

<b>Nominee (School)</b>	<i>Special Ed Teacher</i> (Elementary)
<b>Grade/Program</b>	Special Education/Resource- primarily grades 4-6
	<b>Description</b>
<b>Academic Student Growth</b>	<p>With a case load of 45 students you could imagine that it would be difficult to keep track of every student's goals and progress they are making toward those goal on a daily basis, but Mrs. -- does. She keeps a tracker for each student and keeps notes on how they did with concepts they were taught or reviewed each day. Her special education files are always in compliance with district, state and federal rules and the IEPs that she manages are current.</p> <p>Because of the hard work and dedication to the students she works with, they are making fabulous progress. So far, this year, she has released 6 students from resource because they no longer qualify for services. For instance, Reed, a 6th grade student was reading at 83% on a 3rd grade level one year ago. He is now reading at 87% on a 6th grade level. Jacob's results are similar. He is also in 6th grade but was only reading at 41% on a 3rd grade level last year. He is now on grade level and reading at 87% accuracy. Megan, who is in 5th grade started at 49% on a 4th grade level last year and is now reading above grade level. All three of these students were released from Special Ed. in the last few months.</p> <p>Her Math results are similar. 6th grade Logan is scoring at 100% accuracy on grade level material and Celeste is scoring 98-99% on grade level this year. Last year these students were both well below their grade level and scoring at 50-63% on average. 5th grade Logan was scoring in the 70-80% range in 4th grade Math a year ago, and is now 98% accuracy on Grade level assessments. These students have also been released from her services recently.</p> <p>Although there are some students who will always struggle due to their disability, and may never be able to get on grade level, they are still making progress toward their goals. Mrs. -- communicates their progress with parents by having personal progress reports for them at each parent/teacher conference and IEP meeting. She conducts her IEP meetings in a very thoughtful and thorough manner; taking time to explain evaluation results, and providing examples of their child's work and informal assessments. She celebrates with them even over the smallest improvement in any area, which encourages the children to keep trying and working hard.</p>
<b>Instructional Practices</b>	Mrs. -- never says no. Even when she is asked to do difficult things, she smiles, thinks about it a few minutes and says, "okay, I'm going to try". Then she gets to work.

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Description</b></p> <p>A few years ago, we began using a new math book that coordinated well with the Utah State Core standards and our district's Math Benchmarks. During the summer, Mrs. -- went through the entire content- all grade levels, and organized her curriculum based on the units and standards suggested by the district. She pulled information and resources from the state curriculum guidelines and outlined her year. Because she works with students on many different grade levels and abilities, her task is daunting, but by the time the school year started, she was ready. Her files were organized so that she is able to pull the lessons she needs for any grade or standard. As the regular ed. teachers came back, she invited them in to see how she had organized and then she offered to share what she had created with anyone who asked for help. She planned her year to keep a week or two ahead of the grade level teachers. This allows her students to receive the information, process and practice the new skill before they hear the lessons in their regular ed. classrooms. What a great idea! Now, the struggling special ed students are able to participate, answer questions and even help other students as the new concepts are introduced. Teachers see a big difference in the attitude and willingness of these students to try and work hard at what they are asked to do..</p> <p>This year, our school adopted an evidence based strategy to use school-wide to help our students increase their comprehension of real-world problems and informational text. We decided that "Reciprocal Teaching" could be a successful strategy that could be used in every grade level. Like other strategies, this poses a difficult situation for a teacher in resource because of the varying levels of communication and vocabulary skills of these students. Mrs. -- attended each professional development and looked for ways to implement the strategies with her students, and she did! Although reciprocal teaching looks and sounds a little different in her class, the students know the skills and are able to transfer information from one setting to another.</p> <p>Nothing is impossible to Mrs. --. She finds a way to make a difference in her classroom and in our school.</p>
<b>Impact on Students' Lives</b>	Mrs. --'s classroom is filled with students; students with disabilities, and who are struggling to learn. But, you would never guess that they are frustrated, because each one of those students knows what they need to do, as soon as they walk in the door. They pick up their folders, sit down at one of 3 tables and get busy. And, they feel smart. For these students, the best part of their day is the time that they spend in the resource room. They

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Description</b></p> <p>are motivated to do their best because each child knows that Mrs. -- loves them, no matter how many times she has to re-teach a concept.</p> <p>Mrs. -- is a soft spoken teacher with unfailing patience. She is quick to find humor in situations when other people would be exasperated. It is not a wonder that parents and students sit in IEP meetings and cry, as their child is released from resource because they no longer qualify. What should be a time of celebrating great accomplishment is also a sad day because they know that they will no longer be able to enjoy learning in a small group setting with such a kind, loving teacher. Mrs. -- has great rapport with the students and parents she works with. Because she serves many of her students over a few years, they build a strong working relationship, and they consider her a friend.</p> <p>-- also works remarkably well with the other staff members on her team and in the school. She coordinates learning goals and meets with individual teachers to make sure they are working together to meet the needs of the students that they work with. She has often been called on to present professional development to the staff that will give them the information they need on the referral process, evidenced based intervention strategies, or how to provide documentation to show student growth. Her open door policy allows teachers to go to her with questions and get ideas to try to get the best results with students that are falling behind.</p> <p>On top of everything else Mrs. -- does to help the school and community, every year for the last 13 years, she has produced a school musical. It is amazing to see this remarkable teacher put in countless hours after school to pull off such a production. The students audition for lead roles, but no child is turned away from participating. Many times, the special education students who are struggling in academic areas, shine in the musical as they realize their talents and abilities in areas not always recognizable in the school setting. The Musical has become such a community event each year, that friends and neighbors who may not even have students at the school anymore still return to see the production. This tradition at our school will continue as long as Mrs. -- is willing to share her talents with so many.</p> <p>Many former students come back to visit their favorite teacher, Mrs. --, because of the life changing example of care and compassion she demonstrates. Their parents keep her informed of their successes and accomplishments. She makes a difference in their lives and helps them to overcome their fears and reach their goals.</p>

