

APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Lesa Dickson

Name

11 and 12

Current Grade Level(s) Taught

AP Language and Composition, College Concurrent Composition I and II Liaison Teacher

Current Subject(s) Taught

9

Years in Current Position

39

Total Years of Teaching Experience

Languages Other than English Spoken Fluently

Areas of National Board Certification Achieved or In Progress:

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Broken Arrow Public Schools

School District

Broken Arrow High School

School Name

3,872

School Size

19,431

District Size

Public

School Demographic

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

List all below, most recent first.

EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

College or University	Dates Attended	Degree Earned (i.e., B.A. in Math)
University of Oklahoma	1977-1981	B.A.
University of Oklahoma	1984-1988	M.A.

Name of High School Attended	City	State	ZIP Code
Sapulpa High School	Sapulpa	OK	74066

EMPLOYMENT RECORD OF SERVICE (Include grade level and/or subject area)

School District	Position Held	Dates
Broken Arrow Schools	Eng. 9, 10, Journalism I, II, Newspaper	1981-1991
Tulsa Public Schools	English 11	1991-1992
Broken Arrow Schools	Eng. 9, PreAP 9, Eng. 10, Eng. 11, Eng. 12, AP Language and Comp., Concurrent TCC Comp. I, Comp. II, Inspire English (BAPS online program)	1992-present
Tulsa Community College	Comp. I, II, Writing II, Mass Media and American Cult.	1982-present

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS (Include offices held and/or other relevant activities)

Membership	Position Held	Dates
NCTE	Member	1982-1992
BAEA	Building Rep.	1981-1986
Junior League of Tulsa	Education newsletter editor	1994-1997

LEADERSHIP IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT (Include leadership in the training of future teachers)

Title	Position Held	Dates
North Central Eval.	Prof. Dev. Presenter- Writing Mission Statements	1994-1996
North Central Eval.	Prof. Dev. Presenter - Student growth	1997-1999
Restructuring Secondary	Professional Dev. Presenter	2001,2002
Schools NSCI Conf.		
Intern Teaching Program	Observing Teacher	1996,1999, 2001
		2007,2012,2016
Academic/Vocational	Professional Dev. Presenter	2005
Curr. Integ. NSCI Conf.		
Solution Tree - PLCs	Professional Dev. Presenter - Building PLCs	2013,2014

AWARDS AND OTHER RECOGNITION OF TEACHING

Title		Dates
LEADERSHIP CONT.		
Rhetorical Strategies	Professional Dev. Presenter	2015,2016
PLC Building	PLC Lead	2017-present
English Dept. Chair		2012-present
AWARDS		
Teacher of the Year and Top 3 Teacher of the Year	BAHS	2018, 2019
Selected Teacher of the Month	BAHS	2009-2018
Most Influential Teacher awarded by a senior in the top 10% of class		2015, 2016,2017
		2018, 2019

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Limit all following responses to spaces provided.

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

What were the factors that influenced you to become a teacher?

Describe what you consider to be your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education.

Listening to stories of my grandmother riding a mule over a mountain to teach in a one-room schoolhouse in Arkansas, hearing her tales of teaching in Indian Territory (soon to be Oklahoma), watching my mother as a young woman commuting back and forth from Stillwater to earn her teaching degree, and eventually sitting in my mother's classroom every afternoon doing my homework. These stories and images are an integral part of my childhood and ultimately shaped me into the person I am. Though struggling in poverty, my grandmother instilled a love of reading and learning into each of her five daughters, three becoming teachers. With a grandmother, mother, aunts, and cousins all educators, teaching is a part of my DNA. School is as vital to my emotional well-being as my heart is to my physical. The classroom has been one of my comfort zones my entire life. Now, thirty-nine years later, the thought of leaving that comfort zone in the near future is actually a little frightening.

When I sometimes consider my footprint on the world and the significance of my career, I reflect on the hundreds of children with whom I have worked, and I realize with a full heart that my contribution is as significant as any other service career that I could have chosen. My greatest contribution is the single-minded devotion I have given my entire professional life, a career where I purposely remained an active learner in my craft, stayed involved in professional growth and development, and remained enthusiastic in my teaching.

