

## Beverly recognized nationally as distinguished school



Beverly City Director of Curriculum and Instruction Kerri Lawler (left) and Superintendent Elizabeth Giacobbe pose for a recent photo after being recognized as a Lighthouse District by the New Jersey State Board of Education. [ARCHIVE PHOTO]

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Beverly City was chosen as one of about 100 schools across the country to be a National Title I Distinguished School.

BEVERLY CITY — 2017 has been a good year for the one-school, kindergarten-through-eighth-grade district that serves just about 300 students.

After receiving multiple state honors, the Beverly City School is being recognized on the national level as one of up to 100 National Title I Distinguished Schools.

The district received a letter from the New Jersey Department of Education acknowledging the latest achievement, Superintendent Elizabeth Giacobbe said.

“Your school is being recognized for its diligent and focused work in helping significantly close the achievement gap between student groups for two or more consecutive years,” said Karen Campbell, acting chief accountability officer in the division of learning supports and specialized services for the Department of Education, in a letter.

Title I is a specific part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provides federal funding to school districts for students who are economically disadvantaged. Giacobbe said about 70 percent of her students fall into that category. The district received \$152,781 in Title 1 funding for the 2016-17 school year.

“Putting Beverly on the national map is something I never even dreamed of,” Giacobbe said.

When Giacobbe joined the district in 2011, she had to address multiple issues, including federal funding, which was being monitored by the state because of how the money had been handled.

“Beverly did not have a good reputation with the Title I Department at the state Department of Education,” Giacobbe said.

One of her first tasks was to write corrective action plans, which had to be approved by the state, on how she would manage the funding. Looking back, Giacobbe said going from there to being selected as a nationally recognized school, is both satisfying and surprising.

“For them to pick us out of the how many other schools — I’m speechless,” she said. “There are no words.”

The district will receive a one-time \$10,000 grant from the program. Giacobbe, the administrative team and Board of Education will discuss how to use it.

School officials are also invited to the 2018 National Title I Conference, which will be held in Philadelphia on Feb. 8.

In July, the Beverly City School was notified that it had [lost its “focus school” status](#) from the state. The Department of Education had spent five years monitoring the district to make sure that its test scores and teaching practices improved, and also that it closed the achievement gap between its student subgroups, including the special education and economically disadvantaged populations.

Giacobbe said the school had been placed under the watch of one of the state’s nine Regional Achievement Centers, which are responsible for working with districts to “implement proven turnaround principles and dramatically improve student achievement.”

Beverly was subsequently recognized as a [“lighthouse district” by the State Board of Education](#) as part of a new initiative to highlight districts that have overcome struggles to improve achievement as examples for other districts that are still struggling.

“It’s just such a testament to the hard work (of the staff),” Giacobbe said.