

EXEMPLARY STAFF VISION AWARDS 2020

The recipients were selected based on the following criteria:

- Develops, seeks out and attends or facilitates ongoing professional development programs that reflect current research and exemplary practices, and successfully implements new learnings, and serves as a model or coach for others.
- Aggressively recruits quality staff who are committed to excellence and able to meet the diverse needs of students and community.
- Consistently seeks feedback about job performance; engages in peer coaching activities and training that supports reflection and self/peer evaluation; develops support systems to enhance professional understanding and continuous improvement; reflects and critically uses feedback for improvement.
- Is an exemplary model of the District Core Values.

ANDERSON ELEMENTARY

Georga McCauley – School Secretary

Georga has been an amazing support during Distance Learning to the Principal, and has been incredibly supportive of Anderson and its community for the past year while transitioning a new Principal and Supporting new systems during this unusual time. Georga helps brainstorm how to make things easier for teachers to access, more helpful for parents, and has really spent time thinking about how to keep strong systems in place for our return. She is a warm smile for parents who walk in and has a gentle touch for those that feel overwhelmed. School Secretary is a position that could be taken for granted, but it is important that Georga be recognized for her commitment to Anderson not just this past year, but for the many years she has served its community.

BALDWIN ELEMENTARY

Heather Samson – Teacher, 6th Grade

Heather exemplifies what it means to be "Exemplary." She has been a true leader and innovator at Baldwin Elementary not just this past year but for many years. Heather was instrumental in bringing Baldwin's upper grade staff together during the past two years. This year, she set up a weekly upper grade meeting as a way for cross grade level collaboration to take place and for the teachers to support each other. She truly models and exemplifies what it means to hold true to our Core Values. Heather is consistently looking for ways to improve her own teaching as well as ways to improve Baldwin overall. She has served as a mentor to many student teachers modeling the way, has been on our leadership team for the past several years, and actively engages in reflection on her own practice. Her leadership, dedication and commitment to the success of our staff, students and families is inspiring. It is with great honor that I recommend Heather Samson for The Exemplary Staff Vision Award.

BERNAL INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Tiffany McFarren – Teacher, Math 7th/8th Grade

Ms. McFarren has demonstrated time and time again an exemplary and commendable level of care and support for her students. She is consistently going above and beyond the call of duty, and for that, I am honored to work with her here at Bernal.

DAVIS INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Adriana Chavez – Biliterate School Secretary

Adriana is a true champion for our school. She has helped so many families, staff members, teachers, and community members over the years with her amazing skill set as our Davis bilingual/biliterate secretary. She communicates and follows through even in the busiest times, with a smiling face. I have seen her take on unofficial roles as a parent advocate, tech mentor, student mentor, and problem-solver. We, at Davis, are happy to see her every day in the front office.

Janice Ickert – School Secretary

Janice is an amazing person and secretary here at Davis. She knows the ins and outs of our school and has helped so many community and staff members and teachers over the years with her knowledge and diligent and dedicated work habits. She is also the most spirited person on campus. She consistently and constantly adds to the positive culture and climate at Davis School. For this, we are always pleased to see her at the front office counter at Davis.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Elizabeth (Lexi) Zapien – Media Clerk

Lexie exemplifies the District's Core Values of positive interdependence, communication and quality performance. She is a hard worker, who often goes above and beyond to make sure that programs and services related to the libraries are run effectively and she looks for room for improvement. She is able to spearhead tasks and launch initiatives. She is amazing!

HAYES ELEMENTARY

Olga Gonzalez – Lead Custodian

Olga became the Hayes Day Custodian during the 2019/2020 school year. She responded flexibly and eagerly to whatever challenges came her way last year. When the long time night custodian retired shortly after she was hired, she adapted to helping and directing whatever substitute showed up for night duty. When the night position was filled, she began training and helping the new custodian feel the same enthusiasm for Hayes that she exudes in all she does at the site. After the staff left to quarantine during the spring, Olga began furiously cleaning, disinfecting and organizing the school. Olga is willing to help others in their roles at Hayes, from the noon duties, to the food service staff, the secretary, teachers and the principal. Olga has high standards for her work responsibilities and always asks how can she help. Olga Gonzalez is truly a model of an exemplary staff member and amazing human being!

