

Caledon elementary teacher recognized with prestigious OTIP Teaching Award

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A Caledon teacher is feeling the love after being awarded the OTIP Teaching Award in the Elementary Teacher category.

Deanna Gaughan, who has been with the Peel District School Board since 2000, teaches the Grade 6 to 8 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Contained class at James Grieve Public School. In teaching the class, Ms. Gaughan handles all curriculum and programming assignments for her students.

She was nominated for the OTIP Teaching award by one of her student's parents.

"There are many good teachers, but seldom do you come across someone who evidently has committed their entire life's work to education and the wellbeing of students," said the parent who nominated Ms. Gaughan.

OTIP, short form for Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan, alongside the Ontario's Teachers Foundation, awards Ontarian teachers for their excellence in teaching annually, with three categories; secondary school teacher, elementary school and beginning teacher.

"The words that describe Deanna are kind, considerate, professional and patient," said James Grieve Public School principal, Cheryl Dell in the award video. "Deanna has had a tremendous impact on the James Grieve community, in particular the kids in her class. She goes out of her way to advocate for their needs and will think of creative and dynamic ways to engage them in their surroundings."

On top of her excellence in teaching, Ms. Gaughan has also led a successful program at the school called the RISE Room, which stands for Reaching Independence while Striving for Excellence. She is known for her engagement with the students and creating an interactive and safe environment.

"The challenge with some of our students, is they get confined in their own world, and we want them to broaden their experiences," said Dell. "She's had a tremendous impact on bringing light and life to the world of our ASD students."

Ms. Gaughan has also encouraged her students to get involved in their community, and even had her class write letters to Caledon Council to show their support for a potential sidewalk project in front of the school.

"Receiving this award for me, it's very humbling and it makes me emotional," said Gaughan. "I've really given my heart to the kids I've worked with. This award for me, is like a culmination of my 20 years of working with the school board already."

She added, "It empowers me to do more."

Alongside Gaughan, the other two winners include Peterborough teacher Cameron Douglas, and Heather Lett from Eganville.