

***The O'Rourke Prize
2014 Honoree
Tina Cassens***

Learning Forward Colorado is honored to present the 14th annual O'Rourke Prize to a distinguished Colorado educator, **Tina Cassens**. Tina serves as Director of Educator Effectiveness and Instructional Technology for the Woodland Park School District Re-2.

The O'Rourke Prize, sponsored by Learning Forward Colorado and Mrs. Anne O'Rourke, honors an exemplary leader of professional learning and collaborative practices who has significantly impacted the learning of educators. This annual award is named for the late Dr. Bill O'Rourke, a distinguished Colorado educator. The nomination process addresses the attributes of vision, commitment, leadership, and effectiveness as well as the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning.

Tina was nominated by her colleagues, Yvonne Goings and Erin Street, who stated that "Tina embodies the vision that all students can learn and teachers are the essential component in the classroom." She has established true professional learning communities which are supported with high quality and relevant professional learning. Teacher input is essential to Tina's leadership and was instrumental in the design and implementation of an educator effectiveness process which proved authentic and meaningful to teachers and administrators.

Erin shared this story of her 13 year career in Woodland Park: "I was fresh out of college, eager to learn, and in need of mentorship. Tina was there to facilitate my growth from a classroom teacher to the instructional Resource Teacher at Woodland Park Middle School. Her explanation of data, encouragement to attend conferences, fostering of my desire to further my education, and continual dialogue about best practices shaped me as an educator." She speaks for other educators with similar experiences.

Yvonne underscored Tina's effectiveness as a Professional Developer by citing her ability to establish a safe and welcoming environment in which staff members are truly part of the decision making process. Tina led the Woodland Park Middle School through changes in curriculum and instructional practices, scheduling, administration, team structures, and standardized testing. She created an atmosphere in which every opinion was honored and held true to the belief that the group is stronger than the individual. Whether through organized professional learning or simple conversations, Woodland Park appreciates and celebrates the leadership of Tina Cassens.