



## TRANSCRIPT

Copyright © 2019 Orange County Superintendent of Schools. All Rights Reserved.

### Title: 2020 OC Teacher of the Year – Mandy Kelly

- I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was eight. I fell in love with it, I loved the whole idea of bringing fun into the classroom.
- She gives a thousand percent to this school. I mean, she lives across the street, unfortunately for her, because she's here all the time.
- She is extremely positive, and just someone who really wanted to empower students.
- And I remember telling my parents that I wanted to be a teacher when I was eight, they were like, "Oh you'll change your mind a dozen times "between now and college." And I just never did.
- She really connects with students. She connects with people all over.
- She was, like, excited, and she had energy, so she made us feel really comfortable.
- This year, April showers brought May flowers in snowy December.
- [Student] Was it December and--
- What I love is that there really is no typical day, every day is different. I want them to feel comfortable, I want them to want to be there. And the best way I can do that is to make it feel like a second home.
- She looks like one of the kids, she's doing everything they're doing. She's into it, she knows how to motivate them, she knows how to relate to each and every one of 'em.
- I'm a really big proponent on taking risks and learning through exploration.
- The students are well engaged, excited about learning.
- After reading the novel, do you think any of these aspects are worth sacrificing, and how much would you be willing to risk for these rights?
- If you take away someone's freedom, they're gonna wanna fight for their freedom, to get it back. And so if you wanna have peace, you should try and find another way by giving them choices and encouraging people to make peace.
- But what about the fact, that like in Giver, they never knew about having a choice, they, A lot of our day is exploring, you know, giving them something and letting them just see what happens. A lot of our day is making connections, that is my favorite thing to do, in the classroom, is making connections. So that you have in your history, and now I want one more project from, and you guys can all work together on it, but I want one more project 'cause I'm super curious. You guys are the first, I just wanted to feel like it's a place where they're safe, they're respected, their ideas are welcomed. And not just between me and them, but also between each other.

- She has started program called The SAKtivists, which is student acts of kindness.
- She is that kind person and she has seen a lot of unkind things lately in our world, and she truly wants to make the world a better place.
- I gave them a blank calendar of December, and I challenged them to do one random act of kindness everyday for the month of December. When they turned in their calendars in January they loved it and they were like, "Can we keep doing this?" It was just this amazing thing that had evolved, and I made them promise to be a SAKtivist for life and continue doing acts of kindness. And they made me promise to continue the program. Now here we are at the end of the year, and we have almost 200 classes signed up. We're in 30 different states and six different countries.
- It's hard to describe the feeling 'cause it makes you feel so good inside when you know that you're doing something good and making people happy.
- They are 12 years old and they feel like they're changing the world, and they are. And it's so great for me to see that they are feeling empowered, and they feel that they, they're not just changing the world for one product that they create, they are changing the world in terms of how people are. Freedom, choice, and individuality can lead to peace as long as you have that desire, and you have that empathy, and you have that emotion, that drive to create peace.
- She's really taught me that things are gonna be hard, but if you just persevere, you can always get through it.
- Keep doing what you're doing, you're making a difference in the lives of teachers, in the lives of students, in the lives of the children of the world.
- You've inspired all of us to work a little bit at a higher level.
- You don't realize how much power you have and how much influence you have. And to be able to show kids their uniqueness and what make them unique, what makes them great, and then further, how to use that. They learned how to work together, they learned how to take risks, and all of those skills are what they found in my room. Being a teacher is just being able to give them that feeling that they can go out and conquer the world kind of thing.

###