This month’s IEI featured educator exemplifies the advocate role. Jennifer Johnson is a third grade teacher at Blue Creek Elementary School in Onslow County.

A National Board Certified Teacher, Johnson is a product of the Onslow County School System and a former Blue Creek Elementary student. She earned her bachelor’s degree from UNCW in 1997 with a degree in Elementary Education.

This is a letter excerpt sent to the North Carolina State Board of Education by a parent of one of Mrs. Johnson’s students from the past year:

I really feel the need to bring one special teacher to the attention of the NC Board of Education. Mrs. Jennifer Johnson is the most amazing teacher that I have ever met. My daughter has had some good teachers over the past few years, but not one of them has impacted my family the way that Mrs. Johnson has.

My husband was severely injured in Iraq in 2006. My daughter was just two years old at the time. Our life is chaotic. There are always trips to the ER, almost daily trips to doctors and things are never stable in our home. My husband also has severe PTSD and a moderate to severe TBI. In turn, my daughter has developed anxiety and panic issues over the past 6 years.

At the beginning of the school year, I presented Mrs. Johnson with a packet to help explain TBI and PTSD and how it impacts the children of wounded warriors. She actually read the packet and right away, she tried to make my daughter feel like she mattered. In Mrs. Johnson’s care, my daughter did not have any problems the way that she had previous years. She cares. My daughter is a very bright child that needs to be challenged, which Mrs. Johnson did, and she flourished even more than she had before. She wanted to succeed and wanted to impress Mrs. Johnson, because she loves and respects her so much.

To say that Mrs. Johnson has been one of the biggest blessings to my family, would not do her justice. She has changed my daughter’s life.

“...You never truly know all that is going on in the life of a child. In many cases, we will never know what they are experiencing, but what we can do is love them, make their time with us special, and do all we can to provide them with encouragement, pride, and self-esteem that will help them to cop with the struggles they are facing.”

- Ron Clark, Disney Teacher of the Year and North Carolina Teaching Fellow