

2026 YOU MATTER AWARD WINNER



Lauren Seaman



Penn Wynne Elementary School



As a Special Education Teacher, Lauren Seaman does far more than support our child academically—she ensures, every single day, that he feels seen, valued, and like a meaningful member of his school community. Because of Lauren, he doesn't just attend school—he truly belongs there. One of the most remarkable practices Lauren models—something every educator could learn from—is her intentional focus on strengths-based inclusion. She does not define our son by his challenges. Instead, she takes the time to understand what makes him unique and builds learning experiences around those strengths. She works closely with her team to create thoughtful, inclusive opportunities for him to participate and contribute alongside his peers in ways that are meaningful and authentic. This approach not only supports academic growth, it nurtures confidence, dignity, and self-worth. Leading with empathy, designing inclusive moments with intention, and starting with a child's strengths are practices other educators could adopt to create the kind of environment Lauren fosters every day. The impact on him has been extraordinary. He arrives at school smiling. He is comfortable, secure, and eager to engage. He lights up when he sees familiar faces and when we share photos or stories from his day. Most importantly, he knows he matters. That deep sense of safety and belonging has allowed him to thrive in ways we once only hoped were possible. Lauren has transformed what we thought school could be for our son into something far beyond our expectations.



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