

Teacher of the Year Recommendation for Ms. Melissa Sand

*Nominational
by Liz Miller*

I have had the pleasure of working with Melissa Sand over the past five years, but working most closely with her during the past year and a half. During this time Melissa and I formed a close relationship through our work and discussions, specifically regarding leadership at Princeton High School. Melissa's knowledge of her content area and ability to lead the discussion around elective classes is innate.

However, more than her ability to own her content and think about the supports for elective classes, Melissa has a natural and powerful ability to think about the big picture. She is able to reason why and how the elective classes fit with the core subject areas as well as able to think interdisciplinary and bring in other core content areas into her classroom to make learning more engaging to students.

With every initiative I sought to share with the staff I first presented it to Melissa, or involved Melissa in the planning. She has an ability to think through all the issues that might arise and even more importantly, she thinks about how any initiative might affect staff. Again, her ability to think about the big picture and make connections to best meet the needs of others is outstanding.

I decided to bring Melissa along during outside professional development trainings I attended. For example, Melissa attended the High Aims Project-Based-Learning (PBL) training where we, along with a science and social studies teacher, created and presented an interdisciplinary PBL lesson that we plan to use with tenth grade students this school year. Along with attending this training, Melissa helped me organize, plan, and even attended the Common Core workshops for English and Mathematics teachers this summer. Even though Melissa is an art teacher, she finds value in understanding standards for all classes and even more importantly how to make connections between these classes.

One initiative that Melissa and I, along with a small group of teachers and administrators, have been working on is the development of a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) program for 6-12th grade students. This program would encourage interdisciplinary lessons and co-teaching opportunities so students could see the big picture connection between content areas. Melissa is by far the lead member of this initiative. She is constantly researching, organizing, and creating documents to support this initiative. She has created templates, concept maps to show structure, presentations, and started to make important outside contacts with the forefront leaders in STEAM research.

Melissa is actively involved in any leadership or professional development task that is going on at Princeton High School. However, she also is involved in a series of other leadership roles. For example, currently, Melissa is a conference committee chairperson for the Ohio Art Education Association Conference. She has presented at state, OAEA, and National conferences. She and I presented at the National STEM conference in Kansas this year. Melissa is also a member of the Clay Alliance and