

Sarah Mellisa Adamson-Mair



The Region 3 Virginia Teacher of the Year, Sarah Mellisa Adamson-Mair, is a kindergarten teacher at Lewis and Clark Elementary School in Caroline County

Public Schools, where she is beginning her fourth year. She has over 12 years of teaching experience in the Counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania, and Caroline.

Mrs. Adamson-Mair received a Bachelor of Arts from Brigham Young University. In 2004, she earned a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Phoenix.

Mrs. Adamson-Mair explained that teachers have always been her “superheroes,” and they were her “mothers, her fathers, and her idols.” As a child, on Fridays, she would often blink back tears as she prepared to go home for what seemed to her, to always be impossibly long weekends. She *loved* school – her safe place. School took her away from her own turbulent home life. Later, after she was removed from her home and placed in foster care, she discovered that it was her teachers, those “superheroes,” who had been trying to help and protect her for years.

When Sarah was in first grade, it was her teacher, Mrs. Jones who discovered that Sarah had learned to read lips. Because of her teacher, she was able to have surgery which corrected her hearing.

In fifth grade, Sarah’s parents no longer paid for school supplies. She had a paper route and the money earned was to pay for lunches and other school fees. Sometimes she ran out of money, and her teacher, Mr. Hyde, came to her rescue. He would pay her to draw pictures

for him, and that money became her lunch money for the day. She said it took her years to realize that she “wasn’t really that good of an artist!”

Mr. Arritola, another superhero teacher, helped her complete her college applications and encouraged her to continue her education. When she was in college, her professor acted as her father and gave her away as a bride. All these teachers influenced her to seek to continue her love for school, but this time in a different role. She became the teacher!

Community and civic involvement is an extension of Mrs. Adamson-Mair’s role as a teacher. In the 2016-17 school year, she planned and assisted in the creation of an afterschool Garden Club for 30 kindergarten through third-grade students. She also wrote and received funding for two technology-related grants for her classroom.

Mrs. Adamson-Mair has assumed various leadership roles. At Lewis and Clark Elementary School, she has served as the teacher representative for the Caroline County Steering Committee, mathematics lead teacher, teacher representative for Kindergarten Assessment Development, Professional Learning Community lead teacher, member of the Principal’s Advisory Committee, and a mentor teacher.

Meeting students’ basic needs is important to Mrs. Adamson-Mair. Sometimes she works to ensure that hungry children are fed. To help a student with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) with harmful habits, she provided a textured stuffed animal on his desk to help redirect the child’s attention and provide an alternative behavior that was less distracting to learning. She even made arrangements for a local dentist and orthodontist to provide free treatment for a child whose teeth were not brushed – the child hoping they would fall out to avoid having a crooked smile. Once such needs are met, the students are then able to focus on learning.

Mrs. Adamson-Mair uses innovative activities in her classroom. She implemented “Whack-A-Word” Wednesdays, which incorporated an introduction to computer keyboarding skills with letter and word identification. Playdough and bead words are implemented to help young students develop the fine motor skills. One of her students showed an interest in robots, so after some research, she found Bee-Bots and wrote a grant to obtain them. She uses them to spark interest in learning sight-words, and she discovered how versatile the tool can be for learning different topics in class.

The principal of Lewis and Clark Elementary School, Cynthia Aref, wrote the following about Mrs. Adamson-Mair: “...When you enter Mrs. Adamson-Mair’s classroom, you can sense the excitement for learning. Her classroom is very positive which allows students to use each other as sources of knowledge, listening to and showing respect for others’ contributions. The room is bright, cheerful and organized for instruction with visual reminders that pertain to behavior and academics. She has established routines and keeps the students engaged at all times. She exhibits outstanding classroom management with her students. Along with that, she has built positive interpersonal relationships with her students and believes every student can learn and achieve to his/her ability. As a result, students know they are in a supportive learning environment and they are not afraid to take risks... Mrs. Adamson-Mair is a dedicated, caring, kind, and an exuberant teacher that every principal hopes to have on staff.”

A parent, Kate Carter, wrote, “You would be hard pressed to find a more dedicated or deserving individual who exemplifies our profession so well. ...She is a gift to our school, to our staff, and most importantly, to our students.”