

OHS student addresses state board

Tolani Waller, a sophomore at Orange High School, was a featured student speaker last week when the state Board of Education met in Trenton.

During each month's meeting, a student is invited to address the state board on a topic of their choice. Waller was selected as the student speaker for Dec. 16. She lives with her parents and two younger siblings.

In Waller's address, "Orange High School: The Love Affair Continues," she discussed the potential of the school in meeting students' needs. She said that in order for students to obtain the best education possible, they must foster a relationship between the school system and their families.

"Becoming successful is easier with support from family and teachers," said Waller.

Erica Stewart, the school's principal, recommended Waller to the district for her inclusion in the meeting. Stewart said Waller is academically strong and well versed.

"Miss Waller is the quintessential student and is a fine representative of Orange High School," said Stewart. "She is involved in extracurricular activities, is very interested in her studies and knows how to reach out to her teachers for assistance while inspiring others to learn by her example and positive attitude."

Waller had many positive things to say about her teachers. She said her English teacher, Phyllis Jackson-Johnson, engages her with weekly vocabulary coursework, supported by a "word wall," and displays papers written by students in her class. Waller added that Jackson-Johnson also helps her with writing assignments by instructing her in the use of figurative language.

After mentioning "word walls" in her talk, the school received positive acknowledgement from board member Edythe Fulton, former president of the New Jersey Education Association, who said she was pleased to know "word walls" are still being employed in schools to help increase student vocabulary.

Waller continued to describe her relationship with Orange High School. "As with any relationship, there are ups and downs; but with any relationship that lasts, both parties must work to improve communication and support," said Waller.

Waller said she hopes to be an actor and is preparing herself by participating in several extracurricular activities in the performing arts.

"I want to act," she says. "I'm in the drama club and everything I am doing will prepare me for a big role."

Waller also is also a member of the OHS Strings Ensemble, where she plays the violin, and is a member of the Guitar Club. She sings with school's select chorus, Voices In Harmony, and dances with the Dance Ensemble.