, and dedication that shine through all of her professional responsibilities. Deb is a professional educator

who cares about students. She is someone who spends quality time preparing for her daily lessons and responsibilities so her students are most successful.

Deb is a passionate, positive, and dedicated teacher who strives for her students to be most successful in language arts class. She is enthusiastic for teaching and constantly reflects on her teaching methods to make sure she meets the needs of all of her students. Mrs. Ronning is passionate about language arts instruction and her students enjoy reading and writing and excel in both. She makes literature relatable and meaningful, and in turn, her students enjoy language arts classes.



Deb attends many extra-curricular events to support our school and has been the co-advisor of our student council for over 15 years. The initiatives, activities and events that she has organized have positively influenced our students and families, local and state organizations, and individuals around the world through fundraising and charitable events. She is motivated to make learning fun, experiential, and meaningful as a teacher and as an advisor. She is always first to lend a helping hand and go the extra mile for our students and for our school. She is always positive, kind, caring, and has much to offer with her professional knowledge and sound personal input.

The Eisenhower family is proud to have Deborah Ronning as their Governor's Teacher of the Year.



***Carmelina Geiger***  
Hillside Intermediate School  
Grade 5 Math, Social Studies & Science Teacher

With great respect and appreciation, Hillside Intermediate School recognizes Carmelina Geiger as our teacher of the year. Mrs. Geiger has been working at Hillside School for



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the past 21 years, currently in her 22nd year in 5th grade. Mrs. Geiger uses her special education background to help all of her learners get the support they require. She has not only shown a dedication to her students, but also to the school itself through committee positions she has held and the department work she has completed.

Mrs. Geiger has been an integral part of her 5th grade team, organizing extra activities for students, spearheading field trips, creating innovative lessons with differentiation, and coordinating with colleagues for team and grade-level initiatives. She can often be found researching extra science activities for her students, planning with the science coordinator for the grade level, and sharing ideas in department meetings. She shows her dedication to her students through the constant differentiation within her classes, the open lines of communication with students and families, and her far-reaching support for her most struggling students as well as those needing enrichment.

Mrs. Geiger is a pillar of the Hillside Community. She often has students reach out to her years later expressing the impact she had on them, many of whom have become teachers themselves due to her inspiration and dedication to them as her students. As a true testament to Mrs. Geiger's character as a teacher, one student said, "She's so kind and she makes everything fun! Even when we get in trouble, she doesn't yell at us, she gives us warnings. In science, instead of reading straight from the book, she had us act it out. She lets us do experiments that other classes don't do. She is such a great teacher!"

In Carmelina's words, "I love teaching because every day is different. I love that I can make a difference in my students' lives by inspiring, supporting and mentoring. My first priority is always doing what's best for my students. I strive to build relationships with them so they feel comfortable coming to me with not only academic needs but also their social emotional needs. I want my students to look forward to coming to school and enjoy learning."

We are so lucky to have Mrs. Geiger at Hillside School!



***Sarah Martin***

Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School  
Grade 8 English/Language Arts Teacher

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Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School is proud to recognize Dr. Sarah Martin as our 2023 Educator of the Year. Dr. Martin has been an English Language Arts teacher at BRMS for fourteen years. During this time, she has proven herself to be an invaluable asset to her students. Dr. Martin continually strives to meet students where they are so she can help them improve and grow as learners. She is interested in their growth as readers, writers, and human beings.

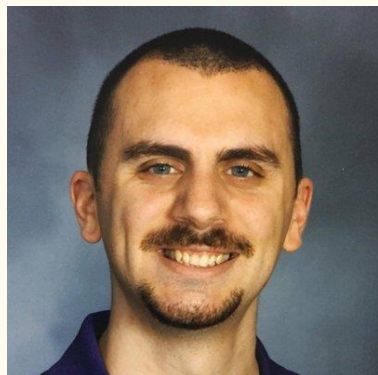
Dr. Martin is a child-centered advocate. She continually looks for different ways to teach a skill, finds texts that represent diversity, and incorporates social emotional learning into her lessons. She is mindful of the learning environment she tries to create for her students. It starts from the minute a person walks in the room and is greeted with the phrase “extend grace.” Dr. Martin is determined that her students will have a positive experience in school.

