



PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



Bonita Evans

Gifted teacher takes leadership roles at Austin Academy in Garland

When she headed off to get her undergraduate degree, Bonita Evans says she knew she wanted to be a lawyer. On her way to that goal, life stepped in and sent her in a new direction.

“When I got pregnant and realized that I didn’t know anything about raising a child, I took some child development classes. As part of those classes, I had an internship with a Head Start program and discovered that I loved teaching,” she says.

The rest is history or rather history in the making. Since her first foray into education classes, Ms. Evans has never stopped learning. She has earned an associate degree in child development, a bachelor’s degree in political science and sociology, and a master’s degree in educational supervision. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in educational administration at Texas A&M Commerce.

Her 17-year career path took her from California to Arkansas and finally to Garland where she has taught math and science at the Austin Academy for Excellence the last four years.

Given her educational foundation, Ms. Evans says, “The one thing I never learned was how to go to a school and just teach.”

Wherever she has taught, she has found herself in a leadership role not only with students, but also with faculty. Serving as a diversity trainer, a math curriculum writer, and a math team leader are just a few of Ms. Evans’s “extracurricular activities.”

During her time at Austin Academy, she has led the Girls’ Step Team and a science tutoring class she named JASS, “Just Academic Science Success.” She says, “I decided that if I had a group of students I was

tutoring, but I called it a club, the kids would be more excited about coming.” Designed specifically for eighth graders getting ready for the TAKS test, the group watches movies, does labs, and even goes on field trips to enhance their learning experience.

As Step Team leader, Ms. Evans says she has been delighted to watch her team improve every year since she began heading it up in 2007. “We started out just performing at a school talent show,” but lately they’ve been participating in regional step-team competitions, and the three-hour practices are really paying off, she says.

Even with all these activities, Ms. Evans says learning comes first. She says that in her 17 years in the classroom, she’s seen teaching come full circle. “We’re back to student-centered, hands-on learning. We’re far away from the traditional classroom, and I’m glad. This kind of teaching makes it fun for teachers and for the kids. Even though preparing students for the TAKS test is important, it’s even more important for students to understand what they’re learning, and to do that, they have to be really engaged. When they are, authentic learning can take place,” she says.

After leaving the idea of a profession in law far behind, Ms. Evans says family members still tell her she would have been a great lawyer. “But they know I love what I do. In fact, my mother said, ‘I can tell you really love those kids,’ and I do. The kids I’m teaching today are our future.”

With the commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm Ms. Evans brings to the classroom, that future is in good hands.

Congratulations to a teacher who has truly earned the distinction of Teacher of the Month.



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