

CRITERIA FOR NOMINATING AN OUTSTANDING TEACHER OF THE YEAR

The Macomb County *Outstanding Teacher of the Year* awards are given annually to honor teachers who have achieved the highest standards of excellence in their profession. These awards are created out of a conviction that quality public education is essential to our community and that encouraging excellence in education is the shared responsibility of all who reap its benefits.

With national attention focused on all students meeting high standards, teacher quality is more important than ever. The most important mechanism a school has to ensure teacher quality is its evaluation system. The Macomb Intermediate School District uses Charlotte Danielson's **Framework for Teaching** theory as the cornerstone of the *Macomb County Outstanding Teacher of the Year* nominating and scoring process. We believe this system is research-based and provides a professionally meaningful system of teacher appraisal.

In Charlotte Danielson's book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, she outlines measures relating to quality teaching organized into four domains, each with several components. These measures are:

- **Planning and Preparation** which includes comprehensive understanding of the content to be taught, knowledge of the students' backgrounds, and designing instruction and assessments.
- The **Classroom Environment** is concerned with the teacher's skill in establishing an environment conducive to learning, including both the physical and interpersonal aspects of the environment.
- **Instruction** is concerned with the teacher's skill in engaging students in learning the content, and includes the wide range of instructional strategies that enable students to learn.
- **Professional Responsibilities** includes a teacher's additional professional responsibilities, including self-assessment and reflection, communication with parents, participation in on-going professional development, and contributing to the school and district environment.

NOMINATING TESTIMONY

NOMINEE'S NAME: Nicole Rene Clark

Please list the outstanding achievements and service demonstrated by the nominee during the last two years. In fairness to all, we ask that you limit your testimony to this assigned sheet and one additional blank sheet following.

**A. Evidence of teacher's evolving knowledge of Planning and Preparation:
*How does the nominee demonstrate his/her knowledge of content, pedagogy, students, instructional goals, and the design of coherent instruction? (25 points)***

Examples might include:

- Teacher's translation of instructional goals into meaningful learning experiences (i.e., adapting standards and benchmarks to their teaching, organizing and sequencing activities to engage students in learning and reflecting)
- Adjustment of instructional goals to accommodate the diversity represented by their students (i.e., knowledge of resources, varied approaches to learning, student interests and abilities)
- Use of assessment to inform the instructional process and plans for next steps (i.e., student feedback, reflecting on learning)
- Professional development in curriculum or in general teaching techniques

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

Nicole Clark has been successfully teaching the students of Mt. Clemens Middle School for six years. During this time she has taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The exposure to all three grade-levels has afforded Nicole the opportunity to successfully develop intensive differentiated strategies and interventions that allow her to diagnose, modify, and re-teach lessons and engage students in those activities necessary for introducing, reinforcing, and mastering content dependent on their developmental readiness in math. She knows where students are and where they need to be in their learning. She continues to help close the achievement gap between students and increases student achievement, engagement, and satisfaction in learning. Nicole examines formative and summative student data daily to make sure that her seventh and eighth graders master the required grade level content expectations that the State of Michigan requires. Most importantly, she shares these formative assessments with her students often in order to teach students how to become responsible for their own learning and develop goal-setting skills. Her leadership in collaborating with her fellow colleagues once a week in *quality teaming* helps her and others evaluate, reflect, and create lesson plans that can be used so that all students in the Middle School are successful. District, county, and state resources are investigated, assessed, and implemented to meet the needs of students at various levels in her

classroom. These include teaching videos, integrated literature, measuring, graphing, counting, and geometric resources. Paraprofessionals and after-school interventions are coordinated with daily to assist students with additional time and support in Nicole's class. The use of manipulative math tools in the classroom allows students an hands-on experience in math which often sets Nicole apart as a master teacher in her abilities to teach math to learners who learn best visually or kinesthetically.

A typical lesson that Nicole delivers contains sections such as G.L.C.E. statement, teacher's objective, set, purpose, modeling, check for understanding, guided practice, assessment, and modifications. During an observation of Nicole's class it was clear, not only to an adult observer, but also to the students, what her objective was when teaching how to find the slope of a line. She made her students aware of this through several methods such as listing the objective on her "Tasks for the Day," on her monthly calendar, and on the overhead used to teach the lesson. Nicole engages the students in the topic of slopes by having them think about where slopes are in their lives (relevancy). The students came up with items such as skiing, skating, and their homes. When modeling the lesson to the students she used guided note taking, direct notes, and one-on-one time to achieve the desired outcome. Throughout the lesson Nicole checked the students' understanding by having them complete sample problems in their notebook and then she monitored their individual success. When assessing students, she uses several methods such as warm-ups, quizzes, student written and oral reflections, and chapter tests. Her warm-ups reflect the students' understanding of the days' prior lesson. This in turn allows her to re-evaluate her lessons' objectives by how well the students achieve. The students reflections, orally and written, guide Nicole in her next steps for differentiation, individual and group instruction, and the instructional focus for the next day's lesson and provides Nicole the direction in advising students of their choices in seeking addition assistance from the school's Academic Intervention Specialist or KID CORPS facilitator.