Dr. Martin has also taken a lead outside of the classroom serving on the building SCIP committee as well as leading numerous professional development opportunities. Dr. Martin created a professional learning community for ELA teachers that supported the implementation of the independent reading initiative. This has assisted her colleagues and has enhanced the learning experience for students throughout the school.

Sarah states, “I believe deeply in the potential of all of our students and I am grateful for the opportunity to help students find their voice and grow their passions. Exposing students to diverse literature and providing a safe and welcoming environment in which to explore ideas is my priority each day. Through these experiences, I hope students find literature that both reflects their own lived experiences and provides windows into



the experiences of others. By viewing literature through these lenses, we can support tolerance, build understanding, grow respect and celebrate diversity.”



***James Olivola***

Bridgewater-Raritan High School  
Teacher of Mathematics



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With pride and admiration, Bridgewater-Raritan High School recognizes Mr. James Olivola as the Governor’s Teacher of the Year. As a seasoned teacher, he has served for three years with BRHS, making a significant impact on student learning in his role as a Mathematics Teacher. He is a tenacious and charismatic teacher and incorporates divergent instructional techniques in each lesson to foster understanding among different types of learners. It is abundantly clear that Mr. Olivola brings out the best in his students and colleagues.

Outside of the classroom, Mr. Olivola attends many sporting events in support of the student athletes of BRHS, often publishing articles and pictures on local news feeds. Additionally, he offers tutoring to his students and serves as an advisor for several clubs. He exemplifies how one teacher can impact many students.

One of the several nominations from his students mentioned, “Mr. Olivola is an incredible teacher who has been nothing but amazing to me and my fellow classmates. Mr. O. is dedicated to us and has given us every opportunity to succeed in a fun and caring environment.” Another nomination from a parent reiterated his outstanding dedication to students, “... he has helped both of my children find success and a love of math. Personally and professionally, Mr. O. is such a dedicated member of the community and my children have been blessed to have him in their lives.”

James states, "We have so many fantastic and talented educators at Bridgewater-Raritan High School, so words alone cannot describe what a huge honor it is to be the recipient



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of the 2022-23 Governor's Educator of the Year Award. Congratulations to my fellow 21 award recipients from the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District. All of the credit goes to the amazing students and families of our Bridgewater-Raritan community for their hard work, support, and involvement inside and outside of the classroom. I'd also like to acknowledge our faculty, staff, and administration who all play critical roles in guiding and supporting our students on their paths towards their next chapters in life, and everyone I have had the great privilege of working with and learning from throughout my journey as an educator."

Bridgewater-Raritan High School is fortunate to have such an outstanding teacher to guide our students.

**BRIDGEWATER-RARITAN EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICES PROFESSIONAL AWARD RECIPIENTS**





***Maryellen Filep***

Adamsville Primary School  
Learning Consultant

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With pride and admiration, the Adamsville Primary School staff recognizes Ms. Maryellen Filep as Adamsville’s Educational Services Professional of the Year. Maryellen graduated from Marist College with a BA in Psychology and dual teaching certification in both general and special education. She earned her master’s degree in special education with a concentration in learning disabilities from Teachers College, Columbia University. She also obtained a certificate in autism from Purdue University and is currently working on obtaining her doctorate in education. Prior to becoming a learning consultant at Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District, Maryellen was a special education teacher in New York City.

Adamsville has the largest pre-school and pre-school disabled program in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District and it couldn’t be as successful as it is without the passion, work ethic, support, and leadership of Maryellen. On almost a daily basis she collaborates with teachers, occupational therapists, speech therapists, teaching assistants, parents, students, case managers, administrators, and transportation to ensure that our students’ needs are being met. She decisively makes decisions to ensure that all our students are provided with the most appropriate learning environment so they may gain the skills that many of us take for granted such as; walking, eating, and communicating. She exemplifies what one person can do to make a difference.

When informed about being Adamsville’s Educational Services Professional of the Year Maryellen stated, “It is an honor to work with the amazing staff at Adamsville School. Within the preschool program, we provide each student with the early intervention that they need to build a foundation to be successful in the future. The children within our program grow and develop daily. Their daily successes are the motivation that I need to continue working in education.”



