DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence

The Distinguished Teachers Awards Ceremony



Tuesday, May 6, 2008

4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Western Middle School

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DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS AWARDS

The Distinguished Teachers Awards Committee, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established to recognize and celebrate excellence among the dedicated teaching staff of the Greenwich Public Schools. The Distinguished Teachers Awards Committee has worked on the selection process for this year's recipients for the last eight months. The committee selects the Distinguished Teacher recipients from nominations made by colleagues, administrators, parents, students and/or community members. The committee reviews the nominations and selects a maximum of six Distinguished Teachers based on the criteria outlined in the Nomination Packet. To be eligible, a nominee must be a full-time Greenwich Public Schools staff member who is a certified teacher. A nominee must have completed at least five years of teaching, three of them in Greenwich. The criteria for identifying a distinguished teacher include, among others, that he/she inspires enthusiasm for learning and academic excellence, elicits a high level of achievement from students in relation to their ability, encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and shows mastery of subject matter. The six teachers selected this year personify the criteria of a Distinguished Teacher.

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Program

Welcome

Stacey Gross
Principal, Western Middle School

Musical Selections

Greenwich Public Schools Festival Orchestra
Conducted by Connie Barrett and Bethany Cook

Western Middle School Jazz Band
Conducted by Karen Anderson

Program Introduction and Master of Ceremonies

Esther Bushell
Chairman, Distinguished Teachers Awards Committee

Comments

Betty J. Sternberg
Superintendent of Schools

Presentation of 2008 Distinguished Teachers

Nominators of Recipients

Comments

Nancy Weissler
Chairman, Board of Education

Please join us after the ceremony for a reception to meet this year's Distinguished Teachers.

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2007-08
Distinguished Teachers Awards Committee

Esther Bushell *Chairman, Community*
Mei Stone *Vice-Chairman, Community*
Anne Miller *Secretary, PTAC*
Barbara Tormondsen *Treasurer, Community*
Kevin Coutant *Assistant Treasurer, Community*

Nancy Carbone *GOSA*
Donna Curtis *Community*
Nick Edwards *Community, Kiwanis*
Susan Ellis *BOE*
Jo Frame *GOSA*
Warren Greene *Community, Rotary*
Barbara O'Neill *Community*
Lillian Perone *GEA*
Natalie Queen *BOE*
Melissa Schreff *Community*
Fran Schapperle *Community*
John Wachowski *Community*
Caralliene Westbrook *Community*
Louise Williamson *GEA*
Kim Eves *Ex-Officio*

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Distinguished Teachers 2008

Karen Anderson
Western Middle School
Grades 6-8 Band/Music

Rita Clair
Eastern Middle School
Grades 6-8 Special Education

Camille Fusco
Greenwich High School
Grades 9-12 Latin/English

Arianne Haley-Banez
Greenwich High School
Grades 9-12 Guidance

Christine Kovac
Julian Curtiss School
Grade 1

Anthony Mullen
Greenwich Alternative High School – Arch School
Grades 9-12 Science/Electives

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Nominators of Recipients

Karen Anderson
Nominated by Lauren Yoon

Rita Clair
Nominated by Beth Auch

Camille Fusco
Nominated by Susan Fitzpatrick

Arianne Haley-Banez
Nominated by Annette Goard

Christine Kovac
Nominated by Cindy Santucci

Anthony Mullen
Nominated by Barbara Varanelli

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Karen Anderson

Western Middle School
Grades 6-8 Band/Music

Karen Anderson describes the importance of music, "Aesthetically music is in laughter, in sadness, in hope and in nature, always evoking an emotion. Music is also basic. It is math through deciphering rhythms, it is English through musical phrasing, imagery and narration, and it is creative through improvisation. Personally, music helps develop self-expression through phrasing and style, self-discipline through responsibility and perseverance, a positive self-image through achievement and recognition, interpersonal skills through cooperative learning behavior, and psychomotor skills through technique. Overall, music provides lifelong recreational opportunities, encourages community involvement in local performing groups, delivers therapeutic comfort, and expresses us to other cultures." Ms. Anderson is a respected and inspiring teacher as one of her former students explains, "…one of the things that always amazed me about her is how she could make all talking stop and everyone focused on her just by giving us that look to mean "it's time to work now." …Ms. Anderson always had a positive attitude, and I always looked forward to going to Band because I knew as soon as I walked into the classroom there was no room for grumpiness or sluggishness. Her sense of humor and upbeat manner made coming to class a pleasure, and looking back, I know I learned a lot from her." An administrator concurs, "The skillful application of educational pedagogy, paired with her

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personal humor and warmth, inspires students' zeal for learning and academic excellence."