I am blessed that my career has been long and fulfilling, and my accomplishments cannot be reflected in a single event or a specific child, but rather the accumulation of hundreds of both small and large ways I have impacted my students' lives. I have been the teacher whom depressed and emotionally unstable Rachel sought for solace and comfort. I have been the teacher who counseled lesbian students Amber and Marla regarding fear of their parents' and peers' judgment. I have been the teacher who intervened and sought help for Marcus, a lonely boy having suicidal thoughts. I have been the teacher who helped Emily, paralyzed as a result of a suicide attempt, go to the restroom. I have been the teacher who attended the funerals of Emily, Jason, and Bri, children whose lives were just beginning but were tragically taken away by suicide, alcohol, and tragic disease.

However, the joy has outweighed the pain as I have shared moments of great happiness, pride, and accomplishment with hundreds of children whether it was exposing them to world travel, seeing their confidence when they mastered a difficult concept, sharing their joys of success, or feeling their love and appreciation shown in countless ways, often years later. Recently, a former student, whom I had counseled through rough high school years with poor grades, low self esteem, and little emotional or financial support, visited to tell me that he had changed his college major to Religious Studies as he wanted to be an army chaplain. Those are the moments that I tell myself, "You are making a difference." Whether great or small, whether significant or insignificant, I have impacted lives in positive ways, and that is my greatest accomplishment.

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

Describe your personal feelings and beliefs about teaching, including your own ideas of what makes an outstanding teacher. Describe the rewards you find in teaching. How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in your personal teaching style?

"Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability." These words written in 1625 by English essayist Sir Francis Bacon capture the powerful role education plays in one's life. I am a lover of learning and firmly believe that education is a vital key to one's success and sense of self-worth. Whether it is to learn for the sheer "delight" of enriching our lives, to proudly "ornament" ourselves with our knowledge and educational achievements, or to use our "ability" accrued from studies in a profession, education enriches lives in profound ways. My number one goal is to educate my students, to provide them with the necessary skills to become confident, intelligent, productive citizens and to appreciate the value of learning.

Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm, and that is my strength in the classroom. I have no doubt that all students can learn, but it is the ability to motivate students that separates the so-so teacher from the outstanding teacher. From the most challenging novel to the most onerous task of writing a research paper, I approach the unit with a positive attitude, a strong sense of purpose, and engagement. If I can get my students to "buy in" on the task, they are well on their way to successful learning, and the resulting rewards are a joy to see. Small rewards occur on a daily basis when an entire class is engaged in a discussion, a struggling student passes a test, the shy student speaks up, or a student grins when I pass back a paper that has "Best work yet!" written on the top. Sometimes those rewards come months and even years later. My heart sings when I get my students' AP exam scores and see that I have helped so many of them achieve great success, their scores reflecting a long year of extremely hard work on both our parts. I feel rewarded when students return from college to tell me that my class helped them more in their college courses than any other class they have had. I feel touched when a student whom I have not heard from in years sees me and says that whenever she sees "A Christmas Carol," she remembers me reading every word of *Great Expectations* to her in ninth grade. And perhaps there is no greater reward than students such as the young man I ran into this past fall whom I had in class in 2000. He struggled in school, was routinely suspended, and came from a terrible home life. I distinctly remember one day when he showed up with ugly stitches across his forehead which he calmly told me were the result of a fight with a broken beer bottle. My heart connected with this young man, and I begged him throughout the year to continue his education at the local community college; otherwise, I was afraid he would end up in prison. However, after graduation, I never heard from him again. Suddenly, twenty years later, he showed up at a staff professional development day last August. Working in BAPS as an aide in the special education department, he sought me out to tell me that if it had not been for me, he would not have gone on to take TCC classes. and though he quit school for a number of years, he told me that he is now committed to going back and becoming a teacher to work with troubled youth. After I walked away, he called out my name, followed me, and asked if he could give me a hug. Those are the rewards that mean the most.

My enthusiasm for learning is the first component of my teaching style. However, learning only takes place when there is a connection between the teacher and student. My style is open, honest, friendly, but focused. The students know that I have high expectations and mean business when we get started, but I strive for a relaxed, safe environment where we can all make mistakes, students understand why the learning will be to their benefit, a joke is always welcome, and we can laugh a lot. I am purposely friendly and upbeat, even on those days that it might be challenging for me. I strive to establish a personal relationship with each student. That connection, along with my passion for both teaching and learning, has proven a successful recipe for my students.

EDUCATION ISSUES AND TRENDS

What do you consider to be the major public education issues we face today? Address them in depth, outlining possible causes, effects, and resolutions.

