Educational Excellence Award

Award criteria: The recipient selected in this category recognizes the personal commitment and example that Dr. King provided for academic achievement. Therefore, the recipient has demonstrated a personal commitment to scholarship and/or attainment of educational goals despite significant barriers or obstacles. The recipient also has demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in eradicating systemic barriers that impede the attainment of academic excellence.

Candace Floyd
Marion

Candace Floyd is Media Specialist at Benjamin Harrison Elementary School in Marion City Schools, where she has introduced cultural programming and resources to the district’s elementary students.

A Marion native who attended Marion City Schools, Floyd is making a difference for students of color in her community by introducing new texts, resources, and programs on the history of the Civil Rights Movement, the racial justice struggle in the United States, cultural traditions, and more. Her work expands educational and cultural understanding opportunities for students who often rarely get to learn about their community’s own history, cultural arts, and resilience in school.

In her time with the district, she has enhanced Black History Month programming, lessons on Civil Rights history, and “an urgent vision for library arts as a place where students can find and nurture their own cultural roots, and listen deeply across lines of difference,” said her nominator.

Her nominator said Floyd’s “commitment to racial justice work through the fight for equitable education and the providing of culturally-sustaining education for students from all races and cultural backgrounds goes above and beyond the call of duty of her position” and she has turned the library program into “a culturally-affirming site for all students — holding space for students to not just cultivate a lifelong love of reading, but to cultivate diverse cultural literacies, too.”

Beyond her work at the district, Floyd is active in programming at her church, Mayes Community Temple, and in her community. She was an organizer of the Rally 4 Justice demonstration for racial justice in Marion County last summer and participated in the Marion Voices Folklife and Oral History Programs’ Fall 2020 Community Co-Curation Cycle. She was co-host of the 2020 “This Christmas: Black Marion Celebrates” two-hour cultural livestream event, celebrating and amplifying the power of Black holiday traditions across Marion County.

Floyd exemplifies “Dr. King’s insistence that racial justice struggle exists to provide a better future for young people.”