

## Zitomer earns 'crystal apple' as an educator achieving highest national certification

Millburn High School teacher Deborah Zitomer was one of the 21 New Jersey educators honored Tuesday at a reception held at the headquarters of the Educational Testing Service in Princeton.

The teachers were given "Crystal Apple" awards by The Business Coalition for Education Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce for earning National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

"By completing this rigorous assessment program, these teachers have attained one of the highest hallmarks of excellence in teaching and helped to raise the bar for teaching standards," said Dana Egreczky, president, BCEE. "National Board Certification is a smart investment for school districts and state policymakers. We need every parent to ask their local schools to embrace and support the National Board Certification process."

Administered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession. Certification is achieved through a rigorous standards- and performance-based assessment that takes between one

and three years to complete and measures what accomplished teachers and school counselors should know and be able to do.

Research is consistently positive about the impact of National Board Certification on improvements to teacher practice, professional developments and areas of school improvement that are critical to raising student achievement. A U.S. Department of Education-funded study found that students of certified teachers score 7 to 15 percentage points higher on year-end tests than students of non-certified teachers.

Before the BCEE became involved in New Jersey's efforts in 2002, only 18 percent of teachers who applied for National Board Certification actually achieved the credential. In an effort to help more New Jersey applicants attain this distinction, the BCEE, with the support of Washington Mutual; Prudential Financial, Inc; the Merck Institute for Science Education; Johnson & Johnson; and State Farm Insurance created a recruitment and mentoring program for teachers interested in working toward National Board Certification. The program, called the National Board Support Network, is a service that links colleges

and educational organizations in New Jersey as well as mentor teachers who have already achieved National Board Certification with teachers seeking certification.

"When more teachers achieve National Board Certification, they are helping raise the quality of education across this country. As a business leader, I see evidence every day that education is a critical ingredient in growing a strong economy that is full of opportunity. State Farm's partnership with NBPTS demonstrates our commitment to the strongest teaching force possible, which will help lead us to a quality education for every child in America," said Edward B. Rust, Jr. Chairman and CEO of State Farm Insurance.

The BCEE at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce is committed to ensuring that students achieve at high levels and are prepared to succeed in the workplace. The BCEE serves as the voice of business in the education policy debate, and supports programs that address the business agenda in education reform. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent, non-profit, nonpartisan and non-governmental organization.