Public education in America faces a myriad of problems which are complex, multifaceted, and interrelated. The overall decline in the intrinsic value of education on a widespread scale is alarming but is a result of societal lifestyles and values that are difficult to change. To me, the best approach to correcting educational issues is to focus on what can be done in "our own backyard." If communities and states would take that approach, then bit by bit, we would eradicate problems and increase success in our public schools nationwide. Therefore, I feel that addressing issues unique to Oklahoma is the best place to start.

One of the major issues in Oklahoma public schools is the lack of equity for students. Although no two districts are truly equitable, the disparity between students in both rural and urban schools and students in suburban schools is unacceptable. Students in the rural and urban districts do not have the advantages of students in wealthier, suburban school districts regarding both opportunities and teacher quality. As a result, thousands of students in Oklahoma graduate from high school, if they graduate, ill-equipped to be successful, and Oklahoma remains near the bottom in a variety of social problems including literacy, poverty, poor health, and incarceration.

The reasons for inequality in schools vary depending on whether the district is rural or urban. The small rural communities in Oklahoma cling to their notion of autonomy and fail to see the value of consolidation. These small districts simply cannot fiscally offer students the opportunities larger districts can. Neither can teachers in these districts focus on their craft due to the necessity of teaching several different courses or grade levels, sponsoring clubs, driving buses, and a myriad of other obligations. The urban districts face different challenges but with similar results. Little home support, cultural differences, violence and poverty make attracting quality teachers challenging while suburban flight to outlying schools keeps student populations and resulting educational opportunities shrinking at an alarming rate. Rather than receiving an equitable education, students in the suburban districts are more likely to be the winners in the lottery of public education in Oklahoma.

A major step addressing the small, rural districts is consolidation. Physically consolidating these districts would allow for more programs and courses offerings while increasing teacher quality. More teachers would want to teach in these districts that can offer more, they would have greater resources, and they could focus on quality instruction with fewer plans and responsibilities. Addressing the urban school districts of Oklahoma City and Tulsa is a greater challenge. A deep commitment to an innovative and comprehensive approach supported by state officials and legislative funding would be necessary to truly address the issue. Research-based initiatives, community education programs, and school restructuring on a comprehensive basis would have to be embraced in order to make an impact and change. Addressing the urban problems is not an easy fix, but we cannot keep allowing thousands of these students to leave school only to continue the cycle of poverty, poor health, and illiteracy that Oklahoma is unfortunately known for. Resolving this problem of inequality in our schools will take both political and economic courage and will. Nonetheless, Oklahoma leaders and its citizens must realize that an educated population benefits every one of us socially and economically.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

What do you do to strengthen and improve the teaching profession?

What is and/or what should be the basis for accountability in the teaching profession?

The teaching profession and education in the country face many challenges. In recent years, we have experienced a mass exodus of teachers, resorted to non-certified teachers, and lost many of our brightest college students to other fields outside of education. Improvement of the profession has always been important, but now, especially, the value of strengthening the profession cannot be underestimated.

Early in my career, I began to volunteer for committees, agree to lead professional development, share material and ideas with other teachers, mentor intern teachers, and read professional journals. In the 1990s, I served as my building representative for both the Basis Cadre initiative and the Instructional Coordination Council, both for three years each, and attended seminars "Tools for Tomorrow" and "Integrating Arts and Curriculum" which focused on effective teacher strategies. In addition, I served as the building representative on the school restructuring committee from 1994-1998. In the 2000s, I attended two NSCI National Conferences, "Restructuring Secondary Schools" and "Academic/Vocational Curriculum Integration." I also served on the BAPS Professional Development Committee for three years and the PLC Committee from 2010-2013. All of these committees, conferences and workshops entailed faculty training and presentations to improve all teachers.

As a veteran teacher, my experience and expertise seem even more valuable now. As department lead, I encourage my department to adopt a team mentality, sharing material, ideas, and strategies at every department meeting, advising each other in classroom management techniques, attending workshops, and observing and helping on an individual basis, often visiting classes and coaching. In addition, I have been a major proponent of new initiatives in my department to raise the quality of instruction including strengthening PLCs, expanding the LDC initiative, and offering and strongly encouraging teachers to take advantage of training opportunities.

