



Tumalo Community School

Dear Selection Committee,

I am honored and truly humbled to have the opportunity to write this letter. I hope that by the end of it, you'll have an idea of who I am and why I chose education as my profession.

Let me begin by sharing a little bit about myself. I am a 3rd generation Redmond, Oregon native, born and raised in a very large extended family. I am the proud father of two 4th generation Redmond kiddos as well. Growing up, my extended family was heavily involved in major community activities. Each fall, my mother's family would help to organize and host an enormous fundraiser called "Lord's Acre" at Powell Butte Christian Church. This experience and others like it instilled in me a strong sense of community and servant leadership. My core beliefs are grounded in these values. Ultimately, those experiences shaped the school leader I am today.

"It's all about love." Those were my Grandfather's last words to me. He was a man who loved people and loved his community. As a teacher, coach, and now principal, I recognize that great learning begins with great relationships. A student's basic needs must be met before that student can attend to their studies appropriately. One of the most basic needs is feeling safe and cared for. It is my intent that every student, staff member, and parent feels genuinely cared for and loved.

One of my favorite things about Tumalo School is something we call "The Tumalo Way." It isn't something I created or brought to Tumalo, it is however a belief that I support strongly. The basic idea of "The Tumalo way" is the idea that we give kids what they need regardless of their circumstances, eligibility, or academic standing. If we identify a need, we find a way to help. On the heels of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we are finding that this idea is more important than ever. Student attendance is at an all-time low. Schools are not only faced with lagging foundational skills in math and reading but also, social-emotional learning deficits. Students are re-learning how to communicate, share, and navigate frustration. In order to overcome these challenges we must build and maintain a school environment that students WANT to come to. We want them to beg their parents to come to school. We NEED them to be here, safe, sound, and among their peers. One of our school wide initiatives this year has been "kindness." We spend time teaching students what kindness means and how it might look. We reward students for showing and exhibiting kindness to themselves and others. At school and in society, we need to make kindness part of our everyday life.

As an instructional leader, I firmly believe that my role is to help create an environment where teachers can do what they do best, so that students can grow and learn at a high rate. This environment starts with developing strong relationships built on love, genuine caring, and respect. I owe so much to the Redmond School District and it is my goal to continue giving the same educational opportunities to all students that were provided to me. This is my home.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Platt".

Samuel A. Platt

Dear Sir/Madam:

I write at this time in support of the application of Sam Platt, Principal at The Tumalo Community School in Bend, OR, for the Gold Star category for educator of the year. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

I first met Sam in my capacity as VP of the Tumalo School Parent Teacher Committee (PTC). Having been selected as the new principal at Tumalo Community School (K-5) for the 2022-2023 school year, Sam and his wife attended our annual auction party in May, 2022, 4 months before he would even start the job. He happily grabbed the microphone to introduce himself to the hundreds of parents in attendance, and to start spreading the love and community immediately. We were able to raise enough funds at that event to provide a music teacher for the school, partly thanks to Sam's entreaties, and in my capacity as Chair of the music program for the PTC I got to work with Sam from Day 1.

Sam immediately embraced the music program and the PTC and, before I could even meet with him, he had slotted two days a week to cycle every class through the music program for 45 minutes a week. It amazed me how prepared he was, and how studied he was of the Tumalo School's older traditions, yet how adept he was at coming up with new traditions to seamlessly integrate with the old. For example, Sam adopted "Kindness" as the theme for the entire school, prepared various programs to stress Kindness with the staff and students, and had the hallways peppered with Kindness-based themes and art before the school year even started. The first month I attended his Kindness awards, a new tradition, to make the students feel rewarded and empowered, and the smiles of the kids and the parents have never abated. Take a look at the pictures of Sam with the weekly "Terrific Tiger" winners and you will see in his and the kids faces the sort of culture that he imbued in the school from the onset.

I will let the teacher recommendation letters speak for themselves as for the day to day. In my capacity on the PTC, my next major interaction with Sam was when he came to me ready to start planning an amazing Holiday concert for the kids and families. The school had not previously had even a music program, much less a holiday concert, and it was a big endeavor. On that he was ready with every angle. First he picked a day and time that would allow all families to make it there to see their children perform. I will talk more about that later but Sam has always been especially sensitive to the less privileged children and families and almost everything he does has some component of empathy and extra caring for those in need.

