

High marks for Teacher of Year candidate



Kristen Martin, a full-day kindergarten teacher at QE, is a state semifinalist.

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By Gary Weckselblatt

Kristen Martin, a full-day kindergarten teacher at Quakertown Elementary School, is a semifinalist for Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year.

“I am humbled, surprised and honored,” Mrs. Martin said. “I believe my nomination is a recognition of how hard we work as teachers in Quakertown to best support all of our students. It’s great to be recognized for the passion and dedication I have for our Kindergarten students’ success and future success.”

Mrs. Martin, who has taught in the Quakertown Community School District for 12 years, all at QE, was

nominated for the honor by Principal Dr. Michael Zackon, who wrote a glowing letter on her behalf.

“A letter can’t possibly explain the totality of what she means to those students day in and day out,” Dr. Zackon said. “She teaches students creative thinking, speech and communication skills, and how to develop questions. These are necessary skills for college and career success.

“Further, Mrs. Martin has a hyper-focus on ensuring our students leave her classroom ready for first grade through a focus on literacy development. Students in

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her class will be reading, computing, and performing on grade level. We know our QE students are being prepared for college and career when they leave Mrs. Martin's classroom at the end of the academic school year."

Students in the district's full-day kindergarten program are considered at-risk learners through a strict and specific screening process. Administrators select teachers for these classrooms based on their past professional performance, Dr. Zackon said.

Superintendent Dr. Bill Harner, who solicited state funding to help QCSD begin its full-day kindergarten program nearly four years ago, said Mrs. Martin "is an excellent example of the quality of teachers we have throughout our school district. She is an outstanding professional educator."

Mrs. Martin often leads professional development sessions on multiple educational best practices, Dr. Zackon said, and has been a teacher leader for: use of technology to communicate with parents, lesson planning to engage diverse learners, and the use of student choice during instruction to engage students in learning.

Before moving to the full-day kindergarten classroom, Mrs. Martin was an intensive learning support teacher for grades K-2 and taught half-day kindergarten.

"In kindergarten, students come in at all levels, I was excited to get the full-day Kindergarten position because my passion is teaching a diverse group of learners," she said. "I build the foundation and confidence in children to become lifelong learners. As a teacher, you're always doing your best to make all students successful. It is important to me to meet students where they are and using best practices to support their growth and achievement. I love being able to creatively grow a program that supports our students."

In the last several years, QCSD has had several faculty and administrators receive state and regional recognition for educational excellence.

In 2015, high school teachers Janet Bassett and Ryan Stetler were recognized by different organizations as teachers of the year. Ms. Bassett won the 2015 Secondary Teacher of the Year from the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. The PA State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance named Stetler the 2015 K-12 Health Education Teacher of the Year.

In 2016, Assistant Superintendent Nancianne Edwards was one of 28 women to receive the Lehigh Valley Business' Women of Influence award.

In 2017, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Lisa Hoffman won the Outstanding Curriculum Development award from the Pennsylvania Association for Supervision



and Curriculum Development.

In 2018, Trumbauersville Elementary School Principal Adam Schmucker was named Pennsylvania's National Distinguished Principal by the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

For Teacher of the Year, nominations can be made by fellow teachers, administrators, parents and students. The nominations are narrowed down by the state Department of Education and the National Teacher of the Year organization. About a dozen finalists are expected to be named in April.

Melissa Sell, whose children have had Mrs. Martin as a teacher, wrote a letter of recommendation on Mrs. Martin's behalf.

"She exhibits many characteristics that make her an outstanding teacher; a passion for teaching, love of children, and a willingness to work with parents to ensure her students leave her classroom with a solid educational foundation," Ms. Sell stated. "She understands the importance of school in the life of a child and, selected or not, Mrs. Kristen Martin, in my mind, is already the Teacher of the Year."

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