

# APPLICANT INFORMATION FORM

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Natalie Haworth

Name

10th - 12th grade

Current Grade Level(s) Taught

Honors Chemistry, AP Chemistry & Forensic Science

Current Subject(s) Taught

5

Years in Current Position

5.5

Total Years of Teaching Experience

Spanish

Languages Other than English Spoken Fluently

Areas of National Board Certification Achieved or In Progress:

## SCHOOL INFORMATION

Durant Independent School District

School District

Durant High School

School Name

922 students

School Size

3812 students

District Size

Rural

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)
Southeastern OK State University	Aug. 2012-Dec. 2015	B.S. in Science Education
Southeastern OK State University	Oct. 2018-Dec. 2019	M.Ed. in Professional Ed. Leadership

Durant High School	Durant	OK	74701
Name of High School Attended	City	State	ZIP Code

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

School District	Position Held	Dates
Durant Public Schools	10th-12th grade AP and Honors Science	Aug 2016-curr.
Mid-DeI Public Schools	7th Grade Science Teacher	Jan -May 2016

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

Membership	Position Held	Dates
OEA	Member	2016-current
NEA	Member	2016-current
OK Sci Teacher Assoc.	Member	2018-current

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

Title	Position Held	Dates
Science Dept. Head	Science Department Head	2019-current
Mentor Teacher	Serve as a mentor teacher for new hires	2017-current
Safe Schools Committee	Member	2018-current
Distance Learning Team	Member/Leader for our high school campus	current
Guiding Coalition	Member/Leader for our department (PLC organization)	2019-current
Observation Teacher	Observed by future educators from local university	2017-current
UCO NSF Grant Teacher	Mentor Teacher for UCO Forensic Camp	2019
Google Certified Ed.	Google Certified Educator	2020-current
Kahoot! Certified Ed.	Kahoot! Gold Certified Educator	2020-current

**AWARDS AND OTHER RECOGNITION OF TEACHING**

Title	Dates
Durant High School Teacher of the Year	2019-2020
Durant Public Schools District Teacher of the Year	2019-2020
February Learning First Teacher of the Month (from Senator David Bullard)	February 2020

## 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.**

I was in third grade in 2003 when the space shuttle crew on the Columbia mission with NASA were unfortunately killed upon their entrance back to Earth. My class had done an entire space unit before the shuttle's departure. My teacher, Mr. Brigman, taught us about what it meant to be an astronaut and how they did their training. He taught us about pressure, heat shields, and the effects of no gravity on the human body over time. He took our space unit, applied it to something that was happening at that moment in our world, and made it mean something to me. One day right before their initial departure, he even constructed a makeshift space shuttle complete with plastic walls and astronaut "ice cream" for us to eat.

On the day that the Columbia mission was supposed to return to Earth, I remember standing up at the back of the classroom, looking over my classmates' heads in order to see the tv that was mounted on the corner wall. We watched as the crew and shuttle that we had been so invested in burnt up, and knew that everything had gone terribly wrong. I had tears running down my face as I realized what had happened, and looked around at my classmates. We all were so connected to the crew, we felt like we knew them on a personal level. As I questioned the point of the time we had invested in the Columbia mission, Mr. Brigman turned the tv off and addressed our class. He looked at us over his glasses, and said, "Children, something very terrible has happened. But I want us to take this moment to recognize that not everything in science, or life, goes the way we want it to. Sometimes there are unknowns that we can't control, and we have to be able to decide to never give up. Scientists are always seeking to solve the problems they see before them. They are always asking questions and finding solutions. That is what we must all do, and we must decide that no matter how difficult things may get, to never give up."

I have never forgotten that moment. It was heartbreaking, but it changed my entire perspective of science. It was in that moment that I knew I wanted to be a part of the science world. I wanted to be able to look at things around me, ask questions, and solve problems. I wanted to be able to take something I learned in school, apply it to a real-world problem, and then move on to the next one.

When I was getting ready to graduate high school and begin college, I thought that the science world that I wanted to be a part of specifically was the medical field. It seemed to be the most logical choice. However, as I talked to some of my peers about their majors, I realized that many of them were pursuing degrees in the educational realm. My mind was quickly changed as I listened to them reminisce about their favorite teachers and who had inspired them to teach. As I did my own reminiscing and self-evaluating, I found myself asking why I was so drawn to science and why it was so important to me. I realized that every science teacher I had ever had in school had been my favorite teacher of that year. They were the reason I was so drawn to science, because they had each made whatever subject or content areas they covered mean something to me.

