

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee

05.13.2026



I have several important items to share this evening.

Last Day of School

Based on the [school calendar](#) and weather-related closures to date, the last day of school for students is currently scheduled for Tuesday, June 16, 2026, which will be a half day for students.

Charlton Elementary School Principal Search

As previously communicated, Principal Laura Ramos will not be returning to Charlton Elementary School for the 2026–2027 school year. The District has formally begun the search process for the next Principal of Charlton Elementary School.

To support this process, surveys have been distributed to both CES [families](#) and [staff](#) in order to gather feedback regarding the qualities, priorities, and leadership characteristics the school community believes are important in the next principal. While the District will not utilize a formal search committee structure for the initial screening process, staff and community members will have the opportunity to participate in a public finalist forum and question-and-answer session once finalists are identified later this spring.

The position has been posted through [SchoolSpring](#), and we appreciate the continued professionalism and support of the CES staff and community throughout this transition process.

Marfan Awareness and Advocacy

I would also like to recognize a Heritage Elementary School 4th grade student, Monty, who recently presented to a small group regarding [Marfan Syndrome](#) awareness and advocacy as she and her family prepare for next year's transition to Charlton Middle School. The presentation highlighted the Monty's courage, leadership, and commitment to increasing awareness and understanding surrounding this important medical condition.

In addition, the District is proud to support Monty and her family through the upcoming Marfan [Walk for Victory](#) in Boston. Flyers of awareness and program information related to the event are attached for the Committee's review.

aMAzing Educators Ceremony

I would also like to congratulate Stephanie Moison, who was recently recognized at the state level during the aMAzing Educators Ceremony Tuesday, May 5, 2026.

This recognition reflects Stephanie's dedication, professionalism, and continued commitment to supporting students and education. We are proud to see members of our staff recognized for the positive impact they have within our schools and broader educational community.

The program from this year's celebration is attached.

Dudley-Charlton Leadership Council (DCLC)

I would also like to recognize the continued work of the Dudley-Charlton Leadership Council (DCLC) and thank the students who have participated throughout the year. The DCLC continues to provide students with opportunities for leadership development, student voice, collaboration, and engagement across the district.

This year's participating students include:

Alexa Zannotti, Andrew Heywood, Brianna Ndegwa, Carter Gendron, Chelsea Twumasi-Ankrah, Elyse Peculis, Elyse Resener, Emma Kokocinski, Erin Gormley, Hallie Dzivasen, Hayley Phommala, Jean Sebastian Bardier, Jillian Clarke, Joya Adib, Kate Moran, Kennedy Davis, Maxwell Sanchez, Natalie Megas, Natallie Habib, Paige Warner, Sadie Landrum, Sarah Miller, Sinead Ennis, and William King.

In addition, I would like to recognize the student officers:

- Aiden Dzik – President
- Adrienne Warner – Vice President
- Jayden Njoroge – Secretary
- Thomas Dolan – Treasurer

We appreciate the leadership and engagement these students continue to demonstrate within our schools and community.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI/AI) Working Group

I would also like to provide the Committee with a brief update regarding the District's Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI/AI) Working Group, which formally began its work this spring.

The purpose of the working group is to explore both the opportunities and challenges associated with artificial intelligence in education while helping inform future district guidance, expectations, and policy development. The group includes representation from district and school administration, educators, student services, the School Committee, and students.

Current working group participants include:

Aimee Vitkus, Christopher Audette, Darren Elwell, Heather Harriman, Jamie Congdon, Jeanne Costello, Kristin Martin, Kelly McDonald, Kelly True, Rachel Lemansky, Raymond Sullivan, Sarah Zoschak, Jayden Njoroge and guest participant Kealyn Lamarche.

To date, the working group has focused discussions in several priority areas, including:

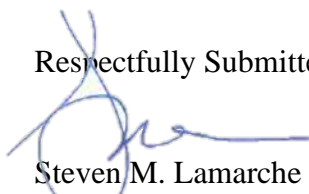
- Staff use of AI and the importance of maintaining professional judgment
- Student use of AI related to learning, integrity, and skill development
- Data privacy, confidentiality, and digital footprint concerns
- Equity, accessibility, and consistency of use across classrooms
- Academic integrity, critical thinking, and human connection
- AI accuracy, misinformation, and “AI hallucinations”
- Governance, guardrails, and district expectations for responsible use

A consistent theme throughout the discussions has been that artificial intelligence should support learning, creativity, productivity, and accessibility, but will never replace human judgment, critical thinking, or authentic relationships within education. The group also emphasized that student and staff privacy protections, including FERPA and COPPA compliance, must remain non-negotiable.

