



PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



Michelle King After-school job leads to the discovery of a passion for teaching

Try to imagine a classroom of third graders who, when told it's time to pack up their belongings at the end of the day and go home, respond with, "Awwwww, do we have to?"

That's the compliment Michelle King often receives from her students at Heather Glen Elementary.

"They just don't like for the day to end," Ms. King says. "But I'm not sure why; I work them really hard. I tell them that the brain is a muscle, and they have to exercise it!"

Ms. King's path to teaching was anything but typical. "I had never really thought about teaching as a career," she says, "although I played school as a kids and things like that. But I wanted to go into journalism and be a sportscaster."

It was a part-time job during college at University of Texas at Arlington that changed her life. "I worked for the after-school program at the Arlington YMCA. It was the perfect college job from just 3 until 6 every day, creating lesson plans and tutoring. After a couple of years of working with the kids there, I realized I loved it and thought, 'This is it for me,' and changed my major to education." Ms. King received her teaching certification from Texas Woman's University.

Her career choice appears to be a perfect fit. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm allows Ms. King to keep pace with a classroom full of 8 and 9 year olds – and often even outpace them.

Though she taught fifth grade and kindergarten before settling in at third grade, she says, "Third is a perfect fit for me. The kids are independent in many ways, but not

so much so that they're not attentive and loving. They want to work hard for you."

And work hard they do, as third grade is the first year students must prepare for the rigors of TAKS testing. Ms. King says she helps her students face that challenge head on. "We teach test-taking strategies, and I teach the students to first answer the question, then look for the answer among the choices. By the time they take a practice test, they realize it's not hard for them because they're well prepared," she says.

Ms. King says that she takes her students beyond the prescribed curriculum, integrating "life skills such as honesty and integrity. I try to model that, and be that example for the kids."

Ms. King's curriculum-based and beyond-the-curriculum teaching has clearly attracted positive attention. Heather Glen principal John Drummond says, "Michelle is the kind of teacher we all hope our child will have. She is kind, makes learning fun, and teaches to the highest standards. She is a leader on our campus. She makes everyone around her want to do their best."

Ms. King says she plans on making Heather Glen her permanent professional home. "I did my student teaching at this school, and it's the first place I wanted to work. I would like to retire right here in my classroom," she says.

That's no doubt good news to the students who will benefit from her passion for teaching in the years ahead. Congratulations to Michelle King, a deserving recipient of Garland Power & Light's Teacher of the Month award.



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