

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

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OMAHA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER NAMED NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Luisa Palomo, a Liberty Elementary School teacher in Omaha, was named Nebraska Teacher of the Year today during a surprise presentation in her classroom.

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Roger Breed presented the award to Palomo.

Palomo was one of five Nebraska Teacher of the Year finalists.

The following teachers were finalists and will be recognized as Awards of Excellence winners:

- Thomas Michalek of Morton Elementary School in Hastings.
- Michael Musil of North Star High School in Lincoln.
- Diane Stauffer of Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School in Omaha.
- Karen Wolken of Johnson-Brock Public Schools in Johnson.

Palomo has been a kindergarten teacher at Liberty Elementary School since 2004. She said she works to go above and beyond teaching the traditional curriculum to make certain that the “whole child” is supported as well as their families. Palomo said her interactions with her students and their families are the strongest motivators to continue as a classroom teacher. “I think that my greatest contributions and accomplishments in education are my relationships with others,” Palomo wrote in her application. Recruiting and retaining highly-qualified teachers and holding students and teachers accountable for learning are important educational issues as well as using data to guide classroom instruction and parental involvement.

“Strong parental involvement is one issue that is of extreme importance to student learning,” Palomo wrote. “With teachers, families and children working together for student success, our students are limitless in their potential.”

Donna Dobson, director of elementary education for Omaha Public Schools, described Palomo as “the epitome of the ideal teacher. Ms. Palomo truly loves her students, cares about their families and the learning is active, engaging and with joy.

“There is true joy in her classroom, and I think that is what must be seen to be understood. Ms. Palomo teaches in a high poverty school with a very high percentage of students who are learning English as their second language. Every single child feels the care from Ms. Palomo, and they become a very close group of students,” Dobson wrote, noting that her students’ families include her in their lives, seek her advice and invite her to family events.

Another colleague, Cecilia Di Masi, said: “Luisa Palomo is a gift to teaching.” Di Masi said Palomo is selfless and goes the extra mile for everyone at Liberty Elementary School.

Palomo received a Bachelor’s Degree in elementary education from Creighton University and a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She holds a teaching endorsement from Concordia University in English as a Second Language. She received the Alice Buffet Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2010.

A panel of Nebraska educators selected Palomo as the 2012 Nebraska Teacher of the Year. The Teacher of the Year program recognizes the contributions of classroom teachers who are exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled and teachers who have the ability to inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn.

Palomo and other Awards of Excellence winners will be honored by the State Board of Education at a luncheon on Nov. 8 at the Nebraska State Education Association in Lincoln. Palomo will participate in the national Teacher of the Year competition later this year.