Right off the bat, with 265 kids, 30 staff, and 420 parents, it was clear there would not be enough room in the gymnasium for everyone to attend, well over Fire Marshall limits. Sam had a plan for that. First, he created a "dress rehearsal" day so that all grandparents and friends of families could attend the concert. Then for the night-of event he came up with a scheme, with walkie talkies and detailed maps, to bring only the performing class in and have the students in their classrooms when not

performing. He created a standing room area for late arrivals, taping off everything with precision. He arranged for the entire event to be streamed on Facebook live, so that nobody would miss it. He arranged for risers for the stage, seats from the district, and got volunteers to man the soccer fields lighted up with rental klieg lights for parking. He worked hours with our team decorating the gym, leading every item every step of the way. He scrutinized song choices, to ensure a cross section of every culture was recognized, resulting in the Ukrainian Bell Song (played by kids on xylophones), Kwanzaa Rocks, and Shalom Chaverim being included with the traditional Xmas classics. The concert was a true "Happening", building confidence and joy in the kiddos, and massively enhancing our Tumalo community. Nobody has stopped smiling since.

While on that subject, as we were cleaning up the gym from the concert, Sam already was planning the Spring Slam concert. In short there will be a stage built in the back soccer fields, each grade is learning classic rock songs, and there will be a local musician playing for the kids and families afterwards. This guy just does not know the word "No" when it comes to things for the kids. This event will also feature performances from some of the other after-school Clubs Sam created, as detailed below.

One day I went to Sam and said that the PTC wanted to help sponsor some after school extracurricular clubs. Well this brief mention was all Sam needed, and within a week he had found the money and staffing to start the following clubs for the kids: (i) Garden Science Club; (ii) Math Club; (iii) Performing Arts Drama club; (iv) Art Club; (v) Creation Station (art from famous books) club; (vi) Novel Dreamers writing club; (vii) Robotics Club ; and (viii) Free Guitar Lessons for 5th Graders. I proposed merely a Drama club, Sam took it on his own initiative to not only create all the others, but to find the teachers, parents and funding to get those done. I was blown away. Then get this....when more kids applied for the clubs than spots that were available, Sam cleaved them into two and ensured that every single kid got to participate in an after school activity.

Sam has attended every single parent-teacher committee meeting and has encouraged staff to do the same. At one of the meetings we decided this year's theme would be "The Comeback Kids", meant to impart that after two years of remote and pandemic school, children in K-5 were behind where they needed to be when they left the nest to go to middle school, where they are still teaching to pre-pandemic curricular levels. So Sam took it upon himself to form a study group of teachers, staff and experts to discern what manpower, tools and technology would enable our children to catchup to where they need to be and spring ahead academically. The results of that effort are being woven into our PTC fundraising efforts and will, hopefully, be enacted for the kids in the 2023-2024 school year.

There's plenty more. For example, Sam took a pie in the face from every kid in school after the students met their jogathon goals. He reads to kids daily, he manages

every discipline issue with kindness and empowerment...he helps sweep the gym for goodness sakes. When his youngest son, Phillip, who is in Kindergarten with my daughter, developed a heart condition, Sam missed one day of school and has been dealing with that in his typical brave, indefatigable manner on a day to day basis without affecting his work or the school.

In sum, we are lucky to have Sam and hope and expect to have him for decades. If anyone is deserving of a "Gold Star" it is Sam, who shed a few tears when I told him about this. Thank you so much for holding this contest and for your consideration of this most-excellent man for your Gold Star award.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Bergman
Parent of K and 1st Grader
V.P. Tumalo School PTC
davebergman32@gmail.com

P.S. I neglected to mention as I alluded to how insanely caring Sam is for those less fortunate. Approximately 65% of our school students would qualify for free lunches. Sam comes up with an array of ideas to ensure all kids and families have every opportunity. From translating communications into Spanish, to holding a "lottery" where kids were called to the office to surreptitiously "*win*" tickets for their families to our annual dinner/dance party, to working with after school programs. I don't want to make this sound too sappy, but he is 100% genuinely caring.

Mark Strelcheck

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markstrelcheck@gmail.com

March 10th, 2023

OnPoint Community Credit Union

Excellence in Education
P.O. Box 3750
Portland, OR 97208

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to you in support of Tumalo Community School principal, Sam Platt, for Educator of the Year. As a parent, as well as the Tumalo School Parent Teacher Committee President, I wholeheartedly recommend Sam for this honor.