In addition, the working group has begun reviewing a draft district policy related to artificial intelligence and generative artificial intelligence that establishes guiding principles, expectations for student and staff use, data privacy protections, and procedures for district review of AI tools.

The group will continue meeting throughout the spring as the District works toward the development of administrative guidance and potential policy recommendations for future School Committee consideration.

Respectfully Submitted:



Steven M. Lamarche
Superintendent

Here a few important dates in [2026](#)

May

Friday, May 22, 2026 – Early Release All Students – Educator Professional Development

Monday, May 25, 2026 – No School – Memorial Day

Sunday, May 31, 2026 – Class of 2026 Commencement

June

Wednesday, June 16, 2026 – Early Release All Students – Last Day of School 2025-2026 SY

HELLO MY NAME IS MONTY

WHEN SHE ISN'T AT SCHOOL SHE IS

FAVORITE SUBJECT

MATH

**LOVES RIDING
4 - WHEELERS**



I AM PROUD OF
MYSELF
BECAUSE
I NEVER LET
MARFAN
BRING ME DOWN.

I AM GOING TO
CHANGE THE
WORLD BY
HELPING
ANIMALS




**FAVORITE
FOODS**









EXCITED ABOUT
LEARNING
HOW TO RUN A
CHRISTMAS TREE FARM







What is Marfan Syndrome?

-  Marfan syndrome is a genetic condition that affects connective tissue in the body.
-  It can affect the heart, blood vessels, eyes, bones, and joints.
-  Students with Marfan syndrome often look typical but may be taller, thinner, and more flexible than their peers. Every student with Marfan has unique medical conditions and physical characteristics.

Health & Safety Considerations

-  The student may have heart or blood vessel involvement and is usually followed closely by a team of doctors. Physicians may set specific activity restrictions and/or recommendations
-  They may need to avoid sudden intense physical strain.
-  If the student reports sudden chest pain, severe shortness of breath, fainting, or unusual pain, follow school emergency procedures immediately. These situations are rare, but awareness matters.
-  Fatigue, joint pain, shortness of breath, headaches, and chronic pain may occur more easily.
-  The student should be allowed to stop, rest, or modify activities without penalty.
-  For specific accommodations, please refer to the students 504 Plan , IEP and/or medical plan.

Impacts on the Student

-  Joint pain, fatigue, and low muscle tone are common. Writing as well as sitting for long periods of time may be difficult.
-  Often affects eyesight and may cause vision issues that require accommodations.
-  Frequent medical appointments are necessary, therefore increased absences are common, requiring flexibility with attendance and assignments.
-  Mental health concerns and low self-esteem may occur due to different physical differences and/or feelings of isolation

For additional information visit the Marfan Foundation: marfan.org

THE MARFAN FOUNDATION

WALK FOR VICTORY




**to donate or
join her team**



Please Help Support Monty

Monty is a student of DCRSD. She was diagnosed with Marfan Syndrome as an infant. She is a fierce advocate for herself and others. She is raising money and participating in the Walk For Victory at Christopher Columbus Park in Boston, MA on June 14, 2026.



2026
**CELEBRATION HONORING
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

dese MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education
May 5, 2026 | Devens Common Center

Program

Cocktail reception (5:00 p.m.)

Dinner buffet open (6:00 p.m.)

Welcome – Special Assistant to the Commissioner Regina M. Robinson

Remarks – Education Secretary Steve Zrike

Remarks – Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Pedro Martinez

Remarks – Wellpoint General Manager David Morales

Presentation of Awards

- Patriots Hall of Fame presented by RTX 2025 Massachusetts STEM Teachers of the Year
- History Teacher of the Year
- 2025-26 Massachusetts Milken Award Winner
- School Nurse Awards (Massachusetts School Nurse Organization)
- School Counselor of the Year (Massachusetts School Counselors Association)
- School Administrator Awards (Massachusetts School Administrators' Association)

