



Mary Perez

9th – 12th Grade English and Spanish Teacher
Tombstone High School, Tombstone
Tombstone Unified School District

- ❖ *“My passion for culture and language grew when I learned we were being sent to Arizona. I was hired as a Spanish Teacher for Tombstone High School, in Tombstone, Arizona. My new job was a perfect fit, as I was also asked to coordinate Tombstone’s Hands Across the Border program. Tombstone has an 18-year history of student exchanges with Alamos, Mexico. My heart is with the community of Tombstone and Arizona. I have been active in leading our school reform model, and can be found selling burritos at football games to support my Spanish Club, coaching girls basketball, mentoring new teachers, and being the building ‘cheer and morale’ person.*
- ❖ *“I want my classroom to be a place that my students look forward to coming to. I try to show my students that I care, not only by my actions, but by the environment I provide. An outstanding teacher must approach teaching as a vocation, not a career. Good teaching cannot simply happen through lesson plans, and following standards. Good teaching comes through the anecdotal comments, the late night basketball games, and the lunchtime tutoring sessions. It comes from my students having my cell-phone number and email address, and knowing I am always available (which a student has never abused!). I am an excellent teacher because I pay attention to the changes in mood that my students have during the year; I ask them how their day is going. They know I always have an extra dollar if they forget their lunch money, and they know they can always call me for an answer to a question, even if it has nothing to do with that night’s assignment.”*
- ❖ *“All students deserve the same access to the same quality education. They deserve the same accessibility to a diverse and challenging curriculum, the same high quality facilities, and the same opportunities to be taught by excellent teachers. It is heartbreaking to explain to a student that they did not qualify to apply to a university because we do not offer advanced placement courses. It is difficult to travel to athletic competitions to schools whose facilities are far superior to ours. How can you explain to a young person why our gym, fields, locker, and weight rooms are not as modern and well maintained as the school we are visiting? Inner city and rural teachers frequently felt left behind by wealthy suburban district facilities, technology, and pay scales. Inequity issues are a tremendous problem in public schools. The geographic distances found in rural schools compound them.”*
- ❖ *A student writes this about her teacher Ms. Perez: “I distinctly remember the day I told her I was deathly afraid of college. We were on a trip to the lake and I explained how I had big aspirations for going out of state, but I had no idea on how to go about the process. I met the criteria for obtaining a fair amount of financial aid like good grades, being a Hispanic female and a first generation college student from a low income family, but I lacked the courage and knowledge for going towards my college dreams. Mrs. Perez immediately assured me that I could do it. I was still unsure, but I listened to what she had said. By my senior year, I had become Mrs. Perez’s project. I was filling out my FAFSA forms and applying for colleges in the east coast. Mrs. Perez was rooting me on the whole time. Sometimes it was like she was the one going off to college. If I was stressed, she was stressed. When I was excited, she was ecstatic. Every time I got a step closer to my east coast college dream I would thank her, but she would always tell me it was all me. Now, after much drama and decision making, I will be attending Loyola College in Maryland. I have my tuition covered and I fly out to Baltimore in two days. This summer was stressful and busy, but Mrs. Perez was still there. She taught me not to be afraid of change and to not be afraid to stand up for myself. Most importantly, she taught me to be passionate about what you do, even if you have to make some sacrifices along the way. For four years, Mrs. Perez was my mentor, my encourager, and my real life coach, but now, I can safely say she is my FRIEND Mary.”*

Ms. Perez earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History with a minor in Spanish from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Illinois. She earned her Master of Science in Education degree from the State University of New York at Potsdam. Mary began teaching in Watertown, New York, and moved to Tombstone where she has been since 2002. Ms. Perez has been a teacher for nine years.