Sam has only been in his current position at Tumalo since the start of the school year and what impressed me during his interview was the fact that he grew up and graduated from the Redmond, OR school district and had such a strong commitment from that early age to want to give back to his hometown. His resume proves that commitment.

I have been fortunate to get to know Sam over the past handful of months and have found him to be a genuine and humble, servant leader. His passion for our children and families as well as the community we live in is impressive. He has been able to launch programs to better educate, plan assemblies to motivate and take care of his staff of teachers and auxiliary employees without obstacle. All of this is done with a tremendous smile and pure heart.

His partnership with our Parent/Teacher group has been tremendous. He is willing to do silly things as rewards for the students, he thoughtfully helps us to work out details regarding events and he has a deep knowledge of the school district for which we are grateful.

I am truly excited that Sam has arrived in Tumalo. His tenure here will be filled with high water marks that will be difficult to beat. I look forward to seeing his name announced as Educator of the Year.

Sincerely,

Mark Strelcheck

Parent & Tumalo Community School PTC President

Deb Johnson
Tumalo Community School
Tumalo, Oregon 97703
(541) 490-1176

March 6, 2023

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to write this letter to recommend Sam Platt for the OnPoint Credit Union Gold Star Award. Sam is the principal of our school and I've had the wonderful opportunity to be part of his teaching staff this year. I am also a member of our school leadership team and I have had the privilege of working alongside Sam with other teachers as we team up to make school wide decisions.

From the moment Sam became our administrator he fit perfectly into the Tumalo School community. From day one Sam began working on getting to know each of his staff, students and parents personally. His positivity and friendliness is contagious and we are blessed to have him leading our school. Sam is a very good listener and makes people feel that they are really heard and supported.

Not only is Sam consistently kind and respectful to students, staff and parents but he does his job with excellence by focusing on the success of each and every student. He also has the ability to help regulate students in stressful situations and follows through when discipline is needed. Sam spends a lot of time every day involved in the day to day routines in our school. He isn't an administrator that stays in his office but is out and about within the school every day. You can tell he enjoys his job and is "all in"!

Sam is able to multitask and I am impressed with the way he "juggles" all the responsibilities in his day. He is purposeful, prepared, punctual and organized. He is able to make important decisions regarding student achievement, behavior and safety in a calm and timely manner. Some of his responsibilities fall outside of the school day and Sam has done an incredible job organizing after school enrichment clubs, working alongside the PTC and supporting events for our school.

I have never once heard Sam complain and his positive outlook sets a tone in our school. I believe without a doubt that Sam is deserving of this award. Tumalo School teaches the students to focus on the following character traits: integrity, effort, responsibility, respect, perseverance, gratitude, empathy and teamwork. These are the exact traits that describe Sam Platt. Please consider Sam for the Onpoint Credit Union Gold Star Award!

Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Deb Johnson
Third Grade Teacher



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March 3rd, 2023

Dear On Point Credit Union,

I would like to support the nomination of Sam Platt for your award. Principal Platt has only come to Tumalo Elementary in the last year, but he has quickly made his presence known.

As a long time resident of the Redmond area and an experienced employee of the Redmond School District, Sam Platt has an integral understanding of the people and places of Central Oregon. He has used that knowledge to help connect with the Tumalo community.

He was able to embrace the traditions that have made Tumalo Elementary a wonderful place to educate children for years, but at the same time introduce new ideas and practices that will accelerate student learning. Sam Platt connects with people and brings them into the community and finds a way for them to belong.

Sam has begun the process of recreating the unique features of the school that were lost in the pandemic. He has already started to bring inspectors in to examine the stability of the old ropes course in order to repair it and create a singular experience for Tumalo students.

Because of this the community has wrapped around Principal Platt and have endorsed him as the leader they want for their children now and into the future. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Charan Cline Ed.D
Superintendent



Tumalo Community School
19835 2nd St, Bend, OR 97703
www.redmond.k12.or.us

March 11, 2023

Selection Committee,

I am writing this letter of recommendation to honor Sam Platt, principal at Tumalo Community School in Bend, Oregon. Sam would be an excellent candidate for the Gold Star Award through Onpoint Community Credit Union's Prize in Education.

