

STRIVE TLC Coaching Excellence Award Nomination – Arika

I am honored to nominate Arika for the STRIVE TLC Coaching Excellence Award. As a district instructional coach for Great Falls Public Schools, she supports multiple schools and consistently exemplifies excellence across all four criteria.

Data-Driven Leadership

Arika leads with a clear commitment to teachers being successful. She meets schools where they are and supports continuous growth through small, strategic improvements that build over time. Her work with data and Focus Folders has helped teachers better understand and use student data to inform instruction. She continues to bring teachers back to the data, guiding them to make thoughtful, actionable decisions that impact teaching and learning in core instruction and interventions. I have seen this in action when a teacher approached her in the hallway with a question about student data with interventions—seeking Arika’s guidance on how to interpret it and what instructional decisions to make next. The teacher trusted Arika and wanted her guidance and moved right past myself and the principal.

Curriculum Planning

Arika provides high-quality, standards-based support to teachers navigating the core curriculum, CKLA and intervention programs such as Lexia. She collaborates with teachers to plan lessons, design meaningful practice opportunities, and strengthen implementation. Teachers deeply respect her expertise—they actively seek her input and guidance. For example, I observed two highly skilled first grade teachers, both master teachers, specifically ask Arika for feedback before AND after they taught the lesson. They wanted her insight on what they could improve and refine, which speaks volumes about the credibility and trust she has built. She leads with heart and best practices, always maintaining a non-evaluative stance.

Feedback

Arika’s coaching is grounded in research-based practices and a deep understanding of effective adult learning. She creates a safe, supportive environment where leaders and teachers voluntarily seek her feedback. Her coaching is responsive, specific, and rooted in classroom evidence and student needs. Because of this, her feedback is not only well-received but also acted upon.

Professional Development

Arika designs and facilitates professional learning that is targeted, relevant, and immediately applicable. She focuses on helping teachers effectively implement curriculum and assessment resources, ensuring that planning translates into strong classroom instruction. As a result, teachers feel more confident and successful, and students benefit from stronger, more responsive teaching.

Arika is deeply committed to being present in the work. She intentionally seeks out opportunities to stay aligned with consultants and school leaders so she can understand what’s happening across schools and provide meaningful, timely support. She is highly collaborative and always focused on what is best for students and teachers. The only time she steps away from that collaboration is when a teacher needs support. I witnessed this firsthand when,

during a learning session, Arika turned to the principal and me and said, “I hate to leave this discussion and collaboration, but I have a teacher who needs help. She’s struggling with pulling together lesson plans, and I need to go support her.” Without hesitation, she left to meet that need. She consistently puts teachers first, responding in the moment to ensure they feel supported and successful.

I highly recommend Arika for the STRIVE TLC Coaching Excellence Award. She embodies the very best of instructional coaching—building teacher capacity, strengthening systems, and ultimately improving student outcomes. Any district would be incredibly fortunate to have her support.