

# 2015 Classified School Employee of the Year Application

## 1. Welcome Page

---

Congratulations on your nomination for Classified School Employee of the Year!

This application requires basic information about you and your workplace, a resume, letters of recommendation, and three short essay responses.

The [application guide](#) includes a list of the required information and the three essay prompts. Please read through it before beginning your application.

You must submit a resume, three letters of recommendation and a completed [signature page](#). Upload these files as PDFs at the end of the online application.

You may want to download the [Guidance for Letter Writers](#) to share with the people who will write your letters of recommendation.

Your application is due February 16, 2015.

*Please Note: This form only accepts PDF documents and works best if you use Firefox or Internet Explorer.*

## 2. (untitled)

---

## Using the Online Application

### How do I save and continue the application later?

You may save and continue your application later at any point once you have entered the required contact information on the following page.

When you want to leave the form, just advance to the next page and click the "Save and Continue Later" button at the top of the page and type in your preferred email. Note: the form will only save up to the previous page.

You will receive a unique edit link to your application via that email address.

Be sure to use this link when you want to continue your application. **IMPORTANT:** If you re-enter the application from the beginning without using this link, you will create a whole new application.

### How do I navigate the survey?

You can navigate back and forth through the survey by using the "Back" and "Next" buttons at the bottom of the page.

**IMPORTANT:** If you use the arrow buttons in your browser, you will be bumped out of the application. You will still be able to access your partially completed application via your unique edit link.

### How does the word count work?

The word count in this form is different than in Microsoft Word. When you cut and paste into the application, the word counts may not match exactly. You may have to edit your response in the form to conform to the application's word count maximums.

### Why does the formatting look different than what I entered?

The form will convert your essay responses to a standard format to make it easier for reviewers to read. For example, the form will not allow indentations. If you want to create breaks between paragraphs, you must do this with a return.

You must submit your application no later than February 16, 2015.

## 3. Nominee Information

---

I work in the following Educational Service District (ESD)

*Don't know your ESD? [check out our interactive state map.](#)*

Northwest ESD 189

Please provide the following information about yourself and where you work:

**First Name**

Juana

**Last Name**

Cartagena

**Current Position**

ELL Para-Educator

**Home Email Address**

su.carta@yahoo.com

**Work Email Address**

CartagenaS@lynden.wednet.edu

**Home Street Address**

1284 Bridgeview Dr

**Home City**

Lynden

**Home State**

WA

**Home Zip**

98264

**Home Phone Number (with area code)**

(360)318-0993

**School Name or District Department**

Lynden Middle

**Principal or Supervisor Name**

Molly Mitchell-Mumma

**School District**

Lynden

**Principal or Supervisor Phone (with area code)**

(360)354-3760 ext 4113

**Principal or Supervisor Email Address**

mitchell-mummam@lynden.wednet.edu

**4. Nominee Background and Education**

---

**Please provide the following information about your background and education.**

**Where or with what level of students do you currently work? (check all that apply)**

Middle/Junior High School

**Please indicate your highest level of education**

High School Diploma

**Education and Training (please begin with the most recent)**

	School or Program Attended	Degree or Certificate Received	Year Graduated
1	El Paso Community College		
2			
3			

**Number of years working in education**

1 1/2

**Number of years in current position**

1 1/2

**Do you plan to continue working in the same position next year? If "no," why not?**

Yes

**Strengths and Areas of Expertise (please check all that apply)**

Literacy  
English Language Learners  
Special Education  
Multicultural Education  
Certificated Staff Collaboration  
Conflict Resolution  
At Risk Intervention  
Before and After School Programming  
Parent Participation  
Administrative Support  
Other: Spanish Interpreter

**Your Race/Ethnicity (please check all that apply)**

Hispanic

**5. Essay Instructions**

---

**Essay Responses**

Applicants for Classified Employee of the Year are evaluated based on their:

Professional biography  
Outstanding work performance  
Professional leadership and collaboration

Please write essay answers to questions and prompts. You may want to write and edit your essays in word and cut and paste them into the form.

Each question has a word limit. Supplemental materials are not allowed.

**6. Professional Biography**

---

## PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

**Why do you work in education? How did you prepare for your career? What are your biggest accomplishments? (Maximum word count: 400)**

Having been a former Level I ELL student, I possess a unique perspective and understanding of student and family needs. I consider my Para-educator role essential because I have the opportunity and ability to positively impact student's lives forever. Today's ELL students are typically the first in their family to graduate from high school and go onto secondary education. I want them to think about their future; about what they want to accomplish, and I desire to help students develop healthy mindsets of the value of school. I constantly instill the importance of setting goals to attain a better future and I work hard to inspire them to succeed and create new opportunities for themselves later on in life.

