

[Franklin County, North Quabbin students honored for success in, out of class](#)
By [ERIN-LEIGH HOFFMAN, Staff Writer](#) Published: 12-06-2024 7:59 PM

TURNERS FALLS — Ten exemplary students from across Franklin County and North Quabbin region were recognized Thursday night during the Franklin County Area Superintendents’ Association’s annual awards dinner at Franklin County Technical School.

These students received a Recognition of Academic Excellence award, per the recommendation of their superintendents, who proudly described the many accomplishments of their pupils, both in academic prowess and extracurricular participation, while also detailing to attendees the young people they’ve grown into.

Greenfield High School

Greenfield High School senior Shane Toomey was recognized by Superintendent Karin Patenaude, who described Toomey as being an “academic powerhouse, a committed community servant and an ambitious entrepreneur.”

“His kindness and humility, along with his self-deprecating wit, has endeared him to teachers and students alike,” Patenaude added.

Toomey is valedictorian for the Class of 2025. He was the only recipient the University of Rochester’s Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony Award and Saint Michael’s College Book Award. He is also a National AP Scholar, and was part of both the National Junior Honor Society and the National Honor Society. He holds several leadership positions within the school.

Toomey is the founder of his own bread business, Kneaded Goods Bakery, which he operates out of his family kitchen that he has a permit for, and he plans to go to college to study business and public policy.

Ralph C. Mahar Regional School

Twins Lian and Luan Lopez-Baez were awarded by Superintendent Elizabeth Zielinski. Both brothers are at the top of their senior class, with Zielinski saying their GPAs are within a couple half percentage points of each other.

“Luan stands out among the talented students, and that has been clearly recognized by the guidance counselors that he has worked with over the past 17 years,” Zielinski said. “The guidance councilors really wanted to say that he is just an exceptional child that totally stands out.”

Luan was recognized for his academic achievements, particularly his interest in taking difficult classes at Mahar, along with his talent in basketball and music as a clarinet player. Zielinski said that even with his academic and extracurricular success, Luan is a peer to others with “a particular gift of empathy.”

Lian is also successful in his academics, and was a catalyst for AP Statistics to be offered at the district. He is a successful basketball player and now coaches younger players through the Orange Recreation Association.

Mohawk Trail Regional School

Senior Eliza Crowell was recognized for her academic success, extracurricular activities and leadership by Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional school districts Superintendent Sheryl Stanton.

Crowell has a 4.47 GPA and is a National Merit Scholar with particular success in math and science, though Crowell also loves the social sciences, too. Crowell is taking a class at Greenfield Community College with state Sen. Paul Mark, who teaches there, and she hopes to attend a liberal arts school for college.

Crowell is involved in school theater productions as a lighting director and is part of the tennis team. She worked with her peers to raise more than \$4,000 for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts through the Mohawk Trail Equity Alliance's 8-mile walk, and she is a self-taught musician who plays in the experimental student band "The Survey."

"Not only is Eliza a fantastic musician, she is also among the most dedicated students I have ever encountered in my career. No matter the academic obstacle, Eliza works extremely hard to perform at a high level," Stanton said.

Crowell expressed that she is thankful to represent Mohawk Trail.

"It feels really good," she said. "It's also great to bring recognition to my school."

Turners Falls High School

Mia Marigliano was awarded by Superintendent Brian Beck. She holds a 107 GPA on a 100-point scale and is a National Honor Society member. She's been awarded for academic excellence in mathematics, science, world languages, social studies and art courses.

One of her standout activities is participating on the wrestling team, where she placed third for her weight class in the state wrestling meet. She is also captain of the softball team.

Beck said that not only is Marigliano dedicated to academics and athletics, but she is a leader in her class as a tutor, class co-president and member of the Helping Hands Athletic Leadership Council. Marigliano hopes to attend Franklin Pierce University to study health care after graduation.

"Mia has been an exceptional force for positive change, by her example," Beck said. When asked about her feelings on receiving the award, Marigliano said she had never considered receiving one for her hard work.

"I didn't even think about it until now," she said about the award. "So it really means a lot to me. It means that the hard work that I put in throughout my school — my whole life — paid off."

Athol High School

Emily King was awarded by Superintendent Matthew Ehrenworth. King has earned multiple awards and recognitions for her scientific endeavors and academic achievements. One of her accolades includes an honorable mention for her work on a planaria regeneration project that was presented at the Worcester Regional Science & Engineering Fair at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and a Youth Leadership Award from the state Legislature.

King is part of the Early College Academy, where she holds a 4.0 GPA at Mount Wachusett Community College, and she will graduate with 41 credits from 12 classes, including environmental chemistry and calculus. She is also part of several clubs and sports, with leadership in Best Buddies, National Honor Society, and both her basketball and soccer teams. She plans to study environmental engineering in college with a focus in sustainability and renewable energy. “Emily’s tremendous commitment to our school, her academics and overall contributions to the communities of Athol and Royalston make her a most outstanding selection for this prestigious award,” Ehrenworth said.

Frontier Regional School

Senior Sasha Malo was awarded by Superintendent Darius Modestow.

Modestow described Malo in his opening remarks as “nothing short of remarkable” for her academic course load of AP classes and perfect scores on exams. He said she has also participated in lively Socratic seminars in her English class on the topics of artificial intelligence and double consciousness

Malo was also commended for her leadership in creating a writing center for students and staging a walkout in protest of the 2022 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. She is president of the National Honor Society at the school and class vice president. Additionally, Malo was accepted into Boston College, her top school, earlier this week.

“There’s no doubt that she’ll continue to lead and inspire the Frontier community,” Modestow said.

Pioneer Valley Regional School

Amelia Fowler-Shaw, a senior at Pioneer, was awarded by Superintendent Patricia Kinsella. “She is a young person of good character whose calm demeanor and steadfast contributions are recognized and respected by all,” Kinsella said.

As a student, Fowler-Shaw has taken leadership initiative, being part of the first cohort of students to be trained in restorative justice and working with middle school students in restorative circles. Other school leadership roles include secretary for her class, National Honor Society member, captain of the cross-country team and a Student Council member. She is also an oboe player, a Girl Scout, a church youth group member, a volunteer librarian at Vernon (Vermont) Free Library, a volunteer at the Vernon Food Pantry, and an active member of school plays and musicals.

Upon graduating, Fowler-Shaw has a range of schools to choose from, including the University of Vermont, Roger Williams University, Wheaton College and Endicott College, where she plans to study environmental science and creative writing.

Franklin County Technical School

Superintendent Richard Martin said that seniors Kylee Gamache and Madix Whitman are “indistinguishable” on paper, with the same 4.4 GPA, participation in AP courses and leadership roles within their circles.

Gamache is in the carpentry program at Franklin Tech, outside of her honors and AP studies. She is described as having a passion for helping others and she hopes to be a child advocate. She is also captain of the varsity softball and varsity soccer teams. She’s been invited to join the Western New England University honors program for criminal justice to reach her career goal, and she has been recruited by sports teams at the university in both soccer and softball.

Whitman is similar in his academic and athletic achievements, taking multiple AP and honors courses while also working within the health/medical assistance shop at Franklin Tech. He seeks to pursue a career in kinesiology or another related field. Whitman is a member of the National Honor Society, is captain of the football team, and participates in wrestling and track.

“It’s definitely a great honor,” Whitman said about receiving the award. Some of his friends have received the same award in previous years and he’s glad to be part of that group. “It’s kind of cool that we’re all in the same award.”

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