***Katherine Rayburn***

Bradley Gardens Primary School  
Media Specialist

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Four years ago, Ms. Kochis and I were presented with what we thought would be an impossible challenge. We were to find and hire a candidate that could successfully teach in the roles of a Media Specialist and Technology. We thought we were on the hunt for a unicorn. With many interviews under way and shattered hopes, we brought in a candidate that held the appropriate certification in Media and was a certified trainer in Google as well. To say that we struck gold is an understatement when we met and hired Mrs. Katie Rayburn. In a few short years, she has proven to be an incredible asset to our school and district and I'm honored to call her our Educational Services Professional for Bradley Gardens Primary School.

Mrs. Katie Rayburn accepted a position that had no footprint. In addition, in that first year, she had to switch gears to a virtual/hybrid model. She forged on, never complaining, always positive, and extremely flexible. She has brought a contagious love for literacy to our building while partnering with the teachers to target areas of their curriculum in her lessons. The tech classes evidenced students laughing and working together to code and work with the robotics. The makerspace is an inviting challenging area of our library. Katie always has a smile on her face, a soft librarian whisper voice, and a passion for infusing technology.

Katie writes, "From early childhood, I have always loved learning and books. Being a librarian allows me to share my love of literature with students and teaching technology enables me to connect our learners to the world around them. I am so very excited to receive the Educational Services Professional award because being a part of the outstanding Bradley Gardens team means a great deal to me."



***Gretchen English***

Crim Primary School  
School Nurse



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Gretchen English is an exceptionally skilled and dedicated educational services professional at Crim School. Throughout her time as a school nurse in Bridgewater-Raritan, Gretchen has dedicated herself to her role in ways that make her well loved and respected by staff, students, parents and administrators.

As the school nurse, Gretchen attends to the medical needs of all students and staff in a warm, comforting, and knowledgeable manner. She provides assistance to students and staff experiencing medical emergencies and is quick to provide assistance to anyone in need. Gretchen is a visible presence in our building throughout each day; she often moves paperwork to the side to visit a classroom, assist with a behavioral crisis, or tend to a child's needs. Gretchen consistently goes above and beyond in the care of all members of our Crim School community - staff, students and families alike.

More than just placing a Band-Aid on a knee, Gretchen truly gets to know every student in our building. She works hard daily to make every child feel safe, cared for, and an important part of the school community. During the times when she is tending to an ailment, no matter how big or small, Gretchen makes a connection with the student, letting him/her know that she cares. She engages in conversations related to family, interests, and school. These connections reinforce to our students that Gretchen is a kind and trusted adult who will support them in any way necessary. Gretchen cares for Crim staff members and families as much as students - her dedication to the profession and the Crim School community is a testimony to the type of professional she is.

Gretchen's day does not end with charting and medical care of Crim School students. As a member of our Crim CARES Committee, Gretchen creates



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philanthropic opportunities for students, parents and staff to work together as a school community. Gretchen organizes Thanksgiving and Souper Bowl Food Drives to provide families within the community with much-needed meals. Likewise, she serves as a co-chair for the Health and Wellness committee, assisting with planning Red Ribbon Week and Wellness Week activities for students and staff. Gretchen is an active member of the Section 504 Committee and assists in the creation of accommodation plans for students with medical or physical impairments.

Gretchen's knowledge, support, willingness to assist, and hard work is well respected and admired by students, staff, and administrators. Having Gretchen as a colleague and leader within our building is one of the most wonderful elements about working at Crim School. The Crim School community is proud to have the opportunity to endorse Gretchen English as our 2022-2023 Educational Services Professional of the Year.

Mrs. English shared, "Over 20 years ago I began my nursing career caring for pediatric transplant patients at the University of Chicago. It was exciting and demanding work that required focus and patience. Along the way, I learned that no matter how sick a child is - they still want to feel like a kid. Later, I moved home to New Jersey and Goryeb Children's Hospital and also began my own family in Bridgewater. I was an active Crim Mom for 9 years as my three kids progressed through the school. A few years back, when the opportunity arose to work in a community I knew well, it was a perfect fit. Becoming a school nurse was not something I planned or expected, but I am glad I made the move. I still find each day rewarding and exciting. The challenges change constantly and my work goes far beyond Band-Aids and ice packs. The role of a school nurse is multifaceted and can move from routine paperwork and screenings to full blown medical emergencies in a heartbeat. My priority is to provide the best possible medical care for the 400+ students and staff in the building. My goal is to make a connection with each student that walks through my office door, so they feel both safe and cared for whether it's an illness, injury or they just need to talk. I adore the opportunity to see healthy children grow and flourish from Kindergarten to 4th Grade. My own children may have moved on, but I'm still happily at Crim all these years later."



