Our *Faces of Education* honoree this evening is Jane Gouker, who teaches strings at Tri-North and Jackson Creek Middle Schools as well as Bloomington High Schools North and South. Jane also coordinates the elementary school strings program, which currently has about 170 students enrolled. She is nominated by Asst. Superintendent for Human Resources and Personnel Peggy Chambers for her collaboration with the Human Resources and Transportation Departments to address not only rising transportation costs, but also contractual issues with the before-school-strings program.

Jane is in her 29th year with MCCSC and remembers the state of the strings program when she started in 1980. “It was at a stalemate,” Jane said humbly in a recent telephone interview concerning her *Faces* nomination. She knew then that she could not help build a successful program without a focus on cultivating talent at the elementary level, and she held her first fifth grade strings class that year. “Things started to grow so much,” she said. Today, students have a chance to experience strings in the fifth and sixth grade and continue on through middle school and high school.

With the growth of the program, it takes school and community support to keep it going smoothly. “I have a great help,” Jane says. She credits Dr. Alisa May at Indiana University and fellow teacher Julie Enzinger as well as many of the talented musicians in the community, who serve as instructors in the elementary program. “It takes being active and aware in the Bloomington community and (specifically) the music community.”

Coordinating a program also requires as much focus on the behind the scenes details as it does the music instruction. Each year, supporting the student enrollment process and selection of staff, sites changes, coordinating performances, and transportation of students are all par for the course, Jane shared. “I have seen all of that.”
Her love of the students and music help her transcend any of the challenges that may exist from time to time. In fact, Jane describes the strings program as a kinship. “It’s very much a family feel,” she said. “I love the kids. They have become like a family to me.” Jane shared that in some cases she has six to eight years to watch the students mature. “I watch these kids grow up just like a parent.” She also added that the unique, rich sound of the strings program comes from the student’s own love of music and their respect for each other. The students grow musically and push each other, which makes the entire program better.

As with other *Faces* nominees, Jane certainly doesn’t seek the spotlight and approaches tonight’s honor with a great deal of modesty. It is quite simply the sound of music that serves as her driving force. Perhaps, after 29 years of service, Jane’s own words say it best, “This is my passion.”

Jane Gouker, thank you for gifting us with your love of music and the passion to see our students soar musically. We are proud of your efforts to build a world-class strings program. Congratulations! The Board of School Trustees is pleased to recognize you as one of its shining *Faces of Education*.

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*Faces of Education* is a feature of every regular Board of School Trustees Meeting. It is designed to recognize current MCCSC employees or volunteers, who have made a difference in our school community. Nomination forms can be found at each MCCSC site or on the web at [www.mccsc.edu](http://www.mccsc.edu).