

October 16, 2004

Mr. Tom Williams, Executive Director
Community Day School Network

Dear Mr. Williams:

I am writing you to nominate Ms. Penny Whitaker, a teacher at Gateway Community Day School located in the Grossmont Union High School District for the Portraits of Success Award through CDSN. Ms. Whitaker is one of two teachers at this school and has been instrumental in the success of the Community Day School program in our district. Ms. Whitaker has worked tirelessly to make certain that the students at her school are there every day, meeting their graduation requirements and fulfilling the requirements of their expulsion rehabilitation plan. She assists the students in writing their letters to the Governing Board when they request a lift of their expulsions and continually stays abreast of the student's community service requirements. Of the nine students who took the CAHSEE last year, six passed both sections, two passed one section and only one student, a recent immigrant from Germany, did not pass. This is indicative of the supplementary work that Ms. Whitaker and her partner teacher did.

Although Ms. Whitaker is very firm and consistent in her discipline approach with the students, they know that she cares for them and wants to see them succeed. She acknowledges the student's successes, even if they appear small to an outside observer. Ms. Whitaker is at school well before the day begins because many of the students come to school very early in the morning because of transportation. During this time students are able to talk casually with Ms. Whitaker about the obstacles in their lives as well as their goals.

Each day Ms. Whitaker has a current events period in which the students observe the previous night's national news that Ms. Whitaker has videotaped for them. The students take notes while they watch the news, ask questions and discuss topics pertinent to our world. Through this class Ms. Whitaker encourages the students to be informed citizens who contribute to society. This is just a small example of the work that Ms. Whitaker does for her students. It is my pleasure to nominate her for this award.

Sincerely,

Lucia Washburn
Principal, Alternative Education