Accountability is a key ingredient for a successful teaching staff, but it must be a comprehensive approach of several measurements, not just one formal assessment tool. The district's PLC initiative is a prime example of an additional tool that promotes teacher accountability in both curriculum and rigor. However, other measurements would increase teacher success and ensure accountability. It is imperative that administration prioritize observing and spending time in teachers' classrooms beyond the few formal observations throughout the year. When a teacher is struggling, principals should facilitate teacher learning and offer them the necessary resources for success. Another practice that should be adopted is the "teachers observing teachers" approach. By allowing time for teachers to observe their peers, new ideas and methods can increase teacher success exponentially. Furthermore, student/parent evaluations should be embraced rather than feared. Although this idea might be met with some skepticism, the knowledge gained would be insightful and helpful. Finally, student achievement must be part of the accountability process. Students learn in different ways and different rates, and, of course, the students themselves and the course should be taken into consideration; however, the ultimate goal is student achievement and is undoubtedly a reflection of a teacher's success. Embracing accountability without fear is necessary for teacher success and should be the goal of all administrators and teachers alike.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Describe your commitment to your community through service-oriented activities including volunteer work, civic responsibilities, and other group activities.

My life is much richer for my contributions both professionally and personally to places I call home: my school, my community, and my church. My most rewarding service areas are the years I spent with speech and debate students, student council, and students I took on trips to Europe, in addition to chaperoning a variety of school events each year. For years, I volunteered throughout the competitive season as a judge for area schools' weekend speech and debate tournaments and chaperoned student council and senior class events. Since my first year teaching in 1981, I have led over 15 student trips to Europe, my last in 2019. The impact a teacher has on a student's life does not always happen in a classroom. Not only do my students see my love for them, but I too am enriched. Witnessing their fun at a dance, pride of winning an event, or wonder at seeing the Eifel Tower are invaluable memories I cherish.

I started my community volunteerism as a member of the Junior League of Tulsa. Throughout the years I participated in the "Songs for Seniors" group, a singing group which visited area nursing homes, Domestic Violence Intervention Service volunteer, editor of the monthly educational newsletter, and a member of the Public Affairs Advocacy Committee. For the past five years, I have volunteered for Life Senior Services of Tulsa and Catholic Charities. During the recent pandemic, I have volunteered with the Farmers to Families food box distribution and with the Catholic Charities food distribution program.

Service in our church has also been an integral part of my life. I have served and continue to serve on a variety of church activities including fundraising events, blood drives, the Pastoral Care Ministry, visiting the sick and elderly, and the Outreach Ministry, providing essentials for the needy.

The teaching profession is in itself a call to serve. Therefore, it doesn't surprise me that so many teachers, not just me, are some of the most dedicated volunteers in other areas of their lives. I know this is true for me. I love helping people whether it is teaching a valuable life skill in my classroom, bringing a smile to a lonely elderly person, or seeing the grateful faces of needy families as I load their cars with groceries. Service to others is not only personally rewarding but also serves to strengthen those communities that I hold most dear: my school, my community, and my church.

OKLAHOMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

As the Teacher of the Year, you will serve as a spokesperson and representative for teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the public?

Why are we facing a teacher shortage across the country? Why are so many teachers stressed, discouraged, mentally and emotionally exhausted? It is because we are drowning in a sea of responsibilities. For centuries, a teacher's sole purpose was the cognitive development of his or her students. However, as America has changed over the past century, our role as teachers has taken on an even greater degree of responsibility. Today, we are not only responsible for our students' cognitive development but often their emotional and social development as well. More and more students come to us suffering from unstable homes, violence or abuse, hunger, poverty, bullying, or social pressures. With the current pandemic and resulting loss of face-to face learning, parents are realizing the role teachers play in their children's lives not only from an educational point of view but from an emotional and social perspective too. Now, they need us more than ever, but how do we address these challenges?

Hillary Clinton once said, "Every child needs a champion." So, we become champions for not only our students but their families as well. We connect. We become THAT teacher, the teacher that days, months, or years later, the student and often parents remember. Every single act, large or small, makes an impact that we may never even be aware of. Whether you hugged them in kindergarten and commented on their pretty hair bow as my daughter's kindergarten teacher did, taught them fractions in 4th grade, were their friend in middle school when they didn't think they had any, or simply said, "We missed you" when they were absent, these actions may seem small to you but are often huge to them.

