

[Home](#) / [Recognition](#) / [Educator Recognition](#) / Governor's Educator of the Year Program

Governor's Educator of the Year Program

Broadcast Memo: [Nominations Sought for 2022-2023 Governor's Educator of the Year Recognition Program](#)

[Program Materials](#)

New Jersey State Teachers of the Year

Current State Teacher of the Year

State Winners 

County Winners 

Program Materials 

Program Contributors 

2022-23 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year

[Christine Girtain Highlight Video](#)

Christine Girtain is a high school science teacher and the Director of Authentic Science Research at Toms River High School North and Toms River High School South in Toms River, NJ. The Authentic Science Research program is a three-year elective program that allows students to pursue and conduct independent research on a specific science topic that interests them. As the director, she has guided student projects that have covered a range of topics, from the effects of fruit seed extracts on bacteria to bioengineering E. coli to studies of bees. She has connected students and teachers with research and STEM educational trips that have taken them to cattle farms and to Costa Rica. Christine's love of learning began early, as her family nourished curiosity and taught their children the value of education. Her parents instilled a love of learning, curiosity, and a sense of adventure in her and her brother, Paul. It was this curiosity and having some inspirational teachers, who motivated her to become a teacher, a role she fully embraces. Consequently, her brother Paul is a history teacher at Toms River High School North, where her mother was a secretary for years. A Toms River Schools graduate herself, Christine has been teaching in the district for twenty-eight years.

Christine's own career journey began thirty-two years ago, when during a teacher shortage, she received a Governor's Teaching Scholarship from Governor Florio. She went on to earn a bachelor's degree in biology with a concentration in education from The College of New Jersey & a master's degree in earth science instruction and curriculum from Kean University.

Christine loves the bonds she has made with her students, especially teaching the research class. Her work to push the limits and give students hands-on research opportunities have led to her to being named the NJ STEM Pathways 2019 STEM Teacher of the Year, the National Association of Biology Teachers 2022 Genetics Educator of the Year, and the 2021 New Jersey Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. In addition, Christine has brought in more than \$185,000 in grant funds to fund student research projects and STEM camps.

Christine's impact on her students and community reaches well beyond the classroom walls.

As an educator, she is always trying to learn something new to add to the crop of experiences her students can choose from. She tries to meet new people and build connections with academic, industry, and government leaders. She does this to enable her students to have a better sense of what career will bring them happiness and fulfillment. She loves her job and wants the same experience for her students.

Christine has formed partnerships with the United States Army & Navy to establish a K-12 STEM pipeline with a goal of ensuring the sustainability of the STEM workforce in the United States. She and a colleague took students to Europe for a cultural trip last spring to do research and in 2017 to Costa Rica with Seeds of Change. Christine continues to build pathways for her colleagues, funding local teachers and hosting teachers from six different states for bioprospecting workshops, whose focus is to find new potential antibiotics to protect humans, crops, and animals. She and her students have built a Global STEM Wolbachia project with Dr. Pirhi Waxman from Giv'atayim, Israel. Their students get support from the Bordenstein Lab from Penn State running their "Discover the Microbes Within: Wolbachia Project" to look for the prevalence of a bacterium called Wolbachia in insects, which has been found to be a sustainable means of blocking the spread of Dengue and Zika viruses. Girtain's students build friendships and work across time zones. They presented their final work to a panel of scientists from the US, Israel and Switzerland. She firmly believes that teachers are the farmers of education, growing the next generation of citizens in a global economy.



She has shared her message as a national presenter and advocate for increasing agricultural literacy working with organizations that include Nourish the Future, the National Corn Growers Association, the United Soybean Board, the Beef Checkoff, and The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. In her presentations, she stresses that to ensure an equitable education for all students, teachers first must ensure that the basic needs of all their students are being met, which means access to food and eliminating food insecurity.

Christine credits her success to the efforts of everyone in the district, from the school bus drivers, the cafeteria staff, the custodians, and support staff, to the teachers, administrators, and Toms River Board of Education as they all work together as a team to make the best educational experience for students.

Recognition

Recognition

Educator Recognition

Overview

Exemplary Educator Recognition Program

Governor's Educator of the Year Program

Milken National Educator Awards

Distinguished Clinical Intern Awards

Distinguished Cooperating Teacher Awards

Additional Recognition Programs

School Recognition

District Recognition

Statewide

Governor Phil Murphy

Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver

NJ Home

Services A to Z

Departments/Agencies

Contact Us

Privacy Notice

Legal Statement & Disclaimers

Accessibility Statement



Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2020

Department of Education

PO Box 500,

Trenton, NJ 08625-0500,

(609)376-3500