



# NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

For Immediate Release:

October 9, 2015

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## **WATERBURY TEACHER NAMED 2016 CONNECTICUT TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

(WATERBURY, CT)—Jahana Hayes, a high school social studies teacher, is Connecticut’s 2016 Teacher of the Year. State and local officials joined Mrs. Hayes to deliver the good news to her students and colleagues today at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury.

Mrs. Hayes’ career as an educator goes back 13 years with the most recent 11 years in Waterbury. Her role as a social studies teacher extends beyond the walls of her classroom and into the community where she encourages her students to be active in projects that help their neighbors and improve the world around them.

“I am extremely humbled by this honor and thrilled by what it means for the students at Kennedy High School and for the Waterbury community. I’ve been telling my students for years that excellence happens here every day. Our students need to know that they have value and can make a difference in the world. This honor makes that real for them,” Mrs. Hayes said.

Regarding her role as Connecticut Teacher of the Year and what that means for educators across the state, Mrs. Hayes said she hopes to inspire more young people to consider a profession in teaching.

“I want to remind people that this is a noble profession and we should celebrate it,” Mrs. Hayes said. “We should also encourage more young people to go into teaching and encourage veteran teachers to be re-energized about the amazing work that they do.”

“Teachers change the world. Across the state, we’re making progress because educators are working tirelessly to improve lives and equip children to achieve their dreams,” said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. “We all have a special teacher who inspired us to work hard and rise to our potential. And today, we’re recognizing one of them who has gone above and beyond. Congratulations to Mrs. Hayes on this tremendous honor—she inspires children in Waterbury each and every day. Thank you to all of the teachers in Connecticut who make a difference and make the future brighter for our children and our state.”

Mrs. Hayes 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.

“Jahana Hayes is an inspiration not only to her students, but to all educators who seek to deliver on the promise of an outstanding education for every student,” said state Commissioner of Education Dianna R. Wentzell.

“Teachers are called upon to stir intellect and ignite passion in their students. They come to the classroom as learners themselves, ready to share knowledge, engage in thoughtful dialogue and inspire new ideas. Congratulations to Mrs. Hayes and thank you for inspiring our young people to be lifelong learners.”

Mrs. Hayes, who got her start in the classroom 13 years ago in New Haven, has spent the last 11 years teaching students in Waterbury. In the last decade, she has taught World History, Roots of American Citizenship, U.S. History, Civics & Geography, and African American History.

In addition to her teaching duties, Mrs. Hayes has served for seven years as the lead teacher for the district’s after-school programming and she has worked as part of a team on minority teacher recruitment strategies for the district. Mrs. Hayes mentors new teachers and is working to create a districtwide teacher mentor program.

Mrs. Hayes also has a passion for service learning and spearheads many community service efforts at her school. She has helped students get involved in projects with Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life and the American Cancer Society. Her goal is to write and implement a service learning curriculum to teach students the importance of helping others.

“Jahana Hayes is an exemplary teacher who genuinely touches student lives year after year. She takes great pride in helping students find success in high school and prepare for success in their post-secondary educational endeavors,” said Kennedy Principal Robert Johnston. “Her students are enabled to achieve their goals in high school and beyond through Jahana’s example and active guidance. Her quality as an educator is only surpassed by the quality of her character.”

The Connecticut Teacher of the Year and Teacher of the Year finalists serve as teacher-ambassadors for public education. They are appointed to various education advisory committees and become consultants to the Commissioner of Education. They present workshops; speak at education conferences and meetings; address student, civic, college and university, and governmental groups; and operate special programs in accordance with their interests and expertise. The Connecticut Teacher of the Year also represents the state at the national level - participating in national educational forums, National State Teacher of the Year Program planning and networking sessions, and U.S. Department of Education meetings.

Mrs. Hayes also now becomes Connecticut’s representative for National Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Hayes succeeds 2015 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Cara Quinn, a teacher at Sunset Ridge School in East Hartford, who concludes her term as Teacher of the Year on December 31.

Mrs. Hayes and the three finalists will be honored at a ceremony on Tuesday, Nov. 10, at the Bushnell in Hartford

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