



**WILLAMETTE**  
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Dear Educators:

Justine Hynes' broad smile – matched by the energy and diligence of her students - reflects the joy in learning that exudes from her classroom. A highly organized, responsible, and student-centered young woman, Justine is ready and eager for her own classroom.

A graduate student in our intensive and selective Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, Justine Hynes is completing more than 1,000 hours in public school classrooms at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels. She is thriving in a Title I school where 90 percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced lunch and 70 percent are ethnic minorities (where more than half are English language learners). As her university supervisor, I completed six formal observations of her teaching this spring.

Justine's strong organizational skills and alignment of curriculum are the foundation of her teaching and are an important factor in her students' strong learning gains. Each of her lessons focuses on objectives tied to state benchmarks and is clearly tied to her activities and multiple assessments. When she designed her most recent work sample on measurement, for example, she provided strong modeling while involving students in an array of questions and problem solving. Students made predictions about metric and standard measure, demonstrated their understanding ("show me a cm. with your hands" or "think in your head how many meters the room is"), conferred with their partners ("turn and talk"), then worked in triads to estimate and measure portions of their classroom and hallway in meters. Afterward, students recorded their findings in their math journals, another way they integrated literacy in their learning.

Justine has been especially creative in designing lessons that actively engaged students in fun-filled exercises to practice their skills. Who could have imagined 98% time-on-task while learning about adverbs? The energy was high when students in pairs acted out designated adverbs and verbs while their peers made guesses. Students each wrote adverbs to complete 10 sentences then individually shared an adverb/verb pair when they left the classroom. In a follow-up lesson, students built on their use of word forms to sing and say complete sentences. In groups, they unscrambled sentence fragments to form complete sentences. After each group shared with the class, they received another set of fragments, this time with the purpose of trading with other groups to form their own complete sentence. This time when they shared, students had the choice of either singing (to the tune of "The Farmer in the Del") or saying their sentences. Then, before they lined up, students each chose an adjective to describe their moms - and all did. As you might imagine, this lesson depended upon well-organized materials, including word charts and sentence cards. Table monitors also took responsibility for clipping together and collecting the word cards. Clearly, students gained relevant, focused practice. As you might surmise, Justine has developed strong classroom management skills. Her expectations are clear and succinct, for example, "I'll call on groups that are quiet and respectful" or outlining 4 key steps for a group activity. She reinforces students regularly with such statements as "Two big claps for everyone!" or "Great job getting quiet so quickly." When she follows up on inappropriate behavior (with silence, a raised eyebrow, a reminder to be respectful, or asking a student to pull a card, for example), students respond respectfully. More than anything, this is based upon the strong individual relationships she has built. Justine makes a special effort to get acquainted with each child to learn interests, sensitivities, and capabilities, even going so far as to attend a student's softball game, which merited a huge hug and boosted the child's energy for learning. In class, students use circle time to discuss issues of concern (such as respect) and to create and respond to their own personal goals.

I'm very pleased to recommend Justine Hynes as a newcomer to our profession. She is a purposeful and poised young woman who gains high respect from her students and school staff. A classroom multi-tasker who creates a strong classroom community, she is a collaborative team member who plans active, meaningful lessons that help students to attain their learning outcomes. You will find her a welcome colleague as well. Please feel free to contact me. I'd be delighted to tell you more about Justine and her aspirations for teaching.

Sincerely,

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