As a teacher it is important to have a Principal who cares about the students, the staff, the school, and the community. A principal who understands the value of educators' time and effort, and a principal who goes above and beyond to show his appreciation of those who work with them. I am proud to say Sam Platt does all of those things.

Sam began his year as principal here at Tumalo Community School ensuring a bond between all staff members through team building activities, as well as opportunities to get together around the community. He has made efforts to help all students choose and feel kindness for each other. He achieves this by creating monthly character trait themes that students learn about and strive to emulate, with students from each class recognized for practicing that character trait particularly well. Students then get to be recognized in front of the whole school for their hard work.

Sam truly cares about his students and staff. He has expressed the importance of a strong partnership between the school and its community. Sam has provided staff experiences to hear about and be involved with our local supporters. He has spent countless evenings working with the Tumalo PTC to develop partnerships and provide opportunities for parents and community members to be a part of our Tumalo team, creating fantastic experiences for students AND staff. In addition, he shows he values our time and effort by giving us extra planning options, he helps in our classrooms, and even gives the weekly pick-me-up of extra coffee and donuts in the staff room. We love Sam Platt!

I can attest that Sam's character, hard work, love and appreciation for all is exceptional. We are so lucky here at Tumalo Community School to have him as our Principal. To have someone who strengthens, cares for, and works hard for our school and community is truly a blessing. Sam would be an outstanding recipient of the Onpoint Gold Star award.

Sincerely,

Madison Anderson
Kindergarten Teacher
Tumalo Community School

SAMUEL PLATT PORTFOLIO ITEMS

While it is impossible to enumerate all the special things Sam does day to day, here are a handful of examples that comprise the portfolio of a very special Principal:

- 1) The Music Program: Redmond School District does not provide funding for a music program. Every educator knows how essential a musical education is to not only confidence and culture, but to the core curriculum. Sam took it upon himself to work with the Parent Teacher Committee to raise enough funds to hire a music teacher. He made a dedicated space for the music program and helped obtain and safeguard hundreds of instruments. He dedicated a slot for each child to cycle through music each week for 50 minutes.
- 2) The Winter Concert: Sam was the shepherd of a true “*happening*” with the winter concert. He created a program where every culture would be recognized by combining traditional Christmas songs with Kwaanza, Hannukah and even Ukrainian songs. Each grade learned two songs and then the entire school together belted out a rousing rendition of Feliz Navidad. Sam ensured that every family could be there by getting all teachers to return in the evening for a 6:00 show, and since the capacity of the gym exceeded Fire Marshall limits Sam arranged for grandparents and other friends and relatives come to a “dress rehearsal” the day before. He helped set up chairs and bleachers and decorate himself, helped me move the piano for goodness sakes, and managed parking in the soccer field with rented solar klieg lights. Then he helped get the event livestreamed on Facebook Live where it was watched by 2000 people around the world. (I have tried to upload the entire concert digital file as part of his portfolio but it is a large file and may not go through. Sam can be seen at 4:45 with some housekeeping announcements, and again at 22:15 introducing the program.). As he was cleaning up the gym afterwards, Sam was already talking about our end of year event, where kids will be singing classic rock songs on a stage to be built outside. AMAZING.
- 3) Catch Up From Covid: Sam worked with the parent teacher committee to develop a 2023-2024 mission entitled “The Comeback Kids”, recognizing that while his students have been severely hampered by the pandemic, middle school curriculums have not changed and that an expanded effort is needed to catch kids up to be ready for the next stage of their schooling. Sam created a study group of teachers to discern what manpower, tools and technology are needed to catch the kids up and spring them ahead, and the results of that will be incorporated into next year’s PTC budget in the form of a math and reading interventionist and additional software, hardware and other tools for the staff to get the kids back to where they need to be.