I attended El Paso Community College completing 86 hours in pursuit of an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education. I'm registered in Para-Educator PD to increase my knowledge of the multifaceted dynamics of ELL students. I have learned to differentiate modeling to help students get accustomed to general education procedures and ease anxiety. I've also learned the importance of recognizing how ELL students' native language proficiency can affect how they acquire English as their second language. Recognizing these differences lets the students know that we as educators acknowledge and embrace their uniqueness, which therefore allows them to feel valued and comfortable to perform their best. I'm proactive in seeking advice from colleagues and collaborate with teachers to better understand the whole child so we can build student relationships, embrace what is in our control, eliminate learning barriers and create differentiated instruction that allows students to learn and feel successful in Math, Science, Language Arts and History classes. As a result, these students possess greater levels of self-confidence and are now better able to articulate their understandings and self-reflect upon areas of academic strength and needs for improvement. Students that were traditionally underperforming are now consistently performing close to or at grade level standard.

My greatest achievement has been collaborating with teachers and administration to create bonds between Hispanic families and school. I coordinate parent-teacher conferences, monthly parent teacher meetings, and all-school ELL parent nights acting as the liaison to communicate current student work, individual academic progress, planner importance, medical/dental care, sports scholarships and secondary education scholarship opportunities. Parents now feel more comfortable asking questions and are more involved in their child's academic success knowing there is someone they can communicate with.

### 7. Outstanding Work Performance

---

## **OUTSTANDING WORK PERFORMANCE**

**How do you exceed expectations? Please provide specific examples of how your work has improved student achievement. (Maximum word count: 800)**

Lori Myers stated, "Tell yourself often: I am going to tackle my aspirations head on with the passion and dedication necessary to exceed even my expectations." I strive to be as involved as possible to assure I am contributing to a team effort that leads to improved student success.

In addition to my Para-educator duties spanning 86 students, I confidently serve as the 7th grade Access supervisor. I check on grades, missing work, and assist challenged students in achieving greater levels of work completion and academic success on a daily basis. This extra time to serve student needs allows me to build relational trust and take advantage of extra processing time to challenge students using differentiated instruction until they demonstrate understanding. It's magical to see their progression and confidence grow. Students I work with started the year sitting as far as possible from each other and wouldn't participate in class activities. However, they now pull tables together to help each other learn new concepts; they willingly grab markers to work at the whiteboard to explain where they are lost, and raise their hands to ask questions aloud in class and to participate in discussions.

I also coordinate an after school Homework Help Program that serves more than a dozen 7th grade Hispanic students. I provide extra support in Math, Science, Language Arts and History, that results in greater levels of ELL academic success. The majority of my students underperformed coming into 7th grade, but now consistently earn A and B trimester grades, near or at grade level standard. Because of the student success observed resulting from this program, Lynden Middle School is attempting to provide like programs for all grades! Not only do I focus on the importance of education but I also help them set long term goals for themselves. This population of students typically doesn't have anyone at home that speaks English to help with homework. I often let them know I understand their struggles and the different responsibilities they have when they get home with chores and siblings, and the pressure of being the first to graduate. I often remind them of the work their parents are doing; most work the fields, and how they are working hard to offer them a better future. At this age these students tend to lose focus and I help them realize they have to work hard to make their parents proud and have a better life. I instill a growth mindset by encouraging them to let go of their past negative experiences and to realize they have control of their future. I tell them to believe in themselves and have confidence.

Moreover, I serve the entire school learning community collaborating with administration, teachers and other professionals, and acting as a liaison to enhance relationships with our entire Hispanic community. I make calls home to inquire about student absences, communicate student needs for organization and homework signatures, set up teacher-parent meetings, student led conferences, and gain parent approval for schedule changes. I communicate with parents to confirm sports information and provide positive messages of student successes. I translate for teachers and administration for families of general education, special education and life-skills students. I translate documents and meetings for our Hispanic families. One of my most significant contributions has been collaborating with teachers to engage parents in monthly after school meetings to become more informed and supportive of their children's education. My ability to communicate effectively and build familial relationships has allowed Lynden Middle to experience greater teacher-parent communication. College Bound Scholarship completion has increased and there's an improved sense of trust and comfort for parents to approach school officials regarding special education services, extra-curricular opportunities, placing students in Homework Help and access other sources of support. This success has opened the door for me to collaborate with administration and serve as a school-wide coordinator for 6-8th grade Hispanic family gatherings. I am responsible for contacting families and providing the majority of communication. For our first meeting, 109 Hispanic individuals from 27 families attended. My efforts helped us gain feedback that expresses a need for bimonthly meetings to immerse these parents in their children's success, which will allow us to continue to strengthen our educational community.

I also take advantage of my training to act as a facilitator for the Strengthening Families Program offered to our Spanish speaking community. This program is a great resource for parents to solidify a good routine for students at home, which will reflect in their academic achievements. My role in the Strengthening Families Program allows me to offer a variety of systems that can be implemented at home to encourage children to stay in the right path to success. Participating families will be better equipped to assist their children in striking a more balanced home-school life.

