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Doreen A. Winn, Executive Director

September 20, 2017

Dear Secretary Ruszkowski and Selection Committee Members:

My recommendation begins with a story, the story of a twelve year old Mexican immigrant who showed up at the rural, New Mexico school where I was the Principal. She was new to the United States and spoke no English. As in many schools, she was streamlined into the educational system with limited support. She worked hard over the next six years and became an active member of the school community, participating in sports, clubs, and a member of National Honor Society. She learned how to speak, read and write in English, all while maintaining a grade point average that placed her in the top five percent of the class. She attended UNM on scholarship to study chemistry. Along the way, she decided her passion was teaching. She wanted to positively impact students by teaching her first language, Spanish. Luckily for the staff and students at the Public Academy for Performing Arts, I learned she was looking for a teaching position, and we had an opening. Among the best hiring decisions I have ever made was hiring my former student!

Ivonne Orozco believes that education makes the world a better place. Her story represents the history of New Mexico and of the United States. Through her success, she changes lives by promoting an appreciation for language as the ultimate communication tool.

Ms. Orozco's faith in all students' ability to learn is reflected through passion and compassion. Her own passion for learning and teaching shines in the classroom. Students embody her belief that individuals determine how well and how much they learn as they take responsibility for their education. Ms. Orozco approaches teaching compassionately by focusing on skill level and the needs of each student. Yesterday, a Spanish I (primary language is English) student with a learning disability in reading and writing produced a class presentation in Spanish. This presentation was a huge step in the student's personal path to learning. That's the type of amazing results Ms. Orozco's students exhibit.

As modern education evolves, so must the technological skills a teacher possesses. Ms. Orozco effectively will utilize countless technological resources including the Promethean board, websites promoting best practices and game-based learning, Google Docs, and apps like Remind – as instructional and communication tools. This approach takes education to students and parents where they live, work and learn. Ms. Orozco has an excellent website (www.orozcospansh.weebly.com) reflecting her beliefs and expectations, where students and parents can find updated assignments, deadlines and educational resources for each class. Another skill Ms. Orozco possesses is that of a Statistician. She has been a driving force, helping the English Department organize data in an effort to improve student success. She appreciates the importance of analyzing and utilizing data to drive instruction and uses data to gain an understanding of the skills incoming Spanish I students possess. This was the first year Ms. Orozco's students took an EOC. She used EOC data to set a basis for growth and program improvement. In addition to exceptional classroom teaching, Ms. Orozco is active in the greater community, sponsoring a club, collaborating with other teachers, providing transformational technology training for staff, and is active at the State level on the committee to create higher level Spanish End of Course exams.

I don't have enough room to list all the reasons Ms. Orozco deserves the Teacher of the Year honor. Though she is not a 20+ year veteran, Ms. Orozco does represent the future of education in our fast-paced world. She possesses a rare ability that is found in those who are born to teach. She models a true lifelong love of learning as she continues to pursue higher education, professional development opportunities and researches best practices. Ms. Orozco is a knowledgeable and committed voice and representative for the continuous improvement of her craft. Possessing excellent communication skills, she promotes the value of education and cultivates positive, appropriate relationships throughout the education community. Mostly, Ivonne Orozco can effectively teach any student and instill in them her love of learning, her most priceless gift to the world!

Sincerely,

Doreen A. Winn
Executive Director

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