- 4) Extracurricular Clubs: Not satisfied with waiting until next year to begin “the Comeback”, Sam took it upon himself to find the funding, staffing and energy to create an entire roster of extracurricular after-school clubs to help get the process started. On his own initiative, Sam created the following after school clubs: (i) Garden Science Club; (ii) Math Club; (iii) Performing Arts Drama Club; (iv) Art Club; (v) Creation Station (art from famous books) Club; (vi) Novel Dreamers Writing Club; (vii) Robotics Club ; and (viii) Free Guitar Lessons for 5th Graders. Sam not only donates his time to be there on all after-school club days, but he somehow convinced numerous teachers and parents to staff these clubs as well, all on their own free time. The kids love it, and the teachers and parents are inspired. (as an aside, when more kids applied for the clubs than capacity allowed, Sam simply doubled capacity and ensured that every single kid got to participate in a Club!!!)
- 5) Sam’s Character Education Assemblies: Upon arriving at the Tumalo School Sam brought an entirely new tradition designed to foster the education of children’s character to supplement the academic learning they already obtain. Sam started with “Kindness” as an overarching theme and had literally decorated the school walls as part of a “kindness-intensive” program from Day 1. At the end of the first month several kids from each class were recognized as Kindness champions at a school assembly with parents invited and certificates awarded. Each month Sam has built upon Kindness with another essential character trait, last month’s being “integrity”. On the last Friday of each month at pickup time one can see fifty cars parked outside as parents inside get to see their kiddo awarded a new character trait certificate in front of his or her peers. Sam leads every assembly and hands out every award...one can only imagine what this does for the kids’ emotional development and confidence.
- 6) More Student Recognition: Sam is all about empowerment of our children: (i) Sam recognizes every birthday in the school by wishing kids “Happy Birthday” over the loudspeaker and presenting them with a birthday pencil; (ii) Sam does Monday morning announcements each week where he recognizes students who have had perfect attendance for the previous week, and calls each one to the office for a treat; (iii) each week students are given “Terrific Tiger” awards for traits teachers recognize on a daily basis, a carbon copy of which goes to the office. On Fridays, Sam draws winning names from each grade level and those kids are rewarded with a treat and a prize, whereupon Sam takes a photo with the Terrific Tiger winners for each week and displays them all in the hall. (I am attempting to upload some of these photos to you by email so you can just see what I am describing here); (iv) Sam incentivizes the children for their participation in schoolwide events, such as the jog-a-thon and the read-a-thon. When the students met their jogathon goals, Sam took many pies in the face from the kids (hope you get to see the picture of this!). Sam is just now deciding

what to do for the kids who just knocked it out of the park in the readathon, but we know it will be special!

- 7) Hands-On All-Over School: Sam is rarely to be found in his office. He is more likely all over the school participating and inspiring children all day every day. For example: (i) Our PE teacher had a full Ninja Warrior course in the gym set up. The students were all excited to do the course over and over. Sam got right in there and participated himself, showing the kids his ninja skills; (ii) Sam is hands on in the technology room to help oversee the Kids on their I-Ready performance. Sam works hard to boost performance by inspiring and encouraging the kids and teachers on our computer based i-Ready math and reading program, helping to ensure students get their required minutes and pass their tests; (iii) Sam was the emcee for our Oregon Battle of the Books final school championship; (iv) Sam supports staff and students by being present on the playground during recesses, where he can usually be found checking on kids who need extra support or a friend to play with; (v) Sam gets in the trenches by standing there with the kids in any weather at dismissal time, and mid-day on lunchroom duty, both of which he does every single day with a smile.
- 8) Communication: Sam makes all Tumalo families part of the community with his daily robocalls, his near daily texts and emails, and his monthly newsletter on all the goings on in the school. More than just communicating logistics, he really designs all communications on a community building platform, even going so far as to post his character traits in the form of famous quotes on the A-Frames set up out side the school on drop off and pickup.
- 9) Fostering Staff: Its not just the kids that respect and adore Sam, it is the teachers and staff as well for myriad reasons, starting with his leadership by example. Sam guides many in-school staff development opportunities focused on student academic improvement and safety. Sam routinely plans times for the staff to unwind and socialize together. Importantly, I am advised by the teachers that Sam organizes the entire school leadership team effectively, having a purposeful agenda and an effective format for meetings. Together they share, listen and discuss implementing positive changes to the school.
- 10) Fostering Parents: In addition to his open and profligate communications Sam does many things to ensure parental involvement in our school. First he helps shepherd a volunteer program where parents routinely volunteer in the classroom. Second Sam attends every single parent teacher committee meeting. More than attend, Sam gets actively involved in fundraising efforts, even emceeing our annual auction party and serving as auctioneer.







"KINDNESS BEGINS WITH ME."

- RAKTIVIST



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