



Our students will lead and shape the future

News release

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Jefferson Elementary teacher named district's Teacher of the Year

Mary Elizabeth Branch exemplifies her authentic self as a teacher and leader in the education field

As an elementary school teacher and leader for the past nineteen years, Mary Elizabeth Branch, now a first-grade teacher at Jefferson Elementary, has excelled at creating a classroom family of learners connected by culture, language and experiences. She celebrates students and promotes the joy of discovery that enhances lifelong learning. Her classroom environment is safe and encouraging, and students feel comfortable taking risks.

Leanne Heilman, a parent of one of her former students and volunteer in her classroom, says Branch, "instills in each child a true love of learning and a desire to excel in school and she does it in an amazingly calm and relaxed environment where every child is heard and appreciated."

In Branch's classroom, students can be confident about who they are and where they come from, whether near or far. She embeds cultural awareness by setting high expectations for all students and believes they can achieve at high levels regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, culture or learning disabilities.

Janet Erickson, the Literacy Coach at Jefferson Elementary, says "In our school, Branch has helped to change the culture around what our expectations are for each and every student; that no matter the background, ethnicity or level of poverty, all students can meet or exceed standards." She also shares, "The confidence and self-esteem of her students is a wonder to behold."

Branch believes everyone plays a part in this beautiful world and as a teacher, she is there to bridge the home, school and teacher connection to inspire, support and develop each of her student's purpose. Marguerite Moskat, the Director of Elementary Literacy for Everett Public Schools, says Branch is "regarded for her ability to make strong connections with families, problem solve and confront challenges. As a result of her intentionality to facilitate student learning that attains both academic and social achievement, students in her classroom are confident and develop the skills to be lifelong learners."

Mary Elizabeth takes the time to uncover each student's path of achievement and adapts to their learning style. Her classroom is an inspirational canvas with positive affirmations on the walls for students to reflect upon and see themselves as learners. Students are surrounded by their own masterpieces of creativity showcasing their individuality, inspiring them to express themselves openly. Every student contributes each day, sharing their gifts.

She sees each student who visits her along their journey as a priceless gift and establishes a unique relationship with each. In building a relationship, it is not just a connection with the student, but with the whole family. Mary Elizabeth's ongoing love, care and support for her students go beyond the school walls and her positive web of influence imprints each child for a lifetime.

Elizabeth Kelley, Principal at Jefferson Elementary, says “Mary Elizabeth never stops learning and challenging herself. She demonstrates lifelong learning by participating in professional development and through her flexibility and responsiveness. She learns from her students each day. When something doesn’t work, Mary Elizabeth takes responsibility and makes changes. Each decision is intentional, with data to back it.”

As Everett Public Schools’ *Teacher of the Year*, Branch is now among those being considered by this region’s Educational Service District as the *Regional Teacher of the Year*. If she is selected for that honor, she would be among those considered for the honor of *State Teacher of the Year* and potentially the *National Teacher of the Year*.

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For more information:

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