



# PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



## Sandra Neal Teacher's passion pays off for students, school

Passion for one's profession usually translates into success, and that philosophy is true for Garland ISD's Teacher of the Month, Sandra Neal. She has a passion not only for the courses she teaches, but also for her students.

Primarily a seventh-grade Texas history teacher, Ms. Neal says she has always loved every kind of history, and has especially enjoyed sharing all she knows about Texas's unique past.

"I enjoy teaching," Ms. Neal says, adding that a teacher who appears to the kids to enjoy the subject matter makes that topic more interesting for them.

In fact, her passion for Texas history has translated into her students' success. "I've been lucky enough to have one or two students qualify for the Texas History Day competition at the state level every year," she says. "It's been great to see that many students get excited enough about Texas history to get that far."

Her passion has even translated into opportunities for Ms. Neal's own recognition. "I received the award from the Texas State Historical Association for Teacher of the Year in 2005," she says.

Finding her passion wasn't a quick, direct path for Ms. Neal. After raising five children, she realized she wanted to work, and completed her college education at the University of Texas at Dallas in 1998. "I earned a degree in history, as well as a teaching certificate, and I'm certified to teach not only history, but also English, social studies and special education," she says.

Following two years at Lyles Middle School, Ms. Neal was hired for a history opening at Jackson Technology Center, a math, science and technology magnet school, where she has been ever since - and where she plans to stay. "They'll have to drag me out of here in my wheelchair," she laughs.

"I love seventh grade, and I love my students. They're just wonderful," Ms. Neal says. "I love to see the light bulbs turn on, seeing them make a connection from 200 years ago to what's happening today, realizing that we face the same problems, desires and wants that people did all those years ago."

Ms. Neal's commitment to teaching extends well beyond the seventh-grade classroom. She teaches night classes at Garland High School, rotating among world geography and U.S. and Texas history.

In addition, she finds time in her schedule to help coach Jackson's seventh- and eighth-grade Pentathlon team. "The students are tested in science, English literature, math, history, and a theme subject. This year's theme is the 1950's," Ms. Neal says. The team meets once each week to drill on the tested subjects and prepare for the intramural competition.

"I am busy, but that's OK, because I'm doing what I love," she says.

That love spills over into every facet of Ms. Neal's work as an educator, an inspiration, and a leader. Her dedication and commitment serve her students, and her school, well. Congratulations to Sandra Neal on receiving the well-deserved recognition as Garland ISD Teacher of the Month.



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