***Sharon Fargo***

Hamilton Primary School  
Speech Language Specialist

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Hamilton Primary School is proud to recognize our colleague Sharon Fargo as our Educational Services Professional of the Year. Sharon is currently in her 16th year in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District and her 24th year as a Speech and Language Specialist.

Throughout her time in the District, Sharon has consistently demonstrated her commitment to her students and their families in her specialty, speech pathology. Sharon is an integral member of our school's staff, whether as a member of our IEP and MTSS teams or as a highly-respected source of wisdom and good judgment within Hamilton. Sharon is always approachable when colleagues call upon her for her expertise. By virtue of her expert knowledge of language development and acquisition, Sharon provides an invaluable perspective on how best to support our students' learning needs. Sharon also makes special connections with her students thanks to her compassion and her sensitivity to their needs. She is adaptable and resourceful, providing each student with individualized instruction that enables them to take great pride in their accomplishments.

Sharon states, "I am grateful to be the Speech Language Pathologist at Hamilton for the past 16 years, and I'm fortunate that my career path has led me here. The most rewarding parts of my job are teaching students to communicate more effectively and watching them grow and mature from Kindergarten through 4th grade. I also love being able to share my knowledge of speech and language development with my colleagues and work collaboratively with them in order to help the Hamilton students and families."





***Linda O'Brien***

John F. Kennedy Primary School  
Intervention Specialist

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Linda O'Brien has been an Intervention Specialist in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District for the past 23 years. Mrs. O'Brien began her career at Eisenhower and Van Holten Schools before spending the last 18 years at John F. Kennedy Primary School.

Mrs. O'Brien finds ways to meet the needs of all her students and finds fun and engaging ways for children to learn. Mrs. O'Brien has an innate ability to assure all her students work to their full potential. Mrs. O'Brien is a valuable member of the JFK team and many of her colleagues look to her for guidance.

Mrs. O'Brien is an active member of the JFK staff. She volunteers for BREA events as well as school-wide events and activities. She has helped organize and run literacy nights and has also been instrumental in helping to coordinate the Backpack Program through the Somerset County Food Bank. She also works closely with JFK's Giving Tree committee to help less fortunate families.

Mrs. Linda O'Brien is an excellent choice for the Educational Services Professional of the Year.



***Theresa Torraca-Sheats***  
Milltown Primary School  
Special Education Teaching Assistant

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Mrs. Theresa Torraca-Sheats has been a part of the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District for over ten years. She began her career as a substitute Secretary and Special Education Assistant, having the opportunity to experience all the schools in the District. She became a permanent Special Education Assistant in 2013, beginning at the Middle School and finally coming to Milltown Primary School. Theresa has also been serving as the Lead Care Provider for BRCAREs at Milltown.

Theresa is always willing to reinvent herself to meet the needs of her assignment. That has looked different each year she has been at Milltown and her commitment has been unwavering regardless of the assignment. She has maroon and gold coursing through her veins, always looking to support the children and faculty with any initiative happening at our school. This year she turned our hallways into a chocolate factory and did so on her own time and by rallying our staff around her. She also assumed a leadership role with our Book Fair and engages our children in aftercare in helping to decorate our school.

In her own words, Theresa has stated, “It has been an honor being nominated and winning the ESP award. I find working here both challenging and self-rewarding at the same time. I enjoy watching the kids grow, knowing that I am a part of that growth. Seeing their faces and watching them light up as you are teaching them many new things is the reward. I try to inspire others around me by taking on challenging projects. These projects allow for the staff to be creative and have fun with their students. I don't approach this as only a job, but as a learning experience for myself as well. Many times I feel I am learning and growing as a person. Working with children who have disabilities both physically and academically has allowed me to appreciate the smaller

things in life. I am humbled. Working alongside some of the best teachers and staff has been inspiring.”

Mrs. Torraca-Sheats is truly all about the children - she loves them and they know it, and our entire school benefits from her dedication and creativity!





***Shawn Danus***

Van Holten Primary School  
Intervention Specialist

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Mrs. Shawn Danus has taught fifteen of her twenty-four-year career here in the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District. During her career, she has taught kindergarten, first grade and reading recovery. She is currently an intervention specialist teacher who is exceptional in providing instruction to students who need targeted language arts and/or math skills remediation. Her warm, caring approach helps her to connect with students quickly. This is not always an easy task for students who might not see themselves as smart or find learning hard. Each day, Mrs. Danus focuses on each student having success. Each success becomes a building block for the next lesson. She cheers for them when they meet a target while reminding them there is still hard work ahead.

