

# Teacher of the Month



## Lindsay Williams believes a balanced classroom means a balanced life

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Lindsay Williams, a first-grade teacher at Lee-Hamilton Elementary in the Ferguson-Florissant School District, says there is no way she'd be able to sit still in a 9-to-5 office job. Maybe that's why she doesn't expect her kids to sit still, either. She keeps them moving and stretching about every 10 minutes, even if they're doing a quiet activity such as looking at books — not to mention the days they're milking cows or making soap or learning how plants grow during field trips. "I have so much fun at my job," she says. "I literally dance and sing and laugh every day."

Mrs. Williams has taught early elementary school for 16 years. She appreciates that going from kindergarten to first grade can be tough, so after she receives her class list in early summer she visits students and their parents at home. "We'll bring some books for them to read, a workbook that talks about the transition from kindergarten to first grade, play some games. It's a great way to establish comfort, and the relationships pay off all year. Parents seem to trust you more, and when you're talking to them on the phone, they know you."

Mrs. Williams herself is constantly in motion. "Every year you have a new group of kids, so there are new needs, new stories. We're not just teachers anymore. We're nurses, we're counselors."

Mrs. Williams strongly believes in the importance of health, wellness and fitness, so she arranged for a yoga instructor to lead her students through a half-hour session on Friday afternoons.

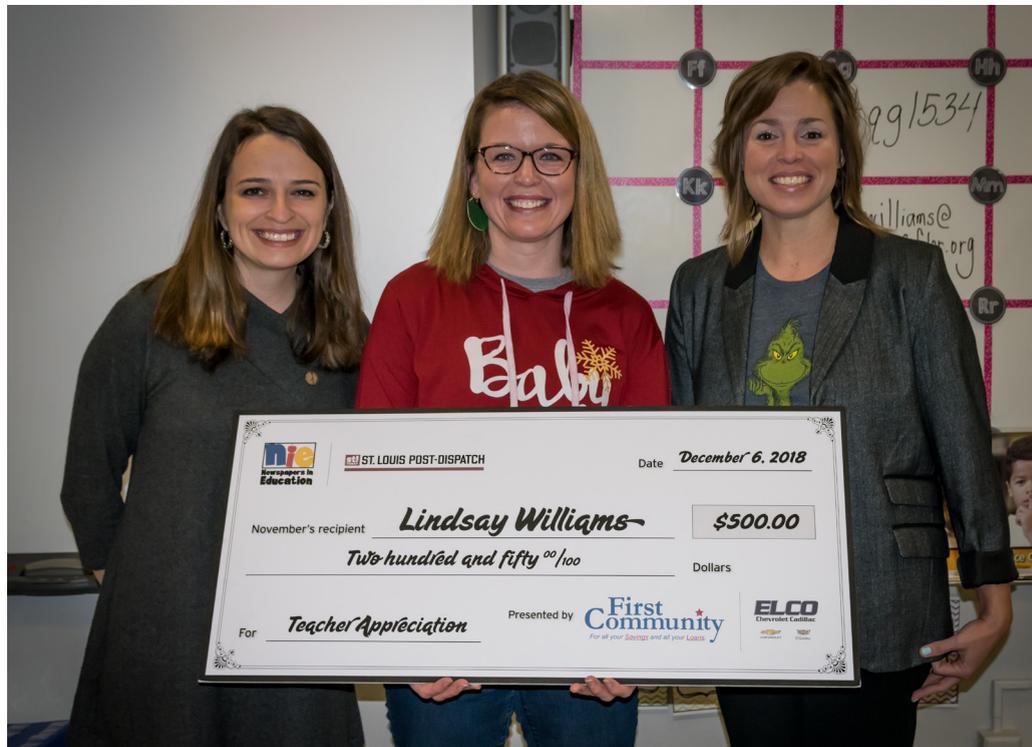
Mrs. Williams has seen firsthand how yoga helps her kids achieve more than just physical balance. "I try to think of the whole child. We'll play calm music, or we'll do breathing exercises, which will help them later on academically. Breathing can help them focus and clear the mind. It's crucial for kids who have strong emotions but don't always know how to handle them. It teaches them how

to be calm, and it connects to the social skills I teach. We might be doing a completely different activity, and then I ask, 'What's one thing you can do to calm down?' We talk about feelings a lot."

Field trips are among Mrs. Williams' favorite ways to impart social skills, and she often finds educational inspiration in some unlikely spots. "Later this year we're going to Herbaria, a place on the Hill where they make soap in the back. We'll be working on how-to writing, and I thought it'd be a cool opportunity to learn about how to make soap. In addition, we'll be going to one of the

Italian restaurants. Visiting a restaurant, ordering from the menu — it's a character-building experience. We milk cows, we go to Greenscape Gardens, the Missouri Botanical Garden and Urban Harvest on top of City Museum in the spring."

Mrs. Williams was excited and surprised to be the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Teacher of the Month, and when she heard about the awards from the sponsors, her first thought was: "I can buy something for my classroom!" She was also humbled, saying, "I don't like a lot of the spotlight. You do your job day in and day out, and you don't expect a lot of applause. You just do it for the kids."



Lee-Hamilton Elementary principal Dr. Jill Loyet with Lindsay Williams as she receives a check from Shannon Keller

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