

## 2018 National Teacher of the Year Finalist



### **Mandy Manning**

2018 Washington Teacher of the Year

Joel E. Ferris High School -  
Newcomer Center  
Spokane Public Schools  
Spokane, Washington

School Profile: Urban, Traditional  
Public

District Size: 30,832

School Size: 1,742

Subject: English Language Arts, Specialist/Interventionist,  
English Language Development

Grade: 9-12

Years in Teaching: 18

Years in Position: 6

## Candidate's Resume Information

### Education

School	Northwest Institute of Literary Arts
Degree	MFA
Major	Fiction Writing
Years Attended	2012

School	West Texas A & M University
Degree	MA
Major	Communications
Years Attended	2005

School	Eastern Washington University
Degree	BA
Major	Electronic Media and Filmic Arts
Years Attended	1998

### Certification

Certification	Washington Professional Teacher Certification - English Language Arts (Secondary)
Year Obtained	2015

Certification	Washington Teacher Certification - English Language Development (Endorsement)
Year Obtained	2010

### Experience

Title	Adjunct Instructor - ELL Methods in Language Arts and Reading
Organization	Whitworth University
Years in Position	2014 - present

Title	Teacher - ELD Newcomer Center
Organization	Joel E. Ferris High School, Spokane Public Schools
Years in Position	2011 - present

Title	Teacher - Video Production, ESL Levels 4 and 2
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Organization	Lewis and Clark High School, Spokane Public Schools
Years in Position	2008 - 2011

Title	Teacher and Assistant Teacher (Japan)
Organization	Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications, Bronx, NY; Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program, Sapporo; Amarillo High School, Amarillo, Texas; Spearman High School, Spearman, TX
Years in Position	2001 - 2008

Title	Teacher
Organization	United States Peace Corps, Armenia
Years in Position	1999 - 2001

### Leadership

Position	Member
Organization	Washington Paraeducator Board
Years in Position	2017 - present

Position	National Board Cohort Facilitator
Organization	Spokane Education Association
Years in Position	2015 - present

Position	Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program Cadre Trainer (2015 - present); Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Trainer & National Board Teacher Leadership Academy (2017 - present)
Organization	Washington Education Association
Years in Position	2015 - present

Position	Zone Director (2014 - 2016), Recording Secretary and Communications Chair (2010 - present)
Organization	Spokane Education Association
Years in Position	2010 - present

### Awards and Other Recognitions

Award/Recognition	National Education Association Foundation Global Fellow to China
Year Received	2017



Award/Recognition	National Education Association Foundation's California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence
Year Received	2017

Award/Recognition	Kim Plemons Leadership Award, Spokane Education Association
Year Received	2015

Award/Recognition	Outstanding Graduate Student, West Texas A & M University
Year Received	2005

**Candidate’s Professional Biography**

Mandy Manning teaches English and math to refugee and immigrant students in the Newcomer Center at Ferris High School in Spokane, Washington, where she is her students' first teacher once they arrive in the U.S.

Mandy began her career as a teacher in the Peace Corps in Armenia. She has also taught in Japan and in schools across the U.S. This global perspective infuses her classroom. Mandy uses experiential projects like map-making to help her students process trauma, celebrate their home countries and culture, and learn about their new community. Mandy has hosted more than 160 teaching candidates in the Newcomer Center. Many teach their first lesson in the Center. For others, the Center is their intercultural field experience. Mandy aims to expose as many future teachers, colleagues, and community members as possible to the diverse environment of the Center. District leaders, school board members, and legislators are regular visitors to her classroom.

As a National Board Certified Teacher, Mandy is an ambassador and mentor to her colleagues and is known for her collaborative style and determination to bring marginalized voices into decision-making. Mandy lead a diverse committee in re-evaluating her school’s discipline plan and adopting an evidence-based behavioral intervention plan that enhanced academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. This effort resulted in a 74 percent decrease in suspensions in the first year.

