

I was quite surprised and flattered to be chosen by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade team. And I had no idea how stressful it can be to analyze your coworkers and make this very important decision. I feel like I have a huge responsibility. It took me over a week to decide who the next recipient of the High Flyer Award should be. I studied the criteria and thought long and hard because we have so many great teachers at Brier Creek. To me, a High Flyer is someone who always thinks about their student's needs first, is friendly and approachable, helpful and encouraging, flexible, and always learning. In addition to all of those qualities, a High Flyer also needs to use data regularly, have a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding and incorporate technology in the classroom, and be a leader in the school. I ended up selecting someone who may slip under the radar. In fact, she has been teaching here for years, and has never been a recipient of the High Flyer.

We have an, all too often, thankless job. We often come in early, stay late, work from home, and on the weekends. This High Flyer does all of those regularly. She is often one of the first cars in the parking lot and one of the last to leave. She always brings work home and spends time on Pinterest gathering ideas. She's here every Sunday working in her room and preparing lesson materials for her students.

All great teachers are life-long learners. When there is something this teacher doesn't know, she makes the effort to learn it. She was eager to learn Mclass and even discovered useful tools in the system and shared with the staff. She has worked toward National Board Certification and has about 1 more month before getting her results. (fingers crossed)

Data should always be the main focus in any decisions a teacher makes for their classroom. This teacher analyzes her own data and helps her team analyze their grade level data. She spends hours looking for ways to support her struggling students. She uses this data to implement strategic interventions in her classroom. She guides her team to use data to plan for flexible grouping.

She develops relationships with all the children in her classroom and their families. This teacher invites parents and community members into her classroom to volunteer in various ways. She reaches out to parents when she is in need, and they support her anyway they can. This teacher is a Girls on the Run Coach. She is a positive role model for many young girls at our school. She talks with the girls about self esteem and having a positive self image as well as instilling in them positive character traits.

Like many of us, this teacher uses technology every day. She is often discovering and sharing new technology with all of us. If you need help using technology of any kind, she's your girl. If you need an app for that, she knows it. She is a member of the technology committee and regularly attends meetings and makes technology decisions for our school. Putting technology in the hands of students is one thing, but this teacher takes it to the next level. Her students aren't just playing games or apps, they are using iPads to create projects, Discovery Education to research and supplement their own learning, and Edmodo to communicate with each other about their learning.

This teacher is a leader in many ways. She is the first person many people go to when they need help or have a question. The night before report cards were due, she was up late on the phone with me and others helping to finalize. Mid-year she has picked up the responsibility of being the grade-level-chair-back-up. She is a member of the Teacher Leader Corps. But not only that, she is the only one of us who volunteered for the job. When one of the original DEN members decided to leave Brier Creek, she saw the void before anyone even realized it was there and volunteered to fill it.

This teacher may possibly be the messiest in the school, but she makes sure the students are her number one priority. She is the reason I am at Brier Creek. She is a good friend of mine, but I made this decision with professional judgment and I am recognizing her today as a coworker. Caitlin McCommons, I hope you know that you are an asset to this school and you are greatly appreciated.