

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Shireen Rhoades of Maple Street School is Vernon's Teacher of the Year

VERNON, Conn. – Shireen Rhoades, a reading interventionist at Vernon's Maple Street School, has been selected as Vernon's Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made Thursday afternoon at Maple Street School.

Rhoades did not know she had received the honor. After sounding the alarm for the school's routine monthly fire drill, a stunned Rhoades stepped outside to join fellow teachers and students and was greeted by district officials and cheering students. In addition to her teaching duties, Rhoades, who has taught 28 years, is chair of Maple Street's Family Engagement Committee. She will now be considered for state teacher of the year.

"Shireen Rhoades epitomizes what teachers are all about in Vernon, and what we want from our teachers," Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph P. Macary said.

In her role as a reading interventionist, Rhoades works closely with students who are struggling with reading and writing, and helps them improve and attain grade level standards.

"I know that children thrive when held to high standards and clear expectations," she said of her work, adding that she believes every student can learn and that it is her job as a reading specialist to tailor each lesson to each student's specific need and to keep working with each student until the lesson breaks through. She motivates the students, especially the younger ones, with prizes as they achieve different milestones.

"I love my students and I love planning lessons that address their specific needs in ways that keep them positive and engaged," Rhoades said. She also works closely with students' classroom teachers to ensure that each student is getting the assistance they need to succeed.

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

She said she is honored to be selected as Vernon’s teacher of the year.

“I am just overwhelmed,” she said. “I love kids and I love teaching reading. I love doing the family engagement work. I’m very proud and I love this town.”



Shireen Rhoades, Vernon’s teacher of the year, with two students outside Maple Street School.

Maple Street School Principal Josh Egan said Rhoades’ work with students and families is remarkable. “We have an amazing staff here at Maple Street School, but I can’t think of a more deserving person to win this recognition,” he said.

In her role as chair of the school’s Family Engagement Committee, she has coordinated events such as career day and Read Across America Day to connect Maple Street School students to the wider community while also engaging Maple Street parents. Other events Rhoades and her team organized included Math and Literacy Night and the annual spelling bee.

During the pandemic, Rhoades and her Family Engagement Committee came up with creative solutions to keep families engaged, Egan said.

“She is all about students and putting students first,” said Melissa Trantolo, Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning. “And she does so much for our families.”

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