



# PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



## Cecelia Culpepper She seems to be in the right place - all the time

Though a lucky few are “to the manor born,” those even more fortunate are “to the profession born.”

“My mother was a teacher,” Cecelia Culpepper, a fourth-grade teacher at Shugart Elementary School, says, crediting that heritage for choosing her career path. “She taught in first and second grade, and even had my husband as a student!”

As a fourth-grade teacher for 18 of her 35 years in teaching, Ms. Culpepper says she has learned to love that grade level.

“The curriculum is great, and even though we’re faced with TAKS, we practice for it all year, and the students are prepared through the curriculum.”

Ms. Culpepper says she is fully in favor of standardized testing.

“We do need to set standards,” she says. “All districts should be doing the same level of work, helping the kids achieve the same level, so the kids are prepared to move on. I always tell my students, “If other kids can do it, so can you.”

That enthusiasm and can-do spirit has served Ms. Culpepper well throughout her teaching career, and she follows the same philosophy in her own continuing education program.

“I didn’t ever want to start getting stale, so I took advantage of writing workshops, Region 10 training, and embraced curriculum changes,” she says. “I try to make school fun for my kids, so they will enjoy learning, but still have ‘serious time.’”

As a mother of two, Ms. Culpepper’s maternal instincts surface in the classroom, she says. However, she doesn’t let those feelings keep her from being firm, when necessary.

“Every year, you have a few students for whom you have a special feeling,” she

explains. “As an elementary school teacher, you’re like a mother figure to many of the kids. And while you can’t help but feel for them, you also can’t make excuses for them.”

During her years of teaching, Ms. Culpepper says one recurring event has made it all worthwhile.

“As you go through a lesson, you see some kids with a clouded look, and you know they’re not catching on. After you’ve worked with them, when they finally do get it, you can see that light come on, and you feel this great ‘Ahhhhh’ of satisfaction, knowing you’ve reached them.”

After three-and-a-half decades of teaching, Ms. Culpepper says she is retiring at the end of this school year.

“Experience has really helped me. When I started, I may have taught the lessons, but I’m not sure how many children I taught. Through the years I’ve learned how to reach individual students by accommodating every kind of child.”

Shugart principal Dr. Lura Raney concurs. “Mrs. Culpepper and I have worked with each other for the past 23 years. She truly cares about each child personally and expects all of them to be successful,” says Dr. Raney. “She never gives up on a child, even if he gives up on himself.”

“She also contributes her talents and time to the entire school such as holding a PTA board office, presenting a staff development workshop, or just assisting another coworker on a one-on-one basis,” Dr. Raney says. “She has touched the lives of many students, parents, and educators, and I feel honored to be one of them.”

Those sentiments reflect the level of dedication Ms. Culpepper has devoted to her career as a teacher. It’s clear she will be missed at Shugart Elementary.



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