## **8. Professional Leadership and Collaboration**

---

## PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Why should educators collaborate? How do you know when to take the lead on a project and when to support someone else? Please tell us about a time you took on a leadership role AND a time you collaborated with one or more groups (for example, teachers and parents). (Maximum word count: 800)

Collaboration should be at the forefront of everything we strive to accomplish within school. As educators we have the flexibility to insert ourselves and play different roles during our career. In doing so, we need to always keep in mind that we share the same mission, "Lynden Middle School empowers all students to reach their full potential through compassionate and skillful teaching in a respectful and challenging environment." We might think it's cliché when we hear, "there is no I in team," but it's true. Our students need more than one person to guide them; the more brains that are working together, the better off we can support our students. To reach our goals and be successful we need collaboration. An alliance is essential to guarantee school improvement that ensures greater levels of success for our learners. I am humbled and honored to work closely with such wonderful professionals who want to collaborate and share their wisdom with me.

Throughout the year I have opportunities to collaborate with my peers to improve levels of student success and achievement. During these moments I usually support others but I'm also presented with opportunities to take the lead on projects when my strengths are called for. For instance, while working with 7th grade ELL students it became obvious that there was a disconnect in communication between home and school. Understanding my background and that I fluently speak Spanish, my 7th grade teaching team asked me to collaborate to formulate a plan to engage these parents in after school meetings. During our parent meetings, we shared our ideas on how parents can be involved in the everyday learning. We also shared student expectations, the significance of establishing a healthy homework routine, and the importance of using student planners as a two-way communication tool between home and school. It was no surprise to us that the parents were eager to participate in their child's education. As we continued to meet we surveyed the parents to find out how they felt about their involvement in school and how we could work together as a team to make sure their children would succeed. We led them through the process of accessing our Skyward grading system to check on their children's academic progress and enjoyed discussions on student daily performance. Parents expressed their interest in having continued monthly meetings and were grateful to know there was someone they could communicate with. Because these meetings have been such a success, the idea of having a school-wide Hispanic parent information night came up. I knew I could use my teaming experience and strengths to take the lead. I collaborated with my administration to determine our objectives. I then obtained a list of ELL students with phone numbers, created an invitation letter, and coordinated with colleagues that could help in different areas. I created an itinerary for the evening and followed up with phone calls to personally invite each family. Parents were surprised and enthusiastic about having the opportunity to learn how to contribute to their child's education. We hosted 109 people from 27 families, providing even greater opportunities to serve our learning community. I will continue to take the lead on these meetings.

I've taken on additional leadership roles and have collaborated with several other groups of individuals. When I saw the need of a few male students that could use help developing their social skills, I pursued the help of our counselor. We met and planned a ten-week program called "Boys Advocacy and Mentoring" focused on building trust, communication, and confidence. We opened lines of communication by organizing challenges that they had to overcome together. For example, one week we blindfolded all the boys and they had to trust each other to be guided through the school. The one that impacted them the most was called "the trust fall." One student would be blindfolded and had to fall back from a table top, trusting the other boys to catch him. You could see the hesitation, but once they would talk and the others reassured the one on top they were there to support him, he would let go and fall back. Some of these students live without their parents and have a difficult time speaking about their feelings. It was nice to see them open up and share their struggles. The counselor and I debriefed after each session to start thinking about how we could improve the next meeting. I made myself available at all times to provide assistance, whether that meant setting up materials or communicating with our attendance secretary and teachers to inform them of the dates and times we met. Witnessing the confidence growth and trust develop among these young men enforced the importance of collaborating with others to achieve a common goal.

### 9. (untitled)

---

#### Resume

Please upload a copy of your resume.

PDF format

up to 1 MB

up to 2 pages

[Resume.pdf](#)

## Letters of Recommendation

Please upload three letters of recommendation. Each letter should:

Be one page in length (Letters over one page will only have the first page reviewed).  
Be on letterhead (letters from students/parents are exempted from this requirement) and have a signature.  
Be a PDF and no more than 1 MB in size.

Please Note: The first letter must be from your supervisor.

Letter writers should:

Address your professional biography, outstanding work performance and leadership and collaboration.  
Provide specific examples of how your actions have made students more successful.  
Share what distinguishes you from your peers.

### Letter 1

Please upload a letter from your supervisor.

[Molly Ref Letter.pdf](#)

### Letter 2

Please upload a letter from a colleague, student, parent or community member.

[Dirks Ref Letter.pdf](#)

### Letter 3

Please upload a letter from a colleague, student, parent or community member.

[Kristine Ref Letter.pdf](#)

## Signature Page

To complete your application, you need to:

1. [Download the signature page](#) (if you haven't already).
2. Sign it.
3. Have your principal or supervisor and district superintendent sign it.
4. Scan it to create a PDF (you can do this using a networked copier or a smart phone app or by going to your local office store).
5. Upload it into the question below.

Please upload your completed signature page

[Signature Page.pdf](#)

I verify that my letters of recommendation and the signature page I uploaded contain all required signatures. I acknowledge that if my documents are not signed, my application is considered incomplete.

Yes

**10. Thank You!**

---



Thank you for applying for Classified School Employee of the Year, Juana.

We sent your application to the [regional coordinator](#) at your local ESD. You will now compete against other applicants for your ESD's regional nomination.

Please visit [our website](#) to learn more about Washington's award winning educators and schools.

Contact [Hilary Seidel](#), Statewide Recognition Coordinator, with any questions or comments.