My former teachers are the influences that made me choose teaching as my career. They changed and shaped my life with their care, empathy, grace, intentionality, and consistency. On top of it all, they prepared me for my future by teaching me content knowledge, but also by modeling for me what it means to be a lifelong learner. When my classmates or I had questions that my teachers could not answer, instead of ignoring the question or moving on to something else, they researched with us and made it clear that not knowing everything is acceptable and normal.

I want to do the same things for my students that my teachers did for me. I want to be intentional and I want to be able to take scientific concepts and make it applicable to their world, while also teaching them life lessons and skills, whether they intend to pursue science in the future or not. In the process of making curriculum applicable to their lives, I also want to encourage them to extend learning beyond the classroom, so that they can have experiences even in their own homes or work places that promote asking questions and solving problems.

I believe that every student is worthy of having the chance to walk through the doors that a good education can provide for them. In addition to wanting to connect with my students and show them the world of science through a new lens, teaching is a calling that I have had placed on my life, and it is not a calling that I take lightly.

As a result of my intentionality with my relationships with my students, supporting them in whatever way I can, and the extra time that I put in with them through volunteering for school events, attending community events, sponsoring student council, FCA, and academic team, and offering extra study sessions, I would say that my students are my greatest contributions and accomplishments in education. They are my pride and joy. They are our future, and I could not be prouder of who they are. I have two students currently attending Ivy League Universities. I have other students who are in teacher education programs who reach out to me still for help on assignments. I have female students who are pursuing degrees in the field of science who will play a role in bridging the gender disparity of the STEM field. I have many other students who are serving in our military or who plan to serve, some who are raising families, and some who joined the workforce right after graduating. To me, they are all successful, and they all have the potential to change our world for the better. I am confident that I have done what I could to prepare them for whatever walk they have taken, and I will continue to cheer them on from the sidelines, just as my previous teachers still do for me.

## 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?

An outstanding and effective teacher has high expectations for their students, they ensure that learning is innovative and extends beyond the classroom, and they are inclusive and have cultural integrity. Additionally, an outstanding and effective teacher is empathetic and intentionally forms connections and relationships with their students, their parents, and the community. These teachers should have clearly communicated expectations for their students so that there are no questions about what is expected academically, behaviorally, and individually. Teaching and learning are the foundations of why schools were established, and they should still take the priority in all classrooms. Within the classroom, an outstanding teacher will create a classroom climate that is welcoming, inclusive, supportive, flexible, and full of grace.

Personally, I want every student that walks into my classroom, into my school, or any school for that matter, to know that they belong. When students have a reason to be at school, and when they feel that they belong, I believe teaching is more effective. The barriers of emotional and social needs must be overcome in order for students to be able to make progress academically. I also believe that every student is deserving of grace, because none of us are perfect. I cannot expect them to be perfect all of the time in their effort, behavior, preparedness, attitudes, or anything else when I myself am not perfect in those areas every day. My personal teaching style is embodied in the descriptions above. I am aware that students sometimes need extra grace, but they also need structure, discipline, and to know what is expected of them. The best way that I think I can convey my personal teaching style is to share what happened the first day of school this year in my classroom.

My community suffered the loss of four of our current students and the loss of a student who had recently graduated all within the span of two months. Each of the students we lost were involved in accidents beyond their control, and our community has been deeply affected. As I have been working through my own grief and feelings this summer, I had to prepare myself mentally and emotionally for what I was going to walk into on the first day of school. Not only would my students be back in a classroom without their friends, but they would be back in my classroom for the first time in many months. I knew their feelings would be all over the place, and that in order to communicate anything effectively concerning the school year or academics, I needed to address the loss and our feelings first. I also knew that I needed to show them grace and that I needed to be prepared to not only be their teacher in that moment, but also their counselor, confidant, and whatever else they needed. I had seen some of my students at the funerals and at some church counseling events during the summer, but no matter how much I had tried to prepare myself, I was not prepared for what I walked in to.

