



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:** [Michael Yaple](#)

(609) 376-9072

## **Essex County Educator Named 2021-2022 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year**

**Trenton, NJ** – The New Jersey Department of Education today announced that Theresa Maughan, a high school social studies teacher at the East Orange STEM Academy in the East Orange School District, has been named the 2021-2022 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year.

Theresa may not have become a social studies teacher forty years ago had it not been for two of *her* social studies teachers when she was a young student growing up in Hudson County.

“I was in seventh grade when I realized I was a ‘Dreamer,’ as the term is used today,” said Theresa, whose family, from Belize, faced deportation when her parents’ visas had expired. “My social studies teacher, Mrs. Roman, launched a campaign to help save me from deportation.” The teacher organized a letter-writing campaign to their Congressional representative, and the story attracted the interest of the Jersey Journal, which ran a cover story on the family’s plight.

The effort worked, and the family was able to go through the naturalization process and become American citizens. “My teacher ignited our class with the realization that we could take our civics lessons and use them in real life situations,” said Theresa.

A few years later in high school, Theresa’s social studies teacher assigned her the role of “teacher for the day” as the class re-enacted a simulation of the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson. “I was hooked,” said Theresa. “Even though I had considered a career as an immigration lawyer to help people experiencing what I went through in the seventh grade, I knew that a career in teaching would provide me with the best opportunity to fulfill my commitment to work for change.”

Theresa challenges her students to reach beyond their classroom walls for new learning opportunities and to enter statewide and national academic contests. For instance, she chaperoned a group of STEM students to the annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., and she secured an opportunity for her students to participate in the Hamilton Education Program, where they created performance pieces such as songs, raps, and a monologue about the Founding Era. Her students have won the Black History Month Essay contests sponsored by the New Jersey Bar Association, the New Jersey Department of State Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Commission essay contest, and were state finalists in the National History Day competition.

“New Jersey has been recognized as having the best education system in the country, and this can be attributed to dedicated educators like Theresa,” said **Governor Phil Murphy**. “We congratulate Theresa on this prestigious honor. She embodies the strength of New Jersey’s school system and of our proud immigrant community.”

“I am honored to recognize Theresa Maughan for her commitment to her students and dedication to the teaching profession,” said **Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “The Department of Education looks forward to working with Theresa as we strive to continually enhance education throughout the State.”

“Now is the time to celebrate outstanding teachers more than any other period in our recent history. Throughout the challenges posed by this global pandemic, educators have truly risen to the challenge and demonstrated their dedication to the students they serve. Ms. Theresa Maughan exemplifies this level of professionalism and dedication,” **said Kathy Goldenberg, President of the State Board of Education.**

Theresa earned a bachelor’s degree in Education and History from Rutgers University and a master’s degree in Administration and Supervision from New Jersey City University. Even after serving as a teacher for four decades, Theresa believes in continual professional improvement; she is currently working toward a second master’s degree, this time in American History, from Pace University in New York City.

Thirty-four of Theresa’s forty years in education have been as a teacher serving the students in the East Orange School District.

“This serves as one more example of the East Orange School District being recognized for what it is, home to some of the best teachers and students in a state known for having the best teachers and students in the nation,” **said AbdulSaleem Hasan, Superintendent of the East Orange School District.** “We are truly proud of Ms. Maughan. In the midst of a global pandemic and the challenges inherent in virtual learning, she was able to adapt and overcome and ensure her students received a world-class education.”

“Mrs. Maughan is a remarkable educator who demonstrates outstanding teaching strategies, daily,” **said Vincent L. Stallings, Principal of the East Orange STEM Academy.** Her students are always at the center of her lessons and student engagement is extremely high. Mrs. Maughan is a respected leader amongst her peers and district colleagues; her level of professionalism is unmatched.”

Theresa lives in Morris County with her husband of thirty-three years, Niall. Her daughter and son are both graduates of The College of New Jersey and her daughter is a special education teacher in New Jersey.

In her role as State Teacher of the Year, Theresa will work with the New Jersey Department of Education and give presentations to colleagues and stakeholders around the State, speak with aspiring teachers, and visit classrooms throughout New Jersey to promote diversity in the teacher workforce and continual educational improvement. She will also take part in national conferences with other State Teachers of the Year.

Theresa was one of four finalists for New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. The finalists received the highest scores on their applications and their interviews with a distinguished panel of representatives from the State’s education associations and other stakeholder groups.

The other three finalists are: Lynne Bussott, a second-grade teacher at the Governor Charles C. Stratton School, Swedesboro-Woolwich School District, Gloucester County; Alyssa Geary, a special education and English language arts educator at the Red Bank Middle School, Red Bank Borough School District, Monmouth County; and Faith Roncoroni, an English teacher at the Phillipsburg High School, Phillipsburg School District, Warren County.

Additional information can be found on the [Governor's Educator of the Year webpage](#).



