

# PRESS RELEASE

KANSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
2901 TROOST AVENUE, KANSAS CITY, MO 64109  
816.418.7420 • KCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### Whittier Teacher Represents Students on the International Stage

**Kansas City, May 15, 2017:** A Kansas City Public Schools teacher is ready to have a global impact on education.

Whittier Elementary School teacher Melissa Zirkel has a unique bond with her current third grade class. For the last three years, Zirkel has taught the same group of students from first to third grade. This unique opportunity has allowed Zirkel to implement specific strategies in order to meet the needs of each individual student.

Zirkel's academic success over the last three years has earned her recognition from the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA), one of Europe's largest and most prestigious organizations. Zirkel will be representing her findings in August at this year's EECERA conference in Italy.

Over the course the last three years, Zirkel sought to answer one key question: "How am I preparing my students to succeed in a racialized world beyond the four walls of the classroom?" Consequently, Zirkel has taught her students how to become self-sufficient learners and develop long-term success mindsets.

Zirkel is honored to be recognized by such a renowned organization and cherishes the time she has spent with this group of students.

"I have spent four incredible years at Whittier, three of which, have been with the same students. I have been one of the luckiest teachers in the world as I was able to follow my students from first to second to third grade." Zirkel said.

Zirkel's strategies have garnered amazing results. Of the 17 original students who have remained in Zirkel's classroom from first through third grade, 15 scored at or above grade-level on the 2017 Spring NWEA assessment.

However, Zirkel believes that her students' success goes far beyond the classroom.

"These practices have not only yielded tremendous academic results, but they have also helped all of us tackle racism and inequity." Zirkel said.

