

## “Why I Teach”

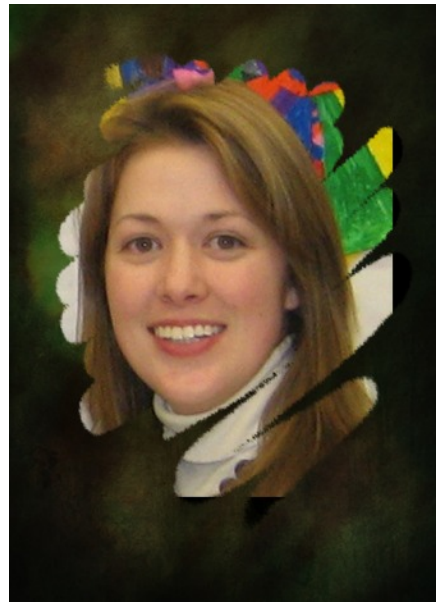
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Region I Teacher of the Year

Throughout my life I have always enjoyed moments when I taught someone something new. Growing up, I was active in my county’s 4-H program and relished opportunities I had as a senior 4-H’er to teach younger members. For several years I served as a teen leader and camp counselor which provided me with experiences in teaching junior members how to shear sheep, show and judge market animals, and use technology. Although I had always considered entering a career in education, it was not until I volunteered one spring at our club’s “Lamb Mini Camp” to teach younger members how to shear sheep that I made my final decision. Watching the younger members’ faces glow with pride as they successfully sheered a lamb’s wool away for the first time made me realize what a rewarding and important career choice teaching would be for me. Those same expressions I see on my students’ faces each day are what have made me the educator that I am.

As an educator, I develop essential 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in my students. I strive to create a caring classroom environment where students feel safe taking risks and challenging themselves. My instructional foundation consists of problem solving, communication, questioning, developing cross-curricular connections, reasoning, collaboration, creativity, and technology. Through the integration of these skills I am able to design and implement lessons that engage and motivate students while they develop an in-depth understanding of content. It is my obligation to educate students with academic curriculum; however, my instructional focus also empowers students with the skills they need to be successful individuals.

Several days after exploring the importance of constants in scientific investigations, one of my

students participated in an investigative math lesson and enthusiastically shouted, “Oh, so a foot [measurement] is kind of like a constant. It has to stay the same or your results will change!” When students display such understanding with excitement, I find this the most rewarding aspect of teaching and this motivates me to continue teaching with creativity and innovation. This thrill for learning exhibited by students is why I teach!



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