



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FORTY-EIGHT YEARS IN THE CLASSROOM – AND SHE’S BACK FOR A FORTY-NINTH

Paterson Elementary School Teacher Bessie Ames since 1974 receives special commendation for her service

PATERSON – Today, Public School No. 10 teacher Bessie Ames was ready to greet her students on the first day of school. Like she had done for so many first days of school throughout her career, Ames had prepared her classroom with desks arranged to encourage student interaction, walls decorated to create an atmosphere of learning and fun, and a laptop full of lesson plans for the year ahead.

But today was just a little different for Ames. It was her 49th first day of school since 1974, when she first became a teacher in 1974, and Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer and other education officials marked the occasion by presenting her with a special commendation, thanking her for her service.

“When a person works in a profession for nearly half a century and shows no signs of stopping, that person truly loves their work, the people they get to work with, and the community they work in,” said Shafer. “Since her first day of school as a teacher in 1974, Ms. Ames has touched thousands of lives. Many of the children who entered her classroom have now entered the world...as better people than they might have been without the knowledge and love Ms. Ames gave them when she was their teacher. I want to thank Ms. Bessie Ames for her dedication to her work and her devotion to her students.”

Assistant Superintendent David Cozart and School 10 Principal Lolita Vaughn also participated in awarding Ames the commendation. Vaughn, who remembers Ames from her early years as a teacher, called Ames a role model and an inspiration for her to become a teacher. Cozart said that Ames exemplifies what teaching is all about.

“It’s not just a job. It’s a passion,” said Cozart. “You have to have a heart for kids and a love of what you’re doing.”

Even with 48 years of teaching behind her, Ames doesn’t like to use “the R word.” And it was until School 10 Principal Lolita Vaughn had told her that district officials wanted to congratulate her on her long career that she realized just how many years she had been working. The reality seemed to hit her when she came to the podium to accept the commendation.

“I am just so happy today, to be an educational teacher for the years that I have worked,” said Ames, with misty eyes. “I always tried to motivate each student I looked for the key to get them to learn and tried very hard to understand each and every student.”

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Ames expressed her gratitude to the Board of Education for providing the technology needed to teach and learn in the 21st century, and she also thanked the school staff whom she described as “always helpful and encouraging.”

Ames is a Paterson native whose mother worked in a factory and whose father worked as a bricklayer. Her grandmother was a teacher and was part of the inspiration for Ames to become an educator. Ames is also a product of Paterson Public Schools. She attended Public School No. 18 and is a graduate of Eastside High School. She earned her bachelor’s degree and teaching credentials at William Paterson University. She taught for 36 years at Public School No. 6 and 12 years ago began teaching at Public School No. 10.

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