

Donna McEnery

Rio Vista Elementary School

2012 Rodel Exemplary Teacher Finalist

Bragging rights

“ My greatest source of pride is my students. When I look at each one, I envision them 20 years from now graduating from college and accomplishing great things with their lives. I see their potential. Many of these children deal with such difficult issues on a daily basis, issues far beyond their years. But they deal with it, get through it and come to school ready to learn. Even at this young age, many see the value of education. They see what college can do for them and how it can change their lives. And when they need help along the way, that’s my job. I steer them in the right direction, cheer them along the way and mentor them. They are remarkable children with remarkable abilities.

Engaging students

“ Allowing students to learn using multiple intelligences is key. Hands-on learning is an important component. Having students clap every time they hear a noun and stomp their feet when they hear a verb increases engagement and retention. Science naturally lends itself to experiments and hands-on learning. Making ecosystems lends itself to all kinds of questions and connections in a student’s mind. Creating new characters, such as Dr. Stitch-Em-Up when teaching contractions or Ms. Zeep (from another planet who needs to be taught math concepts from students) adds imagination and engagement in the classroom.

A tip for new teachers

“ Be passionate in what you do. Get to know each of your students and take a real interest in who they are and what they bring to the classroom. When you see each child as an individual and not just a name, a connection is made. It is a two-way connection. It breaks down many barriers and helps you understand each child’s life in and out of school. It also shows the student that you have a real interest in him/her. It helps you understand behaviors and attitudes and helps keep you from making assumptions based on your own set of values and beliefs.

Collaborating for student success

“ I’m a firm believer in the statement “two heads are better than one.” I’m very fortunate to work in a school and a grade level that firmly believes in collaboration. In addition, I am a member of many groups who meet on a regular basis to share ideas. I’ve also attended other schools to watch how they implement reading and math. From this we have incorporated many different activities and centers using best practices. It’s a win-win situation.

The 2012 Rodel Exemplary Teachers will be announced on November 27 at www.rodelaz.org.



Donna McEnery
Rio Vista Elementary School

Amphitheater Public Schools

Third Grade

Experience: 25 years in corporate education as a software trainer and a training manager; seven years in elementary education including three years as a first-grade teacher, one year as a second-grade teacher and three years as a third-grade teacher

Degrees: A.S. in Computer Science from New England Institute of Technology; B.S. in Business from the University of Rhode Island; M.A. in Education from the University of Phoenix; ESL Full Endorsement; Early Childhood Endorsement

The Rodel Exemplary Teacher Initiative honors extraordinary teachers and asks that they each mentor six high-potential student teachers.

What sets the program apart from typical student teaching programs is that mentor teachers are selected based on their outstanding student achievement in high-poverty schools, their ability to mentor new teachers, and the recommendation of their principals and Rodel’s observation team. This ensures that student teachers are learning from the best. In addition, Rodel provides further training and support to both mentors and student teachers to assure Promising Student Teacher Graduates start their careers as outstanding educators.

Since 2004, 119 Rodel Exemplary Teachers have been named and more than 500 Rodel Promising Student Teachers have been mentored.