

2012 Arizona ELL Teacher of the Year – Melanie Conger



Melanie Conger graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She earned her Master's in Education-Reading Curriculum and Instruction in 2010 from Grand Canyon University. Melanie currently holds an Arizona Teaching Certificate in Elementary Education. She has an SEI endorsement as well as a Reading Specialist endorsement.

Mrs. Conger has been a teacher in the Glendale Elementary School District for six years during which she has always taught ELL students in an ELD classroom. Melanie has taught first grade, a first and second grade multiage combination class, and currently teaches second grade.

Melanie is very involved in the district and community at her school and holds many leadership positions. She is a first and second year ELD Teacher Induction Coach, is on the district ELD Committee, served as a district Literacy Summer School Coordinator, and has presented multiple district and school wide professional development seminars highlighting literacy and ELD methodologies. Her commitment and dedication to her district, school, and students has not gone unnoticed. She was the 2012 Teacher of the Year at Bicentennial South Elementary School, and achieved National Board Certification in 2011.

When asked her ELL teaching philosophy, Melanie explains it is simply "Yes, we can. All too often in ELL education the focus is on what students can't do. In a teaching world overwhelmed by negativity, I ensure that my answer to anything my students are asked to do is 'Yes, we can.' I believe ELL education, and teaching in general, needs more positivity. Starting with myself, I try to be that change every time I walk on campus."

Melanie's passion is not only for teaching primary students, but in teaching ELL students. "It is an absolute honor to be an ELD teacher," Conger said. "ELD teachers have the power to truly change the lives of our ELL students. English is a difficult language to master, but we, as ELD teachers, hold the keys to unlocking English and a whole new world for our ELL students. Just because our students are learning a second language does not mean they are not capable of everything we ask them to do and more. We need to hold ourselves to the highest of teaching standards, set rigorous expectations for our kids, and support them as they learn to set these high expectations for themselves. We need to show our ELL students what is available to them through hard work and a commitment to themselves and to learning. I am proud to be an ELL teacher and wouldn't choose to do anything else."