Her students are motivated by her approach and gain the confidence to take on the next challenge. Students go home to share with their parents about their success in Mrs. Danus’ class from that day. Many times students share a book that they read on their own for the very first time.



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Mrs. Danus is a highly-trained teacher. She has a deep understanding of district curriculum and state standards. Having been trained as a Reading Recovery teacher earlier in her career, Mrs. Danus is well versed in literacy instruction. Since that time, she has expanded her understanding of literacy instruction through her work and training with Leveled Literacy, Sonday and Wilson reading programs. Her lessons are focused based on a specific objective(s). These objectives are clearly communicated to her students so they know the purpose of any lesson. Learning activities are multi-sensory, progress from the simple to the more complex, and provide multiple avenues for student practice.

Mrs. Danus is a staunch advocate for students for both their academic needs and well-being. Academically, she participates in MTSS meetings to discuss interventions and services that would benefit a student. She asks questions for further information or will share her own collected assessment data to help develop the next steps to support the student. Mrs. Danus has a couple of students with food insecurity issues. The students often come to school hungry. She immediately reached out to the school counselor, nurse and building administration to share and find solutions for these students. In the end, a solution was determined to help these students.

Last year, Mrs. Danus had a student where the parent requested the child be retained. The classroom teacher supported the idea to a certain extent. Mrs. Danus disagreed with that recommendation. It was not that she advocated that the student should not be retained that was special. It was her tireless work and effort that she devoted to supporting this student through Tier 3 interventions on a daily basis that was remarkable. A plan was developed, followed and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Mrs. Danus collaborated with the student's classroom teacher regularly so that the two could maximize their instructional time. She also communicated with the student's parents to share progress as well as provide further practice that could be done at home. At the end of the year, the student made huge gains in their learning. The suggestion of retaining this student for the next school year was never brought forward by any individual again.

Mrs. Danus is a vital member of Van Holten's Intervention Specialist team. She works with that team, our ETS and the building administration to discuss student services. She will collaborate with teachers to share advice, suggestions or interventions to try in the classroom. As the school year progresses, so do the needs of the students. Our intervention specialists often have to adjust their schedules and student caseloads in order to meet the needs of the students requiring services. Mrs. Danus never blinks. She just responds with "Let me know what you need me to do."

Mrs. Danus is a gifted teacher who has and will continue to significantly impact students in need of support. She works tirelessly in each student's best interest so they never fall through the cracks. The Van Holten School community is proud to recognize Mrs. Danus as our Educational Services Professional for 2022-2023 school year!



***Alice Piscadlo***

Eisenhower Intermediate School  
School Counselor

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Alice Piscadlo is an excellent intermediate school counselor who has a passion for students and their academic success and well-being. She radiates enthusiasm and joy for the success of each of her students and that perspective has a positive effect on everyone around her. She approaches each student with love and understanding, patience and guidance, and an enthusiasm for learning. She continually seeks out new strategies and techniques that will enhance her counseling effectiveness. She is the first one to lend a helping hand to a family in need and has organized many altruistic endeavors to help our students and other community causes. It is a pleasure and honor for our staff to work with such a dedicated and inspirational counselor. She has their utmost respect and admiration, and we are grateful for her commitment to the students of Eisenhower Intermediate School.

Alice has demonstrated a genuine commitment to the students of Eisenhower School and a willingness to function as a cooperative and collaborative team player. She approaches her position with tireless energy and enthusiasm and has effectively integrated herself into the Eisenhower School community while meeting the many and varied challenges of her position.

As Eisenhower's HIB Specialist, Alice has done an excellent job in the prevention and education of our students and staff so they can be positive citizens of our school. She provides her students with a safe, risk-taking environment, helping each student to develop a sense of personal growth and esteem. Mrs. Piscadlo's work is greatly appreciated, and she positively impacts the climate and culture of our school.

We are proud that Alice is Eisenhower School's Educational Services Professional of the Year.