As I closed the door and turned around, I could hear the cries of my students. I expected it, but when I turned and saw that some of my big, strong, varsity football players were crying, I broke down. I sat at my desk, waited a moment, and then I addressed my class. I explained to them that it was okay to be upset, it was okay to cry, and that some days were going to be harder than others. I also told them that my expectation of them in any moment was that they were kind to each other, and that as a school family, we were going to support and love one another. It was not an easy conversation to have, and I know that all of the obstacles are not overcome yet and that the pain will never fully go away, but that moment was vital. I needed to address the obstacle. I needed to allow my students the space they needed to deal with that obstacle because it was in the way of everything academic. If I had not allowed that moment to occur and had not facilitated the conversation, then I would have been met with resistance from my students. They were not ready to learn, and they needed that problem to be acknowledged and partially resolved, which is what I attempted to do. Additionally, if I had not already put in the work to create a classroom climate where that kind of conversation could occur, then my students may not have had the appropriate opportunity to grieve and deal with how they were feeling. An outstanding and effective teacher would do the same thing that I did with my students. They can discern what is necessary to address and resolve in order to make sure that their teaching of content is effective.

The rewards I find in teaching are abundant, but the rewards I love the most are mostly found in the smaller moments. I love seeing the light bulb click the first time one of my students finally understands how to do a stoichiometry problem. I love hearing the student that hates their math class tell me that the math required in chemistry makes sense to them. I also love when I have a student rush in to class just to tell me a chemistry joke they found on the internet, or to tell me that they finally passed their driver's license test. My favorite thing of all is when a student comes to school and tells me that they read something interesting online and they have more questions about a concept we have covered in class. This often occurs after we talk about radioactivity or electrons, but it is my favorite thing. In those moments when a student comes to me and has researched and tried to problem solve on their own, outside of the classroom, I know and am reassured that I am teaching effectively. In a sense, my students in those moments have become a scientist all on their own by extending their learning beyond the classroom and trying to find answers to their questions.

## 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.

I believe that the significant teacher exodus from the state of Oklahoma is one of the most pressing issues in education today. Some of the more obvious causes for the teacher exodus is the lack of funding, resources, and support for teachers in Oklahoma. In the last few years, I have been able to watch some progress be made towards decreasing the amount of teachers leaving the state and the profession, but there is still work to be done. I have watched teachers ask for more pay and funding with the teacher walkout a couple of years ago, and I know that there are more conversations being had across the state about what changes could be made to keep teachers here. All of those steps are important and significant, but we have a long way to go with improvements. Some examples of resolutions to decrease the numbers of teachers leaving would be to increase teacher pay, implement more mentorship programs, and to help bridge the gaps where resources are lacking in classrooms in school districts state wide. If resource funding and teacher pay raise funding cannot be resolved at the state level, I think it is a great opportunity for community members and other stakeholders to step up and support schools and teachers. Not only could community members and stakeholders offer help in locating and providing resources, but they could offer teacher incentives locally.

I began my teaching career in a middle school where the previous certified teacher had left early during the school year and they did not have a consistent teacher in the classroom. It took me being there about six weeks for my students to realize that I was not going to leave or give up on them. No matter how difficult they were, or their lack of motivation or content knowledge, I was there to stay. The room itself had essentially nothing as far as lab supplies are concerned. As a science teacher, I know the power that lab experiments can have in the science classroom. After talking with my students, it became apparent that they had never really had hopes of doing a real lab experiment, and they did not believe that they were capable of doing so. I went to the store that night and bought supplies for us to perform a strawberry DNA extraction lab with my own money. When I got to the checkout, I found myself overwhelmed by the effort and money it was taking for me to provide one simple experience for my students, and I understood why so many teachers quit early on. It can be exhausting to work day in and day out and feel that you have little to no support. A fix for the lack of resources available would be to adjust funding for schools, and establish a system where schools could exchange or request resources as needed.

In Bryan County where I currently teach and live, there are significant resource availability discrepancies between the resources I have available at my school and the resources that are available at the smaller county schools surrounding Durant. Despite these discrepancies, every student that chooses to attend our local university is expected to have the same skills and knowledge regardless of what school they attended. I watched as some of my peers in my undergrad experiences were less prepared or more prepared than I was for the course we were taking, depending on the situation. However, it was clear that there were many times that none of us were truly prepared like we should have been.



