



The School District of Osceola County, FL
Dr. Michael A. Grego, Superintendent

Press Release

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Holly Plaza Named Osceola School District's 2012 Teacher of the Year



In recognition of the creative ways she expands her students' learning and for her engaging leadership style, Holly Plaza, a teacher for gifted and talented students in Grade 4 at Mill Creek Elementary, was named as Osceola School District's 2012 Gaylord Palms Teacher of the Year at an awards ceremony on March 31, 2011, hosted by the Education Foundation - Osceola.

"As a teacher, my role is constantly changing in response to the situation, but what remains unwavering is the love and dedication to the students I am blessed to teach," said Ms. Plaza.

In her six years as a teacher, Ms. Plaza has taught both exceptional education and academically-advanced students, striving to make learning exciting and engaging for her students. By incorporating hands-on activities and "how to" lessons, she utilizes differentiated instruction in cleverly-designed independent learning stations. Students are able to explore content area academics on their own with positive reinforcement, which ensures the dignity of her students and provides a boost of self-esteem.

"I teach because I love being the first person to introduce children to books they may have never read on their own. I love that I can make even the biggest boy cry at the end of Where the Red Fern Grows, fall in love with a china rabbit in the Miraculous

Journey of Edward Tulane, and learn tolerance in Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. I love it when a reluctant reader suddenly changes into a ravenous reader because of my book suggestions. In short, whether I'm working with exceptional needs students, children who don't speak English as their first language, advanced readers, or all those in between, I love hearing students discuss books, laugh at their favorite parts, and beg me to let them read for 'just five more minutes, please,'" said Ms. Plaza.

She also extends her influence as an educator to the parents, the community, and her colleagues. She has an "open door" policy for her parents and encourages their participation in their child's education. As a result, she has their support as the children progress throughout the year. Not only does Ms. Plaza shine in the classroom, she sparkles in the many activities she has taken on to benefit the overall student body at the school. She is an active member of the School Advisory Council, the PTO, and the Spirit after-school program. She volunteers for numerous PTO schoolwide events from the Harvest Festival and Math Nights to FCAT information programs. She is the fourth grade chairperson whom fellow educators look to for input and guidance. She continually leads by example, whether in her prompt attention turning in lesson plans, volunteering for fundraising activities, or providing a safe and secure environment for students.

"Ms. Plaza has distinguished herself as one of our most dependable and dedicated teachers, having both a wonderful command of all facets of the curriculum as well as the gift to know how to present them successfully to any student, regardless of ability," said Superintendent Dr. Michael A. Grego. "Anyone who has the privilege of seeing her in action in the classroom can immediately tell that she loves teaching and that the progress and total well-being of her students are foremost on her mind."

Ms Plaza will now represent Osceola County at the state level in Florida Department of Education Macy's 2012 Teacher of the Year judging.

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