Our jobs today may seem harder than ever, but our students also need us more than ever. In our uncertain and divisive times, in our world of social activism, conflicting information and ever changing values, in our communities of jobless parents and broken homes, teachers can be a steadying force, a source of strength, optimism, guidance, security, encouragement, and acceptance. Yes, our goal is to teach them skills and knowledge to lead successful lives, but we are capable of so much more. Be THAT teacher that students and often parents remember for the rest of their lives. Be their champion. Everyone needs one.

SHARE A LESSON

Describe a lesson or unit that defines you as a teacher. How did you engage all students in the learning, and how did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson or unit?

One of my favorite lessons which encapsulates my teaching approach is entitled "The Murder of Allen Ripley." It addresses multiple reading and writing standards, utilizes a variety of teaching methods, and reaches visual, aural, verbal, and kinesthetic learners. The lesson takes approximately 3-6 class periods and requires students to collaboratively use the Toulmin model of argumentation and both inductive and deductive reasoning to solve a crime. Critical thinking is one of the most important cognitive skills we can teach students, necessary in both their personal and professional futures. This lesson shows students how to solve problems creatively, using reason, logic, and facts to support an argument.

All students are involved in the learning process as they each have both individual and group roles/responsibilities. It is a highly engaging activity, so I never have students who fail to participate. In fact, it is probably my students' favorite activity all year. After weeks of rhetorical analysis and argumentative writing based on AP prompts, students take those skills to a "real life" scenario, requiring them to utilize all levels of Bloom's taxonomy of learning, most importantly the highest levels of applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. It is a beautiful thing to listen in on each group's discussions, debates, and reasoning in order for them to arrive at a consensus.

After a couple of days reviewing elements of argument, students arrive to see an elaborate crime scene set up outside my classroom, complete with a body outline and multiple pieces of evidence: scattered financial documents, turned over lamp, empty medicine bottle, a tie, slashed piece of art, etc. etc. The entire scene is roped off with crime tape.

Students individually take notes or photos of the crime scene before rotating to a series of stations, each with a large photo of suspects and their written police interviews. Again, they read the interviews, taking notes. The following day, the detective squads compare their notes and theories to determine who they believe committed the crime. They must analyze the means, motives, opportunity, crime scene, and suspect interrogations by practicing their logic, reasoning, and argumentative skills. Once they have come to a consensus, they must collaboratively write an argument explaining their reasoning as to who they believe murdered Allen Ripley. Then each detective squad attempts to convince the class that they have identified the murderer. Students are free to ask questions and point out any logical fallacies the detectives may have committed. Class discussion is often intense, funny, and astute!

This lesson perfectly reflects my teaching beliefs. Learning should be engaging, relevant, and meaningful. Also, when a lesson can incorporate a variety of learning styles, engagement and learning is even higher. In addition, this lesson requires little if any differentiation. All students, regardless of their individual skill levels, feel empowered in their argument skills after this lesson. I also believe that my role is to prepare students for future success both personally and professionally. The "Murder of Allen Ripley" is a highly engaging and fun activity that allows students to practice and grow confident in their critical thinking and problem solving ability, a valuable skill in life.



June 30, 2020

Dear Teacher of the Year Selection Committee:

It is my distinct honor to recommend Lesa Dickson to be named as the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year. Although I had been aware of Ms. Dickson's reputation as an engaging educator prior to my having the opportunity to work with her, I have come to know her work in detail during the past five years that I have served as her principal. And like others before me, I have found myself inspired by her passion for both the English language and for teaching.

Ms. Dickson's eleventh grade AP English class represents a significant step upwards in rigor from the tenth grade coursework with which students new to her class have grown comfortable. From day one, her students find that they are being asked to truly stretch themselves and their abilities. They are not alone in that endeavor, however. As they attempt new skills, they find that Ms. Dickson offers encouragement in the true sense of that word—literally providing them with the courage they need in order to risk and lean forward academically. In her class students learn not simply to mindlessly parrot the opinions of others but to read critically for analysis while formulating and defending their own ideas both verbally and in writing. Ms. Dickson's classroom is a safe space where she helps all her students develop both the competence and the confidence that they need in order to grow bold and succeed.