I believe that if resource availability was more consistent for all schools, we would see less gaps in academic performance, college entrance and graduation, less teachers would leave, and there would be more positive relationships between communities, parents, students, schools, and teachers. Taking that one frustration away could make a huge difference.

Another public education issue that is going to become a bigger issue is the threat that integrating more technology and digital tools will negatively affect teacher and student communication and relationships. As someone who intentionally seeks to connect with students on a daily basis, I have already been able to tell that the use of more technology this school year has affected my initial connections with my students, and I am worried that as we move forward it will only get worse.

Technology and digital tools are essential in our digital age. They can help with providing instruction of content, new experiences like virtual tours, can reiterate concepts taught in the classroom. However, my concern is that the additional use of those tools and virtual learning will serve to negatively impact the individuality of students. Teachers need students and students need their teachers. They need that guide and that cheerleader, and they cannot get that from a digital device as much as they can from a teacher that is with them every day and tries to meet them where they are at on an individual level.

To address this problem personally, I have found that I have had to intentionally connect with students, from a distance, through the technology components. For example, my students completed a virtual "All About Me" with more specific questions that I would normally ask them in their lab groups or on a one-to-one basis. Some of these questions were about their learning styles, their goals after high school, their family/siblings, what they are most afraid of, and what they would do if they had one thousand dollars to spend. I took the time to read through every response the night I got home from the first day of school, and I took notes on their answers. Many of my students really opened up to some of the questions, which allowed me to get to know them quicker on a personal level, despite the barriers of technology, distance learning, and social distancing. I was surprised at some of their answers, and heartbroken at others, but it served as an effective tool to help me walk into my classroom on the second day and to be able to connect with them even more by asking additional questions while also teaching.

In order to prevent the loss of individuality as a result of the increase of digital tools and virtual learning, I think the best course of action is to begin having conversations now. Communication and recognition about potential or current problems will help in reducing the effect of those problems in the future, including this one. These conversations can even be as simple as facilitating times for teachers to collaborate about how they are intentionally forming connections with their students, and allowing them to share ideas about how to do so more effectively as the school year goes on. Additional training could be put together about being intentional through digital tools, but I think that sometimes the best training comes from allowing teachers to collaborate and problem solve.

## 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?

First and foremost, my goal as an educator is to always try to be as positive and as kind as I possibly can be, which I think strengthens and improves the teaching profession. Positivity and kindness are lacking sometimes in the teaching profession, and so I make it my goal each day to put those at the top of my list, especially when I am in contact with or working alongside my colleagues.

In an effort to strengthen and improve the teaching profession, you can also find me investing in and mentoring new teachers in my district, investing in and mentoring future teachers from our local university, actively participating in professional development, other online trainings, collaboration groups with other AP teachers, and sharing my technology skills with my colleagues at my campus. I try to be always anticipating what my classroom or our campus might need next as far as climate, events, technology help, or faculty needs. As a result of that anticipation, this last summer and spring during the closures due to COVID, I worked on and received my Google Educator Certification and my Kahoot! Gold certification. My school utilizes one-to-one devices and the devices that most of our students and teachers use are chromebooks, so I knew that with the move towards a more digital learning environment, it would be beneficial not only to myself but to my campus and potentially district to work towards those certifications. Both this school year and in previous years I have presented new methodology to our faculty and have offered extra technology help as needed. I have even recorded myself and sent the video out explaining how to use a new tool to our staff that was also used at our middle school campus.

Another goal I have as an educator is also to serve my colleagues well and to help wherever I can, even if that means I am stuck fixing the always broken or jammed copier. I volunteer to help with events and activities that I am not required to help with like our prom and working our Miss DHS pageant. I try to offer more effective ways to do things to support my administration team, when my help is asked for or welcomed. I have helped my colleagues translate assignments and conversations into Spanish to help meet the needs of our English-Language Learners. Last year, I organized our "encore" (study hall) student requests in a Google form and a Google sheet and sent it to our faculty each day so that we could effectively request students who needed extra help in class, needed to see a principal or a counselor, or who needed to meet with their organization sponsor. The use of this technology reduced the need for phone calls and extra emails, and gave our administrative team access to know where students were if they were not in their original teacher's classroom.