Ms. Anderson has been the general music teacher and instrumental band teacher at Western Middle School for twenty-two years. She conducts two concert bands, a select band, and a jazz ensemble and has tripled the size of the program since she came to the school in 1986. She is a dedicated and supportive member of the Western staff as a Learning Facilitator for the Unified Arts, and having served on the Middle School Scheduling, Drama, Mission Statement, and Staff Development Committees. In her 'free' time, she coaches students for the WMS Talent Show, sells tickets, applies make-up and creates costumes for the WMS musical, teaches dance and acting workshops, supervises school dances, and chaperones overnight school trips. She is an avid musician herself, performing as the soloist at her church and numerous other local bands.

Ms. Anderson received her Bachelor of Music Education from Ithaca College in 1984; her Masters in Music Education from the University of Connecticut in 1987; and her Sixth Year Certificate from the University of New England.



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Rita Clair

Eastern Middle School
Grades 6-8 Special Education

"All children want to learn and be successful in school. Even when a child appears to be uninterested or disengaged, he is merely reflecting his frustration about what he does not understand. It is the role of the teacher to provide the opportunity for each of his students to find success." It is likely that this philosophy of education as espoused by Rita Clair is one of the primary reasons for her success. She is described as having made a "profound impact on the students at (Eastern Middle School)," by a parent. An administrator claims, "once these children have worked with Mrs. Clair, they begin to have positive experiences in their classes and bring an enthusiastic attitude about learning to school every day." A colleague believes, "Rita is not only teaching them curriculum, she is giving (the students) something of much more importance: self-confidence…they leave "Mrs. Clair's" room feeling good about themselves and ready to take on the next challenge." And perhaps most importantly, from a student's perspective, "In life, you are lucky if you meet one person that changes your life, and Mrs. Clair was that person for me."

Rita Clair began her teaching career in 1991 as a Special Education teacher at Windward School in White Plains, N.Y. In 1997 she came to the Greenwich Public Schools as a Special Education teacher at Eastern Middle School. For the last eleven

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years, she has contributed to the program at Eastern with innovative classes, support and professional development for her colleagues, and leadership skills. Several years ago, Ms. Clair introduced a 'Decoding Class' at Eastern for students in Special Education – "without a strong foundation in decoding and comprehension, students will not be able to move forward and tackle more complex thinking skills," noted Ms. Clair. Based on the Orton-Gillingham method, Ms. Clair developed and implemented this class for 7th grade special education students. The success of this program with students has supported its expansion beyond 7th grade and special education classes to other grades and training classroom teachers in the method. Ms. Clair is the 'go to' teacher when her colleagues are in need of advice on how to address the particular needs of a student; she is a "driving force" in developing professional learning activities for the teachers at Eastern; and she is a BEST Mentor as well as an informal mentor to colleagues and administrators alike. She is the Learning Facilitator for the Seventh Grade Team at Eastern and a member of the School Improvement Team.

Ms. Clair received her B.A. in Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, N.J. in 1975, graduating cum laude; her M.A. in Special Education from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH in 1978; and her Administrative Certificate from Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT in 2007.



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Camille Fusco

Greenwich High School
Grades 9-12 Latin/English

"The Latin roots of the word education, *educare* (to nurture) and *educere* (to lead out), are the source of my philosophy of education. I believe that education is a bipartite process of both nurturing and drawing forth," declares Camille Fusco. Ms. Fusco has internalized this philosophy believing that her "role is to draw out the best in each student, to exploit each student's strengths, to nurture both a love of Latin and a love of learning." Her colleague and nominator attests, "One of Camille's fortes is that she quickly assesses a student's strengths and then teaches to those strengths. She can teach any student Latin, even special education students whom other teachers may have been unable to reach." A parent agrees, "Ms. Fusco is capable of taking a difficult academic subject and breaking it down fundamentally for all of her students to understand." Ms. Fusco believes in reaching her students by understanding the 'whole student' and to that end she attends her students' extra-curricular events to gain a better understanding of their strengths and interests. She describes, "It surely added a dimension to my teaching after I saw a demure, serious academic vigorously attacking the goal in ice hockey and when I attended a jazz concert and heard a student, who is virtually mute in class, jam with wild abandon."

