

Best in State

Heidi Crumrine '01 is the 2018 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year

Tuesday, April 3, 2018



“As educators, our primary aim should be ensuring that all students, regardless of ZIP code, family circumstances, attitude, sexual orientation, race, class or gender, have equal access to an equitable education.”

Ask Heidi Jones Crumrine '01 what drives her as an educator, and that's what New Hampshire's 2018 Teacher of the Year will tell you.



HEIDI CRUMRINE (PHOTO: ELIZABETH FRANTZ/CONCORD MONITOR)

Crumrine, who began working at Concord High School 15 years ago, caught the attention of the Teacher of the Year's selection committee in part because of her commitment to all students, with Frank Edelblut, New Hampshire's commissioner for education, praising her “exemplary leadership abilities, professional growth

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and achievement and total commitment to excellence in education.”

Tom Sica, principal at Concord High School, wrote in his letter of recommendation for the award that “Heidi has invested herself in creating an environment in which students are known and valued ... Consistently, she works to develop and implement lessons that engage students and challenge them to think critically.”

An example? “This spring, my students will be writing ‘Passion Letters’ about issues that matter to them,” Crumrine says. “When I visit our Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., in early May, I will be hand-delivering their letters to them. I want our legislators to hear what matters to our young people, and I also want my students to feel power in using their own voices to advocate for themselves.”

That’s not all Crumrine hopes to accomplish as New Hampshire Teacher of the Year, however. “I plan to use my platform to talk about my passions in education: advocating for equity in education, offering student choice as a way to engage students in their reading and speaking positively about the remarkable work that is happening in our public schools in New Hampshire,” she says.

For Crumrine, educational equity means asking herself over and over again, “Am I reaching out to that angry student who is rude to me? The one who plagiarized her last essay? The one whose parent sent me a nasty email that kept me up all night? Because those students deserve access to the same education as the ones who do not challenge me in those ways,” she says. “Equity does not mean everyone gets the same thing; it means everyone gets what they need.”

Crumrine is a strong advocate for public education. “The words of Shanna Peeples, the 2015 National Teacher of the Year captures

this perfectly for me: ‘A school is a promise that a community makes to itself that it will invest in its young people.’ That promise should not end with a high school graduation, and a strong public university like UNH is a continuation of that promise,” Crumrine explains. “Especially with the skyrocketing costs of higher education, an accessible and affordable public university is not only necessary but integral to the livelihood and success of any community.”

At UNH, Crumrine says she was fortunate to have professors who made her feel noticed, and those experiences have resonated in her own classroom. “It’s not just about curriculum; it’s about forming connections and relationships that allow the learning to happen. No one is going to take a risk in an environment where they don’t feel safe to do so,” Crumrine says. “I strive to encourage my students to fail forward, just like my UNH professors did for me.”

As New Hampshire Teacher of the Year, she says, “I get a chance to use my voice to highlight my students’ voices. Their stories are the ones that I tell when I speak about providing equitable access to education, and it is their voices that inspire me to keep going.”

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