

COVENTRY

Hopkins Hill teacher named top art educator

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COVENTRY — The Coventry School Committee recognized one of the district's art teachers last week in a new portion of their regular meeting agenda dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of local students and staff.

Hopkins Hill Art Teacher Sarah

Hemendinger was recently selected by the Rhode Island Art Education Association (RIAEA) as the 2018 Outstanding Elementary Art Educator of the Year. She was chosen based on her dedication and service to art education, and recognized for her implementation of a model art education program that can increase awareness of art for children around the state.

She is well known at the school for her

relationships with her students and members of the committee as well as her colleagues, who sang her praise Thursday night.

"When I go to the school and see Sarah, I think she is the epitome of what we're all about," said Coventry Superintendent Craig Levis. "You're always showing me what we're doing and how it benefits the kids. It has nothing to do with, it's all about

them, and I think that's something I feel very strongly about and I feel this is very deserving. It's a very proud moment."

The educator also received a Golden Apple award in 2015.

Coventry School Committee Chairperson Katherine Patenaude said that she was "not surprised" to hear Hemendinger was



Sarah
Hemendinger

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selected for the 2018 award.

"I remember vividly coming to Hopkins Hill and seeing [her] work and the excitement and being amazed," Patenaude said. "This does not surprise me at all."

"It's wonderful when one of our teachers gets recognition it makes our

whole school system look good," said committee member Ann Dickson.

Hemendinger said she is grateful for the recognition and for the appreciation of her students.

"The day I found out people were coming up to me saying congrats and there was a fifth grader who has had an interesting history at Hopkins Hill," she explained. "He asked me what everyone was congratulating me for and I told him about the award and

he said 'you so deserve that.'"

She added, "It meant more to me than anything. He was so sincere. If you knew him, you'd know he meant it. He says what he thinks. It was really so sweet."

Hemendinger's principal, Kathy Tancrelle, also praised her work at the school.

"It's an extremely well deserved award," said Tancrelle. "The boy she mentioned, art was an oasis for him in

an otherwise very difficult day. That's what she does for so many of our students. They get to enjoy art, relax and learn the curriculum as well."

"She has such a great relationship with the children," said Coventry School Committee Vice Chairperson David Florio.

Hemendinger will be attending the 2018 RIAEA award ceremony in early November.

Levis said he plans to make the

"Celebrations" portion of the agenda a regular occurrence at meetings.

"We have a lot to celebrate in Coventry and I thought there is no better way to start this off than with Sarah Hemendinger," he said last week.

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