



# NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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## **Connecticut Teachers Receive Presidential Award for Excellence in STEM Education**

(HARTFORD, CT)—Governor Dannel P. Malloy and State Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell offered congratulations today to four Connecticut teachers who received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

President Barack Obama last month named Nicole Gilson, a math teacher at Peck Place School in Orange; Liesl Fressola, a former science teacher of Sandy Hook Elementary School and math coach in Danbury Public Schools; Richard Brogini, a science teacher at Smith Middle School in Glastonbury; and Elizabeth Capasso, a math teacher at Jettie S. Tisdale School in Bridgeport as recipients of the prestigious award. In total, 213 math and science teachers in grades K–12 from across the country received the award, which is the highest recognition that a teacher of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) can receive in the United States.

“Teachers have a profound impact on the success of our students. They work tirelessly on behalf of our students, inspire them to dream boldly, and help them reach their individual potential,” said Governor Malloy. “Excellent teaching is the cornerstone of our civic society and our economy, and teachers like Ms. Fressola, Ms. Gilson, Ms. Capasso, and Mr. Brogini are vital to the success of our state and our nation. I want to congratulate them and thank them for their unwavering commitment to public service.”

“This is a tremendous honor for these four teachers. We are so grateful for their dedication to our students and our schools,” said Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman. “Teachers are not only responsible for academic excellence, but they also play an integral role in helping young people become good citizens and lifelong learners. We appreciate everything they do for our students and our future.”

“We are so proud to have these inspiring teachers represent our state,” said Commissioner Wentzell. “Connecticut is committed to providing all students with a rigorous STEM education that equips them with the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to compete for the best jobs in today’s economy. Teachers like Ms. Fressola, Ms. Gilson, Ms. Capasso, and Mr. Brogini encourage our students to

achieve their potential, and play an integral role in ensuring our students receive the high quality education they deserve. They are excellent examples of the high caliber of Connecticut's teachers.”

Ms. Gilson has taught elementary school for nearly 20 years and currently teaches fifth grade at Peck Place School in Orange. She uses data-based instruction to support students' learning and tailor lessons based on their needs.

Ms. Fressola has been an elementary school educator for nearly a decade, and has taught in Danbury Public Schools and Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown. In addition to classroom teaching, she has served as a STEM coach, which has allowed her to disseminate best-practices and increase the quality of STEM education at her school. Ms. Fressola now teaches at a school in Missouri.

Ms. Capasso has been teaching for the past eight years at Jettie S. Tisdale School. She currently teaches Algebra I and eighth-grade mathematics. She strives to have her students understand mathematics through discourse and writing.

Mr. Broggin has been teaching middle school science for 23 years, including eighth-grade physical science for the past 19 years at Smith Middle School. He makes science come alive for students by tapping into their capacity for joy and creativity, and by providing engaging activities that encourage deeper understanding and collaboration.

The state of Connecticut has taken significant steps to strengthen STEM education. In November 2015, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted the Next Generation Science Standards, a set of more rigorous and real world-based science standards. Additionally, the state encourages educators to participate in the U.S. Department of Education's Mathematics and Science Partnership program to increase students' academic achievement and teachers' content knowledge.

Each awardee receives \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation, in addition to a certificate of achievement signed by the President of the United States, and an invitation to Washington, D.C., for an awards ceremony and visit with members of the administration.

Award recipients were honored during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on September 8, 2016.

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