Ms. Fusco began teaching Latin in 1987 at The Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, CT. After receiving her M.A.T. in 1990,

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she returned to high school Latin in 1992 at Catonsville High School in Catonsville, MD and from 1993-1999 at Largo High School in Largo, MD. In 1999, returning to Connecticut, she began teaching at Greenwich High School and for nine years has provided Latin instruction and a 'love of learning' for her students. She is dedicated to ensuring that her students take responsibility for their own successes providing weekly progress reports and maintaining a detailed web site and portal to ease communication with both students and their parents. She is adept at providing appropriate instruction and support, no matter the individual needs of her students. While many have lauded her ability to reach the struggling learner, she has also provided Advanced Placement Latin Literature instruction to a dedicated group of students in her Honors Latin Class. Five of those students successfully participated on the AP exam last year.

Ms. Fusco received her A.B. in Classics with Honors Latin from Brown University, Providence, RI in 1979; her M.A. in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley, CA in 1986; and her M.A.T. in the Classics from Connecticut College, New London, CT in 1990.



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Arianne Haley-Banez

Greenwich High School
Grades 9-12 Guidance

"I want to help my students learn how to make responsible decisions and take responsibility for their actions. The ease with which today's teenagers can head down the wrong path is mind-boggling. Tarnished heros, promiscuous celebrities, over-dosing rock stars – everywhere our children turn they are faced with adults making poor choices. Helping a child sift through this quagmire is the most challenging – and enjoyable – part of my job," declares Arianne Haley-Banez. Ms. Haley-Banez has created a refuge from the often chaotic world of high school, navigating the academic, social, emotional, and extra-curricular pressures that teenagers face on a daily basis. She is superbly adept at guiding students (and their parents) through these challenges and assists them with identifying appropriate solutions. An administrator describes Ms. Haley-Banez's skills and talents, "She teaches many students to deal with the complexities of Greenwich High School, she teaches some students to better understand themselves and their choices, and she sometimes teaches parents that their children need to make their own choices." A colleague concurs, "Her ability to help students, parents, and colleagues make sound educational decisions is predicated on her relationships with students as well as her ability to clearly communicate the needs of her students." A parent notes, "She is an individual of the highest moral character and one whose dedication to her students is steadfast and unwavering."

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After twelve years as an editor for newspapers in Missouri, Ohio and New York, including the *New York Times*, Ms. Haley-Banez became a guidance counselor. Fortunately for Greenwich, she has spent the last 10 years teaching, guiding, and supporting students, their families and her colleagues at Greenwich High School. In addition to her responsibilities as a teacher/counselor, she is a ready participant in supporting school-wide programs and activities. She is currently a member of the GHS Response to Intervention Team, the School Crisis Team, the Central Pupil Study Team and is a Senior Internship Mentor and Advisor for the student's Gay/Straight Alliance club. She also shares her skills, knowledge and experience with graduate students in presentations at Long Island University on best practices, the role of a school counselor and on working with sexual minority youth.

Ms. Haley-Banez received her Bachelor's of Journalism from the University of Missouri, Columbia, MO in 1985; her Master's of Education in Community Counseling from Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH in 1993; a Certificate in Advanced Study in Counseling from Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT in 1998; and her Sixth Year Certificate in College Counseling from the UCLA Extension Program in 2006.



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Christine Kovac

Julian Curtiss School
Grade 1

"I yearn for my children to be treated fairly and to develop their own voice. I want them to be challenged academically and encouraged not to give up. I want them to learn that they are worthy and that there are general rules for behavior, relationships, and respect for authority. I want them to be inquisitive, independent and active participants versus being observers in their lives. My dreams for my two sons are the same for my students, my 'other children.'…Every child has the potential to grow academically, socially, and emotionally and it's my job to ensure this," declares Christine Kovac. Ms. Kovac strives to support her students in achieving these objectives. An administrator describes Ms. Kovac's teaching as "characterized with clarity of purpose, a positive approach, and very effective communications skills." She has been lauded for her ability to identify and meet the individual needs of each of her students and works with her school administration and colleagues to adjust the program to meet these needs, keeping parents informed every step of the way. One parent explains, "All mothers love to know there are teachers out there that go the extra mile when they are not asked; Mrs. Kovac is that teacher. Christine makes sure that all the children are learning to the best of their ability and that they will reach their full potential and beyond."

