



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



## Patricia Lusk

### Learning goes beyond textbooks in this teacher's curriculum

At Back Elementary, the second-grade students of Patricia Lusk get more from their year than just the facts that can be found between the covers of their textbooks. Ms. Lusk, Garland ISD's Teacher of the Month, looks beyond the three R's to provide her students a full educational experience.

"For the past four years, we've written letters to servicemen," Ms. Lusk says. This year's recipient of the students' heartfelt letters and artwork was stationed in Afghanistan, and visited the classroom last week. "He awarded our class a flag that had flown during combat," she says, and noted how touched and awed the students were when they met their military pen pal.

As much as the soldiers appreciate the students' letters, Ms. Lusk says the program is more beneficial for the kids. "It helps to build their patriotism and help them feel they can make a difference," she says. "When the soldiers write back to them, they are motivated to write more."

Creating this caring, learning environment is a natural outgrowth of the school's philosophy, Ms. Lusk says. "Our school is very family oriented. It's a safe place, where kids feel accepted for who they are."

Ms. Lusk's love of teaching is apparent in her enthusiastic attitude toward her profession. "I've never awakened and not looked forward to the day ahead," she says. Even though each day is made up of a unique set of challenges, she says "I can't wait to come back."

This love of the classroom began especially early for Ms. Lusk. Growing up in Beaumont, "I knew since I was four years old that I wanted to be a teacher. I was among the oldest in my

neighborhood, so when we would get together to play school, I was always the teacher. And I've never veered away from that."

Ms. Lusk received her teaching degree from Lamar University, even attending summer school to obtain certifications in early childhood, special education, gifted and talented teaching, and math. "I'm certified to teach three year olds, all the way up to high school," she says, noting the only certification she lacks is the one required for teaching kindergarten.

Now teaching second grade, Ms. Lusk says "that's where my heart is. It's the perfect grade." She says that she is in a position to introduce some students to reading, and she can also open up new types of reading to those who have mastered their reading skills. "We do a lot of hands-on work, and I'm free to do that since I'm not tied to teaching to the TAKS test."

Ms. Lusk says she does recognize her responsibility in laying the critical groundwork for third-grade test preparation. "I keep tabs on the third graders to see where they are, and make sure they're getting what they need in second grade to prepare them for third." She says this vigilance has led her to hone some of her curriculum goals so her students have the background they need for a successful third-grade experience.

After 25 years in teaching, Ms. Lusk says she has no plans to do anything else with her professional life. She laughs that when she reaches retirement age, "they're going to have to put me out."

Back Elementary is fortunate to have on its staff a committed, caring teacher like Patricia Lusk.



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