



FEDERAL HOCKING LOCAL SCHOOLS

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Dear OAEA Division Awards Committee:

I am writing in behalf of Sarah Danner and am recommending her for your consideration for the Middle Level Division Award. As Coordinator of the Gifted Education Program at Federal Hocking Local Schools, I have had the opportunity to work with Sarah in identifying and serving students gifted in the visual arts. While Sarah demonstrates the characteristics that all excellent teachers possess such as professionalism, passion, subject knowledge, and the ability to understand and relate to students, I would like to share with you two additional strengths that make her an asset to the school and community: Leadership and Creative and Inspirational Teaching.

Ms. Danner has demonstrated leadership in several ways. First is in the identification of gifted students. She has learned the state guidelines and has helped develop a procedure for students to meet ODE portfolio requirements. Her contribution to this effort included making initial referrals, meeting with students, and presenting information and letters. Her after school art studio program, which meets 4 hours a week, provides time, space, and assistance for students working on art identification. Additionally, she serves as an adjudicator of portfolios from our elementary schools. She provides service to the gifted and all art students through her Studio 707 Art Club. Sarah's willingness to take on these responsibilities has made our school only the 3rd in our 26 district region to identify students gifted in visual art.

A second way Ms. Danner has taken the lead is by providing venues for students to display their work. She goes beyond her impressive exhibits within the school, and provides traveling shows that rotate among our three small community post offices. This is not only fun for students, but is of great benefit and enjoyment for rural postal patrons most of whom have limited exposure to art. Participation in competitions is yet another way students have to showcase their work. For example, when Ohio University sponsored a competition commemorating the anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, Sarah and her students responded, and when their mural and sculptures won (over larger schools with far more resources), Southeastern Ohio knew that art was alive and well at Federal Hocking.

Thirdly, Ms. Danner's leadership is evident in her community networking. Local art centers and museums know Sarah and work with her to the benefit of both. When I contacted the Kennedy Museum to arrange a field trip, they informed me that "Ms. Danner had already set one up." When I needed additional portfolio adjudicators and mentioned to Sarah that I was going to try to get someone from the Dairy Barn Art Center, she gave me the name and number of the person who would be a good choice to do it. She brings the school and the community together.

Beyond the valuable contribution Ms. Danner makes through her leadership is the joy and passion she inspires in her students. I see this in children with gifts and in children with limitations. I see it in works created in her classroom and in pieces created at home. I see it on the walls and I see it in their faces. What our district lacks in finances, Sarah makes up for with creative teaching and her ability to connect with kids. She fosters talents in both individuals, like the boy who turned an old piece of metal, a broken deer antler, and a scrap of leather into art, and the group children who spent so many hours creating a video from what were once bits of clay. The opportunity to create and critique has made art part of her students' lives and world. In this time of test scores, accountability, reductions, and declining budgets, Ms. Danner is our most valuable resource.

Sincerely,

Linda Burson
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