

Cedarburg teacher named LCMS teacher of the year

Cedarburg — First Immanuel third-grade teacher Casey Miller was selected as the 2013 Elementary Educator of the Year by the South Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Miller was selected from among hundreds of the teachers in the 63 elementary schools of the South Wisconsin District of the LCMS, and this is the second year in a row that a First Immanuel teacher was selected for this honor. (fourth/fifth-grade Language Arts teacher Nicky Valdez won last year.) Miller was nominated by First Immanuel principal Dawn Walker because of the innovation she has shown in virtually every aspect of her classroom and profession.



Photo submitted

Casey Miller

Academically, Miller is committed to using innovative best practices to solidify concepts being taught. She has also successfully implemented language arts and math centers in her room to allow one-on-one time with each student, so she can assess their mastery of concepts and differentiate instruction for each student. Miller also innovates to improve her classroom environment. This year she is piloting a new choice-based discipline program, based on Rick Morris's "New Management Handbook," which aims to stop students' negative choices and reward positive choices. She is also committed to strengthening the home-school connection; her class' language arts and math centers flow well because she has parent volunteers helping on a regular basis.

In terms of technology, Miller was instrumental in the success of First Immanuel's iPad pilot program in the third-grade classrooms last year. The program required extra training, time and effort as she sought to successfully and meaningfully integrate the technology in her classroom. Her success ultimately helped lead to the expansion of one-to-one technology in all First Immanuel classrooms.

Miller has a master's degree in reading, as well as a passion for best practices in reading instruction. When FILS reviewed its entire elementary reading curriculum last year, Miller used her knowledge and experience in balanced literacy programs to inform the process and help educate other staff members. Now that First Immanuel's new reading curriculum is being implemented, she continues to help other teachers be successful in this new approach.

Finally, Miller was nominated because of the way she lives out her strong Christian faith. She is one of the leaders of the church's middle school youth group, and she regularly attends worship services, daily morning devotions, and a bi-weekly Bible study group. She also recently led her class in raising funds and clothing items for a boy in need.

"I am humbled and honored to receive this award. Coming to work each day to spend my time with energetic and enthusiastic kids is a great privilege!" Miller said. "The award truly is a reflection of our whole school; I have been blessed with a tremendously talented and caring staff to work alongside, a principal who leads with integrity and families who are supportive and value an education rooted in Christ."