



CIT INTERN OF THE YEAR CEREMONY

May 16, 2016

| CIT 2016 Interns of the Year | | Teaching Assignment | School | Mentor Nom | Admin Nom | Principal/Dept (if different) |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Donald | Benedict | 4th Grade | #25 | Joanna Rowe | Deborah Lazio | |
| Selene | Bissanti | 4th Grade | #03 | Amy Tierney | Eileen Hurwitz | Rodney Moore |
| Keara | Coakley | 3rd Grade | #09 | Tammy Shaw | June Bailey | Sharon Jackson |
| Stacey | Dawson | 6th Grade | #50 | Kelly Holborn | Connie Wehner | |
| Corey | Hepburn | 3rd Grade | #09 | Robin Hill | June Bailey | Sharon Jackson |
| Katie | Hesford | Kindergarten | #22 | Kathryn Arzuaga | Terrilyn Hammond | Clinton Bell |
| Mercedez | Hollister | Reading | Wilson Comm | Melissa Neill-Adams | Brenna Farrell-Geise | Uma Mehta |
| Anne Marie | LaFave | Speech Language | Edison, #57 | Terry Manscuk | Jacob Scott | Walter Larkin |
| Rebecca | Laske | School Counselor | East Lower School | Lisa Kasdin | Shalonda Garfield | Marlene Blocker |
| Megan | Martin | 3rd Grade | #09 | Robin Hill | June Bailey | Sharon Jackson |
| Anne | Moyer | Speech Language | #19 | Andrea Zona | Margaret Brazwell | Eva Thomas |
| Rachel | Reff | Special Education | #12 | Sandra Perez | Tim Graziano | Michele Liguori-Alampi |
| Elyse | Youngman | Reading | #58 | Gina Porretta-Baker | Brenna Farrell-Geise | Sheela Webster |

Welcome from Adele Bovard, RCSD Deputy Superintendent of Administration representing Linda Cimusz, RCSD Superintendent of Schools

Welcome from Adam Urbanski, RTA President

Recognition of CIT Lead Teacher-Mentor Retirees

Excerpt from Introductory Remarks by Stefan Cohen, CIT Director

We mentors began the school year exploring the importance of bringing passion to our work with students and we continue to discuss ways we can model that passion as CIT Lead Teachers. Of the qualities that unite this group of talented, committed Interns of the Year, their passion for their students is demonstrably clear. Thirteen CIT Interns with thirteen distinct personalities; and while that passion takes a distinctive form in every one of these dedicated professionals, every student I met wanted me to know that these teachers, SLPs, and counselors genuinely cared about them and were passionately committed to helping them succeed. You can't miss the positive energy of these kids in the rooms I visited over the last few weeks, and when you talk to them, you can't miss their appreciation and affection for our recipients.

There are other things I noticed over and over. I considered editing together an hour-long silent film consisting of my slow camera pans around the classrooms and offices of these wonderful teachers, SLPs and counselors. Every area of these spaces consists of lively, colorful, intentional visual encouragement for students to do their best academically and to be their best selves when it comes to their treatment of each other and of themselves. These rooms were full of inviting spaces for active play and study, independent reading, cooperative learning, and/or quiet contemplation.

Also, in nominating these wonderful CIT Interns, their mentors were struck by their hunger for strategies, insights, suggestions, and feedback. There may be nothing more satisfying as a mentor than to help a new teacher or special area professional discover new ways to go from good to great or from great to greater.

It strikes me now, thinking about what we mentors discussed earlier this afternoon about teacher autonomy, that all of these accomplished CIT Interns, with the encouragement of their mentors and others in their buildings, possessed full confident ownership of their work with students when I visited them. From what their mentors told me, they didn't all start out the year that way. With support and a desire to grow as professionals, these Interns have become teacher leaders in their classrooms, active in their school communities, collaborative with their school partners, and committed to carving out the autonomy required to best serve the needs of their students. They seemed to fully understand that we work for our students, first and foremost, and the passion which they bring to that work serves to re-ignite and sustain our own. It is my honor to introduce to you, our 2015-2016 CIT Interns of the Year.

