

2006 HONOREE

Heather Renz

Vern Patrick Elementary, Redmond, OR
Intermediate Elementary Education • 4th Grade



Years Teaching: 26

Average Class Size: 30

Classes Taught Per Day: 1

School's % of ESL Students: 10%

School Type: Public, Rural

Type of Class: Self-contained

“My classroom is a reflection of the talents my students bring to it. The environment and my creative teaching practices are designed to maximize the achievement of my students. I teach students to believe in themselves, persist even when things are challenging, and build confidence in their abilities. I know and have proven beyond a doubt that every child can and does learn and that none need be left behind. When students are regularly immersed in a topic and become part of the story, they learn at a deeper level than through an ‘I teach, you learn’ model. The creative process and defined academic standards are not, as often suggested, polar opposites or oppositional strategies. Because the standards have been clearly outlined for me, I don’t need to concern myself with what my students need to learn; instead I am able to focus on how students best learn. I continue to expand my creative, hands-on, project-based classroom environment because of the results all my students achieve. Students who are engaged in meaningful work are more motivated. This simple philosophy is validated by my students routinely meeting and exceeding state benchmarks in mathematics, reading, and writing.”

“I love to learn and I do my best to instill this love of learning in my students. I use the Scottish Storyline format to immerse my rural students in science and



technology. My students become polar explorers, Hawaiian volcanologists, and Channel Island Challengers. In the Pacific Northwest, we are strongly linked to salmon and their preservation. My class raises kokanee salmon and trout for release, labels storm drains in the community, and learns fishing techniques from elders in our town. My fourth-grade students have checking and savings accounts, rent their desks and books, pay taxes in April, and have many opportunities to earn classroom dollars. In all this, we don’t forget our basic skills mastery, while working in the exciting real-world environment.”

“Heather’s students have been given such a wonderful gift of a teacher who loves to teach, loves to share herself and her knowledge with her students, and loves to interact and engage herself while teaching. I am so very privileged to have had the opportunity to volunteer in Heather’s class and my children have been even more privileged to have had Heather as ‘the best teacher’ yet. I believe fourth grade is a pivotal year in learning for children and Heather’s students definitely had the best chance to gain every bit of excitement, knowledge, experience, and care from her.”

– Becki McKinney,
parent of former students

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

State Farm Good Neighbor Service Learning Award (2006) • Over 50 classroom Web site Awards (2002-2006) • Microsoft Worldwide Innovative Teacher, USA (2005) • JASON Project Teacher Argonaut, Panama Expedition (2004) • Redmond, Oregon Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year (2003) • Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers (First Edition)