

## Nomination Letter for Dr. Jane Q Sample\*

I would like to resubmit my nomination for this special teacher now that she meets the requirement of being a full time teacher.

Sudden death of a parent. Prolonged school absences due to serious illness. Absentee or negligent parents. Ever-changing places to sleep at night. No money to buy lunch, the only substantial meal for the day. Do we simply think of these as examples of the ancillary problems connected to 21<sup>st</sup> century high schools, or do we consider the manner in which a teacher interacts with her students as the most important way to distinguish an inspirational teacher from a great one? My friend, Jane Q Sample, is an inspirational teacher to her students, their parents, and me.

I believe that the **sensitive teacher who keeps in touch with the emotional pulse of her students** is one of five benchmarks found on the yardstick that measures the difference between great and inspirational. Dr. Sample, my colleague and friend, is an inspirational teacher who acts as a supportive buffer for all American High School\* students as they both adjust to the private calamities in their lives and revel in the personal high points. One only needs to ask the young man afflicted with sickle cell anemia about how Dr. Sample encouraged him to keep moving toward his goal of graduation. Constant phone contact, arranging for hospital-homebound schooling when needed, and providing computer and printer for completion of school work enabled this student to not lose hope in achieving his life dreams. Or the youngster whose family was unable to provide her with some of the tools she needed for college. Dr. Sample bought her a laptop computer and printer so that the first year of college would be something to look forward to. Another example occurred in the fall of 2011. Jane Q provided cell phone service to a family who needed at least one operating phone in their home in order to stay in touch with children and to seek employment. She not only offered the service, but also paid for it, which she continues to do. In addition to all of these examples, today, February 21, 2013, Jane Q remains the resident chauffeur for students who want to be members of her Brain Brawl Team or Latin Club/Team, but do not have a ride home after practice or before and after a competition.

Another measure of an inspirational teacher is the **compassionate community teacher/leader who offers her students and families a total loyalty** that extends beyond the school day. Dr. Sample resides within the boundaries of her school. She is a vocal activist at community and school board meetings on issues that affect her school. She attends the after-school events that define her community, volunteers as sponsor of clubs within the school, and freely offers her expertise in Latin studies to develop curriculum which is then shared with her faculty colleagues.

**Dedicated educator who maintains the same high academic standards for herself that she expects of her students** is a third measure on the inspirational yardstick. Dr. Sample, continues to do research on instructional and educational policy topics that affect her school community. In a collaborative effort in March, 2008, Dr. Sample presented her findings at the prestigious American Educational Research Association. This intense quest for knowledge is an inherent part of Dr. Sample's nature.

Not one to work on only one project, Jane Q has finalized her first book.

Jane Q has also begun to explore the technological aspects of education. She is currently developing a virtual course for Florida Virtual School so she can reach more students who are interested in Latin studies.

In 2011, Jane Q assumed the role of National Honor Society sponsor. Her first task was to create a team of dedicated teachers who would work together to improve the rigor of the requirements for admission so the standard would replicate the national standard. After students were informed of the credentials needed, the team began to help them to meet the requirements. This year, 22 students will be accepted into the 2021-213 National Honor Society as members because they met these high expectations.

As of August, 2012, this dedicated educator has returned to her roots as a full time teacher of Latin studies. Because Jane Q is an ardent supporter of all things pertaining to her school, she continues to support the American High School International Baccalaureate program in its last year by donating her every-other-day planning period to I.B. matters, thus forgoing planning time. She tirelessly encourages teachers, students and parents to reach high, to reach for that last ounce of self-accountability and pride in order to prove to themselves that they, too, are great learners who deserve the best in the academic world. Jane Q wants her students to understand that they are an inspiration to her.

In 2011, in the interest of understanding the problems that confront large school systems, Jane Q began a Master's Degree program in Business Administration because of her desire to learn about the business end of effecting change in a school. She one day hopes to implement her many ideas for the ideal instructional design within her own school.

The fourth measure of an inspirational teacher is the **eloquent instructor who immerses her students in daily lessons that open the window of their minds to the world beyond their neighborhood**. I remember the close of the Dr. Sample's first week at American High School in 2006. Two of her students grabbed me in the media center to exclaim about an assignment that required them to learn the entire Greek alphabet and 50 Greek stems. When I asked if they were worried that they might not complete the assignment, they answered with a resounding no. "She said she won't let us fail. She said that failure is unacceptable," was their excited response. At that moment I knew that I must study the techniques of a teacher who could elicit these types of student comments. I was not disappointed. Along with a little Latin, I learned a great deal about working productively with students who attend a school in an urban setting.

Today, in 2013, and 28 years after her launch into education, Latin is still a huge part of Jane Q's life. She stands by her belief that vocabulary growth can make the difference in standardized testing. To that end, she convinced her school to make Latin I, II, and III a permanent part of the World Language curriculum. She now teaches Latin I and II full time to students at American High School, one of the few high schools to offer the subject. Next year, Latin III will be added to the curriculum map.

The final measure of inspiration in action is the **enthusiastic teacher** who remembers students' names and interests even if 20 years has elapsed from their last meeting. Dr. Sample and I regularly walk on the North Bank of Jacksonville. At first I was impressed that so many people, some in their 40's, recognized Dr. Sample. Then, I heard her speak their names and begin a discussion about some event or action from the past as if it happened yesterday. She is a deeply involved teacher who could leave her school at any time to pursue a teaching job in less difficult circumstances. She won't, however, leave her community.

If visitors stop by Dr. Sample's classroom, they will see small student groups avidly locating Latin derivatives for their individual task cards, researching information on Greek gods, reading about foolish mythological mortals, improving their reading abilities by reading, conversing, and writing on a variety of topics as they become familiar with the classics. Visitors will **not** see uninvolved students. How can this be? The students in Dr. Sample's classes believe that they will achieve their personal goals. They are emerging self-confident scholars who have faith in this teacher who considers it her mission to guide them through their high school studies.

Who will confirm these observations? Just talk to the teachers, students, and parents of American High School. Just talk to me. As a former American High School reading coach, I daily observed the positive, respectful interactions between Dr. Sample and the members of the American High School community and continue to see these interactions outside of the school day.

Please consider my friend and colleague as a recipient of the 2013 Gladys Prior Award. You won't be disappointed!

Nominator\*  
School Reading Specialist/Reading Coach  
Nation High School\*

*\*Names have been changed in an effort to provide privacy for those mentioned in this letter*