**Candidate’s Application Questions**

Question	Answer
Describe a lesson that defines you as a teacher. How did you engage	I believe we learn by engaging with the world and people around us and learning new ways of living. My lesson on giving and receiving directions for Newcomer English Language Learners reflects that belief. Yermos is from Tanzania. He came to the U.S. in July, 2016 after living most of his life in a refugee camp. He started in the Newcomer Center only two months



<p>all students in the learning and how did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson?</p>	<p>after arriving in our country. He didn't know English and his experiences as a refugee had interrupted his education. Yermos is typical of the students I teach. In this lesson, I start by introducing the language and concepts we will learn: giving and receiving directions and basic map reading. Next, we make a connection to my students' background knowledge. We create maps of their home-country neighborhood and/or town. Then they share these maps with their classmates. This activity honors their experiences and existing skills. It allows students to share their cultures with their classmates without forcing them to relive traumatic events. One of my students, an unaccompanied minor from Eritrea, came home from school in her home country to find her mother murdered. Making and sharing her map helped her stay connected with her home by focusing on something positive. The activity made her feel proud of her culture. It empowered her to share a piece of her story without reliving the horrible experience of losing her mother. My students learn language best in context and connected to their daily experiences. Taking them into the community is essential. In part two of this lesson, we go out to sketch the city surrounding our school. Some years, depending upon the group of students, we even venture downtown. We have basic conversations and ask for directions to places in the neighborhood we are exploring. As we walk through the city, students draw what they see. We bring their work back and create a class map. It takes up nearly the entire wall. Students work in groups to build a portion of the map, drawing the streets and buildings, each student adding their own flare, with a beautiful tree here and perfect penmanship there. Students take ownership, and we use the map throughout the rest of the unit. When students have physical impairments, we explore our school instead. We walk the halls and engage other students and teachers in conversation. We compare our school layout to their home country schools. Recently we had a family of Muslim students from Malaysia. In Malaysia, they went to their teacher's home for lessons with a group of children of all ages. This interested all of the students, because most had traditional single-grade classrooms, with one teacher. Even the traditional classrooms students attended are interesting. Sometimes students sit on the floor. Some classrooms are made up of long tables with students sitting shoulder-to-shoulder. By the close of the unit, students are transformed because they are more connected to the community around our school. I also extend this lesson into students' neighborhoods. I have them walk through their neighborhoods and sketch them, taking note of important places and neighbor's homes. This encourages them to learn about their own little parts of the city. Coming into a new community is scary. For my students, life in Spokane is vastly different from life in their home countries. The culture is different, and students are not confident traveling in their new home. One Marshallese student, who started school only two weeks after arriving, didn't speak for</p>
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	<p>nearly a month. Halfway through each day he would put his head down and check out. I worried about him. Then, this unit came along and he had to leave the classroom. I learned he loved to draw and sharing about his country made him smile. After exploring the school, he made friends both inside and outside of the classroom. He began to speak up, and I knew he'd be ok. Giving students the language to ask questions about and understand their community empowers them. They feel less like outsiders. Yermos, my student from Tanzania, now goes to the board, asks questions of his classmates, and writes their responses. He is eager for group work and excited to be in class with his friends and to share his learning. This lesson embodies my philosophy that teaching is relational. Through it, I build strong relationships with my students. My students build relationships with one another, and we all build relationships with the community.</p>
<p>Describe a project or initiative you have been involved in. What was your role, and how did this contribute to the overall school culture?</p>	<p>In 2016, our school and district began to have discipline issues we'd never experienced before. Elementary teachers were evacuating classrooms due to violent students. Students were running away. A group of girls at one middle school caused their entire school to go into lockdown. Our district had the most out-of-school suspensions in the state. Students of color were disproportionately affected. As the Newcomer teacher, knowing my students come from dangerous and violent places, I wanted to ensure my students felt safe. I also wanted to make sure they would get culturally responsive, fair, and progressive discipline should the need arise. In 2014, Ferris was one of the first schools in Spokane to use Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS). Unfortunately, the implementation was spotty. Not all staff were trained or informed of the change, and this affected our discipline. In spring of 2016, I asked for a meeting with the administrative team to discuss my concerns. At that meeting, we talked about the issues happening in our feeder schools. We read the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) language on discipline and the plan we had in place. We discovered discipline decisions were being made from the top down. School staff had little to no input and, therefore, limited buy-in to the process. We needed change. I proposed we form a committee to create a new plan with representatives from all stakeholder groups (teachers, paraeducators, etc.). John O'Dell, our student services administrator, and I co-facilitated. Our team of nine members met four times that spring/summer. We worked to create a new plan that adhered to the CBA language, met the needs of all stakeholders, supported PBIS, and provided students a progressive discipline plan. The previous plan incorporated only administrator input, but this new plan included us all. We held a training at the start of 2016-17 to put the new plan in place immediately. We explained restorative justice and our focus on relationship building over punishment and outlined roles and responsibilities. After that first year, we saw a 74% decrease in</p>



