

Texas ASCD

T.E.A.C.H. Award - Nomination
For Outstanding Achievement in the Classroom
School Year 2010 - 2011

Christina Reyes has been teaching for 4 years in an inner-city school tucked away on the near-East side of San Antonio. This is a school some teachers are afraid to teach in, though they need not be. We are 98% economically disadvantaged, with 73% identified as At-Risk, and a mobility rate of 27%. I preface this nomination with statistics to illuminate the challenges she faces as she herself challenges students to achieve at high levels.

I utilize her classroom as a model for other teachers. She'd be the first to minimize what she does, but she is an imitable teacher. What makes her so successful? Where to begin...classroom expectations and student rapport, superior organization coupled with enthusiasm, a sense of humor plus a quest for adventure. Allow me to be specific.

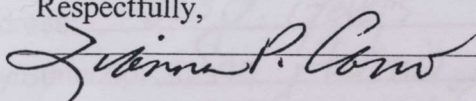
This year, she took on a new challenge: a TAKS grade level (3rd) with only 25% of her students coming to her reading on or above grade level according to both TPRI and a separate reading inventory. Simultaneously, she was pursuing her Master's, mentoring a teacher intern, attending an exclusive series of professional learning, the Syfr Institute, and replicating her learning for the faculty during our professional development. And she doesn't frazzle.

When a teacher wants to know how to meet with each one of her reading groups everyday, I send them to Chrissy. When a teacher wants to observe what interactive learning looks like – where children are up and about, moving, dancing, and singing – I send them to her. When someone wants to know how to handle students who have a propensity to be disruptive, yes, I send them to observe how she is proactive in her responses to individual student needs. Students who have fallen through the cracks for three years are now blooming. Students who could barely decode are now reading upwards of 100 words per minute. Students who had low self-esteem and contributed to classroom chaos have learned to be self-disciplined.

Come by her classroom to watch the Poetry Jam, where students write and perform original poetry, then videotape each others' performances, only to be uploaded on the classroom blog. Come by her Nature Corner to observe Dwarf African Frogs, fish, tadpoles, and any form of life a student might contribute, even if it does have 6 legs.

She is the teacher in whose class I would place my child. She is the teacher I wish every student could have. It aches sometimes having to place a needy incoming student in the hands of someone who is not quite as capable of *literally* transforming a life. I see her someday as a little old lady (far in the future, of course) who will be visited by the children whose lives she touched. She will not be forgotten. In fact, there may one day be a school called Reyes Elementary. She is that good.

Respectfully,



Lianna Cano, Principal (lcano@saisd.net)
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