



12.11.23

WSD Nominating Committee
5320 Adams Ave
Ogden UT 84405

Dear WSD Nominating Committee:

I am pleased to write this letter for the ***First Year Teacher of the Year Award*** and nominate Sydnee Smith. Syd is a 1st year Special Education teacher for the lower grades at Burch Creek Elementary. Syd is the most natural Special Education teacher I have ever seen. The relationship she has with her students is unprecedented. The students absolutely adore her. I have never seen a more patient, professional and kind Special Education teacher. Not only does she have her students moving forward academically, she is teaching them necessary life skills along the way. Many of her students have daily struggles where she gladly steps in and helps the General Education teacher by calming down the student, taking them to her room for a break, or giving them calm down strategies.

Here is an example of how patient and kind she is. We had a kindergarten student that had trouble walking in the hall appropriately. He would run fast and was somewhat out of control. Syd simply had the student stand behind her and said, "see when I move my foot forward, then you move your foot forward. Let's try... my foot, your foot, my foot, your foot, etc. Then Syd and the student did it together as she sweetly suggested, "let's try it." The student is now walking down the hall, just as he has been taught. Syd has another student we thought for sure might be better suited for a different classroom. However, between the general education teacher and Sydnee, this student is doing well in her general education classroom and spends about 3 hours a day with Sydnee. You can always hear this student singing the ABC's in the bathroom as she washes her hands, because "Miss Sydnee also taught her how." Syd also has other self-contained Special Education students meaning they spend 3+ hours a day in her room. They are not easy, yet they thrive in her classroom setting.

Syd's ability to gather and track data is remarkable. She has helped the school team make Special Education referrals for many students who desperately need extra services. She has individualized trackers for her students, does daily (CICO) Check In/Check Out, and collaborates with the general education teachers. Anytime school personnel have gone into Syd's room for any reason, she is actively engaged with her students.

Here are some things the students had to say about Sydnee:

2nd grade boy: " She is really nice and everytime we be good, she gives us chocolate. She is really funny and helps us learn and is really nice."

2nd grade girl: "She is really nice and lets us play legos before we leave her room."

2nd grade boy: "I love how we do math and how she is really sweet and nice."

In addition, we have a new head secretary and when she learned that Syd was a first year teacher she couldn't believe it. She commented on how professional and skilled she was.

Syd puts in extra time and hours to write her IEP's and make sure she is in compliance with federal law. Her Special Education mentor has even mentioned we should have new teachers come and observe Syd for her natural teaching abilities.

I am beyond lucky to have Sydnee Smith as a Special Education teacher at Burch Creek Elementary. In my opinion, there is no one more qualified or deserving for the **First Year Teacher award** than Sydnee.

Respectfully,



Katie Amsden
Principal
Burch Creek Elementary