



## Meet an Exceptional Oregon Teacher: Nicole Butler-Hooton



OREGON'S  
**TEACHER of the YEAR**  
2021 WINNER

### Teaching With Love

When new teachers go through training, they experience a curriculum crowded with subjects ranging from developmental psychology to technology in the classroom. But while they spend a great deal of time immersed in these and other vital topics, one very important aspect of teaching is sometimes overlooked in their training: How to make students feel loved in their classrooms.

### Nicole's Approach

Luckily for second-grade students at Irving Elementary School, Nicole Butler-Hooton has made making her students feel loved and accepted a cornerstone of her teaching. As a member of the Siletz and Apache Tribes, Nicole has an almost instinctive appreciation of diversity and inclusion in the classroom. "I think in order to teach a child, you have to know the child, and I think that that comes with being consistent and loving and kind," Nicole says about her teaching style. "I think understanding that each child has a unique circumstance, remembering that all students deserve respect and attention is key, and it's up to us teachers to go the extra mile to be able to give that."

### Oregon's Teacher of the Year

Nicole's unwavering commitment to her students is a big part of why she was recently named Oregon's 2021 Teacher of the Year, a title that comes with a \$5,000 award for her and a matching \$5,000 for Irving Elementary in Eugene. But more than that, it's a chance to acknowledge one of our most inspirational educators. The title will also give Nicole the opportunity to share her own equity-driven and culturally responsive teaching practices on a state and national level. As the first Native American to win the title, Nicole's win is especially exciting.

### Moving Forward

As for Nicole, she will undoubtedly continue making the students who come through her classroom feel valued for who they are as individuals. "I hope that students will remember how much I loved them and the sense of belonging they felt when they would come into my room," she said. We are fully confident that they will remember exactly that.

The Oregon Lottery\* is proud to partner with the Oregon Department of Education to recognize and reward exceptional teachers across Oregon. If you know a great teacher like Nicole, submit their name for Oregon Teacher of the Year for 2022. Nominations are open through January 31!

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