***Kinjal Barad***

Hillside Intermediate School  
Instructional Assistant

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Kinjal Barad has worked at Hillside Intermediate School since 2020, most recently in the pull-out resource setting. She is a shared Instructional Assistant between two students and is fully committed to their success. She keeps extensive records and has worked after-hours to create data recording sheets, graphs, and extensive notes on students. Every day, she helps her students achieve success in the classroom.

Mrs. Barad is always positive, always has her students' best interests at hand, and is a collaborative team member. In a short period of time, Mrs. Barad has made a huge impact on the students she works with. As a true testament to her character as a teaching assistant, Mrs. Barad's students shared that they think of her like a friend. One student said: "I can talk to her about anything. She's firm but very kind to us. She is constantly helping, and I know deep down she's trying to help us to be kind. She believes in us and helps us know we can do anything."

In Kinjal's words, "When I first started my position as a teaching assistant, it dawned on me that I really wasn't trained to be one. Quickly, I understood that each classroom required different types of assistant support, but the one common denominator is that

it is pertinent for a TA to work off the energy of not just the students, but the teacher that runs the classroom. It is very much of an anticipatory position and to do the job well, a TA must be able to read the nuances of the student as well as the teacher. I have been ridiculously lucky at Hillside to work with some strong teachers that communicate their expectations so a seamless and even synergistic support is given to the students. I positively enjoy what I do and am appreciative to be recognized. Thank you.”

Mrs. Barad is a most worthy recipient of the Educational Services Professional Award.



***Kelley Beahan***

Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School  
Learning Disabilities Teaching Consultant

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Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School is proud to recognize Kelley Beahan as the Educational Services Professional Award recipient. Kelley has been an integral part of the BRMS community for the last twelve years. Kelley is a dedicated educator that demonstrates leadership qualities and has the respect of students, administrators, parents, and colleagues. She is an advocate for her students and she works hard to establish positive relationships with them. They always know that Kelley is there for them to support their academic and social emotional needs. She has high expectations for them and works on helping them develop their resiliency skills. She fosters a growth mindset in her students, encouraging them to be the best versions of themselves. Kelley uses her extensive knowledge of special education instruction, having previously taught in an out-of-district school for students with significant academic and behavioral disabilities, to be a source of information and support to her colleagues. She is a resource for all members of the staff to consult on meeting the needs of struggling learners.

Kelley epitomizes what it means to be a professional. She has a winning combination of experience and intuition that works well for the students who are lucky enough to have her as their case manager.

Kelley states, “Working with middle school students is very rewarding but can also be challenging. They are just starting to know who they are as learners and as individuals so helping guide them during this time in their lives will hopefully prepare them for their high school years and beyond. I am honored to receive this recognition but I know that I could not be successful without the team of TA's, special educators, general education teachers, secretaries, nurses, intervention specialists, related service providers, school counselors, other child study team members, and administrators who support me every day. It takes a village.”



***Erin Lowman***



Bridgewater-Raritan High School  
School Psychologist

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With pride and admiration, Bridgewater-Raritan High School recognizes Ms. Erin Lowman as the Governor’s Educational Services Professional of the Year. She has served BRHS for 11 years where she has been an unshakeable support system for students in her role as School Psychologist. Her work ethic, student advocacy, emotional support, and management skills make Ms. Lowman an exceptional representative for BRHS.

Ms. Lowman takes great pride in the accomplishments of her students and continuously searches for ways to support and challenge them. Child Study Team members have a lot of demands placed on them such as testing students who may need special education





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services, writing lengthy reports, analyzing test results, writing Individualized Educational Programs for students with special needs, helping students with individual challenges on a daily basis, managing expectations and concerns of parents, and collaborating with teachers to help support the needs of students. To juggle all of these responsibilities effectively requires significant professionalism, time management, compassion, patience, and composure. Ms. Lowman excels in all of these areas and she maintains a positive attitude while she is managing very high levels of work-related stress every day.

One of Ms. Lowman's colleagues recognizes her contributions by stating, "Over many years of hard work, Erin has helped multiple students find a path to graduation, even when teachers and administrators had little hope for those individuals. In situations where students were up against the greatest odds of dropping out rather than finishing high school, I've seen Ms. Lowman give them hope and support to get to the finish line. That is a life-changing accomplishment for those students, and I guarantee it was not possible without the care and guidance from a dedicated case manager who would not give up on them."

Bridgewater-Raritan High School students and staff are fortunate to have such a dedicated and compassionate psychologist.