Performance: Lowell High School's *"Sound Impressions"*

Presentation of Awards, Continued

- Superintendent of the Year (Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents)
- Teacher of the Year Semifinalists
- Teacher of the Year Finalists
- 2025 Teacher of the Year Luisa Sparrow
- 2026 Teacher of the Year Tara Goodhue

Closing Remarks – Dr. Robinson

2025 STEM Teacher of the Year



Elizabeth Mundy

Chemistry Teacher
Watertown High School
Watertown Public Schools

Liz Mundy has been a science teacher at Watertown High School since 2013, when she moved to Massachusetts after attending Michigan State University. She is passionate about teaching chemistry to all levels of students, with a particular focus on English learners. At WHS, she advises many clubs, including the Feminist Coalition, GSA, and Interact Club, and prioritizes building relationships with students by advocating for them when they aren't able to and empowering them to self-advocate when they can. By serving on the board of directors for a local non-profit that she helped found, CoLAB, she has connected students with local STEM companies in the community. Scientists come into the classroom to perform scientific investigations with students and present on their career paths, and students go into the local STEM companies as part of a mentoring program and for field trips. Her goal as a teacher is to make scientists out of students, to foster lifelong curiosity, and to help students take charge of their learning and, as a result, of their future.

2025 STEM Teacher of the Year



Tammy Rumplik

STEM Teacher
Roberta G. Doering School
Agawam Public Schools

Tammy Rumplik is an experienced educator with a diverse background spanning elementary, middle school, and special education. Her career in education began as a paraprofessional, where she developed a strong foundation in supporting student growth and learning. Since then, she has served as a special education teacher, kindergarten teacher, elementary STEM teacher, and middle school STEM teacher.

Tammy holds a master's degree and a STEM Certificate from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. She is also a certified Project Lead The Way Launch and Gateway teacher, as well as a PLTW Teacher Trainer.

Tammy loves doing robotics with her students, leading hands-on activities, and engaging learners in environmental projects. She is especially proud of creating a highly popular summer science, engineering, and enrichment camp that continues to inspire students. Throughout her career, she has remained passionate about fostering curiosity, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and confidence while helping students develop skills for future success in school and beyond.

History Teacher of the Year



Jenny Staysniak

History Teacher
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District

Rooted in a deep commitment to social justice, Dr. Jenny Staysniak has dedicated her 14-year career to building equitable, compassionate communities. An acclaimed educator, she has received extensive national recognition, including being named the 2025 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year and a Top 10 Finalist for National History Teacher of the Year. Her expertise has been featured by Time Magazine, The Boston Globe, and NPR. Jenny is a recipient of the Boston EdTalks Innovative Teacher Award, the Facing History and Ourselves Margot Stern Strom Innovation Award, and the Lola Stein Institute International Excellence in Teaching Award. Through her conceptualization of the Armenian Genocide oral history project and the Voices of Activism initiative, she has demonstrated a profound commitment to preserving underrepresented narratives while bridging the gap between students and their local communities. By guiding students through the rigorous process of conducting, transcribing, and publishing primary source interviews, Jenny empowers her students to become active curators of social justice history. She earned her Doctorate of Education from Vanderbilt University, where her doctoral capstone focused on the persistence and retention of first-generation college students, a testament to her passion for fostering inclusive academic environments. Jenny resides in Hudson.

2025-26 Massachusetts Milken Award Winner



Elizabeth Metts

**History Teacher
Excel Academy Charter High School in East Boston**

Elizabeth Metts is a ninth-grade history teacher, team leader, and teaching fellow mentor at Excel Academy Charter High School in East Boston. Elizabeth coordinates the National Honor Society. She has served as teacher coach, professional development facilitator, curriculum designer, advisory board member for The Teacher Collaborative, and contractor for the Obama White House's Turnaround Arts initiative. Elizabeth was named her school's Educator of the Year by the Class of 2025 and, most recently, a Milken Educator. She began her teaching career as a Princeton Public Service Fellow and then as an AmeriCorps member. She is a National Board Certified Teacher, Teach Plus Massachusetts Policy Fellow, and CURATE Fellow for DESE. Elizabeth earned her BA in art history from Princeton University, MA in arts administration from Teachers College at Columbia University, and master's in effective teaching from the Charles Sposato Graduate School of Education (Match Education).

