

Mary Jo Baker

As a seasoned educator, Mary Jo realizes that all students do not learn in the same way, so she incorporates learning techniques and structures that promote learning in all students. For example, she has students work with partners or in small group setting as a way to differentiate for struggling learners. Mary Jo has been known to use music to engage her learners. She has an ability to discover the individual needs of each child in her classroom and is tenacious in her efforts to provide them with strategies and skills to bring them to proficiency. Her classroom is warm and inviting yet challenging, which is important to keep students wanting to learn. Her weekly routines include a daily current events session during which time students share news that they have discovered in the media. Students love sharing interesting stories, and, in the process, students practice their presentation skills. Mary Jo loves reading and engages her learners in a shared novel reading during morning snack each day. Once a book is completed she looks for a video of the story and invites the learners to compare the two.

Mary Jo knows that learning is life-long and is open to new practices through constant collaboration with her peers and by participating in professional development trainings. MaryJo is a team player, who actively contributes ideas to her third- grade team. Recently she discovered a math website to reinforce and practice math skills, sharing it with her team.

Beyond the school and classroom Mary Jo can be seen at her students' extracurricular activities, such as baseball and soccer, which the children just love. Building strong relationships is the foundation for creating students' engagement in their learning. When students feel cared for and special in the eyes of their teacher, they will always strive to do their best. This is what makes Mary Jo so extraordinary. Parents and students alike love her warm and caring ways and how invested she is in each of her students.

With much pride and appreciation, I congratulate, Mary Jo, on her selection as Governor's Teacher of the Year for the Frank K. Hehnlly School.