



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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October 9, 2015

# **The Dulles Difference: Student and Staff of the Month Program Encourages Positive School Climate**

Most of the time, being called into the principal's office means you're in trouble. However, Dulles Elementary is turning that stigma around by rewarding good behavior.

This month, first-grader Nicolas Diomedes said he enjoyed being called to the principal's office to be highlighted as the Student of the Month.

The reward program, coupled with the Staff of the Month award, is part of NLMUSD's Dulles Elementary School's Positive Behavior System to employ recognition as a way to foster good student behavior and recognize the work of teachers and staff who have made a "Dulles Difference" by contributing to a supportive learning environment.

Dulles Principal Robin Padget said the overarching goal of the program is to support a positive and inclusive school climate inside and outside of the classroom.

Superintendent Dr. Hasmik Danielian supports the idea of putting a spotlight on the role staff and students play to build community and enhance school climate.

"When kids feel recognized and acknowledged for their good behavior, that creates a very positive school culture," Danielian said. "This program is a great way to highlight what makes Dulles such a wonderful educational environment."

In her three years as principal, Padget has expanded the Student of the Month program, which has been a staple at the school for 15 years. This year Padget added an additional incentive by choosing one of the Students of the Month through a raffle to have lunch with her, receive a special book, or read to a Kindergartener.

Dulles teachers recognize one student in their class each month who exhibits character traits such as respect, responsibility, good citizenship and kindness by doing things such as helping out a friend or working especially hard on an assignment. By the end of the year, more than 100 students are celebrated for their contributions.

Padget this year also instituted a Staff of the Month award.

Staff members choose one of their peers to win the “Dulles Difference” award -- a hand-painted letter D to be passed along each month to the winning staff member. Dulles teachers often volunteer their time to offer after-school tutoring and personally reach out to parents to ensure individualized attention to their students. Gift cards to a favorite local restaurant, coffee shop or school supply store accompany the traveling staff award.

“Our staff goes above and beyond in so many ways to support students, parents and each other. We call it ‘The Dulles Difference’ – a motto that describes our school environment in which every staff member, parent and student feels special,” said Padget.

Doris Zamora, a new teacher at Dulles this year, was chosen to receive the first Dulles Difference Staff of the Month award for demonstrating love and concern for her students and for exuding enthusiasm in the workplace.

Local realtor and community member Connie Youngblood of First Team Realty donated \$1000 in gift cards to support these incentive items and also funded the cost of plaques that adorn the front office featuring photos of both the Student and Staff of the Month.

“I believe in keep helping local schools perform at high standards,” Youngblood said. “Good schools equal good neighborhoods, and I want to see Dulles Elementary continue to thrive.”

NLMUSD School Board President Jesse Urquidi thanked the Dulles community for their spirit.

“The support and positive energy created by a program like this adds an intangible element to a school that can make a real difference – the difference that creates a true community feeling,” he said.

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*Photo captions:*

*Dulles first-grader Nicolas Diomedes wins Student of the Month recognition*

*New teacher Doris Zamora with “Dulles Difference” Staff of the Month award*