School Nurse of the Year



Laurie Sheridan

School Nurse
Hawthorne Brook Middle School
North Middlesex Regional School District

Laurie Sheridan has been a nurse for over 35 years, with the past 19 years spent working at Hawthorne Brook Middle School in Townsend. She earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, became a nationally certified school nurse in 2013, and obtained her Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education certification in 2009.

Her background includes medical-surgical nursing, home care, long-term care, and rehabilitation. She is also an active member in the district, serving as a certified American Heart Association CPR instructor, where she provides training to staff members. In addition to her role as school nurse, Sheridan runs the school's spring Garden Club, where students learn landscaping, seed starting, and how to grow vegetables and flowers that are then sold within the community.

To be named School Nurse of the Year, nominees must be a Massachusetts School Nurse Organization (MSNO)/National School Association of School Nurses (NASN) member for two years, be currently be employed as a school nurse, demonstrate expertise in school nursing and effective management of a comprehensive school health program, display excellence in health teaching, have a role in nursing research, and demonstrate leadership or participation in professional organizations.

School Nurse Administrator of the Year



Stephanie Moisan

**School Nurse Leader
Dudley-Charlton Regional School District**

Stephanie Moisan is a dedicated nursing professional with nearly two decades of experience in clinical and educational health settings. She serves as School Nurse Leader for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District, where she oversees health operations across seven schools and leads a team of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. She provides strategic leadership, strengthens district-wide health practices, and advocates for comprehensive student health services to ensure safe, supportive learning environments.

Stephanie earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Quinnipiac University in 2007. She is a Nationally Certified School Nurse (NCSN). She began her nursing career in hospital-based practice, spending 14 years building a strong clinical foundation in medical-surgical nursing and labor and delivery. In 2019, Stephanie transitioned to school nursing and quickly recognized it as her true professional calling. Since assuming the School Nurse Leader role in 2021, she has focused on mentoring and supporting her team, advancing public health initiatives, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. She believes that a strong, unified nursing team is essential to promoting health, safety, and academic success of students.

Inspired early on by her grandmother, a nurse manager who exemplified compassionate leadership and patient-centered care, Stephanie continues to lead with those same values.

School Counselor of the Year



Henry Wan

School Counselor
Harrington Elementary School
Lexington Public Schools

Henry Wan of the Harrington Elementary School in Lexington was honored as the 2026 School Counselor of the Year by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA), having made outstanding contributions as an elementary school counselor at Harrington.

Henry's goal as part of the Counseling Department at Harrington Elementary is to help students believe that We All Belong. He pursues this through systemic goals like acceptance and belonging school-wide through the K-5 counseling curriculum and playground lessons, advocating for students with special needs, bringing healing to interpersonal conflicts via restorative justice practices, spearheading the unique initiatives of We All Belong Wednesdays and affinity groups, or collaborating with students through student-led groups, he strives to make this goal a reality.

2026 Paul J. Hunter Assistant Principal of the Year



Michael Lavelle

Assistant Principal
Quaboag Regional Middle & High School
Quaboag Regional School District

Michael Lavelle, assistant principal of Quaboag Regional Middle & High School in Warren, has been named the 2026 MSAA Assistant Principal of the Year. He has served at Quaboag Regional Middle & High School for the past four years. Michael earned an associate degree from Springfield Technical Community College, a bachelor's degree from Westfield State College, and a master's degree from Westfield State University.

Prior to his current role as assistant principal, Michael led the New England Center for Change as the head therapeutic socialization counselor. He also taught history for eight years at the Baird Middle School in Ludlow. He has served the Commonwealth as an assistant principal in the towns of Belchertown, Auburn, and Oxford respectively.

Michael grew up in Chicopee and currently resides in Ludlow with his wife Erica (a second-grade teacher) and his dog Jameson. He also has 13 nieces and nephews that he is the proud uncle to.

Outside of work, Michael finds joy in visiting the ocean, watching his family grow and compete in sporting events, playing and listening to music and attending live concerts, watching and attending Boston Celtics games, celebrating his Irish heritage, and serving his community as a Town Meeting member and serving at his local church as a eucharistic minister.

