

## Shelly K. Unsicker-Durham

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February 27, 2021

Dear Selection Committee,

Teach long enough and you will find that kindred spirit, often a teacher next door, who will push you to become your better self, encourage you when times are tough, and join you in some mad-crazy ideas. Alicia Lacy-Scott has been that kindred spirit for me.

We met Fall 2006 in a graduate class about literacy. The next spring, Alicia did her student teaching with me at Central Junior High, and in the Fall 2007, Alicia began her teaching in Room 904, the classroom next to mine. Thus, began our mad-crazy partnership in all-things-literacy. By *mad-crazy*, I mean, who else would stay late, long past our contract hours to brainstorm and collaborate in how we could help our students find their voices through writing and reading?

Because of Alicia, I learned to embrace technology. She is the reason I had a decent website and learned to embed workable links in PowerPoints and documents. To this day, I cannot create a slide for a presentation without looking to be sure the formatting has unity, consistency, and simplicity. And, alas, she is the reason I no longer use **Comic Sans** as my go-to font.

Alicia improved my teaching in substantial ways, as well. We worked together to develop our discipline plans, focusing on relationship-building with our students. We planned lessons and units together—one of us coming up with an idea, then the other revising it, passing it back and forth until we forgot whose idea it was in the first place. As a fellow Teacher Consultant with the Oklahoma Writing Project (OWP), Alicia collaborated with me on several professional development presentations. And, as you can see on her resume, she moved into her own venues of leadership with OWP and the Summer Institute.

As a co-sponsor of Writing Art Club, and the main sponsor of Cub Publishing, Alicia facilitated the creation of our Writing Anthologies, as well as the school newspaper. An initiative that grew from our Poetry Walls has become a CJH favorite, Poetry Night. When we were able to publish a poetry anthology, Alicia was the techno wizard making that possible. Additionally, she is a fabulous writer who models the process for her students. Her talent as a writer and her collaborative spirit means that lots of folks, in addition to her students, bring her their writing for advice.

Alicia has been my friend for fifteen years. She has seen me through tough times and supported my teaching when I needed her the most. When I faced a house fire in 2009 and breast cancer in 2012-13, she not only offered emotional support, Alicia worked with my substitutes and students to make sure their learning stayed on track.

I am a better teacher and a better human because of Alicia Lacy-Scott.

Sincerely,



Shelly K. Unsicker-Durham, NBCT, PhD Candidate