

Lisa Walker

It is an honor and absolute privilege to recognize Lisa Walker as Teacher of the Month at RVUSD, January 2020. This award is so long overdue. Lisa is currently in her 29th year of teaching and teaches kindergarten at Spring Creek Elementary. Lisa Walker is a dedicated, ambitious, consummate leader in education. Her former students come back year after year to say thank you and tell her that she made a difference in their lives. She has taught, supported and advocated for over 750 students.

Lisa moved to Santa Rosa in 1999 and both of her children, Jacob and Allison, went to Matanzas. She has taught 6th 4th, 2nd, 1st grade, and kindergarten for 8 and a half years. Lisa was inspired to go into teaching when her grandmother (Grannie) suggested teaching as a career. Grannie thought she would be a natural, so Lisa signed up for a child development class and was hooked. Her first teaching job was in Sacramento following college graduation.

Lisa has served on many district and school committees-- School Site Council, Sunshine, Math, language arts, writing, Center for Education Leadership, and Teacher Evaluations, to name a few. Lisa is a lifelong learner who values professional development and continuous improvement in order to stay relevant and current in her teaching practice.

Lisa's favorite moments in teaching are when a student learns to read. They realize that they're reading and they are so excited. She says that that is the best feeling ever! Having former students get in touch with her and tell her that she is the reason they went into teaching is very rewarding and validating. The relationships and bonds she gets to make with her students and families is what she loves most about teaching.

Teaching is a highly complex and sophisticated endeavor. Lisa manages to meet the needs of her students, even though there is not enough time. Walk into her classroom and you will see happy students who are engaged in a loving, calm and well-managed classroom. Lisa advocates for students and organizes and provides resources and help for her families and students in need. Lisa is a beautiful, warm and genuinely caring person who supports her colleagues and those around her. As teacher in charge, she does an amazing job of juggling kindergarten while dealing with challenges that arise while I am

not on campus. She is highly respected by her peers and colleagues throughout the district.

I asked Lisa to describe her core beliefs regarding children, teaching and learning. She said "Building relationships with students and giving them their first most important experience in school is the most important endeavor. It is more important than academics. Students must first have a safe and caring environment to go to each day, before they can learn and grow." Lisa remembers what it is like to be a parent of a kinder and wondering if her kid was normal. Understanding that gives her empathy for what parents experience.

I asked Lisa what qualities make a good teacher. She said "Empathy, a hard work ethic, a willingness to keep learning, and definitely a sense of humor. For example, when a student shows you a booger and asks you to keep their booger safe until the end of the day, you must be patient and kind and then ask them to get a tissue and throw it away." Finally, Lisa believes that being a teacher has helped her be a better parent and vice versa. Lisa has found her niche in life. Here are some comments from her Spring Creek colleagues:

"She is so dedicated to her students. She is at work on the weekends making sure everything is organized and prepared for the upcoming week."

"When planning, with her grade level colleagues, she makes everything ok. She provides treats, hugs, and will do anything that is asked of her with a smile."

"She creates a warm and homey classroom environment and she is the perfect size to teach kindergarten."

"She is a team player and always lends a listening ear"

As Lisa states, "Some people are good with numbers, or music, or art. I am good with kids." The world is a better place with Lisa Walker in it. And... you know what? Grannie was right!

Shawne Kearney
Principal, Spring Creek