



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA ALERT** – Thursday, February 1, 2024

**Fargo Public School District #1**

## **HETLAND NAMED FARGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2024 TEACHER OF THE YEAR**



Eagles Elementary School special education teacher **Amanda Hetland** has been named the **Fargo Public Schools 2024 Teacher of the Year**. Superintendent Dr. Rupak Gandhi surprised her with an announcement Thursday at Eagles Elementary School.

Hetland has served as a special education teacher working with students with Autism at Eagles since 2017. She was a paraeducator at Eagles from 2014-17 and also worked as a long-term substitute paraeducator at Lincoln Elementary School in 2014. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education from Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Hetland's colleagues say she is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that her students can thrive and grow to their full potential. She is always willing to do what is best for her students even when that will mean more pressure, stress, and effort for her. One example of this is her dedication to ensuring her students have opportunities to participate with their grade level peers as often as possible. Although it can be logistically difficult to create schedules for her students and paraeducators, she is willing to put in the extra effort to put her students in the best positions to succeed.

She also understands the value of helping her students be as independent as possible. She helps them learn to perform tasks on their own and is constantly searching for strategies to empower her students to be independent. She is said to not shy away from implementing new strategies and focuses on finding solutions to problems.

Working with students who most often thrive in organized environments with routines, Hetland is described as a meticulous organizer who pays attention to the small details. From the creation of an organized classroom environment to her lesson planning and the crafting of Individualized Education Plans, her attention to detail puts her students in the best possible position to succeed. By creating an organized space for her students, she brings a level of calm and stability to their environment. Her classroom was described as a calm, welcoming environment and a "safe space" with a cozy loved feeling.

Hetland's nominators describe her as being extremely respectful and understanding towards her colleagues and the paraeducators in her classroom. As a former paraeducator herself, she

understands that position and has empathy for the challenging aspects of their job. She is said to do everything she can to help put her paraeducators in a position to succeed so that they can help the students succeed.

Hetland follows South High School Vocal Teacher Sara Lichtblau as the District's recipient of the Teacher of the Year honor. Her name will now be considered for the Cass County Teacher of the Year Award. The Cass County Teacher of the Year is then forwarded to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction as a candidate for the North Dakota Teacher of the Year award.

The Fargo Public Schools Teacher of the Year award has been presented within the District since 1957. The honor is an award regularly bestowed as part of the District's annual Staff Recognition Program. The District also annually recognizes a Support Staff of the Year and an Administrator of the Year as part of this recognition program.

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