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Ms. Kovac began her career in teaching in 1994 as an English teacher in Hungary, Europe. In 1995 she returned to the States as an assistant teacher at the Rippowam Cisqua School in Mt. Kisco, NY before coming to the Greenwich Public Schools in 1996. For the last 11 years, she has been a first grade teacher at Julian Curtiss School. In addition to her classroom teaching responsibilities, Ms. Kovac is an after school and Saturday school tutor for reading remediation and CMT preparation, and a member of the School Improvement Team, and the Special Education and Child Care Committees. She is an active participant in the schools' United Nations Day Committee and annual celebration and the Ambassador's Club. She has also been a classroom teacher and an ESL teacher for the Greenwich Public Schools Summer School program.

Ms. Kovac received her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from the University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI in 1994; and her Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT in 2000.



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Anthony Mullen

Greenwich Alternative High School-Arch School
Grades 9-12 Science/Electives

"My philosophy of education is built upon the pillars of passion, perseverance, and professionalism. Passion is the noblest of the trio because it ignites a flame that all children can see and feel in the classroom. A teacher must be able to emit a light too bright for children to ignore. Perseverance is the ability to teach children who many people consider recalcitrant, unintelligent, and unredeemable – I believe it is morally better to teach the weak, the poor, the meek and the downtrodden because they – more than others- need a teacher. Professionalism means that teaching is a vocation and not an avocation," declares Anthony Mullen. It is no wonder that Mr. Mullen has been selected as a 'Distinguished Teacher.' His administrator wholeheartedly agrees, "Anthony Mullen has distinguished himself and his profession by choosing to work with students most teachers cannot instruct, motivate or control….The Arch School is a unique teaching environment that requires a special calling and ability to reach the disaffected youth of Greenwich. Mr. Mullen touches these students and they feel his compassion and warmth. He makes them enjoy learning again."

Mr. Mullen came to the Greenwich Public Schools five years ago, a retired homicide detective captain, eager to teach the students at Arch School. He generally teaches science-related courses –

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Forensics, Physics, etc. However, he has also taught U.S. History, Law in America, Essay Writing and Home Improvement courses. He is skilled at identifying the needs of each individual student and developing curriculum and instructional approaches to best meet their needs. A colleague attests, "(He is a) master teacher who seems to have a natural ability to engage and motivate students and push them to perform at levels higher than they thought possible." He is a State Certified new teacher and BEST Portfolio Mentor – this year he mentored a new teacher whose BEST Portfolio became this year's model portfolio for Connecticut Special Education teachers. His dedication to supporting youth extends well beyond the standard school day/week/year. Mr. Mullen developed and administers the District's ACE Program – an after school program that provides academic support for students who have been expelled from Greenwich High School. The program provides a second chance for students who want to continue their education and receive a high school diploma. He also is the volunteer Director of the Town of Somers Baseball League – a program that promotes sportsmanship and athleticism to over 700 children.

Mr. Mullen received his Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Studies from Long Island University, Old Brookfield, NY; and an M.S. in Elementary Education and an M.S. in Special Education, both from Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.



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The Distinguished Teachers Awards Committee wishes to thank the following for their generous contributions:

Greenwich Rotary Club
Greenwich Kiwanis Club
Greenwich High School PTA
Central Middle School PTA
Eastern Middle School PTA
Western Middle School PTA
Glenville School PTA
International School at Dundee PTA
Julian Curtiss School PTA
New Lebanon School PTA
North Mianus School PTA
North Street School PTA
Old Greenwich School PTA
Parkway School PTA
Riverside School PTA

Special thanks also to The Rotary Club of Greenwich for sponsoring the reception following the ceremony.