An aspect of teaching that is very important to me is cultural integrity and the reduction of bias in teaching. I have traveled to Peru, Mexico, Canada, Jordan, Syria, and had planned on traveling to Uganda this summer. These trips all were under the umbrella of "mission" trips with the organization that I travel with, however, traveling to several other countries, teaching at a school that was predominantly African-American in Mid-Del Schools, and traveling to almost all of the 50 states in the

United States has allowed me to see different cultures, races, and norms.

The place that I have traveled to that has affected my teaching the most was my most recent trip to Jordan and Syria where I helped teach Syrian refugees in the refugee camps and in their homes. In the Middle East, education is highly valued and is seen as the gateway to a new and better future. We helped teach and take care of students, even though their worlds had been turned completely upside down. Even in the chaos of war, famine, and being on the brink of a humanitarian crisis, the teachers there were doing whatever they could to provide some consistency and care for their students. Although our situations are different, I can relate to those teachers even more now in the midst of adjustments and changes while also trying to teach during the chaos we are all living in now.

One day when I was helping teach students science in the refugee camp, I met a girl who I connected with almost immediately. In Syria, she was the equivalent in her schooling to what we consider a college freshman. She had continued her schooling and had passed the necessary tests to be able to travel to the United States to pursue a medical degree so that she could become a surgeon. The girl and I talked for hours. She talked to me about her religious beliefs, but also about how she truly saw education as the best option for her. She wanted to overcome the societal barriers that had been put on her as a woman in the Middle East, but she also wanted to feel successful. She wanted to move to America, experience all of the freedoms, and be able to send monetary support to her family at home all while saving people's lives. I remember being enthralled by her passion and desire to pursue her education, and I was reminded of the fire I wanted to see and kindle in my own students for their educational goals as well.

Although these trips were technically mission trips, on all of them we utilized schools and teaching as the main way to connect with people. Even in the United States, schools are the main way to connect with others and to form relationships. These trips allow me to reduce bias in my teaching and have helped prepare me for conversations with my students and my colleagues where I could promote cultural integrity, which helps strengthen the teaching profession.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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

The Durant community is where I grew up, went to college, received both my Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and is where I currently live and have worked for the last five years. My favorite thing to do is to serve the community that has given me so much throughout my life. Some events that I have helped with for many years in my community are: a 5K that raises money to put AEDs in our local schools, Main Street clean up days, local elementary school carnivals that serve as fundraisers for the elementary schools, food drives that benefit our local, regional, and state food banks, food distribution through a local program that gives free food to families in need, "survival" bags with supplies for those who are in our homeless population, and nursing home visits to those who do not have local family members.

The last few years I have gotten to be a part of several special projects as a result of my involvement on both a paid and unpaid level with our Student Council. I have helped fundraise for our local Boys' and Girls' Club, helped raise funds to put handicapped play equipment in our parks, and I have helped fundraise to support a local ministry that helps girls who are in foster care that age out of the system. Currently, our Student Council is working on collaborating with green teams at all of our campuses in our district to horizontally align our goals at each school to help reduce waste and to help take better care of the environment. This has required my role both as the Student Council Advisor and as the Science Department Head to collaborate and organize with students and to make sure that the logistics and the science are right for the projects. Additionally, we are creating a virtual Acts of Kindness campaign that will encourage students, teachers and faculty, and our community to do random acts of kindness. After someone is on the receiving end of an act of kindness, they will be asked to report it anonymously to us so that we can post about it and thank the original individual who chose to serve someone else. I have also been a part of organizing and planning our community wide homecoming events, including our homecoming parade. Planning the community homecoming events required me to work with our local university representatives and helped to improve our relationship as a Student Council with the university.

This past spring, I helped my administrative team plan, communicate, organize, and execute a cap and gown parade and a graduation parade through our town that honored our seniors since we had to close due to COVID. I also helped distribute meals to students while we were closed during the initial COVID closure. The events with my community have helped to create and strengthen relationships within our campuses, our district, and our community, and will help promote positivity in our town.

Activities that I have been involved with on behalf of my local church include rebuilding and updating widows' homes that are in need, painting at the Boys' and Girls' Club, cleaning our local school outdoor campuses during school breaks, and I have participated in fundraisers that benefitted local foster care families.