Video of 2016 CIT Interns of the Year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qy5J5sztgao>

Donald Benedict, 4th Grade, School #25

Mr. Benedict demonstrates a passion for teaching and holds high expectations for himself and his students. He has the management skills of a veteran teacher; checks in with his students throughout the day; consistently monitors behavior, always seeking out ways to smooth transitions and maximize learning time. Mr. Benedict actively works to encourage student participation and academic growth with assessments, rubrics, and individual meetings with kids. His mentor writes that Mr. Benedict "goes over and above what is expected of him at all times"

Selene Bissanti, 4th Grade, School #03

Ms. Bissanti effectively engages her students using creative hands-on activities. Many of her students are ELL and she engages them with curricular connections to kids' own lives (Haudenosaunee culture applied to her school's philosophy, students' own lives). She is flexible in her approach in order to support all her students and puts in extra efforts to reach them: meeting students at lunch time, coordinating other building support personnel. She has made an extraordinary number of home visits to engage families in their children's success. (Parent shared her appreciation for her daughter's newfound success). Ms. Bissanti's hard work, kindness, and her ability to always find the positive in all situations sets an example for her students and her entire school community.

Keara Coakley, 3rd Grade, School #09

Ms. Coakley has worked hard and invested a lot of time into thoughtful planning in order to foster an environment of caring, mutual respect in her classroom of nearly all girls. Keara models a polite, respectful tone, works hard to include everyone in her classroom family (purchasing superhero coloring books to motivate the one boy in her class to participate). Her thoughtfully organized classroom creates an "inspiring and learning focused" environment to encourage student autonomy and independence. All areas of her room carefully aligned with the learning goals, and she has helped her students provide sensitive and sincere feedback to each other. She is "dedicated and hardworking—a quiet champion for her students."

Stacey Dawson, 6th Grade, School #50

Ms. Dawson uses humor and a consistently positive tone to create a strong and fun culture of learning (games during transitions). Her students are kind and helpful to one another. Her students' eagerness to ask questions required use of a "question box" and other strategies that validate students' desire to learn. She is flexible, makes adjustments, makes constructive use of student assessment data, sets up learning stations, uses total participation techniques, and uses instructional technology to engage students. Students understand that she will do whatever it takes to find the best way for them to succeed. She is a lifelong learner and shows a passion for teaching that goes "above and beyond."

Corey Hepburn, 3rd Grade, School #09

Mr. Hepburn took on a very challenging classroom of boys with a history of disruptive behavior and through enormous effort has successfully implemented his vision for a classroom based on mutual respect, high expectations, unity, and brotherhood. His mentor highlights Mr. Hepburn's eagerness to excel. He asks lots of questions, gobbles up suggestions, and tirelessly pursues new strategies and resources to fulfill his vision. He inspires the boys with an excitement for learning, and uses a boxing theme to motivate them to develop stamina, try different strategies to attack a problem, and become learning "champions." His students take ownership of their mistakes, comfort each other, and hold each other accountable. He has trained his boys to work effectively in cooperative groups and carefully plans lessons that will engage students and their families (raising trout in his classroom and arranging a trip to the fish hatchery with families). His mentor describes a "remarkable" change in many of his students. "It took a teacher with an abundance of drive, patience, caring, and high expectations to make such a change."

Katie Hesford, Kindergarten, School #22

Ms. Hesford uses her enthusiasm and a mastery of rituals and routines to motivate her students. She is the subject of admiring comments from colleagues. Her room is a vibrant welcoming classroom with kids cheering for friends and offering each other support. Her classroom is filled with praise and encouragement and engaging meaningful activities (props for creating and performing nursery rhymes). She checks in with students individually with encouragement and feedback on their academic progress. Students walk in the door excited to see their teacher and "to see what the day has in store for them to learn."

Mercedes Hollister, Reading, Wilson Commencement

Ms. Hollister is a graduate of Wilson with "a passion for teaching" and a passion for learning/growth. She uses a "tone of mutual respect and caring" where "students want make Mercedes proud." Her classroom is a place "where students feel empowered and safe so that they can interact respectfully and feel comfortable enough to take risks." 9th graders offer constructive criticism and thank each other for suggestions. You can feel the mutual love and affection in Ms. Hollister's interactions with her kids.

