

essay: I am writing to nominate a teacher whose impact sends ripples to every corner of our school. My colleague ***** has touched students and teachers in ways that change us personally and professionally.

***** is an educator who works to close the achievement gap. Her students have struggled in school, and she works diligently to help them achieve grade-level reading. Many of her students were in my class last year, so I'm aware of the gaps in their skills. Despite this, when I walked into her World Literature classroom a month ago, I saw a student in front of the classroom at an overhead projector leading a "Think Aloud" from an unabridged text of Dracula. The student leader invited others to identify specific parts of the text to support understanding and opinions! *****'s students also wanted to share with me the pages and pages of writing they had done in journals over the course of the semester. I was impressed.

***** is a teacher dedicated to helping students, and differentiating to meet individual needs is a fundamental part of her educational paradigm. As a teacher of World Literature for struggling readers, she identifies the academic standards required but provides creative options for students to develop content mastery. By doing so, she helps her students get excited about learning. Last year, she taught Greek Mythology using playing cards to help her students learn the gods and goddesses. Then, after studying the Odyssey in-depth, some of her student-artists got fired up about painting a mural of one scene. The students not only designed the mural, but also stayed after school was out for summer to complete it! ***** bought the paint and necessary supplies out of pocket to cover her entire wall with a modern-day rendition of a famous scene. Subsequently, she applied for and won an Impact on Education grant to support her students' continued literature-through-art-exploration. By providing opportunities for students to develop a personal connection and love of learning, ***** has been a strong model for so many of her fellow educators.

***** is a leader in collaboration at our school. It's typical to see colleagues in her room at lunch or after school asking for advice or involved in some joint activity. Jerry Hunter, a teacher who was new to her department two years ago, appreciates her generous mentoring. He says, "***** is an

exceptional listener—both to students and adults. When I’m struggling, she is always willing to provide helpful feedback about my lessons and about how to be a professional. She helps me to be a better teacher by bringing my awareness back to the structures that good teachers use when she helps me problem-solve.” I can also speak from my own experience. A few years ago, I had the feeling that I cared more about my students’ work than they did, so I turned to ***** for ideas. She helped me attack the problem from many angles. Together, we looked at ways to involve students in developing and assessing assignments. She also shared her record keeping model that allows students to keep track of their own due dates, grades, and academic credits and to see their short-term successes. Finally, she demonstrated ways to individualize lessons for students with different needs. With *****’s insight and support, I was able to dramatically improve my students’ motivation and sense of ownership. As a result, I have had more energy to teach.

***** offers her support and resources to teachers across content areas, espousing the belief that nurturing the growth of our students is a collaborative effort. My colleague Jerry Hunter has benefited from her work, saying, “She’s highly organized—over the years, she has created 3-ring binders packed full of lessons, rubrics, experiential activities, student samples—and she’s always willing to share them.” Over the years, I have also watched her generate numerous cross-curricular relationships. Three years ago, she initiated a mural project between her classes and mine, which benefited both native speakers and second language learners and still graces the walls of our school. To help her young/new students see the connection between working on basic skills and finding a desirable post-high school path, she has arranged activities between them and older students who are preparing to graduate. She also has CU law students volunteering in the classroom on a regular basis, working with individual teens to support their class work and encourage them to consider college as an option. Finally, this year, she worked with other teachers to build relationships between different cultural groups on campus by taking students on a field trip to a high ropes course. Then she invited the different groups to create an album together--photos and students’ writings became a public celebration of their collaboration.

***** is a standout in the field of education. In addition to supporting students and teachers in her own school, she was part of a team that developed a standards-based modular system following the BVSD Learning Development Profile for second-language learners. She implemented it in our school and later served on the BVSD high school curriculum council, where the model was adopted for ESL courses district-wide. In addition, she has presented the model at CAFE and NABE, state and national conferences. A life-long learner, she is committed to professional development.

I could write on and on about the passion and dedication with which ***** teaches students and collaborates with her peers. She is one of the finest teachers I’ve worked with in my teaching career, and I hope you’ll honor her with a Jared Polis award.