



P R E S E N T S T H E TEACHER OF THE MONTH



Judy Alderete Following in parents' footsteps leads teacher to rewarding career

While growing up, Judy Alderete watched both of her parents work as teachers, even helping them in the summer to prepare for the new school year. Observing their passion and dedication to their profession led Ms. Alderete to the realization that she wanted teaching to be part of her future.

"I love being around kids, and I just knew teaching was for me," she says.

After receiving her bachelors degree from University of Texas at El Paso, Ms. Alderete landed a job in the Dallas ISD, where she taught for two years.

"Even though I worked in Dallas, I moved to Garland. I liked the smaller, closer-knit community feeling I got there," she says. Following her move, she lucked into an opening at Hickman Elementary, thanks to a heads-up from a friend. "I came to Hickman and loved it right away," Ms. Alderete says. She has taught first grade there for three years.

Just as Garland felt like home to Ms. Alderete, so does first grade. "I like the age. The kids are so young, so friendly, and they just soak up everything you give them. They're just so sweet at this age," she says.

The students' natural ability to "soak up everything" certainly comes in handy for Ms. Alderete, since she is responsible for teaching her students – many of whom are learning English as a second language – to read and write.

"What our students learn in first grade gives them a foundation for later learning," she says.

Ms. Alderete says that laying that foundation can be a challenge. "My ESL students are primarily Asian and Hispanic, and we try to meet their needs" as well as the needs of the English-speaking students. At Hickman, teachers are ESL-certified, and ESL students remain in regular classrooms all day.

The first-grade classrooms are designed to allow Ms. Alderete as much one-on-one and small-group time with students as possible. "We use literacy centers, and we group or pair ESL

students with English-speaking kids," she says. While students work independently or in small-group situations, Ms. Alderete is able to work with small groups of ESL students, strengthening their speaking and reading skills.

"By the end of first grade, our goal is that our ESL students are fluent in English," Ms. Alderete says. "We have a good success rate, because at this age, students pick up so much from each other. In general, they leave here at the end of the year pretty well set for second grade."

Ms. Alderete says that during spring conference times, she works with parents on ways they can further their children's English-language education. "We suggest that they help their kids keep up their English over the summer. The Garland library is a great resource for that, with their summer reading program. I also send notes home with report cards, suggesting fun ways to keep their English going over the summer so the students don't regress before second grade," Ms. Alderete says.

She takes her own two children, ages four and nine, to the Garland library to participate in the summer reading program, and says she often sees her students there as well.

As gratifying as it is to see her students taking her advice, Ms. Alderete says her greatest reward as a teacher is watching her students grow throughout the school year. "We have kids come in who didn't go to kindergarten, or who moved from out of state, and they can't write their names when they come to us. By the end of the year, they're reading and writing, and my reward is seeing how much growth they've achieved," she says.

Ms. Alderete says she feels fortunate to have found her way to Hickman Elementary. "It's a wonderful campus filled with hard-working teachers, administration, and staff. I just love it here," she says.

Thanks to her passion for and dedication to her students, there's no doubt that Ms. Alderete's co-workers feel the same about her. Hickman Elementary is fortunate to have a caring, committed teacher such as Judy Alderete on its staff. Congratulations to Judy Alderete, the Garland ISD Teacher of the Month.



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