

Preparing an Impressive Nomination Packet

By Maria B. Tucker, Professional Awards Committee Chair 1997-2000

Nominating an individual for an award can be a daunting task, but if your nominee wins, it can also be extremely rewarding and well worth the work it requires.

How can you have the best chance of getting recognition for your deserving candidates? To begin with, read the criteria for the award carefully. In some instances, if the individual is not a current NYS AFLT member, it could affect his or her chances for consideration if they are competing against someone whose dues are up-to-date. Fill out your application neatly, and provide all the information requested. Note also that the NYS AFLT awards application form asks for three letters of recommendation, but it does not state where they should come from. They come from a variety of individuals who are well qualified to state their opinions about the candidate. For teaching awards, however, the most impressive letters are written by former students, fellow teachers, supervisors, administrators, and even parents of students. They are written from the heart and are often passionate in their praise for the candidate. They contain descriptions of lessons, stories of teaching, and first hand experiences. They evoke a love for teaching and for the students, and they effectively paint a picture of the nominee as an inspiring, effective teacher who has made and continues to make an impact on his or her students.

The application asks for a resume and supporting documentation that can assist the committee in making their decision. Supporting documentation can include a wide variety of materials, and the more you can assemble to prove your case for your candidate, the better. We have gotten copies of newspaper articles and some photographs. Occasionally we will see a beautiful portfolio of work that can only be provided if the candidate is aware they are being nominated. This is a decision you must make as the person submitting the nomination. Would you like it to be a surprise? Can you present the fact to your candidate that you are entering them as a nominee but cannot be assured that they will win since the competition is so fierce? If you can do this, you will have access to more information and supporting material. Many teachers are very modest about their achievements and will have to assemble a package of samples of their work. To nominate them is, in itself, very flattering, and a truly deserving teacher will recognize it as such. In the end, it is your decision. But you must know that a group of outstanding letters of recommendation backed up by a portfolio of work that includes photographs, workshop samples, creative lesson plans, student projects and achievements, is hard to ignore.

It is important to note that there have been numerous occasions when a teacher has been recognized without the advantage of a portfolio to display their accomplishments. There have also been occasions when the portfolio was a factor. It is never predictable. The bottom line is that the quality of the letters of recommendation and the well-documented teacher's resume can carry the nominee, but the added materials might be what tips the scale in their favor.

In the case of administrative and leadership awards, the substantiating materials can be newspaper articles, video clips and supporting letters from staff. Years of service in this leadership role and the number of people who have been affected by this individual can have an impact on the decision. We include the histories of the awards that have been named in honor of an individual. This should also provide some background for the kind of teacher, leader, or administrator we would like to honor with a NYS AFLT professional award.

Finally, getting your entry in on time is also essential. And remember, if your candidate doesn't win this year, they can be re-submitted as a candidate the following year. A letter from you with any additional evidence of their work is all that is needed to re-activate the nomination.

As many of you know, there is never enough recognition for the exceptional people in our profession. If you have decided to take part in this most noble task, you are worthy of special praise for your unselfish effort. Thank you.