

Dear First Year Teacher of the Year Award Committee,

I have been a principal for 15 years and have never nominated a teacher for this award. When I got to know Rebekah Jamison, I couldn't let that continue! Rebekah Jamison joined Municipal Elementary in a year of confusion, frustration, and high expectation of a teacher. Honestly the year has created difficulties for even veteran teachers. Rebekah has made her classroom orderly, a joy to be involved with, and has handled the difficulties as if she has been teaching for 35 years. Rebekah has created an oasis for her students from the onslaught of possible concerns in their academic and personal lives. She is so happy all of the time, she brings joy to her classroom and all who come in. She has an infectious smile (and yes, you do know she is smiling despite the mask being on) that is freely given to all, including the student who starts the day slumped down in the chair daring her to teach him. After 1-2 minutes of personal attention from Miss Jamison, he is sitting up, working on whatever she assigned with a smile on his face.

Rebekah is acutely aware of how to help students and wants each child to succeed. When she found out about a student who struggled last year with behaviors, she called the boy's mom in early August and asked if she would bring him over and introduce him to her. She developed a relationship with the boy for 25 minutes, on a day she didn't have to work, and learned that he loved Spiderman, puzzles, and was worried about being hungry in class. She immediately purchased a large box of granola bars and made them available to all students on the first day of school just so he wouldn't feel weird about going to get one in the middle of a phonics lesson. She incorporated Spiderman into many math story problems, and made puzzles of parts of the curriculum when she felt this boy might get bored or frustrated. She has continued to help all her students to self-regulate and process their emotions using the research based Zones of Regulation program which impressed the counselor. Students know her classroom is a safe place for emotions and she has taught them appropriate ways to process their emotions.

As a first year teacher, Rebekah's talents are amazing. At Municipal, we have been focusing on positive reinforcement and student involvement for the past three years. Rebekah has already mastered the practice, showing an average of 12 to 1 ratio of positives to correctives when the goal is 4 to 1. We give out Eagle Tickets as a school wide positive initiative and Rebekah's class has plenty of tickets to spend at the store! Her student involvement is amazing showing an overall average of 97% engagement with ample opportunities for students to participate in the lesson. Often in the classroom, you can see small groups of students showing each other what they have learned and 'teaching' the other students, and then the 'teacher' changes and the other student of the pair will share what they have learned.

Perhaps the most salient talent for this award is how concerned Rebekah is about her students' understanding. She asked to go and view another teacher teach a concept that she had a question about, and she was visibly worried about how her students would do with a substitute teacher while she was gone for a few hours. She came to school early to explain to the substitute teacher what her plans were and how to help each student despite having permission to go directly to the other school to watch the teacher. Often she will be found, well after most teachers are gone, still planning her lessons and trying to get just the right angle that will help

the most number understand the concept and love the lesson. She has daily conversations with a 2nd grade teacher from another school in an attempt to learn from her, and sharing what she has learned as well. She has also asked the grade level above her if she could observe their PLC meetings because she wanted to know where her students would be going with their concepts and because she heard they did PLC meetings in the correct way. Her dedication is easily seen when you talk to her students, they always know why they are learning that particular concept, how it fits in to what they learned yesterday, and they know an application to a real world example. As they talk to you, most students will have the same passion as they talk about the concept that Rebekah models.

As a principal, you love employing teachers with whom there is never a concern. You know they can handle student concerns, and help them understand the concepts they need; you know the parents will be taken care of and be engaged in their child's education; you know they will interact positively and encourage other teachers. Rebekah is one of these amazing teachers. I would love to hire her clone every time I have an opening.

I would highly recommend her for this distinction, but I realize that words can be easy for me to type and very difficult for the committee to decide. I would encourage the committee to come any day to observe her teaching, it won't matter the day or the time, Rebekah will do more than impress you!

Thank you for your consideration,

Kevin Chase
Principal - Municipal Elementary School