2026 Thomas C. Passios Elementary Principal of the Year Award



Liz Garden

Principal
Henry P. Clough Elementary
Mendon-Upton Regional School District

Liz Garden has been the principal of Henry P. Clough Elementary School in Mendon for four years. She is in her 18th year of school leadership, having served as a principal of the Leroy E. Mayo School in the Wachusett Regional School District and the Florence Roche School in Groton-Dunstable. She was also the assistant principal of the early childhood program in Leominster. Before becoming an administrator, she was a teacher for 11 years; she spent the last five before leaving the classroom as a second-grade teacher in Westborough. Liz is a fellow with the National Association of Elementary School Principals' Center for Innovative Leadership. Liz has a master's degree in child development and just completed her MFA in Creative Nonfiction Writing from Bay Path University. She lives in Shrewsbury with her musician husband and her two middle schoolers, Emerson and Cayce.

2026 Edmund K. Fanning Middle School Principal of the Year Award



Sarah Houle

Principal
Southbridge Middle School
Southbridge Public Schools

Sarah Houle earned her bachelor's degree from Boston University and holds master's degrees from UMass Boston and Endicott College. She is currently pursuing her Ed.D. at Clark University in Transformative Education. Prior to her work in Southbridge, Sarah was a high school social studies teacher with a passion for developing critical thinkers and active citizens who chart their own course. She started her career at Cathedral High School in Boston, teaching a diverse population of often first-generation high school graduates. After spending some time in a suburban district, Sarah followed her heart back to urban education and has been in Southbridge working with stakeholders to improve the middle school. Sarah is most proud of the team of passionate and pragmatic educators she works with. They persevere together to find ways to overcome the obstacles that often impede progress in urban settings.

Sarah grew up in Massachusetts and currently lives on a farm with her husband and best friend, Eric, and their children: Emalie, Trevor, and Tucker. In her free time, Sarah most enjoys doing anything with her family, but especially camping in their vintage Airstream, reading, watching her kids play sports, and volunteering at her church.

2026 Bertram H. Holland High School Principal of the Year Award



Scott Palladino

Principal
Wareham High School
Wareham Public Schools

Scott Palladino is in his 33rd at Wareham High School. He has served as principal for the past 16 years, following three years as vice principal and 14 years as a health teacher. During his teaching years, Scott also coached three sports for a decade. What has kept him in Wareham throughout his entire career is the compassionate faculty, the diverse student body and the close-knit families who continually support their schools and community. Many of Scott's current students are the children of Wareham High School graduates who he taught earlier in his career.

Scott earned his bachelor's degree from Springfield College, his master's degree from Cambridge College, and an Administration Certificate from Bridgewater State University. Scott was born and raised in Plymouth, Mass., and is a proud product of the Plymouth Public Schools. He comes from a strong family of educators.

Outside of work, Scott is involved in his children's academic and athletic activities. Scott contributes to the MIAA, serving on the Ice Hockey and Field Hockey Committees, and is a board member of the Cranberry Federal Credit Union (formerly the Plymouth County Teachers Federal Credit Union). In the winter, he also serves as an MIAA high school hockey referee.

Superintendent of the Year



Karen Crebase

**Superintendent
Hopedale Public Schools**

Karen Crebase has worked for 30 years as a school administrator, including working for the past 10 years as the superintendent for the Hopedale Public Schools. She also worked as the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in Nashua, N.H., and spent 20 years as an elementary school principal and/or assistant principal in Title I and non-Title I schools.

Karen has enjoyed working as an administrative mentor and assisting new administrators in developing leadership and visionary skills. Currently, she is a facilitator in Massachusetts for a group of veteran superintendents, and she leads them in examining problems of practice, professional articles, and current trends. She has also worked as a consultant/coach helping K-12 school districts when they are implementing new standards and curriculum.

Karen attended Colby College in Maine and taught elementary school in Houston, Texas before returning to the East Coast to complete her graduate work at Harvard University. She has been fortunate to present at many conferences across the country. She chaired the Blackstone Valley Superintendents Consortium for many years, has been a member of the M.A.S.S. Executive Committee for the past five years and serves as the president of M.A.S.S., and was a 2023 National Blue Ribbon Award Recipient.