Nicole does a great job in asking questions that make the students use higher order thinking. She stays away from yes or no questions and makes her students challenge their own and each others' thinking. For example, Nicole asked, "Why might you want to understand slopes when riding your bike up a hill?" In return a student responded, "So I might have an idea of how much work I'll need to do to get to the top." By asking open-ended questions in the classroom she helps the students develop self-confidence and possibly an interest in mathematics because she made it relevant and fun. The interactive nature of Nicole's classroom invites students to take risks in their thinking and provides safety to those students who need to hear how their peers think through challenging scenarios that involve math in real-life contexts.

Throughout this whole process Ms. Clark reflects on her lessons and modifies them based on the students' understanding and achievement. Nicole could not have accomplished this without Mt. Clemens dedication to professional development. Nicole has attended professional development conferences held by Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) on how to implement the new grade-level content expectations and yearly state mathematics conferences. In addition, Nicole participated in the two-day mathematics alignment workshop held by the district prior to the start of this school year (district curriculum, instructional focus areas, and district and state assessment).

**B. Evidence of teacher's ability to establish a Classroom Environment:
*How does the nominee build a respectful learning community where there is respect, safety, and high expectations for all students? (25 points)***

Examples might include:

- Existence of relationships grounded in respect, dignity, safety, and caring
- Strong culture of learning where everyone is engaged in pursuits of value on high-quality work
- Student pride in work
- Procedures for smooth operation of the classroom and the efficient use of time (i.e., management of classroom procedures, standards of conduct)
- Enhancement of the physical environment and use as a resource for learning

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

At the beginning of the school year, Nicole spends several weeks going over her classroom expectations and procedures with her students. She believes in only having a few significant rules; but every one of them could relate back to the first rule, respect. In order for students to have respect for others they must first respect themselves. Nicole creates a lesson just on respect and how that can impact them outside of the classroom. Once the students have an understanding for what respect is, then she outlines that they need to respect each other, Ms. Clark, the classroom, and the school. Nicole reinforces respect by giving respect to each and every student everyday. She typically refers to each student using Mr. or Miss when addressing them.

Mt. Clemens Middle School has 60-minute classes; while Nicole plans her lessons to go from bell-to-bell there will be the occasional student that understands the assignment better than others. In order to help more students and reinforce the content, these students would then be asked to assist their fellow peers, or she might assign a more challenging task for those advanced students. According to Nicole, dignity is acknowledging each student for the gifts he/she brings to the classroom. Acceptance is important in a caring environment where students feel comfortable excelling at a faster pace than their peers, or having to commit to additional support as a result of moving towards mastery at a slower pace than one's peers. All students find themselves knowing it is safe to learn at any pace in Nicole's room.

Nicole reinforces a positive classroom environment by allowing students the choice to participate and never forces a student to engage when he or she is not ready. Middle school is a crucial time for students and giving positive feedback is necessary. When a student answers a question she replies, "Good Job." If a student is struggling with a question she'll offer them a lifeline and gets them help from another student of their choosing. Learning is just that in Nicole's classroom, it is never embarrassing or painful, only rewarding and celebrated.

The classroom is setup in such a way that it is conducive to learning. Nicole can easily navigate the class and monitor the students' behavior or progress. The students

quickly become accustomed to the layout and know exactly where to hand in homework, attain classroom supplies, and have access to their individual work folders.

Nicole's patient character calms students easily when anxiety is high. Students are asked to perform daily to show their knowledge and skills and this request often increases students' anxiety levels. Nicole assures her students that her classroom is a haven for learning from wrong ideas. Her standards for conduct are of the highest caliber and not only does she have these expectations in her classroom, but her students hold each other accountable. The quality of Nicole's strategic instruction in math concepts and dispositions is visible in her students' presentation of knowledge in their assignments and their assessments. She models acceptance, caring, and high expectations for all students to be able to use mathematics to improve the quality of life.