## **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?**

As teachers, we are used to having to overcome obstacles, and if the year of 2020 has taught us anything it is that we are overcomers-but we already knew that. We can adapt, change, and provide for our students with little to no notice, and we are willing to do so. Although sometimes those changes and obstacles may seem unbearable, hopeless, and unfair, our students are worth it. They are worth the long days, the tears, the frustrations, and the heartache.

I truly believe that every student who walks in any classroom door in the state of Oklahoma deserves a quality education with a viable curriculum, and to know that their teacher cares about them and loves them. They deserve to be in a classroom with a teacher who is certified, who wants to be there, and who is capable of teaching the curriculum in a way that is exciting, innovating, and meaningful. I believe that our students deserve the best from me, regardless of what I get paid or how little my actions may be acknowledged. They are worth it.

The first few years of teaching have proved to be difficult at times, and I know that the difficulties and obstacles do not go away with more experience. It can be hard to stay motivated to give my best to my students every day. On the days when I get to school and have only slept two hours total because I was up all night working, worrying about a student, or taking care of something else, I remind myself of why I became a teacher. I remember the impact my educational experience has had on me, and I remind myself of the teachers who helped shape who I am now. I also remind myself of my students I have already had. I remember one of my students who, when he was a sophomore, got in trouble and was suspended. He came back his junior year and I helped him apply for college, and now he is in college classes and working two jobs to support himself. He was worth it.

I think that every teacher has at least one student like that. They have someone that they can look back on and think, "Yes, they were worth it." But the catch is, every student is worth it. It does not matter if you teach in a rural school or an inner city school. Every student, regardless of their background, race, culture, resources, parental involvement, and motivation level deserves a teacher who will push them beyond what they think they are capable of. Our students deserve a solid foundation that will prepare them for whatever walk they take in life. They deserve you, Oklahoma teachers. So stay in Oklahoma. Stay for your students, because they are our future and because they deserve it.

As the public, we need to do what it takes to keep teachers here. Immediately, that means increasing teacher pay, increasing resources available to all schools, regardless of location, and it means forming better community-school partnerships so that teachers feel more supported and so that our students have what they need to be successful. Let's decide as a whole that only being the best at education is what is good enough for Oklahoma, and let's decide to settle for nothing less. Let's put aside opinions and arguments and resolve to support teachers and education more. Our students and our teachers deserve it.

## SHARE A LESSON

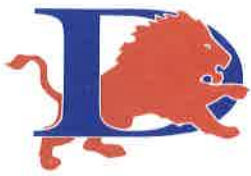
Describe a lesson or unit that defines you as a teacher. How did you engage all students in the learning, and how did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson or unit?

In February each year I teach my Kinetics and Equilibrium unit to my AP Chemistry students. I start the unit by showing a clip from the tv show, I Love Lucy. In the clip, Lucy is working at a chocolate factory, and as the time goes by, the conveyor belt moves faster and faster with the chocolates. Eventually the clip ends with Lucy completely overwhelmed and ineffective at her job. I use this clip to connect the concepts of Kinetics and Equilibrium to each other. Kinetics focuses on the rates of reactions and the factors that affect them, while Equilibrium focuses on what chemical reactions need to do, go through, or adjust to in response to stresses that affect their equilibrium. As soon as the clip is over, I ask my students what made Lucy react the way she did, how it affected the speed of her reaction to the chocolates, and how it affected her "equilibrium."

Then, we talk about how they react when something unexpected happens. I ask every student to tell me something that affects them, whether it is positive or negative, so that they are all engaged and invested. I use examples like getting a flat tire on the way to school, not making the varsity football team, a relationship ending, or not getting in to their first pick for college. Every year, I am surprised at my students' transparency during these conversations. They know how it feels to be stressed and to have to react to something unexpected. I remind them how important it is to be aware of how they are feeling, how much stress they are under, and how important it is to self-evaluate. We take a concept like Equilibrium and relate it to their stress and then I am able to remind my students that they need to take care of themselves. Then, I relate what happens on a chemical level when a reaction is "stressed" and experiences an obstacle to the reaction completing its goal.

