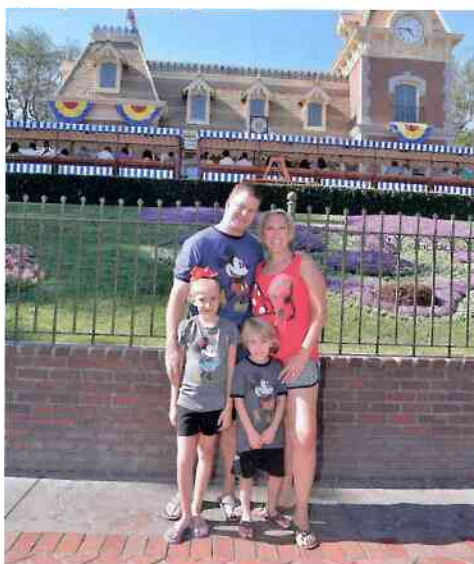




teacher of the month

Q and A with Debra Prather *Raising up Education*

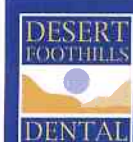


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Where and what have you taught?

I first began teaching in the Florence Unified School District where I taught a half year of second grade and a full year of third grade. From there, I found my home in the Kyrene School District at Sierra where I taught third grade for 11 years and am now in my fourth year of teaching second grade.

What is your favorite thing about teaching?

My absolutely favorite thing about teaching is the moment I see a child developing self-confidence as a learner. In order to facilitate this, it is extremely important to me to form personal relationships with each of my students, so that I can support them both academically and emotionally on their level. When I watch them move past challenges, it is truly a celebration! I also work hard to be a role model and help students understand that learning is a process that involves patience and determination. It is also important to me to incorporate a positive mindset mentality and environment where students feel safe and empowered. As the years pass, seeing the successes of my students as they navigate their educational paths creates such happiness in my heart.

Is there something unique you have done as a teacher?

Establishing a classroom community where students feel valued is extremely important to me. My unique approach to this involves providing students with many opportunities to shine – as a class, as teams and as individuals. We have a weekly class meeting where I address important topics, celebrations of success and always offer my famous “Words of Wisdom,” which are based on a

specific theme that I see as particularly relevant to our classroom. For example, if I have a sense that there are friends using hurtful words, I will select a passage that reminds them that hurtful words can leave a mark on their friends and that they should consider whether they are being helpful or hurtful before saying something. Students also have a daily chance to be recognized as a Super Citizen, which earns them a certificate accompanied by compliments from me. I take a lot of pride in my management techniques and enjoy seeing successful results in the classroom.

What do you do outside of teaching?

Outside of teaching, I have an amazing family that keeps me very busy. My husband, John, and I have been married for twelve years. We have two wonderful children: Jocelyn, age 7, who will be going into third grade, and Landon, age 5, going into kindergarten. Our children have recently become active in soccer and baseball, so spending time on the field watching them practice and play sports is one of my favorite things to do! I also love family activities such as swimming, board/card games, hiking, watching Michigan football and cooking new recipes.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I believe that my involvement in our school, not only with students but also with my colleagues, has helped shape me as an educator. I am a site representative for our teacher association, part of our positive behavior intervention team, student council co-advisor, and I also help with other committees as well. I love learning new things and being a mentor to others. I also want to acknowledge the amazing colleagues and teammates that I have had during my time at Sierra. We are truly a group of professionals who think of our students as "all of our kids." The collegiality between grade levels, along with dialogue among our support staff, is top notch and part of what makes me the teacher I am today. In addition, I want you to know that I both appreciate and feel humbled by the acknowledgment of *Foothills Living Magazine*!