	<p>suspensions. Unexcused absences decreased by 14%, and unexcused tardies decreased by 18%. Staff noted an increase in respect and pride among students. The team now meets bi-monthly to assess what's working and what needs improvement. We give regular surveys to staff and hold meetings with each group of stakeholders. Training is an important part of our plan. We recently held a six-hour training on culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM). The first element of CRCM is classroom connections, so it fits well with our restorative justice focus on building and repairing relationships. This training provides staff even more strategies for learning and doing this, and we plan to continue it in spring. We now have an adaptable and effective discipline plan that stakeholders understand and support. The district now uses our plan as a model for other schools. Most importantly, students feel safer, discipline is culturally responsive, and more students are staying in school.</p>
<p>How do you ensure that your students are connected to the world around them? Describe the ways in which you do this.</p>	<p>My students come from across the world: Syria, Chuuk, Iraq, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Myanmar, Sudan, Mexico, and Tanzania. They are rooted in their own cultures, but they don't know a lot about their peers' cultures. They come with plenty of bias and ideas about other culture groups. Like American students, most of what my students know about the other cultures comes from television and the Internet. This leads to misunderstandings and misinformation on all sides. It's my job to help newcomers learn about and experience real life in the U.S. This can be difficult. In the current political climate, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric is rampant. As soon as my students arrive, they are afraid they will have to leave. Most of my students come to the U.S. seeking safety, but they don't always feel safe here. This makes it hard for them to share and learn from others. I must help them understand current events, know their rights, and provide a safe and welcoming environment. I also need to foster compassion and empathy in my students and in the students outside our classroom. Because of the diversity of my students, my classroom is already global. As a Global Fellow through the National Education Association Foundation, I am challenging myself to create new opportunities for students to share their cultures with others. This year, my students work in the student store during lunch where they interact with the larger student body. This is good for my students' language practice, and it is great to see mainstream students accept and welcome them. It also benefits mainstream students, as they practice patience and compassion and see Newcomers as fellow students. These interactions at the student store help both groups positively connect with one another. I've always encouraged mainstream students to visit and volunteer in the center. Two state legislators have also recently come to help us at the store. District leaders, campus resource officers, community members of color, and professional writers have also visited my classroom. The visits help my students learn about school and city rules and laws, cultural</p>





	<p>expectations in terms of behavior and hygiene, our school system, and how to express themselves effectively. In return, my students have taught these leaders where they come from, who they are, and the beauty they add to our school district. This year, as a part of my NEA Foundation Global Fellowship, I developed a website (<a href="http://thenewcomercenter.edublogs.org">thenewcomercenter.edublogs.org</a>) for my program. Students share their cultures through short bios. In the future, I aim for students to engage with people who visit our blog via comments. We are in the early stages of this site. Each unit I teach includes cultural connections. We use these to create content for our blog, like a recent lesson about the flags of my students' home countries. The key to transcending the classroom is creating opportunities for two-way communication. That is what I try to do every day for my students and their new community.</p>
<p>What do you consider to be a major public education issue today? Describe why this is important to you, and how you are addressing this from your classroom.</p>	<p>Each year, Gallup asks thousands of U.S. students about hope. The 2016 results revealed that 47% of students feel hopeful, 34% feel “stuck,” and 19% are “discouraged.” In fact, hope has been trending downward every year. Lack of hope decreases resiliency. When students are not resilient they struggle to succeed both academically and socially. I believe this sense of hopelessness and lack of resiliency is due in part to our increasingly digital culture and decreasing sense of safety. As public educators, we must address this issue. Technology cannot replace meaningful human interactions. Despite our many friends online, people feel increasingly isolated and alone. When powerful people communicate divisive messages that separate us based on our identities, the result is lack of empathy and an inability to relate to one another. Hate speech has risen and there have been over 270 mass shootings in our nation in 2017 alone. These trends impact hope in our classrooms. September 11th happened my first year as a full-time teacher. Our nation turned inward, but I focused outward. I needed my students to understand the world is not scary and that our connections with one another make life meaningful. Hope was paramount to this message. In my current classroom I model acceptance, non-judgment, respect, and celebration with students and my teaching partner, Maria Echeverri, a Bilingual Specialist. Each lesson focuses on language that connects us. For example, we all have family. When learning family words, we chart those words in the languages in our class and share family trees. These common experiences connect us and help us understand each other better. Developing empathy and compassion for others impacts relationships and builds hope. Recently, a project-based learning class studied modern migrations of refugees. We decided to introduce our classes to each other. The mainstream students had no idea that ELL students represent 25 of the 30 countries they studied. American students saw these cultures hidden in plain sight at their own school. As a result they began to develop compassion for the experiences of their peers. In addition to influencing school culture, I seek to change the hearts and</p>





