



# PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



## Katy Jetton Dramatic shift in plans leads to rewarding career

The best-laid plans are often derailed

in the most unexpected ways - with wonderful results.

That's what Katy Jetton found when she headed off to Costa Rica - even though she didn't speak a word of Spanish - to volunteer through the International Christian Youth Exchange.

The high-school graduate intended to return from a year of working with children in Costa Rican schools to pursue a college degree in the sciences.

However, life threw her a curve ball when she discovered her calling as a teacher while in Costa Rica.

"I loved the children's enthusiasm for learning English," she says. Their excitement fueled her own, and she learned to speak Spanish while in the Central American country.

Upon her return from the adventure, Mrs. Jetton began her college education with the goal of obtaining teacher certification.

She has done that and more. After completing a bachelor of science degree at McMurry University in Abilene, she and her new husband moved to Dallas so he could work toward a doctorate in molecular parasitology at Southern Methodist University. Mrs. Jetton also attended SMU, earning her graduate degree in bilingual education with a specialization in gifted and talented teaching.

While working toward her graduate degree, Mrs. Jetton happened to meet the assistant principal of Williams Elementary, learned there was an opening for a fourth-grade math teacher, and leaped at the chance to work in the school, which has many Spanish-speaking students.

"Almost all my students are second language learners," she says. "They really respond to math class, however, because there isn't the pressure of having to read and write extensively. They find they can be proficient more quickly in

math."

Ms. Jetton uses many gifted and talented teaching techniques.

"I use inquiry teaching extensively, asking them questions, helping them to delve further into the subject, and find links between similar concepts," she says.

She also employs small-group learning and games. "The kids are learning, but they're having so much fun they don't realize it."

Her classroom's unique combination of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students requires a dual-teaching strategy.

"I keep very busy, teaching in English and translating to Spanish occasionally to help my Spanish-speaking students grasp new concepts," she says.

Bilingualism also has proved useful for her students in classes other than math, she says.

"The fourth-grade team's other teachers are ESL-certified, meaning they're certified to work with English as a Second Language students, but teach only in English. If students are having a difficult time with a new concept, they can ask me for help in Spanish, and I can work through the ideas with them," Mrs. Jetton says.

Her enthusiasm for her students and teaching wins accolades from those she works with.

"Mrs. Jetton's fourth-grade students succeed in math because she patiently rejects excuses," says Williams Elementary principal Ellen Mooney. "The fact that many of her students are Spanish-speaking and learning English doesn't lower her expectations for them. Her students learn their math skills right along with English.

"Mrs. Jetton stays in touch with parents and encourages them with reports of student progress," says the principal. "Students learn to take pride in themselves and their school accomplishments."

Though Mrs. Jetton says she would one day like to pursue additional graduate degrees, right now, she's happy to be a teacher at Williams Elementary.



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