



Date: September 27, 2023

Contact: Tracy Poindexter-Canton, 509-789-3540, tpoindexter-canton@esd101.net

Pullman Public Schools staff selected as 2024 Regional Classified School Employee and Teacher of the Year

SPOKANE, WA – The NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101 (NEWESD) has selected **Lincoln Middle School 6th Grade Math Teacher Madison “Mimi” Dissmore** as Regional Teacher of the Year and **Sunnyside Elementary School Office Manager/Head Secretary Carmen Roberts** as Classified School Employee of the Year for 2024.

Overseen by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Regional Teacher and Classified Employee of the Year programs recognize excellence in teaching and the exceptional work of public-school employees. Winners are selected by a committee based on nominations from peers, supervisors, students and parents received by a regional coordinator at each of the state’s nine ESDs. While contending for the titles of State Teacher and Classified Employee of the Year, regional winners engage in year-long professional learning, leadership and advocacy training, and meet with state and national education leaders.

2024 NEWESD Teacher of the Year

A part of the Lincoln Middle School community for nine years, **Madison “Mimi” Dissmore** believes that teachers can be leaders for changing systems.

While math can be a challenging subject for many students, Dissmore has worked hard to develop her skills. Having earned a masters in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on equity in math instruction, Dissmore also actively pursued mentors within the district and continues to push herself to grow as a teacher of math.

“Ms. Dissmore epitomizes what a great teacher is in 2023,” says Lincoln Middle School Principal Cameron Grow. “She is equity focused in her classroom and her work shows this every day. She is a student advocate and continually goes the extra mile for kids who need support. Ms. Dissmore believes in ALL kids. The best part is that her students love being in her class. It’s a great combination.”

In 2017 and 2018, Lincoln Middle School received the "Closing the Gap" award from OSPI due in great part to the growth displayed in Dissmore’s students. As a middle school math teacher, Dissmore’s instructional decisions remove barriers, provide access to challenging grade-level content, support students in productive struggle, and honor diverse ways of thinking about mathematics and the world.

As a part of the district guiding coalition team, Dissmore has supported Lincoln Middle School through the school math PLC work, her grade level team, and is on the district guiding coalition, ensuring higher levels of learning for all students. As the math team leader, she oversees the monitoring of student learning throughout the building in the area of math, focusing on common formative assessments to ensure that students know and understand the grade level essential standards.

Nathaniel Nicol, Lincoln Middle School parent and Professor at Purdue Global University, could not agree more with Dissmore's nomination. "Every one of Ms. Dissmore's students knows that she cares deeply about them, wants them to do well, and is fully committed to helping them achieve," says Nicol. "And she shows them in her own person how caring is totally in line with being strong. She positively radiates caring and strength and is a constant source of reassurance and a safe place for students to face up to some of the most difficult questions that are both on their minds and yet hard to voice."

In addition to her work inside the classroom, Dissmore makes time to be a club advisor for three clubs: Chess Club, Magic the Gathering Club, and the district's first Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Club. In 2021, Dissmore founded GSA, providing voice and a safe space for all who want to be their authentic selves. In this work, Dissmore created and delivered professional learning for district staff on how to support queer students, helping GSA members to connect with and have ownership over not just their organization but the school itself.

So what's next for Dissmore? Over the next year, she will be working towards her principal credentials and begin to take even more of a leadership role in the building with her administrative internship beginning this past July.

"Our school is still improving, but it's better than ever before because of teacher leadership," says Dissmore. "It hasn't been easy or fast but if you are consistent and persistent, you can change systems. Our students deserve that. Every teacher has knowledge, experience, and passion that can move us toward an equitable future, one small act of change at a time."

2024 NEWESD Classified Employee of the Year

To many in the Sunnyside community, **Carmen Roberts** is the "face" of the building.

For the last decade, Roberts has served as Office Manager/Head Secretary of Sunnyside Elementary School, providing staff, families, students and visitors with a safe and welcoming environment filled with support. In addition to her role, she has served on various school and district committees, such as Social Committee, Positive Behavior Intervention Team, and as the President of the Secretary Bargaining Unit. Prior to working at Sunnyside, Mrs. Roberts worked as a para-educator for three years at Franklin Elementary and Pullman High School.

In her time at Sunnyside, one of the projects Roberts has been most proud of is the Kindergarten Round Up, a public forum where families come in person to register students for kindergarten for the following school year. As a leader for this program, Roberts coached new staff from other schools through the process, confirmed information, gathered paperwork, approved documents and created student files. She directed families

to supporting Departments like Transportation, Special Education, and Food Services and provided families with a warm, friendly-first experience.

To nominator Pam Brantner, Sunnyside Elementary School Principal, Roberts embodies the characteristics of a true leader. "During a "typical" year Mrs. Roberts is the first-person families see and meet. Many students see her as a confidante and come to the office when they are having problems, need a break or need to calm down. I have witnessed her make special connections with some of our toughest kids, kids who need a steady adult in their lives who take them as they are."

Roberts knows how important relationships are to our schools and our communities. "Building relationships is the most important part of my job," says Roberts. "The office serves as the backbone of our building. Cultivating trust to provide the best support possible and fostering relationships with students and families creates a positive school experience and lasting connections that span the course of several years."

Kelly Laird, Associate Administrator for Sunnyside Elementary School, knows firsthand the impact Roberts has on the Sunnyside community, particularly during the pandemic. "During the pandemic she had to adjust her role in many ways; from how to take attendance, to assisting with tech difficulties (for example Learning Management Systems, Zooms, and computer issues), to taking on the role of nurse duty, including the incredibly difficult task of tracking COVID return dates, and so much more."

To Sunnyside Elementary School parent Hillary Lovinger, there is no one more deserving of this award than Roberts. "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working with and getting to know Carmen and seeing daily examples of the asset she is to our children and the Sunnyside Elementary and Pullman School District communities," says Lovinger. "She is extremely hard working, loyal, and able to handle any curveball that comes her way. She is an exemplary leader and a force for good in the school."

In her role, Roberts works directly with families, making sure each and every student has positive experiences every day. Her care for each student's well-being is unmatched, greeting each of them by name and displaying how much they matter. Says Lovinger, "Carmen lifts up our students' spirits with simple interactions filled with sincere concern and positive attention. Her ability to be a pillar of light and optimism for those she is around was especially appreciated during the pandemic with the added strain of uncertainty and ever-changing expectations."

Brantner agrees. "We experience Carmen's leadership experience daily. Mrs. Roberts does not look at her role here as a job, but as a part of who she is. She is the glue that holds Sunnyside together."

###

About NorthEast Washington Educational Service District (NEWESD) 101

NEWESD 101 promotes educational excellence by delivering essential, cooperative services to 59 public school districts, 45 state-approved private schools and three charter schools across northeast Washington in Adams, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman counties.

Now entering its 53rd year of operation, NEWESD 101 is the state's largest ESD in the number of districts served, counties served and geographic region served.