HERMAN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Sierra Silva – Teacher, Language Arts 7th/8th Grade

Sierra develops, seeks out and facilitates ongoing professional development that reflects current research and exemplary practices and successfully implements new learnings and serves as a model and coach for others. She has worked tirelessly to incorporate new technology into her lessons, and has been a technology support to many. Sierra also willingly took on a co-teaching model this year in order to best support our English language learners. She is always positive and helpful, and is a model for the Core Values of the District.

HERMAN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Kelley Sproat – School Secretary

Kelley is an exemplary model for the Core Values of the District and has an incredible work ethic. I cannot say enough about how much she does to support the students, staff and parents of Herman and the AdVENTURE/STEM program. She can be counted on 100% of the time. She makes herself available to staff outside of her work day and she takes on responsibilities that are outside of her job description. Kelley is incredibly supportive and knowledgeable about everything related to Herman! She is polite and pleasant to all people she interacts with and has a wonderful sense of humor. Herman would not be what it is today without "Kelley from the front office."

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Debi Rivas-Klem – Administrative Secretary, Confidential

It is with great honor that I recommend Debi Rivas-Klem, Confidential Administrative Secretary, to be the recipient of the Vision Award for her contribution to our students and staff at Oak Grove School District.

Debi is one of most valuable HR team members. She keeps the department running efficiently and smoothly by always seeking out professional development opportunities and sharing this information with staff. Debi is also innovative and enjoys finding new ways to make her job tasks and other team members' jobs easier. Her exemplary attention to detail and extensive knowledge of the various teaching credentials required by our certificated staff who educate our students is invaluable.

Debi is always looking for ways to recruit the best and most highly qualified teachers. With her skills and knowledge she is able to recruit only those potential teachers who share the District's commitment of offering our students the highest quality of an educational experience that they deserve.

Most recently, Debi took on a major project which took an extensive amount of time, collaboration and many meetings with various key District office staff. Debi took on this project in addition to handling and completing her already heavy workload and daily work tasks. Debi spent countless hours working on this project and held several scheduled meetings with our Ed Tech staff and an Informed K-12 representative. In addition, Debi reached out to neighboring school districts to gather information on their current process. This project took significant attention to detail and months of dedicated time. This surely is a demonstration of how Debi has developed a process to replace our current paper process and replace it with a more efficient digital process.

The result of Debi's determination, dedication, and attention to detail has resulted in a new digital on-boarding packet for our HR Department. This paperless digital new hire on boarding packet could not have come at a better time. As the world went into Shelter In Place, having a paperless on boarding packet was beneficial and instrumental in providing new hires the required documents via email versus face-to-face meetings. Not only is this paperless process much more efficient; it also has a positive impact on our budget. The savings on making multiple copies, postage and mailing results in the ability to use these funds to better serve our students. Most importantly, this paperless process also keeps our employees safe while in shelter in place.

The use of technology is changing not just in our schools but also in the manner in which we perform our daily tasks. Debi demonstrates all the characteristics of a Vision Award recipient. Her contributions, dedication and continued support to her colleagues is invaluable. OGSD is lucky to have such a dedicated colleague as Debi Rivas-Klem.

INDIGO PROGRAM

Erin Chadda – Teacher, 3rd Grade

Mrs. Chadda and her teammates understand the transformative power of collective efficacy. She constantly reflects on student response to instruction. Seeking out input and perspectives from colleagues, readings, and professional development. Mrs. Chadda shares her insights, resources, and perspectives with colleagues. Her student centered, strengths based approach creates a positive and engaging classroom community where students thrive in their development of self-concept as well as academics.

