

James Monroe Elementary School

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Mr. Gerard Holzman

Principal



May 9, 2014

Teacher of the Year Recommendation for Barney Noralee Peterson:

I am writing to nominate and support Barney Noralee Peterson as Everett Teacher of the Year and Washington State Teacher of the Year. For nearly twenty-five years, Barney has taught at James Monroe Elementary in Everett, Washington. Barney has been a National Board Certified Teacher the past ten years. However, in no way has a location or a title ever captured or contained Barney's influence on her students or the world of education during the past two decades of her career. She has created blogs to communicate with her students as she spent a month as a NOAA Teacher at Sea and later sent videos from Alaska where she did research as a PolarTREC teacher one summer. Barney has talked by satellite phone with her 4th graders as she climbed to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro one early September. Barney has been invited as a teacher and attended the European Geophysical Union GIFT workshop in Vienna, Austria. In 2006, Barney received The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). For three years she coached her class as 1st place divisional winners in the NASA Student Involvement Project "My Planet Earth." Barney shares her knowledge by regularly presenting at NSTA national and regional conferences throughout the United States on problem based learning, engaging students in science investigation, earth science, and science note booking. She has been a support to teachers seeking national board certification, facilitator to teachers learning to implement the district's science kits, and an annual mentor to student teachers from the University of Washington-Bothell. She is readily consulted how best to meet the needs of students by staff here and around the country in her extended network. She has been repeatedly called upon by NOAA as part of their Teacher at Sea Alumni Program.

Barney is always learning and always teaching and her many classrooms of students have traveled with her in some way as students attest when they later return to share their college pursuits in the areas she has sparked interest. Barney is presently employed as a full time fourth grade teacher at James Monroe Elementary - a school of 550 students with a 45% free and reduced population. I have served as the building principal at James Monroe Elementary the past fourteen years and have observed Barney's effectiveness and success in meeting the needs of her diverse group of learners each year.

It is with great interest that I write this letter of recommendation. From the salmon eggs they raise and release each year to their study of local environment issues, her classroom's applied learning approach integrates science within all content areas daily. Her class recently extended their STEM learning to a study with representatives of all the subcontractors who contributed to our newly built school. Her students interviewed the architects, design teams, and various engineers and used that information to create videos that can be activated by QR codes placed around the school building. She extended that project this year working with some fifth graders in their desire to learn more about our building as she teamed with a district construction manager and met weekly with these students. Each year, with another staff member, Barney takes 40-50 students as young authors to Skagit Community College to share with other young authors the books they have written during a before and after school program the prior four months. She is the inspiration behind and moderator of our "litter ambassadors" and our school green team which currently composts and recycles our lunch room waste daily.

We are continually grateful for Barney's award winning instruction that enables students to use the knowledge gained through experience and hands-on strategies in solving problems faced in our environment. It is encouraging to watch the enthusiasm of her students as they explain what they have learned from their field observations, class investigations, and reflection on their work.

Barney Peterson has taken her lifetime love and involvement in our natural community and developed a program to expand that to our students. Barney obtains community grants to support her extended projects. She has worked with community agencies in coordinating the service aspects of the projects undertaken and in bringing together public entities and our school's student and parent community in creating greater understanding of watersheds and natural resource stewardship.

Barney Peterson treats each one of her students with great dignity and respect. She has helped us create a positive environment that is very child-oriented and focuses on building positive self-esteem through high standards and well-designed instruction. Barney is dedicated and compassionate. Her ability to listen responsively to our students and staff has contributed to the respect she is granted by those who work with her on our school leadership team. I greatly appreciate her enthusiasm and profound respect for people. I highly recommend the work she does with students and our families. She rates in the top 5 percent of teachers I have known and worked with in three states. Our larger community benefits now and in the future in the work of her students. And Barney ever remains humbled and honored when that is recognized as was demonstrated last Friday when our school PTA awarded her our schools' Outstanding Educator Award for this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gerard Holzman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gerard Holzman
Principal