



PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



Tanesha Gant Encourages 7th-graders to be life-long learners

It just might be possible that great

teachers are born, not made.

“As long as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher,” says Garland ISD Teacher of the Month Tanesha Gant, seventh-grade English teacher at O’Banion Middle School.

“Ever since middle school, I loved my teachers,” Ms. Gant says. “I watched them, and modeled myself after them.”

That unintended but critical mentoring inspired Ms. Gant to obtain her teaching certification at Louisiana Tech, from which she graduated in 1997. She immediately followed graduation with more schooling there, pursuing a master’s degree in secondary and higher education, which she completed at the Texas A&M Metroplex Center in 2003.

After a stint in the Dallas ISD at a Pleasant Grove middle school, Ms. Gant learned of the opening at O’Banion and began there in 2002, teaching 6th- and 7th-grade English, reading and theater arts, sharing her passion for English, reading, writing and grammar.

That passion has served Ms. Gant well as she has faced the challenges inherent in her chosen discipline. “All the testing is really a challenge for students and teachers,” she says. “We have to make sure we cover all the material adequately and make sure the kids are ready to take TAKS tests in grammar and writing. Since writing isn’t tested in every grade, we have to make a big push.”

Ms. Gant deals with those challenges by maintaining her own status as a life-long learner. “I attend all the training I can and use the activities and ideas I learn there to inspire my students,” she says.

One recent exercise garnered from one of those training sessions was an in-class contest in

which students were encouraged to develop a list of synonyms for “said.” “Completely on her own, one student brought me a list the next day of words she had researched and come up with,” Ms. Gant says. It’s that kind of independent work that a teacher finds gratifying, she says.

In fact, “seeing kids think for themselves” is one of the greatest rewards Ms. Gant experiences.

Even outside of the classroom, Ms. Gant finds opportunities to challenge and inspire students. She leads a Step Team, which performs to rhythmic music. She likens the Step Team routines to the physical routines a marching band learns. “I challenged myself to reach as many kids as possible, and this was one way I found to do it,” she says.

Participating in the popular Step Team, which this year drew more than 100 kids for tryouts, requires students to keep their grades up and commit to practices.

“The Step Team is now going full steam ahead,” says O’Banion principal John Tucci. “It’s another way Ms. Gant has found to go out of her way to reach kids and make them excited about being part of O’Banion,” he says.

In Mr. Tucci’s experience with Ms. Gant, that’s just par for the course. “She’s the type of person who goes out of her way to help kids be their very best,” he says.

Ms. Gant is also “a strong team player, who works to benefit the entire school. She’s willing to take on additional duties if they mean success for our kids or our school,” Mr. Tucci says.

Given Ms. Gant’s dedication to every facet of education, there’s little doubt that some of her students are looking at her as their own mentor, modeling themselves after her example, on their way to their own teaching careers. Congratulations to Tanesha Gant, Garland ISD’s Teacher of the Month.



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