After I lay the foundation for the unit with those conversations and some review of the chemistry and math required to be successful in the unit, we do a cross-curricular lab with my AP Biology students. My AP Chemistry students work on and calculate different amounts of "acid rain" to unexpectedly put on some plants that my AP Biology students have been taking care of for the entire school year. This results in unexpected stresses for my AP Biology students but also for their plants. They typically take 2-3 days before they decide that they should test the pH of their soil and then they can recognize that an unseen and outside source has affected their plants. I have the same conversations with my AP Biology students, who are typically seniors and are typically under significantly more stress than my AP Chemistry students.

With this one unit, I am able to take a concept, make it cross-curricular, still teach the science, but also make it relatable to my students and their lives. This is what I try to do with everything that I teach, and this example embodies what I believe about teaching. Teaching should provide students with academic knowledge, but it should also be relatable and applicable. Although my students may not always enjoy calculating long equilibrium or kinetics problems, and they definitely do not enjoy their plants' lives being threatened, they almost always excel at this point in the year, because what they are learning and what they are going through in their personal lives are so intertwined. It makes the small stresses on chemical reactions or on a biological level mean more when they know how they feel on a bigger level when they are going through something stressful or unexpected.



Dear Selection Committee,

Please accept my most enthusiastic and heartfelt recommendation for Natalie Haworth for Oklahoma Teacher of the Year. As a teacher in the building when she was a student, a parent of one of her former students, and a current colleague (I am the District Special Education Director), I have a unique perspective in identifying the key characteristics that make Natalie Haworth stand out among the rest of the candidates.

As some of the more "seasoned" educators look back on our careers, we tend to focus on the realization that education is all about relationships. Ms. Haworth came into the profession with a keen understanding and practical application of building relationships with students. From day one, she seemed to have a God-given gift at reaching students on an individual basis. Many teachers have sought professional development and advice on how to reach "unreachable" students. With Ms. Haworth, relationships with students have an "organic" feel rather than forced or artificial. Because of connections built with students, her students have achieved unprecedented results.

Using the foundation of the positive relationships, Ms. Haworth challenges her students with some of the most difficult coursework. She herself is an example to the students in confronting demanding circumstances by volunteering to teach AP science curriculum early in her career. Her students are aware of the many hours she has spent outside the school year honing her craft and expanding her teaching strategies, all for their benefit in the classroom. She is constantly seeking ways to reach that one student who doesn't understand a particular concept. Multiple teaching methods are used daily in order to reach all students.

As exceptional as Ms. Haworth is in the classroom, her influence doesn't end there. After school hours and on weekends, you can find her with students attempting to improve the high school experience. Ms. Haworth serves as Student Council sponsor where her emphasis, again, is reaching all students. She tirelessly leads to create innovative opportunities for students in the areas of community service and social growth. She volunteers as a member of the Safe Schools committee tasked with refining the school environment for the optimal school setting. Although many of her duties are public, some of her most meaningful contributions are behind-the-scenes when she just takes on the tasks that need to get done in order for a school to function efficiently. She willingly volunteers for the menial, less esteemed duties. She even gives her summers to mission trips, broadening her range of impact. This lady does it all!

Although Ms. Haworth presents with a highly impressive resume especially for someone so early in her career, her most significant contributions will not be found under "Education", "Work Experience" or any other commonly touted area. She truly exemplifies what a Teacher of the Year should be, she teaches with her heart. She knows each student individually and truly wants what is best for them even at the expense of her comfort or convenience. When students are listing their most influential teacher, it is common for Ms. Haworth's name to be called time and time again. Students notice the little things that make her so special to them. I will tell you all those little things add up to very big things. The students notice, the parents notice, the colleagues notice, the community notices and, in Ms. Haworth's case, people in other countries around the world notice. She is truly remarkable and is absolutely worthy of being named Oklahoma's Teacher of the Year.

Sincerely,



Lori McCoy

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for Ms. Haworth. Ms. Haworth plays an integral role at Durant High School. She is both the Honors and Advanced Placement Science teacher, the senior sponsor for Durant High School Student Council, and the Chair of the Science Department. She is hardworking and dedicated not only to her craft, but also to improving the lives of all students at Durant High School.

