

**Introduction of the 2016 Dr. Judy Flythe Teacher Leader Award Recipient
by Terry Dozier, Director of the VCU Center for Teacher Leadership
Fourteenth Annual NBCT Pinning Ceremony
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At this time, it is my pleasure to announce the 2016 Dr. Judy Flythe Teacher Leader Award recipient – Ms. Elizabeth “Beth” H. Lucas, an English teacher at L.C. Bird High School in Chesterfield County Public Schools.

I had the privilege of going to L.C. Bird with Dr. Newsome, Chesterfield’s superintendent, to make the surprise announcement of Beth’s selection during the faculty holiday luncheon right before winter break. I was excited to meet Beth because I had learned from the nomination letters that there is really something very special about her. Her department chair wrote: “Beth is honorable, loving, dedicated, and she is someone who EVERYONE looks up to. It doesn’t matter how long you’ve taught, how old you are, or what subject you teach. Beth is a leader in every way—and her ability to see from all perspectives, to be judgement-free, and to lead with love is what makes her leadership quiet but very respected.”

The event was truly inspiring. Her colleagues erupted into applause and cheers, giving her a standing ovation. I don’t believe that I have ever seen a teacher who was so clearly loved and respected by her colleagues as Beth—and for good reason.

Beth epitomizes the true nature of teacher leadership. While exemplary teaching practice is a prerequisite to being a teacher leader, excellent teaching, alone, is not sufficient. We all know excellent teachers who are credible, but who prefer to work as individuals rather than in collaboration with others. The ability to build positive interpersonal relationships is critical to becoming an effective teacher leader.

Thomas Sergiovanni, an education theorist, calls this concept "shared followership." In shared followership the focus is not on who to follow, but on what to follow. Effective teacher leaders are guided by one simple question--will this make a difference for kids?

Beth has lived this philosophy throughout her career and articulately it beautifully in the opening sentence of her application: “To be an educator is to know, intrinsically, that we are all in this together.”

Beth is a master teacher -- winning an R.E. B. Award for Teaching Excellence – but more importantly, she has built upon her success in the classroom and become an extraordinary instructional leader who has had a positive impact on students, faculty, and the community at large.

Her assistant principal noted that “Beth’s leadership style is interpersonal. She is able to build strong relationships with those around her in order to secure trust and collaboration. As a Professional Learning Community (PLC) team leader, Beth stresses the importance of working together among and between PLCs in order to best serve students. She conducts workshops for her colleagues at the school and division level.

Leading through example, Beth suggests and models strategies and methods supported by current research and data. She started Project Based Learning (PBL) projects before they were mandatory. Beth understands that innovation and change may be difficult for some, so she coaches and guides her colleagues through their exploration and implementation of new initiatives. Therefore, when her colleagues were faced with developing and implementing their own projects, they found themselves equipped with an advanced understanding of the Project Based Learning method and products-- due in large part because of the examples that Beth shared and her positive coaching and support.

Above all else, Beth is an advocate for students and our profession. She mentors beginning teachers and nominates colleagues for recognition. Beth not only advocates for the social, emotional, and academic development of the whole child, but she also makes things happen that address these needs—whether it is the Change the World Project in which Beth helps students discover how just one person can bring about change and make a difference in the world and which now involves multiple teachers and classes or Project Next to help C level seniors discover the right path after graduation through field trips to colleges and military bases and by developing short and long-term goals and a plan of action.

Beth works tirelessly with seniors who have not yet passed either their writing or reading SOL. She disaggregates their data so she can create individual remediation plans for students who struggle because of learning disabilities, truancy, English as a Second Language, or students who have simply slipped through the cracks. It doesn't matter what her students' needs are—it only matters that she find a way to help them, and Beth always does. Last year, she had almost a 100% pass rate among her classes of seniors who had never passed an English SOL. This monumental accomplishment is almost unimaginable, but her teaching skills got her there – and her teacher leadership skills encouraged other teachers to do the same for their students.

Characteristically, Beth plans to use the Judy Flythe award to attend the National Council of Teachers of English annual conference to learn more strategies to help her students and to share with her colleagues.

I think you can all understand why her colleagues both love and respect her. Please join me in congratulating, the 2016 Dr. Judy Flythe Teacher Leader Award recipient – Ms. Elizabeth “Beth” Lucas!