

## Grateful parent praises VPE, teacher

Tammie Marsh, whose daughters attend **Veterans Park Elementary**, wrote to Superintendent Stu Silberman to brag on the school and to praise teacher **Rebecca Puckett**. Here is her letter, reprinted with their permission:

February 7, 2008

Dear Dr. Silberman,

This letter has been brewing for a long time, but I've been reluctant to actually write it. I know you must be inundated with communication from parents. Much as I am reticent to infringe on your time, however, an incident this week has spurred me to the keyboard.

My 7- and 6-year-old daughters attend Veterans Park Elementary School. Originally, this letter was going to be just about our family's overwhelmingly positive experience with the entire learning community at Veterans Park. Within the first month of our older daughter's kindergarten year, I began composing a mental letter about how comfortable we were sending our "baby" into the care and nurture of the staff and faculty at VPE. As a parent, I have been amazed at the concern and understanding demonstrated by each VPE employee with whom I've had contact. As an active PTA volunteer and SBDM committee member, I've been satisfied that decisions are being made and policies enacted for the "right" reasons and that the best interests of all children truly are held as the standard. As a former public school teacher, I continue to marvel at the well-oiled wheels which turn the gears to spread enrichment throughout the hallways of Veterans Park Elementary, and I wonder why those hallways aren't filled with observers from outside that learning community, attempting to get a taste of what makes VPE so wonderful (except that, of course, I understand that would be a disruption to the learning process ... which makes me appreciate the place all the more)!

That was all in the first two years of our experience at Veterans Park. Then, in August 2007, our second daughter entered kindergarten. As comfortable as we had been with our elder daughter in school there, my husband and I still left our newly minted kindergartener with trepidation, not knowing how this child would react in her first day of public school. My husband, who had been sobbing as we walked away from the building at 7:45, called me around 10:45 with amazement: He had received an e-mailed update on our kindergartener from the teacher.

In the Fred nomination I wrote for Mrs. Rebecca Puckett, I shared the story of this first-day e-mail and the impact it had on our family. I ended my nomination with a statement that I was going to enjoy watching Mrs. Puckett's work during the year to continue reaching for that bar which she had set so very high on the first day of school.

Well, she has continually met and exceeded our expectations. There has been not one negative experience for our daughter this school year. And yesterday, Mrs. Puckett

leaped over her own bar. Last week, Mrs. Puckett missed some time from school because her husband was hospitalized. This week, my daughter missed the first three days of the week due to illness, so student and teacher have not been in the classroom much together over the past 10 days. Last night, just as my daughter was settling in with books at bedtime, Mrs. Puckett called her. Our daughter's eyes grew wide in excitement as she listened intently on the phone.

After the call, our daughter relayed some of the conversation. Mrs. Puckett had called to see how our daughter was feeling and to let her know that she was missing her in class. When Mrs. Puckett learned that our daughter was planning to return to school the next day, she let her know that she, herself, was going to have to be absent the next day to care for her husband. "Her husband can't go to school tomorrow," our daughter explained.

Preparation and information, for a 6-year-old, can make a world of difference in the response he or she makes to situations. Our child went to school this morning knowing without a doubt that she was leaving a loving home, going to a place where people also care deeply about her. Now, the caveat to this is that she also knew that the day wouldn't be quite as good since her beloved teacher would be absent (another student in the class tells me even the books aren't as good when Mrs. Puckett isn't there!), but she was prepared!

What can I do for Mrs. Puckett? I've already submitted a Fred this year for her. To do that again, in such a public forum, might seem as if I were trying to win favor for my children. That is not the case.

I would like you to be aware that this remarkable teacher is – as are so many others across Fayette County – "in the trenches," as they say. Since there are so many wonderful people in FCPS, I want to make sure you know the name Rebecca Puckett. And I want to thank you for all that you do to make FCPS an inviting place for such shining stars to land.

With regards and appreciation for your time –

Tammie Marsh