

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #151 (2000-2001)

December 11, 2000

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DENALI AWARD WINNERS

PERTINENT FACTS:

To Alaskans, Denali means "great one," and the Anchorage School District is proud to have employees that display greatness in the areas of achievement, service and dedication. Two or three times each year, a committee of Anchorage School District employees selects six co-workers and one team of colleagues that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to our mission of educating students for success in life.

The certificated Denali award winners for December 2000 are Greg Brown of Dimond High School, Margaret Falsey of Rabbit Creek Elementary and Beth Kaser of Kasuun Elementary.

Greg Brown teaches social studies at Dimond High School and has taught in the District for eight years. Brown was nominated by Dimond High Principal Guy Okada who is impressed that Brown's commitment to students goes beyond what is required of him as a teacher. According to Okada, "Every Saturday Greg Brown's classroom is open for study sessions for his A.P. European history students. During the spring and summer he spends the rest of the Saturday, and sometimes Sunday, at the school mowing courtyards, tending flower beds and trimming trees. On a really busy Saturday he may chaperone a school dance or supervise student government students preparing dinner at Our Lady of Compassion Center. And, in the summer, he takes his students to Europe to experience their studies first hand. . . Mr. Brown makes every student feel they are the most important person in his life at that moment. That's the hallmark of a successful teacher and Mr. Brown is one of Dimond High School's treasures."

Margaret Falsey is a teacher in the Intensive Needs program at Rabbit Creek Elementary. She was nominated by her Principal, Lace Fenwick, but also received letters of support from parents and the Supervisor of Elementary Special Education. Both her Principal and Special Education Supervisor commented on her role as a

mentor for other teachers and her willingness to work tirelessly as an advocate for children and their families. Perhaps the most moving remarks came from the parents of one of her students who said, "Mrs. Falsey's teaching style is full of respect, positive guidance and endless patience.

We feel very fortunate that our son has the opportunity to learn in Margie Falsey's classroom. It is clear to us that his education, awareness of our world and self esteem continue to be improved daily by this very capable and dedicated teacher."

Beth Kaser, second grade teacher at Kasuun Elementary, has taught for 24 years and remains "on the forefront of change and receptive to new ideas." Her Principal, Colleen Stevens, counts her among the finest teachers with whom she has worked and says she "continually searches for ways to stimulate and open minds to meaningful learning." Kaser promotes "family nights" at school, organizes and sponsors student council, the talent show, the science fair and Reading Renaissance. In the words of one sixth-grade student, "I've learned responsibility with my election to school president . . . It has not always been easy . . . There is a lot of hard work, but the compliments I receive from Mrs. Kaser make it all worthwhile."

The two classified staff members receiving Denali awards are Dan Traxinger and Art Ayala, both of Dimond High School.

Lt. Col. Art Ayala is the commanding officer of Dimond High School's Army JROTC program, which is a model program, exemplified throughout the Northwest. The Army JROTC program's accomplishments include a strong community service component, a challenging curriculum that develops character and leadership traits, more parental involvement than any other program, an award winning drill team, and an annual golf tournament that raises thousands of dollars for scholarships. According to Dimond Principal Guy Okada, Ayala is "a leading force for positive change at Dimond High School." Last year he assumed a leadership role in the school's re-accreditation effort and "rallied the staff to form subcommittees to do extensive staff, community and student surveys and channeled staff efforts to create a School Improvement Plan lauded as the impetus for positive improvements" at Dimond. Okada calls Ayala, "the kind of teacher and natural leader that makes this school a wonderful place to work and learn."

Dan Traxinger, "Mr. Safety" at Dimond High School, is a home-school safety coordinator. Traxinger specializes in the areas of fire code compliance, parking, emergency evacuation and disaster preparation. Two years ago Traxinger created the emergency procedure flip chart now emulated throughout the District. Traxinger "toils tirelessly" to ensure that Dimond complies with the fire codes -- a daunting task in the aging building. He takes personal responsibility for crisis preparedness at Dimond. Just in the last month, the school staff has been in-serviced by the Red Cross and Fire

Department, practiced a lock down drill and staged a triage effort following a simulated earthquake. Traxinger organizes all of this while supporting the Dimond security team, staff, parents, and students in their efforts to ensure Dimond is a safe place to work and learn.