Angelika Ward – Teacher, 3rd Grade

Mrs. Ward is a phenomenal teacher who artfully integrates all elements of whole-child education in any given lesson. Her classroom is fun, warm, and inviting where students feel encouraged, empowered, and like-owners of their own learning. Students in Mrs. Ward's class develop the habits of life-long learners.

LEDESMA ELEMENTARY

Robert Prola – Teacher, 4th Grade

It is my honor to nominate Bob Prola for the Oak Grove School District Exemplary Staff Award. Bob works closely with both internal and external groups. He consistently works to find the best outcome for all involved. He actively seeks new curriculum to enhance the engagement and academics of his students. Bob is known for inviting peers and the principal into his class to observe lessons being taught. He follows up with observers to seek suggestions and advice on how he may better the lesson next time. Through Distance Learning Bob has modeled the importance of keeping all families actively engaged with our school. He started our school wide weekly PE challenge videos that were published for all families to watch. He has continued this engagement through the use of interviews with staff members. Bob helped create our PBIS Distance Learning Jamboards as he saw the importance of continuing PBIS during Distance Learning. He followed up by doing a radio style interview video with the principal so that students also had an engaging lesson on Ledesma's PBIS Distance Learning Expectations. He truly exemplifies the core values of Oak Grove School District. Ledesma is lucky to have Bob Prola as part of the teaching staff and community.

OAK RIDGE ELEMENTARY

Janelle Biskup – Teacher, 5th Grade

Janelle Biskup is a 5th grade teacher at Oak Ridge. She seeks out and attends professional development programs that reflect current research and exemplary practices and successfully implements new learnings, especially during Distance Learning. She is a natural team player and collaborator and always engages in peer collaboration with her teammates. She develops support systems to enhance professional understanding and continuous improvement and always contributes to her Professional Learning Community. She consistently models the Core Values of the District and it is a complete honor to acknowledge Mrs. Biskup with the Exemplary Staff Vision Award!

Shannon Rose – Speech Language Pathologist

Mrs. Rose is currently working as the Speech Teacher at Oak Ridge. She is an exemplary model for the Core Values of the District. Mrs. Rose is always supporting her students, staff and community at Oak Ridge. In her few short years at Oak Ridge, she has risen up as a quality support staff member that people can count on. She is up to date on all the latest research and, with the recent switch to Distance Learning, she has done everything in her power to support her students in accessing what they need to succeed. It is an honor to nominate Mrs. Shannon Rose as Exemplary Staff award winner from Oak Ridge School!

PARKVIEW ELEMENTARY

Luis Contreras – Lead Custodian

Parkview's Lead Custodian, Luis Contreras, has gone above and beyond during this COVID-19 pandemic to help keep our staff safe. He has learned new sanitization techniques and has implemented a completely revised schedule to ensure high touch areas are sanitized throughout the day. His unwavering dedication to Parkview along with his willingness to consistently seek feedback ensures that Luis is constantly growing and improving. The pride Luis takes in his work shows every day and it is an honor to recognize him with the Oak Grove School District Vision Award for Exemplary Staff.

Florence Thisquen – Teacher, 2nd/3rd Grade

Florence Thisquen, 2/3 Combo Teacher at Parkview, models a growth mindset and a willingness to continually grow and improve, while at the same time sharing her best practices with others. Florence works collaboratively with her grade level team to plan and discuss innovative ways to teach. She builds amazing connections with her parents through ongoing positive communications and she has volunteered as a Coach for Girls on the Run for the last 3-years, a program that started small and now serves over 30 girls. Additionally, Florence has developed and provided professional development through Oak Grove University to share her knowledge on positive community building approaches. Florence is a champion for all students and it is an honor to recognize her with the Oak Grove School District Vision Award for Exemplary Staff.

