Ms. Thomas was honored for the many ways she expresses her sincere concern for the students at her school. Her first notable accomplishment was implementing the Freshmen Mentor Program, a program run by the Counseling Department to help meet the social and emotional needs of the students. Ms. Thomas meets with the Freshmen Mentors weekly to hear the concerns that are conveyed to them by the 9th graders. Some of the critical topics that have been raised include gender expansion and transgender policy; cyberbullying; and digital citizenship.

A second important initiative Ms. Thomas leads is the school’s annual Speak Up! program. This student-led activity allows students and parents to come together to address topics that can be difficult to discuss, including drugs and alcohol, body image, peer relationships, and more. She also leads her school’s No Place for Hate activities and uses her role as a Spanish Teacher to assist the school social worker in her interactions with the English Language Learners.

Ms. Thomas received this award for making her students feel connected, safe and heard. Those are the actions that turn a teacher into a hero.