



Best of State Nomination - 2022

Paige Carsey

Teacher - Elementary School

Background

Paige Carsey came to Renaissance Academy in 2018 as a graduate of the Utah Valley University School of Education. Like our other new hires, she was excited to be in the classroom and eager to meet her students. However, unlike many first-year teachers, she didn't need time to settle in or acclimate to the new environment. From her first day as a classroom teacher, she was capable, comfortable, and confident.

For the last four years, her demeanor, creativity, exceptional pedagogy, and care for her students have continuously filled that classroom with a palpable positive energy that captivates her students' attention, sparks their curiosity, and fosters a universal sense of belonging. As a parent and school administrator, I can say Paige Carsey is the teacher every parent hopes for on the first day of a new school year.

Achievement

While her students have historically performed well on standardized tests, such statistics do not adequately illustrate the full measure of her success as a teacher. Proficiency and growth metrics are valuable tools in guiding instruction; however, they only calculate quantitative outcomes. They don't measure intangibles that fuel life-long learning, curiosity, and tolerance for intellectual risk-taking. Those attributes are byproducts of a person who feels valued, capable and inspired.

Ms. Carsey's most outstanding achievement is this--each of her students knows that she believes in them. Without exception, they leave her classroom with increased confidence, feeling that they can be academically successful. Bestowing this gift to each student is her hallmark achievement as a teacher.

Innovation

Effective teaching is the product of equal parts art and science. A master teacher must have a solid understanding of the science of teaching to employ it as an artist. An exceptional

practitioner in the classroom uses all the tools at their disposal to create solutions for an ever-changing landscape of challenges.

Ms. Carsey's classroom is an artistic masterpiece of evidence-based teaching practices and creativity. The room is brightly decorated and visually attractive. Her students are highly engaged, and they experience exceptional growth both academically and emotionally due to the vibrant tapestry of diverse, creative, and evidence-based teaching strategies she so masterfully employs.

Observable elements of that tapestry include advanced questioning strategies, multiple learning modalities, cross-curricular lesson planning, and the regular use of music and physical movement to provide context and interest for the material being taught.

Quality

Ms. Carsey's contributions to improving the quality of life in Utah are best expressed through a representative sampling of anecdotes that illustrate her willingness and ability to make measurable contributions to all those who are fortunate to know her and work with her.

1. This year, we had a teacher resign the afternoon of back-to-school night. The next few hours for the administrators were a whirlwind of meetings, contingency planning, drafting of emails, etc. Before we knew it, parents were arriving with their kids. Our Dean of Instruction asked me to go to that classroom to greet the families and explain the situation. When we arrived, that room was fully decorated and was as welcoming as any other in the building. Ms. Carsey had finished preparing her classroom and had also decorated the room of the teacher, who resigned. In talking with her that night, she said, "When I heard that the teacher had resigned, all I could think about was the disappointment those kids would feel when they walked into an empty room with nobody to greet them."

2. Ms. Carsey is not only a teacher to her students; she is the daily centerpiece of their school experience.

While it's not uncommon for people to manage job-related stress by taking breaks or intermittently distracting themselves by surfing the internet or scrolling through their phones—it's not something Ms. Carsey does. When I walk past her classroom, she is always engaged with students. She values each interaction with her students and maximizes every opportunity to strengthen their relationship.

While I've seen many examples of her dedication, I've recently gained an even greater appreciation for her efforts to build a strong classroom community where students thrive. Recently we completed an addition to our school building. As a result, my office now overlooks

our playground and I've discovered that Ms. Carsey plays with her students at recess every day. Based on my observations of her interactions with students during recess, it is clear that this additional investment of time has a powerful influence on the well-being of her students. Here are some of the most noteworthy observations I've made

- 1) nobody is alone
- 2) the class does not fracture into small cliques-everyone belongs
- 3) there are fewer arguments and less teasing
- 4) everyone has the chance to participate
- 5) providing structured activities results in fewer bloody noses and reduced demand for band-aids and ice packs

Watching her with her class is a joy. Being her student is a privilege. In an ideal society, every student would be so lucky. Nevertheless, we are incredibly fortunate and grateful to have Ms. Carsey at Renaissance Academy. Her selfless dedication, skillful instruction, and care for each child provide her students with a compelling lesson about the power of individuals to improve the quality of life for everyone in their community.