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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Farmington Public Schools announces the 2025-26 Teachers of the Year

Farmington, MI — January 5, 2026 — Four Farmington Public Schools (FPS) teachers from across the District were surprised in their classrooms by Superintendent Dr. Kelly Coffin to share the news that they were named FPS Teacher of the Year in their respective levels.

The 2025–26 FPS Teachers of the Year are Terri Haas (High School), Gina Szymczak (Middle School), Cassaundra Hack (Elementary School), and Diane Kawesa (Early Childhood).

“These teachers represent the very best of Farmington Public Schools,” said Dr. Coffin. “They lead with expertise and heart, and the impact they make every day reaches far beyond the classroom. We’re proud to recognize them and grateful for sharing their gifts and talents with our students, families, and colleagues.”

High School Teacher of the Year – Teresa “Terri” Haas, Farmington Central High School

Terri Haas was nominated for High School Teacher of the Year for her exceptional commitment to students, innovative teaching, and steady leadership that strengthens both learning and school culture.

Terri has served in Farmington Public Schools for nearly three decades in a range of roles, including Adult Education Teacher, Adult Education Coordinator, Supervisor of Adult & Community Education, and Social Studies Teacher. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Social



Studies from the University of Michigan and has dedicated her career to helping learners of all ages succeed.

Colleagues describe Terri as an educator who consistently goes above and beyond to create an engaging and supportive learning environment, both academically and socially. After more than 30 years in education, she embraced the District's reimagined program model and found creative ways to connect her content area with other disciplines, including expanding opportunities for students to earn dual credit.

Terri is also known for her deep outreach and relationships—supporting current students and families while also staying connected to graduates and helping guide incoming families. She is frequently recognized as a reliable mentor and a trusted leader, stepping in as Acting Administrator when needed and contributing to a positive, collaborative school environment.

Her sustained excellence, innovative mindset, and commitment to student success are why she was named the 2025–26 FPS High School Teacher of the Year. Congratulations, Terri

Middle School Teacher of the Year – Regina “Gina” Szymczak, Power Middle School

Gina Szymczak was nominated for Middle School Teacher of the Year for her intentional instruction, student-centered approach, and the way she balances care, high expectations, and meaningful engagement.

Gina is a middle school math teacher who earned a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from the University of Michigan and a Master of Arts in Mathematics Education from the University of Michigan. Since joining FPS, she has become known for helping students understand not only *what* they're learning but *why* it matters, helping students build confidence, ownership, and academic growth.

Nominators shared that students in Gina's classroom know they are cared about, and they also know what is expected each day. She looks for innovative ways to engage the “whole child,” including helping lead initiatives that build resilience and problem-solving skills.



Gina is also recognized for leadership among colleagues, offering mentorship, contributing in solution-focused ways, and creating a welcoming environment where teammates feel supported and valued.

Her reflective practice, strong content expertise, and steady commitment to students are why she was named the 2025–26 FPS Middle School Teacher of the Year.

Elementary School Teacher of the Year – Cassandra “Cassie” Hack, Wood Creek Elementary School

Cassie Hack was nominated for Elementary Teacher of the Year for her extraordinary dedication as a special education resource room teacher and the leadership she brings to her school community every day.

Cassie has served FPS since 2008 and has held multiple roles supporting students and staff, including long-term guest teaching assignments and student teaching experiences within the District before becoming a full-time educator. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Special Education from Wayne State University and is widely known for her deep expertise, tireless work ethic, and student-first mindset.

Nominators consistently described Cassie as compassionate, patient, and relentlessly committed to student success. She is recognized not only for the support she provides to students with diverse learning needs, but also for the way she strengthens systems and teams, leading weekly Special Education Building Team meetings, coordinating efforts to support individualized student goals, and helping ensure consistency and compliance across programs.

Cassie is also frequently called upon to serve as acting principal while continuing to support students and staff with calm confidence and professionalism. Families shared their appreciation for her communication, advocacy, and ability to help students feel safe, welcomed, and capable.



As one nominator shared, “Cassie is an exceptional educator and leader whose tireless work ethic sets her apart.... She promotes a positive school climate where students feel safe and supported, and teachers feel valued and heard.”

Cassie’s steady leadership and whole-hearted commitment to students are why she was named the 2025–26 FPS Elementary School Teacher of the Year.

Early Childhood Teacher of the Year – Diane Kawesa, Farmington Early Childhood Center

Diane Kawesa was nominated for Early Childhood Teacher of the Year for her kindness, joy, patience, and the safe, welcoming classroom environment she creates for every child.

Diane joined FPS in 2017 as an Early Childhood Teacher and earned a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood from Rochester College. Families shared that Diane has a gift for making children feel loved, supported, and excited to learn, especially during a critical stage of early development.

Those who nominated Diane described her as the kind of teacher who makes students feel secure from the very beginning, building trust through consistent communication and a deep commitment to meeting students’ needs. As one parent shared, “Ms. Diane is so kind, joyful, and patient. I know my daughter is in the best possible hands. She makes kids excited to learn. She makes them feel safe and loved, and they truly enjoy coming to school.”

Nominators also highlighted Diane’s reflective approach and her constant focus on partnership with families, leading with, “How can we help this student, and how can we support this family?” Families shared that students thrive in her care, including students with IEPs who have made meaningful progress with her support.

Diane’s compassion and calling to education are why she was named the 2025–26 FPS Early Childhood Teacher of the Year.

Congratulations to the 2025–26 FPS Teachers of the Year



Farmington Public Schools congratulates all four honorees and thanks them for the expertise, care, and leadership they bring to our students and school communities every day.

About Farmington Public Schools

Farmington Public Schools serves a vibrant, diverse community in Oakland County, Michigan, committed to empowering every learner through meaningful, future-ready experiences in academics, arts, athletics, and extracurricular opportunities. Success Starts Here.

To learn more about Farmington Public Schools, visit www.farmington.k12.mi.us.

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