



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



## Sherry Hansford Teacher provides a helping hand to students, staff

After 25 years in teaching, Sherry Hansford has learned how to juggle. As North Garland High School's head of the special education department, she may not keep several balls in the air at once, but she certainly can manage multiple tasks all day, every day.

In addition to managing a staff of 27, and all the crisis management and paperwork that entails, Ms. Hansford also works in the classroom as a Helping Teacher, a program she piloted at North Garland. In this role, she assists all students with assignments, note taking, test preparation, and any other daily tasks their classes demand.

She also assists teachers. "If a teacher doesn't have enough handouts to go around and she's the only one in the classroom, some kids aren't going to get the handout. But if I'm there, serving as a Helping Teacher, I can run down to the office and make the needed copies. I can also review test material with the kids, allowing the teacher a few minutes to take roll or complete paperwork," Ms. Hansford says.

Ms. Hansford also offers tutoring nearly every day after school, assisting any student in need of a little extra attention with classroom assignments.

As the head of the special education department, Ms. Hansford also modifies tests to enable the school's 280 special education students to prove their mastery of material in every discipline.

Her other responsibilities include teaching and overseeing special education classes designed to help those students who are several grade levels behind their peers; overseeing the Content Mastery Room, a classroom where students can get additional help with specific classes; assisting with English as a Second Language students; monitoring students with behavioral issues; and designing and tracking programs for each student in the special education program, meeting with teachers and parents to ensure those students' compliance with and success in the program and the school.

All of this juggling has not gone unnoticed – by either her peers or her students. Ms. Hansford has been recognized in many ways in recent years. Recently, she was chosen North Garland High School Teacher of the Year. "That was a big deal to me, since I was chosen by my peers," she says.

Equally meaningful to her was her recent inclusion in two annual issues of *Who's Who of American Teachers*. "Seniors in high school who are selected as *Who's Who in American Students* nominate past teachers for this anonymously. I just wish I knew who had nominated me, so I could thank them," Ms. Hansford says.

Undoubtedly, plenty of former students would like to thank Ms. Hansford as well. She spent 14 years at Webb Middle School in Garland, then moved to high school where she taught several subjects. It wasn't until 2001, when she was chosen Educator of the Year for her work with special education, that she was encouraged by staff members and administrators to consider specializing in special education.

It was long before that, however, that then groundwork was laid for Ms. Hansford to become a teacher. "My grandmother had been a teacher, and every summer she bought me workbooks, and I would play teacher all summer. I think I was cut out for teaching from the start," she says.

A dalliance with an alternative career almost drove her off track, however. "In the 1970's, I had been accepted by American Airlines to be in their next 'stewardess' class. The class was cut, though, because of cutbacks related to a gas crunch," so she returned to her original plan to teach.

How many students' lives have been enriched because of that serendipitous cutback? North Garland High School, its students, and its staff certainly benefits from her presence in many ways.

Congratulations to Garland ISD Teacher of the Month Sherry Hansford, a dedicated, hard-working teacher whose responsibilities have caused her to perfect the art of academic juggling.



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