2026 Teacher of the Year Semifinalist



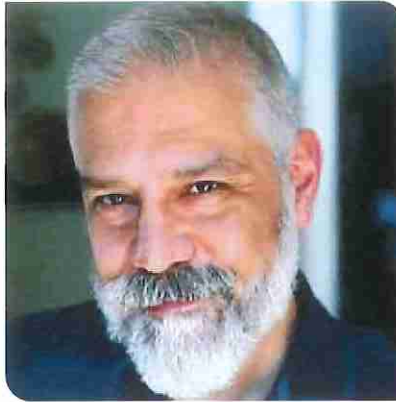
Amy Adamski

Math Teacher
Hampshire Regional High School
Hampshire Regional School District

Amy Adamski has over 20 years of teaching experience, including four years at the elementary level, eight years teaching middle school math, and the past 10 years as a high school math teacher. She currently teaches at Hampshire Regional High School in Westhampton, where she also serves as the math program leader. Her classroom fosters an engaging and inclusive environment in which students are encouraged to think critically, ask questions, and collaborate to solve problems.

Amy holds a bachelor's degree in education with a concentration in mathematics from Framingham State University, as well as a master's degree in math education from Lesley University.

2026 Teacher of the Year Semifinalist

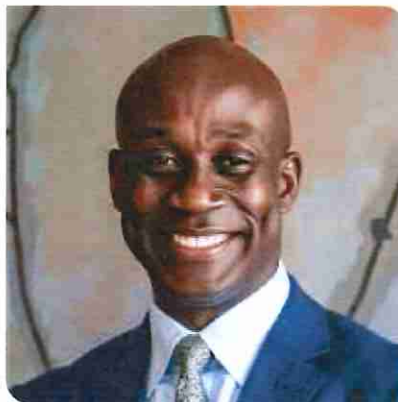


Michael López

Drama Teacher
Lynn English High School
Lynn Public Schools

Michael López has been a theater educator in some form or another for over 20 years. He has taught students from pre-K up to adult and senior populations, as well as special needs populations, including students with autism, intellectual impairment, and hearing and vision loss. In his current position, he has the privilege of teaching a large number of English language learners and immigrants. He also manages to keep his professional life as a theater artist alive by acting, directing, producing and playwriting, both locally and in New York City. He is the author of many plays, including the theatrical adaptation of his novel "The Thousand Natural Shocks," commissioned by the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival. He lives in a dollhouse in Lowell with his visual artist husband Tim Palin and their three dogs: Edith, Esteban and Lavinia.

2026 Teacher of the Year Semifinalist



Anderson Manuel

First-Grade Teacher
General John Nixon Elementary School
Sudbury Public Schools

Anderson Manuel is a passionate early childhood educator with 27 years of experience teaching K–3 students in the Boston and Sudbury Public Schools. He holds an undergraduate degree in business and a master’s degree in early childhood education from Boston College, where his academic training deepened his commitment to nurturing the whole child. For the past 25 years, he has also served as a music leader in Sudbury and Concord, using song, rhythm, and joy to help elementary and high school students discover the power of music, community, and belonging.

Beyond the classroom, Anderson mentors student teachers and new educators, helping them step into the profession with confidence and care. He also works as a classroom management consultant and writes articles encouraging teachers to recognize the extraordinary power they hold to shape lives every day. Married to his wife Cyndi for 29 years and a father to two young men, Isaiah and Jordan, Anderson believes that the greatest gift a teacher can give is helping children fall in love with learning and grow into kind, compassionate, and effective citizens. To him, there is no finer calling than educating young people and showing them that they matter.

2026 Teacher of the Year Semifinalist



Lisa Yendriga-Norberg

History/Social Studies Teacher
Sumner G. Whittier School
Everett Public Schools

Lisa Yendriga-Norberg has taught middle school social studies for 25 years, driven by the belief that every student has something real to contribute to their classroom, their community, and beyond. For the past 20 years, she has been a dedicated teacher at the Sumner G. Whittier School in Everett. The support of her fellow teachers, teammates, administrators, and mentors has been central to her growth as an educator. In her classroom, students don't just learn about government—they engage with it. Lisa gives students real voice and choice so they care about the work and own it, leaving them not just with an understanding of civics, but knowing they can take an active role in shaping their community. Outside the classroom, Lisa serves on the DESE MCAS Civics Assessment Development Committee and as a building representative for the Everett Teachers Association. When she's not teaching, she enjoys the outdoors, family time, cheering her son on from the sidelines, and getting lost in a good book.