Anne Marie LaFave, Speech Language, Edison, School #57

Ms. LaFave is an enthusiastic advocate for her students K through 12 at two different buildings. She is always positive, and ready to tackle new challenges, of which there are many. She sets goals based on IEPs and on data that she collects at each session with her students. Everything she does is with intention and that intention is communicated clearly to her students. She uses creative strategies to illustrate concepts or vocabulary. Her mentor cites her skill in developing her students' ability to be "directors of their own learning" by helping them understand their learning styles and to advocate for themselves. She is a tremendous advocate for her students, whether that means as a "bulldog," "hunting down" absent students at school or at home, or tenaciously insisting (through appropriate channels) on the proper scheduling or services that a student needs. She is always pursuing new strategies to implement with students, and has earned the affection they feel for her.

Rebecca Laske, School Counselor, East Lower School

Ms. Laske has created a warm and welcoming office for her middle school students, and has built trusting relationships with students and their families. She is an active professional that "has never presented like a first year counselor." She "hit the ground running and never looked back." She maintains excellent record-keeping, coordinates student services, organizes a workshop series for kids; deals effectively with crisis management, initiates small proactive counseling groups. Her "counseling skills have blossomed." She makes home visits, contacts with families, guides peace circles with staff. She is open-minded, flexible and accommodating. "Her enthusiasm, motivation, high energy and ability to navigate all aspects of East's counseling program have been stellar."

Megan Martin, 3rd Grade, School #09

Invested a great deal of time into encouraging students to treat each other respectfully: class meetings, structured interactions, behavior management systems to develop a positive classroom environment. Extensive use of classroom technology to engage her kids. She uses mini-lessons and constant coaching to successfully teach her students how to learn cooperatively, provide each other with feedback, and peacefully settle disputes. She demonstrates an openness to working with colleagues: long-range planning, sharing strategies and adapting others' materials to suit the needs of her students, deploying support staff and volunteers to create unique learning opportunities for her students.

Anne Moyer, Speech Language, School #19

Ms. Moyer has been an enthusiastic part of her school community from the very start and has earned the admiration of staff and parents. Her students truly love being with her (cry when they don't have Speech). She is successfully proactive and flexible with strategies for managing behavior in her small groups and has eliminated negative behaviors during the transition from classroom to therapy room. Her directions are clear and students always know exactly what they are expected to do; they feel safe to take risks during her sessions, and she encourages students to self-monitor their growth and self-assess their behavior. She is organized, an effective communicator, and a true professional. She has invested a great deal of time developing a data collection process that she uses to drive her therapy sessions with students and which clearly tracks students' progress on their IEP goals. Anne has approached every challenge with "a positive attitude and a zest for wanting to conquer anything put before her."

Rachel Reff, Special Education, School #12

Ms. Reff invests a great deal of time in planning. Her room is full of evidence of student accomplishments and wonderful learning opportunities. She successfully collaborates with many different adults to provide her students with what they need. You can see how much she genuinely and sincerely cares about her kids. She uses a calm and soothing voice. She is highly organized and creates well-planned activities. She encourages her students to be inquisitive, respectful, and confident. She spends time bonding with students at the start of her day in order to form a positive student community. Her mentor is a gushing and enthusiastic fan and says that "the students in her care could not have asked for a better teacher."

Elyse Youngman, Reading, School #58

Ms. Youngman's mentor relates that "it's hard to believe Elyse is a first year teacher; she exhibits qualities of a seasoned professional." She has erased any stigma for kids receiving reading instruction by organizing engaging activities and literacy games that encourage a sense that "literacy is cool." She has created a safe environment for students to take risks. She uses a variety of reading configurations and is continuously circulating to assess student understanding. She possesses a calm demeanor, plans highly organized and intentional lessons with clear learning targets and opportunities for purposeful reading, higher order thinking, and rich discussion. Students are excited to demonstrate what they have learned. "It is clear her students adore her."