	<p>minds of decision-makers. I've planned and led cultural responsiveness training, invited district leaders to our classroom, and sent a monthly newsletter to legislators. As a result we've had visits from two senators and two representatives. These efforts to build real human relationships inside and outside our school walls help students feel less isolated. When leaders get to know our students they have compassion for our schools and empathy for our needs. With increased support from decision-makers, we can better meet the needs of our students. By inviting outside guests into our classrooms, we help them feel more comfortable with the increasing diversity of our community and we help our students feel more safe and secure. We all become more hopeful, resilient, and successful.</p>
<p>As the 2017 National Teacher of the Year, you serve as a spokesperson and representative for teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the general public?</p>	<p>Let's teach our students to be fearless. Let's teach them to be brave when confronted with uncertainty. Brave when they fail. Brave in meeting new people. Brave in seeking opportunities to experience things outside of their understanding. When we move out of our comfort zones, visit new places, listen to other's thoughts, and share our own opinions, we become compassionate and open. We also help others to be fearless. Teaching fearlessness is the first step in creating a more hopeful, safer, and kinder society where everyone can be productive, global citizens. My students are already fearless. They have no choice. They come to the U.S. to escape. They've faced war, extreme poverty, religious and political persecution, and the loss of family members. One student's brother died in his arms. Another hid in a cave to escape slaughter. They are uprooted from their homes and moved from country to country until they land here in Spokane. In the Newcomer Center they meet classmates from around the world. Often the only thing they have in common is learning English. Still, they are excited and hopeful, eager to communicate and learn from one another. They do not allow fear to limit them. I met Hussein in 2012. He was 20 years old. From the first day, he greeted everyone with a smile and immediately stood out as a leader. He made friends with all the kids in our class and even ventured out to make friends with American students. He said "yes" to every opportunity. When he found himself homeless only six months after arriving in Spokane, he refused to give up and welcomed every new experience. Today, he is a licensed cosmetologist, a productive member of our community, and truly one of the most compassionate and hopeful people I know. As he cut my hair the other day, I asked Hussein, "What made you so fearless when you first came here?" He said he had no choice. In Iraq his father had been murdered. He lost many friends and family, and learned that life is not guaranteed. He knew he'd been given a second chance in the U.S., and he wasn't going to let fear stop him from taking advantage of every opportunity. Part of that was accepting everyone around him and building relationships. He knew firsthand what hate could do, and he chose hope instead. But fearlessness is not just for Newcomers. We also need to teach American students how to overcome</p>



fear. I've seen incredible fearlessness in two gay students in rural Texas, in a homeless student in the Bronx, and in the child of an alcoholic here in Spokane. I've also seen fearlessness in those who volunteer in my classroom. They are seeking new experiences and want to know these students who are so unlike themselves. That is brave. Growing up, I attended six different schools and moved 12 times. As an adult, I set out on my own adventures. I joined the Peace Corps in Armenia, taught in Japan, and worked in states across our country. The discomfort of adapting to new environments and new people helped me learn to welcome change and to accept people as they are. Young people don't have to move a dozen times to learn fearlessness. As educators, parents, and citizens, we can challenge them to learn about other places. Introduce them to what's unique about our own communities. Invite them to explore the world in our classrooms, in our homes, through our lessons, and our activities. If we do not, the consequences will be disastrous. We will further separate and isolate ourselves from one another. All of us together make this world interesting and good. We must teach our students to overcome their fears and seek out new experiences. The only way to teach fearlessness is to show it. We must show kindness by getting to know our students, learning about them, and showing them how to connect. Let's do what we do in my Newcomer class. Get out into the community and talk with our neighbors. Give our students opportunities to meet new people. Go places where things are unfamiliar, and help them experience things they don't yet understand. Let's teach them to smile at strangers and to ask questions. Let's ensure that acceptance, compassion, empathy, and hope are part of every student's school experience today and in the future. Be fearless. Teach fearless.

### **Candidate's Supporting Evidence**

[Recommendation Letter 1](#)

[Recommendation Letter 2](#)

[Recommendation Letter 3](#)