2026 Teacher of the Year Finalist



Sarah Costello

First-Grade Teacher
South Row Elementary School
Chelmsford Public Schools

Sarah Costello is a first-grade teacher at South Row Elementary School in Chelmsford. Her passion for teaching began as a child when she taught her stuffed animals, babysitters, and family members in the classroom in her basement. She attended Salve Regina University with a major in early childhood education and a minor in special education. She was the president of the Council for Exceptional Children and organized Best Buddies events for adults with all abilities.

After college, Sarah taught first grade in Watertown, Conn. and received her master's in education, specializing in English language learners. She values inclusive social-emotional learning alongside hands-on academics to provide her students with a safe learning environment in which students of all abilities can shine. She incorporates DEI and multi-tiered systems of support practices to make sure each student gets what they need to succeed. Throughout the day, students earn individualized and classroom compliments and can cash in the compliments to earn prizes. In addition, Sarah created a schoolwide Connections Calendar highlighting all abilities, cultures, heritages, holidays, and traditions.

2026 Teacher of the Year Finalist



Thomas Simmons

English Language Arts Teacher
Mario Umana Academy
Boston Public Schools

Thomas Simmons is a dedicated educator, instructional leader, and advocate for equity in education with nearly two decades of experience serving students and communities across the United States and internationally. With a B.A. from Boston College and an M.Ed. in teaching and curriculum from Harvard University, Tommy holds certifications in English, ESL, history, mathematics, reading intervention, and bilingual education.

Throughout his career, Tommy has taught grades 3 through 8 in public, charter, and pilot schools, consistently fostering high levels of academic growth while building inclusive, culturally responsive classrooms. He has served on instructional leadership teams, mentored teachers, led professional development for educators and families, and partnered with organizations such as Facing History and Ourselves and the Boston Bar Association to design impactful, justice-centered curriculum. Tommy also founded the Umana wrestling program through Beat the Streets New England.

Tommy began his career as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mozambique, where he developed English language curriculum and trained educators—an experience that continues to shape his commitment to global citizenship and educational access. Known for his empathy, innovation, and unwavering belief in students' potential, Tommy works to empower young people to become confident learners, critical thinkers, and engaged members of their communities.

2026 Teacher of the Year Finalist



Beatriz Thomas

Social Studies Teacher
Somerville High School
Somerville Public Schools

Beatriz grew up in Somerville and is a proud graduate of Somerville Public Schools. She started her career as a seventh-grade social studies teacher and then transitioned to ninth-grade social studies at SHS in 2020. In Somerville, she is lucky to be able to share her Salvadoran roots and culture with her students. Beatriz currently teaches ninth-grade world history and a dual enrollment women's and gender studies course through Syracuse University.

In 2019, the Massachusetts Council for Social Studies recognized her with the Richard Aieta Award for being a Promising New Teacher. Additionally, in 2021 she completed a Latinx Teachers Fellowship through Latinos for Education, inspiring her to co-create her school's Latinx Student Union club. Beatriz is currently enrolled in the Perrone-Sizer Institute for Creative Leadership, which she was awarded a district scholarship to attend. She enacts positive change for her students; her capstone project focuses on the use of restorative justice circles and community building for ninth-grade students through a peer mentorship program. She strongly feels schools should be a safe community for all students. In her free time, Beatriz enjoys watching sports, lounging with her French Bulldog, and traveling with her husband.

2026 Teacher of the Year



Tara Goodhue

Science Teacher
Lowell High School
Lowell Public Schools

Tara Goodhue teaches science and is head of the science department at Lowell High School. She shows her students that nature is all around them, even in an urban setting, and involves them in scientific work through Harvard Forest, Mass Audubon, the National Park Service, and other entities. Tara is an adjunct faculty member at University of Massachusetts Lowell, a curriculum design and science communication consultant with Fort Hill Consulting in New Hampshire, and a mentor teacher with the Harvard Forest Schoolyard Ecology program. She is also a member of the Lowell "Nature Everywhere" Team with the Children and Nature Network.

Before coming to Lowell High, Tara worked at Greater Lowell Technical High School in Tyngsboro for 14 years. Tara holds a Doctor of Education in leadership in schools with a STEM concentration from UMass Lowell; a Master of Education in curriculum and instruction in secondary education, also from UMass Lowell; and a Bachelor of Arts in biology with a minor in music performance from Clark University in Worcester. In 2020, the National Association of Biology Teachers named her Environmental Educator of the Year. When Tara isn't teaching science, you might find her hiking or knitting.

