

LONG ISLAND / EDUCATION

Smithtown HS East math teacher is state finalist for national honor

Marianne Schoepflin is among three secondary school educators across New York vying for Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching.



Marianne Schoepflin, a teacher at Smithtown High School East, is a state finalist for a national presidential award for excellence in mathematics teaching. She is shown on Thursday, Nov. 9, 2017. Photo Credit: James Carbone

By John Hildebrand

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Marianne Schoepflin, a teacher for 12 years at Smithtown High School East, has been named a finalist in a national awards program that recognizes outstanding instruction and leadership in math and science.

Schoepflin, 51, who lives in Port Jefferson, is among three secondary teachers across the state vying for Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching. Another four teachers in the state are under consideration for the same award in science.

Finalist selections for New York were announced Thursday by the state Education Department.

Two winners, one in math and the other in science, are to be named from each state during the coming year. National Presidential awards are accompanied by \$10,000 honorariums presented to each winner by the National Science Foundation at a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

At Smithtown East, Schoepflin teaches four daily classes in Regents-level algebra 2, which includes trigonometry, along with one daily class in Advanced Placement calculus.

She formerly worked as an electrical engineer for Northrop-Grumman Corp. and said the analytical skills developed in that profession have to be combined with a humanistic approach when dealing with students in classrooms.

“That’s not something you can just calculate,” Schoepflin said. “You have to be a very sensitive person to be a teacher. Like an artist, you have to take that emotional side of you and use that to somehow affect change in people.”

Colleagues said Schoepflin makes an extra effort to develop a love of science and math among teens outside their regular classes. With two other teachers, she created an office-sized space within the high school library where students can work on their own with electronic equipment, including a 3-D printer, as well as with math games, puzzles and blocks used to build model bridges.

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“She knows the kids more than as students in the classroom,” said Kevin Simmons, the school’s principal. “She knows them as people, and she takes a genuine interest in every student that comes through her classroom.”

Presidential awards for math and science instruction, including computer science, are distributed nationally in alternating years to

teachers in grades K-6 and those in grades 7-12.

The competition was established by the White House and Congress in 1983. At least 17 teachers from Nassau and Suffolk counties have won the national awards over the years.

Annual judging by national panels of scientists and educators includes a review of videos showing teachers’ work.



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