Ms. Dickson possesses the uncanny ability not only to identify issues of concern but also to take positive steps to address those concerns when she becomes aware of them. One example has been her participation in our BA Scholars initiative. This represents an effort on the part of our school to identify sophomore students who score well enough on the PSAT to qualify them as serious contenders to become National Merit Semifinalists if they retake the PSAT/NMSQT in their junior year. Through BA Scholars, a select group of high-scoring students are invited to an intensive four-day summer camp. There, under the careful guidance of Ms. Dickson and her colleagues, students work through the sorts of English and math questions which they will face on the test. She also continues to work with the students as the exam nears. Her efforts have led not only to an increase in the number of our students who are earning national academic accolades but also in the installation of a prominent display area in our school where our top scholars are honored and celebrated.

Finally, Ms. Dickson serves as our school's English department head. It has been a joy to observe her in this role as I have seen her both develop the skills of teachers new to the profession as well as earn the respect of the most experienced and vocal members of the department. Her ability to identify areas of need and to work productively with others to overcome obstacles and fill those needs is simply remarkable. As the principal of the largest high school in the state, I have come to rely on her candor and input, and my respect for her and her abilities is far greater than can be communicated in a simple letter of recommendation.

Lesla Dickson's contributions to our entire educational program are simply legion, and she is an inspiration not only to her students but also to her colleagues and to our community as a whole. Everyone who has the privilege of knowing her is better for the opportunity. I cannot imagine a candidate more worthy to represent the teachers of our state as Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth J. Burns
Principal, Broken Arrow High School

July 2, 2020

Linda Webb
8986 Haskell Drive
Broken Arrow, OK 74014

Dear Teacher of the Year Selection Committee:

“She’s a pro.” Those were my daughter’s words when I asked her to describe Lesa Dickson.

When Olivia was a Junior, she was in Mrs. Dickson’s AP Language and Composition Class. Olivia described Mrs. Dickson as always being enthusiastically prepared for her lessons. She was intentional in everything she did. Organized and purposeful in all of her teaching, while at the same time ready to help when someone did not understand. As a mother, Mrs. Dickson is that teacher you hope your children have during their educational experience.

Olivia has learned to appreciate literature, as well as analyze and annotate what she reads. She commented how valuable these skills have been during her college classes when she was reading scientific research papers. After high school Olivia reread two of the books assigned previously in Mrs. Dickson’s classroom. She made those books so intriguing, they had to be revisited one more time.

The beauty of Mrs. Dickson’s influence continues beyond her classroom walls. Lesa Dickson produces lifelong learners. Her students know she cares about them as people, but also cares about their future success. She prepares them for this world, modeling a passion to do your best every day, while showing compassion and understanding.

Take note, Lesa Dickson is a pro. She would represent the teachers of Oklahoma well as our Oklahoma Teacher of the Year.

Linda Webb

Parent of a former student
In Lesa Dickson’s class

July 22, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

Most people are able to tell you about a teacher that impacted them, either in a positive or negative way. As students, we spend so many of our formative years with teachers, and we are bound to be affected by these adults who choose to spend their time teaching and nurturing students. I was lucky enough to have had Lesa Dickson as my freshman PreAP English teacher.

Lesla had a profound impact on me throughout high school, college, and my career as an English teacher. In high school, I was shy and awkward. I did not have many friends, and I was extremely self-conscious. But I adored reading. Lesa fostered that love of reading. I did not feel like a loser when I was talking to her, and I did not have to be self-conscious. I was valued and loved. This relationship led to me visiting her during college and when I first started teaching.

As a teacher, Lesa embraces her students and works to build relationships with them. She also has high standards and expectations for them and their work. She pushes her students to work hard and perform well. I remember some assignments on which I did not do well, but, rather than being upset at her for giving me a low score, I learned from them and worked to improve. Being in her class means hard work, but great rewards in the future. Her students are well prepared for the AP Language and Composition test, as well as for college writing courses.

When Lesa was announced as Broken Arrow's District Teacher of the Year, I was not surprised to hear her name. I knew she would be Teacher of the Year. She absolutely deserves this recognition because she embodies the qualities and values that great teachers should possess. She is a tireless worker, and she holds herself to high standards. She works hard to find new and engaging activities for her students. As a department head, I know that she has the best interests of all the students on campus as a top priority. She cares about her colleagues and will not hesitate to do whatever she can to help all of us be successful.

One of my dreams has been to work with her, and I am incredibly honored to be able to say that I have accomplished that goal. She has taught me so much as a teacher, friend, and mentor. She is the gold standard.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss Lesa's qualifications, please feel free to contact me,

Elizabeth Rector
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