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Distinguished Teachers 1985 - 2007

2007
Phyllis Dale
Karen Maher-Cochran
Mary Ann Murray
Christina Shaw
Gloria Sprigg
Dana Tulotta

2006
Nan Barrett
Liz Black
William Bogardus
Charles DiSapio
Karen Harris
Robert Wilson

2005
Mary Fike
Diane Garofalo
Cathy Mayo
Gene Schmidt
Patrick Taylor
Julie Wang

2004
Andrea Abbott
Rae Baczek
Elaine Casale
Karen Nagy
Alice Neal
Jonathan Smith

2003
Donna Conway
Mark Epstein
Courtney Hawes
Brenda Macri
Karen Riordan
Medard Thomas

2002
Margot Bittenbender
Jean Di Vincenzo
Mariko Iwai
Georgia Tedla
Curtis Tipton
John Whalen

2001
Michael Batcheller
Alisa Lewis
Jane Niwa
Kathryn Onofrio
Susan Whalen
John Yoon

2000
Susan Batcheller
Valerie Bolling
Barbara O'Neill
Francis Pierce II
Susan Striker
Louise Williamson

1999
Kenneth Alcorn
A. Ray Hamilton
Patricia Kohn
Frederic Stewart
Carole Tierney
Doreen Zahn

1998
Nancy-Anne Fitzgibbons
Ledell Mulvaney
Mary Pierce
Barbara Schutzman
Steve Rosenberg
Judith Fell Woods

1997
Emma Oberheuser
Susan Valenzi
Dwight Wall
Erica Wiberg
Joanne Zammit
Robert Zapor

1996
Christine Anderson
Joan Beiser
William Dinnean
Carolyn Gilbert
Barbara Gotch
Carol Sutton

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1995
Daniel Barrett
Anne Gilhuly
Chris Kazanas
Susan Lickwar
Judith Petersen
Caralliene Westbrook

1994
Frank Arnone
Lissa Bentley
Victor Mazmanian
Paul Rosenblum
Marcie Schoenfeld
Jerry Snyder

1993
Jory Lockwood
Gail Montgomery
Philip Nobile
Sara Reilly
Candace Robinson
Janet Stroble

1992
John Boyton
Jane Carlin
Susan Hart
Dena Phelps
Carmel Signa
Martha Taylor

1991
Brigid Barry
William Bechem
Elinor Carr
Richard Kohn
Jane Kahn
Camilla Rogers

1990
Joan Lowe
Terrence Lowe
Julie Machen
Mary Seitzer
Lee Spong
Steve Wallerstein

1989
Joel Adelberg
Dolores Kenny
Ralph Pettie
Richard Piotrzkowski
Carol Rosenberg
Ardith Williams

1988
Martha Awdziewicz
Carmelita Brooks
Marjorie Klar
Harry Kropp
Kenneth Lyon
Lorraine Termini

1987
Esther Bushell
Christine Gunn
Jeanete Hotchkiss
George Mathes
Anne Modugno
Harold Trachtenburg

1986
Elizabeth Hughes
Shirle Janowich
Mary Livezey
Marilyn Maxwell
David Ross
Lynn Washington

1985
Ellwood Autuori
Kathy Barnes
Josephine Frame
Lois Hebert
Barbara Lewis
Betsy Perna-Smith

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Criteria for Identifying Distinguished Teachers

- Inspires enthusiasm for learning and academic excellence
- Elicits a high level of achievement from students in relation to their ability
- Expects students to take responsibility for their own learning
- Shows a high mastery of subject matter
- Has the respect of students and colleagues
- Communicates well with parents
- Pursues personal and professional development
- Contributes to curriculum and/or program development for the school or district
- Contributes to the school community beyond the classroom

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"Her sense of humor and upbeat manner made coming to class a pleasure, and looking back, I know I learned a lot from her."



"In life, you are lucky if you meet one person that changes your life, and (she) was that person for me."



"(She) is capable of taking a difficult academic subject and breaking it down fundamentally for all of her students to understand."



"She is an individual of the highest moral character and one whose dedication to her students is steadfast and unwavering."



"(She) makes sure that all the children are learning to the best of their ability and that they will reach their full potential and beyond."



"(He is a) master teacher who seems to have a natural ability to engage and motivate students and push them to perform at levels higher than they thought possible."

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DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence

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