C. Evidence of the teacher's evolving knowledge of Instruction:

How does the nominee promote student engagement in learning the content and which instructional strategies are used? (25 points)

Examples might include:

- Communication skills (i.e., vivid and expressive language, quality of oral and written communication)
- The use of questioning and discussion techniques (i.e., elicits student reflection, framing questions of high cognitive challenge, use of questions to extend learning)
- Active construction of learning (i.e., intellectual involvement with the content, participation, problem-solving activities, student choice and initiative, use of higher-order thinking skills, learning designed to be relevant, diverse grouping strategies, use of instructional materials and resources, lesson structure and pacing)
- Provision of high quality feedback
- Demonstration of flexibility and responsiveness (i.e., sense of efficacy, commitment to the learning of all students)

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

Ms. Clark promotes student engagement through several intensive research-based reading strategies modified for a math classroom. Such strategies are carousel and jeopardy. Carousel would be used typically as a chapter review, where the students would move from station to station needing to solve various problems from the content that they are being tested on. Jeopardy would be used to re-teach a section where students were struggling and needed to be assessed on the math skill being taught.

A typical lesson that is implemented has several parts that challenge students throughout the lesson. For example, Nicole starts her lesson off with a warm up. This is used to get the students thinking while building confidence. Then she asks a thought provoking question like, "Where might we use solving equations in our lives?" The next part of the lesson is the delivery. Depending on the topic various teaching styles are used to deliver the information to the students, all unique in their dominant learning

style, knowledge base, and experiences. Throughout the lesson, Nicole asks various types of questions, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, to check for understanding. For those students that are struggling or absent, Nicole stays after school to assist them so they progress with their peers by mastering and meeting requirements and grade level expectations.

Nicole's commitment to children is obvious to her colleagues, but most importantly, to her students. It is not acceptable to fail in Nicole's classroom. There is always another way to tackle a student's difficulty in math according to Nicole. Patience and communication, mixed with some understanding of how important math is in the life of a citizen, equates to an extremely passionate educator who loves what she does and it shows. Her math expertise is showcased in district committee work and is appreciated by her colleagues and her students. Learning comes naturally to Nicole and she shares this understanding with those students who she is responsible for in her classroom. The trust students have when requesting help from Nicole is nothing more than extraordinary.

**D. Evidence of the teacher's evolving knowledge of Professional Responsibilities:
*How does the nominee reflect on his/her teaching and foster relationships with colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community? (25 points)***

Examples might include:

- Reflection (i.e., sensitivity to the engagement of students, accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness, use of reflections in practice)
- Maintaining accurate records (i.e., records of competencies, portfolios)
- Communicating with families
- Contributing to the school and district (i.e., collegiality, leadership, volunteering)
- Growing and developing professionally (i.e., professional organizations, conferences, local and state educational agencies, conducting research, supervising teachers, mentoring teachers)
- Showing professionalism (i.e., professional standards, advocacy)

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

Ms. Clark reflects on her students' understanding and achievement after each class and at the end of the day. She makes modifications based on those reflections by changing instructional strategies, such as guided note-taking exercises, to hands-on demonstrations. Nicole uses different instructional methods to meet her students' learning needs. She will have them work with a partner or in small groups. She will also work individually with students who are having a difficult time understanding the math concept or skill being taught as evidenced by formative assessment weekly. Nicole can advise a student or parent at any time as to the student's standing in his/her assignments, test scores, homework, and likelihood of proficiency on the MEAP mathematics assessment. Students are expected to take responsibility in Nicole's classroom to understand how their effort in class work, homework, and tests affects their chances of success in school, transitions to college, and the world of work. It is

common for Nicole to be a cheerleader for students in getting them to realize just how important middle school skills are to their success as adults supporting themselves and being able to make the world a better place.

Ms. Clark has fostered countless relationships with parents, colleagues, and agencies in the community. She contacts parents to let them know about their child's behavior and academic performance in the classroom, both positive and negative. She has taken on leadership roles in the Middle School by serving on the school improvement team and has been the department head for mathematics over the last two years. This year Nicole has taken the initiative to propose textbook adoptions for the 6th – 9th grade Algebra. As the math department head, she runs meetings with her colleagues to discuss how to ensure students master grade-level content expectations for both seventh and eighth grade. She has allowed a fellow colleague to observe her teaching practices. She has also fostered a relationship with the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) through Debbie Ferry, a math consultant. She has attended conferences at the MISD and state conferences to keep up-to-date with current mathematical practices and pedagogy.

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