

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 7, 2011

**ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS
HONOR ERICA DePALO
2011 “ESSEX COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR”**

(Newark, NJ) – Erica DePalo of Montclair, New Jersey, was honored by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for having been named the 2011 “Essex County Teacher of the Year”. The ceremony was held during the Board’s Wednesday, September 7th, meeting held at West Orange Town Hall.



2011 “Essex County Teacher of the Year”, Erica DePalo (left), was presented with a Commendation from the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders by Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston (left) and Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell (center). The presentation was made during the Board’s September 7th meeting held at West Orange Town Hall. Photo by Glen Frieson

Ms. DePalo was selected as the “Teacher of the Year” for Essex County as part of the New Jersey Department of Education’s annual “New Jersey Teacher of the Year” program, which is intended to recognize and honor the contributions of outstanding classroom teacher leaders, Pre-K through Grade 12, who possess a special talent for inspiring a love of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities. Her selection was made by representatives of the education community under the guidance and direction of the New Jersey Department of Education, Essex County Office, which is led by Executive County Superintendent Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod.

Ms. DePalo currently teaches Honors English for Grades 9 and 10 at West Orange High School, where she has been employed since 2003. She earned her B.A. in English from

(2)

Villanova University, and then went on to earn her M.A. in Liberal Studies from the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University, as well as an Administrative Certificate from the College of Education and Human Services at Montclair State University. She is currently working on her Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership at The College of New Jersey.

The Freeholder Board's commendation was co-sponsored by Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell, a Library Media Specialist with the Newark Public Schools, and Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston, who taught English at West Orange High School for 30 years until her retirement in 2001.

While applauding Ms. DePalo, Freeholder Luciano also said, "As a public school educator myself, it is so nice to see that our young teachers are out there shining and taking the spotlight away from so many of the negative things that we read and see in the press about public education."

Freeholder Patricia Sebold remarked that she was especially delighted to honor Ms. DePalo in light of the fact that she, herself, had taught at West Orange High School for so many years. "Erica teaches 9th Grade English and some 10th Grade English, and she teaches Honors English. She teaches *exactly* what I taught for most of my 30 years, so I am truly overwhelmed by her accomplishments and it is a real privilege to honor her tonight."

"Erica, I am so proud of your accomplishments", said Executive County Superintendent Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, who also participated in the presentation. "You have touched the lives of young people in West Orange as few educators have. You represent all the teachers of Essex County, and they couldn't have a better representative." He also thanked the Board for taking the initiative and having the insight to honor outstanding educators.

DePalo began her remarks by thanking the Board, especially Freeholders Sebold and Luciano, "...and especially for recognizing education and celebrating the profession of teaching", adding, "I am merely a representative of all the hardworking dedicated teachers, especially those with whom I work at West Orange High School... teachers who are committed to their students, who consistently advocate for their students, and who exceedingly go above and beyond their everyday duties and job descriptions." She went on to say, "I am extremely proud and fortunate to be part of a district that has afforded me the opportunity to grow as an individual and a professional, to work alongside teachers who support me and inspire me every day, and to be surrounded by students who are really the reason I love coming to work, and love my job."

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