

November 2, 1997

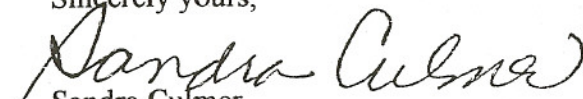
Dear Members of the Teacher of the Year Selection Committee:

It is a sincere pleasure to support the nomination of Cathy Thornton, an exceptional teacher and leader in education, for the Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award. Her outstanding teaching performance, her success as a front-line practitioner, and her commitment and contagious sense of purpose make her a most worthy recipient of this prestigious award. As a teacher of students with autism, her areas of specialty include the integration of students with special needs, the promotion of quality instruction, the development of supportive school culture, and collaboration among general and special education teachers. In each of these areas, Cathy has made significant contributions to the school, to the community, and to the teaching profession.

Cathy's distinguished record as a teacher, consultant, and teacher researcher demonstrates her resolute belief that education extends beyond the classroom. She has gained in her experience in teaching students with special needs by leading and participating in school-based teacher research; presenting at research conferences; training special and general education teachers; and serving on the school improvement team and as a participant in state and national conferences. Her research on general and special education teachers working collaboratively with parents and students has had instructional application across the autism program. Cathy is recognized highly for her ability to help schools develop and implement strategies to include students with disabilities in the general school setting. She was selected by the Department of Student Services to share her personal approach to serving students with teachers at Fairview Elementary School as they opened a new autism satellite program this year. She also provided guidance and support to the Poplar Tree school staff and principal in the development of a step-by-step guide for mainstreaming students with special needs. She shares leadership responsibilities in coordinating efforts between all segments of the school for the purpose of promoting teamwork and cooperation.

Cathy Thornton is a reflective practitioner, a successful and well-respected teacher and a pioneer in the field of special education. She keeps students in the forefront of all educational activities and she promotes their success, self-esteem, value, acceptance, and high expectations. She demonstrates exceptional qualities as a leader in her field and in the community. She is most deserving of this award. It is especially appropriate to honor Cathy Thornton for her leadership and outstanding contributions to teaching.

Sincerely yours,


Sandra Culmer
Director Elementary Programs, Area I