Ms. Haworth is without a doubt the greatest teacher I have ever had. Ms. Haworth is the ideal teacher and she possesses all the qualities that students look for in a teacher. She is kind, caring, and understanding. Most importantly, she loves and enjoys her job. Her love for teaching is almost palpable and we as students can feel it. There were times when I was not overly enthusiastic about a concept that we were going over, but her passion for science made it hard for me to not be invested in what we were learning. When Ms. Haworth is teaching, there is a fire in her eyes that captivates the attention and minds of her students. When she is talking about something, whether it be chromosomes, kinetics, or ecology, she makes me want to learn about it. There has never been a moment where I felt afraid to approach Ms. Haworth about anything, be it academic or personal. If I was struggling with a problem, Ms. Haworth would always walk me through how to do it, simultaneously breaking it down and explaining it to me so that I would understand it for myself. If I had a personal issue and needed someone to talk to, she was an attentive and non-judgemental confidant and advisor. I knew that whatever problem I had, Ms. Haworth would genuinely listen to me and offer sound advice.

Ms. Haworth's impact on students extends beyond the classroom. As the senior advisor for Durant Student Council, she plays an active role in teaching the leaders of Durant High School. Under her leadership, we as a council have planned and hosted several dances which raise money for our community events. We have coordinated with other groups within Durant High School—such as Key Club and HOSA— and with the Durant Independent School District; the student council has worked events for the local elementary school such as carnival nights and other special events. This year we also worked with our local college, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, to plan the homecoming events for the city of Durant. She inspires our council to give back to the local community and to be leaders for the future generations of Durant students. Ms. Haworth allows us a degree of freedom when deciding upon and planning the events that student council does, but she is always there as a guiding hand just in case we ever lose focus. Under Ms. Haworth, DHS Student Council has doubled in size and has developed a true passion for service.

Ms. Haworth exemplifies what it means to be a lion. She has outstanding character, a strong moral compass, and a heart for service. Her presence is something that everyone in the city of Durant can feel. She inspires a desire for greatness in those around her and is one of my personal role models. I can honestly say that having Ms. Haworth as a teacher has made me a better student and an even better person. It was an honor and a privilege to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Haworth.

Respectfully,



Isaiah Wright  
Durant High School Class of 2020  
Yale University Class of 2024



# Durant High School

950 Gerlach Drive  
Durant, Oklahoma 74701  
(580) 924-4424 • Fax (580) 916-7041

August 25, 2020

Teacher of the Year Selection Committee:

I have worked with Natalie Haworth for the past five and one-half years. Also, she is a graduate of Durant High School and attended school while I served as her administrator. It has been a pleasure to watch her grow into a wonderful teacher with a heart and a commitment for our students and our school. She is constantly making a self-evaluation of her personal teaching style and looking for ways to teach each student. She sacrifices personal time during summer months to attend professional development to make certain she provides students with the most current curriculum and effective instructional strategies. Ms. Haworth teaches with a passion that is contagious and inspiring for her students. She was the first teacher in our building to incorporate the "Escape Room" scenario into her lesson plans. Every student is engaged and learning without the traditional sit in a row and recite the answers. They are applying the information learned in a creative way and are then able to analyze the data created to enhance their own learning. AP students participate in virtual lab activities and research current events in science to apply the curriculum to real world scenarios created by Ms. Haworth. Ms. Haworth is a huge part of improving our school climate and culture.

As the Student Council Advisor, Ms. Haworth works with students to find ways to create school wide School Pride and Spirit. Because of the rapport she is able to establish with students, the student section at school events is very large. Students work together to find ways to incorporate school spirit in our halls, classrooms, and school events. She helps students to grow and exceed beyond their own expectations. This type of successful endeavor can only happen with teachers such as Ms. Haworth who work selflessly for the benefit of our students. Because of her commitment to education, our students are afforded many opportunities to learn, develop, and achieve much more in and out of the classroom during and after their high school education.

I have developed a deep respect for Ms. Haworth as a teacher and as a trusted colleague. Additionally, I have grown to rely on her to assist in every aspect of our student life at Durant High School. It gives me great pleasure to say that she is most qualified for the Oklahoma State Teacher of the Year for her efforts in helping our students to not only learn but achieve great success in school in spite of the many obstacles they may face. Every DHS student knows that Ms. Haworth cares for them as a person as well as a student. They are important to her. Her efforts have made a remarkable difference in the lives of many, many students and I have no doubt she will continue to do so.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Conditt  
Principal



*Durant High School is committed to providing a learning community that challenges ALL students to realize their greatest potential.*