Executive Director of Elementary Education Patricia McRae received a letter of support from her Supervisor, Pat McDowell, but she was nominated by one-third of the principals she supervises. Calling her the "Energizer Bunny" of elementary education, principals say she is resourceful, creative and intuitive.

"Her great ideas come to life in many forms that enhance our ability to provide instructional leadership in the elementary schools." At McRae's meetings with principals she uses creative activities to facilitate decision-making or impart information. Principals are often inspired to use these techniques with their own staff, who can in turn incorporate them into their teaching methods. Principals appreciate that she is "very approachable and considers different positions before making a decision," and is "always searching for ways to support the needs of principals while maintaining an intense schedule and managing a large and complex division."

Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Pat McDowell echoes the principals' sentiments saying, "Patricia's tireless advocacy for instructional reform and shared decision making is nothing short of breathtaking. Patricia is a tremendous example of someone whose heart remains in the classroom. Watching her conduct a principals' meeting or plan a training initiative is to see someone who understands both instruction and how to convey information to others. Instructional excellence -- modeling it and inspiring it -- is a top priority for this director."

Members of the Goldenview Middle School Technology Committee are the recipients of the Denali "team" award. Principal Connie Bensler nominated the team and said the following:

"Since before we opened our doors, this group of 14 people has spent countless hours developing a philosophy and practice of the use of technology for our students, staff and community. We have the only on-line, networked PC lab in the District. We have Macs and Dells in every classroom and about half of these computers are on carts and can be relocated to create portable mini-labs. Our web page has team and elective pages with up-to-the-minute information and assignments." This year the team created an impressive technology awards program that recognizes students for achievements in ten areas of technology, ranging from keyboarding to web pages, video production and networking. Thanks to the technology committee, Goldenview Middle School students are better prepared to meet the challenges of this fast-paced, high-tech world.

It is recommended that the School Board recognize these Denali Award recipients, and all of the nominees, for the example of excellence that they set for the entire Anchorage School District community.

CC/LW/ME

Attachment

Prepared by: Michelle Egan, Public Relations Director

Approved by: Lawrence A. Wiget, Director, Public Affairs

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
DECEMBER 2000 DENALI AWARD NOMINEES

Certificated:

Greg Brown, Dimond High School*
Margaret Falsey, Rabbit Creek Elementary*
Beth Kaser, Kasuun Elementary*
Cindy Mikawa, Ptarmigan Elementary
Karen Parrish, East High School
Marsha Taylor, Romig Middle School
Jan Veltkamp, Aurora Elementary
Keren Walker, Romig Middle School

Classified/Support:

Barbara Abercrombie, Wendler Middle School
Art Ayala, Dimond High School*
Jung Lee, Eagle River
Cesar Sobrapena, Sand Lake Elementary
Gloria Ulmer, Mt. Spurr Elementary
Redentor Yambao, Nunaka Valley/Rogers Park
Audrey Richardson, Romig Middle School
Dan Traxinger, Dimond High School*

Administrator/Principal

Margo Bellamy, Wendler Middle School
Brian Hosken, Dimond High School
Patricia McRae, Elementary Education*

Team:

AVAIL
Bartlett STAR, Bartlett
Counseling Team, Dimond High School
Goldenview Technology Committee, Goldenview Middle School*
Matt Niclai/Callie Knollenberg, Hanshew Middle School Special Education
Middle School Team, Northern Lights K-8
Novanet Development Team, Dimond High School
Teaching Assistants, O'Malley Elementary
Preventative Maintenance Committee, Maintenance
Ptarmigan Elementary
Ravenwood Elementary
Tyson Elementary

Nomination Review Committee:

Sharon Baker, Chinook Elementary

Ray Grey, Warehouse/Courier

Sarah Hotchkiss, Assessment and Evaluation

Betsy Nickels, Student Nutrition

Bob Roses, Anchorage Education Association

Jim Taylor, High School Education

Amy Veaudry-Fielder, teacher, Spring Hill Elementary

* award winners