



TRANSCRIPT

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Title: 2020 OC Teacher of the Year – Melissa Brennan

- [Melissa] What is the most important thing you teach your students to be college and career ready? Generally, people's minds go to academic success, but for me, the simple answer for me is teaching our students to be kind. Everybody!
- [Steve] She is very passionate about her kids. She shares an enthusiasm with them that, to me, is infectious.
- [Krista] She's someone who is here because she loves what she does. You can see it from the first moment she steps on campus.
- [Melissa] I was an assistant for the special education program in high school. After working with them for that year and through my senior year of high school, I learned how naive I was. I decided that I am gonna make it my life mission to become a teacher and have students with disabilities integrated and included in my classroom so that their typical peers, or general ed students, would be able to learn alongside these students with disabilities so that they could grow up not naive as me, not looking at these people as different. Will you be sad?
- [Students] No!
- [Melissa] You know what? If you wanna feel sad, it's okay, 'cause you can be sad if I don't pick you. That's a feeling you can have, but you're just gonna say, "Oh, well."
- [Steve] The fact that she can move her students out of a special ed classroom into the general ed setting says a lot about her talents.
- [Melissa] I run my class as if it were a general education classroom, and I hold my students to the same expectations and standards that I hold any other student. How are you gonna make 26 cents? Ooh, count by tens, ready, go!
- [All] 10,
- [Cathery] Melissa is part of a project called TEAMM: Teaching Equitably and Access to Meaningful Mathematics, and the goal of the project was to develop teacher leaders, particularly education specialists in the area of mathematics.
- [Melissa] Your brain doesn't have to be wired for math to be good at math. Anybody and everybody can be great at math.
- [Cathery] She designs curriculum that knows that kids come in with a range of knowledge and skills.
- [Melissa] I wanna get my students excited about math, but I'm like, we need to tell other teachers about how we should be teaching math to these young students.

- [Cathery] Her instruction's hands-on, it's linked to real life, it's all about developing children's sense of agency and children's sense of interest.
- [All] I move like this and go with the flow and then I say, "Bonjour, bonjour."
- [Melissa] Alec!
- She is the best teacher ever because we get to play and have much fun.
- She does a great job with the kids. She also does a great job with taking kids that aren't in her class, helping out, you know, peer relations issues, social-emotional problems.
- [Krista] That takes a really special teacher to be able to work with her own students' varied needs and abilities, and yet also welcome a sixth grader into her class, and also be supporting his needs.
- [Melissa] And when they work with my students, they feel important. They feel like a leader.
- [Brian] She'll engage a student and get their trust so much that, if they are slipping, she can hold them accountable because the kid knows it's not personal.
- [Krista] The student that he is in her class is the best example of himself.
- [Melissa] You gotta spell it, girlfriend.
- [Girl] A!
- [Melissa] No, no . J-U--
- [Steve] She is one of the most inspiring teachers that I've ever had on a staff. Just someone who's, basically, a huge spark on our campus that motivates everyone.
- [Cathery] She shows that the labels people assign to you do not define you. We've all had labels assigned to us. She challenges those labels.
- She is playing the role of mentor, of cheerleader, of mother, of supporter, and it has made all the difference. I don't know how I would have gotten through this school year without her.
- [Melissa] What I hope for the future of education is that teachers and everyone, for that matter, can recognize that all children are brilliant in their own way.
- Thank you for helping me, like, for math and stuff.
- Thanks so much for helping me.
- She was nice to me and she's beautiful.

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