



For Immediate Release:

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EAST HARTFORD TEACHER NAMED 2015 CONNECTICUT TEACHER OF THE YEAR

(EAST HARTFORD, CT)—Cara Quinn, a sixth-grade teacher, is Connecticut’s 2015 Teacher of the Year. State and local officials joined Mrs. Quinn to deliver the good news to her students and colleagues today at the Sunset Ridge School in East Hartford.

Throughout her 11 years as a Connecticut educator, Mrs. Quinn has distinguished herself as a teacher who challenges her students to “shatter their individual glass ceilings” and to make a difference in the world.

“I draw my inspiration for teaching by watching my students embrace these concepts and ideas. Their enthusiasm for learning, care for one another and quest to maximize their potential is what invigorates me and solidifies my commitment to teaching,” Mrs. Quinn said. “I am grateful to have the opportunity to make a positive contribution to our world each day through the work that I so dearly love.”

Besides the academic excellence Mrs. Quinn cultivates in her classrooms, she is equally focused on her students’ character development. She said, “Whether it be committing 26 acts of kindness to honor the victims of the Sandy Hook School tragedy, responding to current event stories by selling loom bracelets for typhoon victims or inviting an ostracized classmate to join them at lunch; when my students see someone in need and are compelled to act, these are my proudest moments.”

“Our teachers play a vital role in helping children reach their full potential and continue to inspire success long after school days end,” said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. “In every school throughout the state, teachers are making a daily difference in the lives of students. Congratulations to Mrs. Quinn on being named the 2015 Teacher of the Year. We extend our gratitude to her—and to all our teachers—for the tremendous work they do each day.”

Mrs. Quinn also spearheaded initiatives to broaden student horizons regarding college and careers. Working with the University of Connecticut, she created a college immersion experience for students. She also organizes an annual Career Day where students have the opportunity to interact with 30 professionals from the community.

“Teachers have a profound impact on the lives of students and are instrumental to keeping them on the path to lifelong success,” Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman said. “We applaud Mrs. Quinn for her dedication, compassion, and her remarkable work with her students. We look forward to her future contributions to students and teachers across the state as the 2015 Teacher of the Year.”

“Cara Quinn is an outstanding teacher and marvelous human being who has more than earned this recognition. In her classroom, Mrs. Quinn not only teaches the material—she also teaches her students about their community and about their world. She encourages her students to give back through service and inspires them to make a difference,” said Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor. “Congratulations to Mrs. Quinn and to the East Hartford Public Schools for this well-deserved distinction.”

Mrs. Quinn was chosen from among four finalists, 15 semifinalists, and over 100 district-level Teachers of the Year. A statewide council of former Teachers of the Year and representatives from educational organizations, businesses, and the community conducted the rigorous selection process, which includes on-site visits, candidate applications, interviews, and observations of teaching.

“The Teacher of the Year Program does not attempt to select the 'best' teacher in Connecticut. Rather, it seeks to identify, from among many outstanding educators, one teacher to serve as a visible and vocal representative of what is best in the profession,” said Susan Pelchat, selection committee chairperson for the Connecticut Teacher of the Year (TOY) Council.

“Connecticut's teachers of the year provide an important voice on educational issues in our state,” said Commissioner Pryor. “They participate in an advisory council at the State Department of Education and, in so doing, they offer an invaluable perspective on statewide education policy and its implementation. We are deeply grateful for their contributions.”

Mrs. Quinn began her career teaching a fourth-grade classroom in Bolton and has taught the last nine years in East Hartford where she focuses on bringing equity to education and closing the achievement gap. East Hartford Public School leaders praised Mrs. Quinn for her work.

“Cara inspires all of us regarding the true meaning of what it means to be a teacher—expect more, love kids and work hard to make a difference. We are so proud to have Cara represent the great teachers of East Hartford and the entire state of Connecticut,” East Hartford Superintendent Nathan Quesnel said. “Cara will be strong ambassador of the TOY program as she is an example for all of us.”

“I am thrilled that Cara has been named state Teacher of the Year. It is a great honor and it is an example of her dedication to the students and families of East Hartford,” Sunset Ridge School Principal Daniel Catlin said. “It is well deserved and I am so proud of her.”

Other state leaders commended Mrs. Quinn for her personal commitment and her professional skills.

CEA President Sheila Cohen said, “Teachers are unsung heroes, so it is an inspiration to see an educator being honored today. Cara Quinn truly is a heroine—doing, as she says, ‘whatever it takes to engage her students.’ Mrs. Quinn’s dedication should remind all of us that students and teachers across Connecticut are achieving in countless ways every single day. This year’s Teacher of the Year doesn’t only want her students to be smart, she wants them to be compassionate as well. She leads by example with a resume filled with unselfish and altruistic volunteer work side-by-side with remarkable creativity within the classroom.”

Mrs. Quinn also now becomes Connecticut's representative for National Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Quinn succeeds 2014 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Mr. Mastroianni, a music teacher at West Hartford's William H. Hall High School, who concludes his term as Teacher of the Year on December 31.

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