SAKAMOTO ELEMENTARY

Renee Glick – School Health Clerk

Renee seeks ways to support the health and well-being of Sakamoto students, and works hard to build relationships with students and families. The health office is a safe, caring environment and students and staff alike see Renee as someone they can trust. She has developed systems in the health office for effective record keeping, storage of medicine and supplies, and tracking students. She supports the front office in helping community members on the phone or in person. Renee is a valued member of the Sakamoto Staff!

Jennifer Provenzano – Teacher, 5th Grade

Jen is an all around team player at Sakamoto. She works hard to support all teachers and students as the SST coordinator and has created a system of support that works. She communicates effectively with families and builds strong relationships with students in person and during distance learning. She seeks professional development that pushes her to grow as a teacher. Jen is a valued member of the Sakamoto Staff!

SANTA TERESA ELEMENTARY

Maria Nardi-Leon – Teacher, 2nd Grade

Maria Nardi represents the definition of an instructional leader. She has brought multiple effective instructional strategies to our staff, including Mentor Sentences. In distance learning, she has created and shared many engaging choice visuals and opportunities for students. Through significant personal obstacles, Mrs. Nardi has maintained an outstanding learning environment for all of her students. She is an amazing teacher, a leader at Santa Teresa, and a very deserving candidate for the Exemplary Staff Vision Award.

Edith Paredes – Instructional Assistant, SDC

Edith Paredes is an outstanding instructional aide at Santa Teresa. She does all she possibly can to support the classroom teacher and students she serves. In addition to instructional support, Edith is always willing to help with translating, developing curriculum, and organizing hands on materials for students. She is always looking for ways to grow and improve. Edith is a gift to Santa Teresa, and we are honored to recognize her with the Exemplary Staff Vision Award.

STIPE ELEMENTARY

Sandy Carranza – Teacher, Bilingual 1st Grade

Sandy Carranza has shown an exemplary mindset during this distance-learning environment. Sandy continuously looks for opportunities to learn and execute innovative online lesson delivery methods. Her ability to adjust, adapt, and be flexible are aspects we all aspire especially during these uncertain times. Her students' enthusiasm and engagement to her lessons displays her proficiency. Equally inspiring is her demonstration of our District's Core Value of positive interdependence. She has been a pleasant, reliable, and wonderful teammate for all of us at Stipe. The STEAM@Stipe community would like to extend our appreciation to Ms. Sandy Carranza by this nomination to receive the Exemplary Staff award.

TWO WAY BILINGUAL IMMERSION PROGRAM

Mira Scherr – Teacher, 3rd Grade

Through this unprecedented time of hardship, Maestra Scherr has risen up to the challenge by using multiple modalities to reach out to our students to help them continue to learn and be as successful as possible. Every weekend, she posts thorough lesson plans for the week ahead. She explores new resources such as Mystery Science and uses Flipgrid to engage her students, asking them to post their commentaries of their favorite book. They also get to see their classmates' posts. In a time like this, many students are lonely and they miss their classmates and this single task allows their friends to be visible in an academic forum. It also reinforces their Spanish speaking and presentation skills. Maestra Scherr keeps lessons relevant by using Newsela to connect concepts with current news. She extends learning beyond the four walls by connecting her students with other 3rd graders across the states in a global-read-aloud. She assigns work that applies to students' experiences and to current topics learned in class; like giving an oral presentation afterwards and doing the relevant math of calculating time differences in different regions. Overall, I commend her on being so creative and innovative.

Aside from her excellent lesson planning skills and abilities, her professionalism is also very admirable. She definitely "walks the talk" and does as she says. At parent meetings, she presents credible data with applicable student samples and provides exact goals to accelerate student learning that is specific for individuals. Throughout the year, Maestra Scherr is actively keeping parents in the loop by posting information and pictures of students working on and enjoying the activities in class.

Maestra Scherr is organized and intentional in all that she does. My hat goes off to the wonderful Maestra Scherr. She is a gift to our students who have crossed her path. She is essential to our educational community and we are very lucky to have her teach our youth.