



# PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



## Audrey Sumrall Starting “chapter two” of teaching career gives new perspective

“Teaching is all I ever wanted to do,” says Garland ISD Teacher of the Month and

so my kids could have the same experience I did growing up,” she says. That love of learning Ms. Sumrall gained from her grandmother has carried over not only to her own children, but also to the many students she’s influenced in her dozen years as a teacher.

second-grade teacher at Cooper Elementary, Audrey Sumrall. Ms. Sumrall returned to teaching about five years ago after spending several years as a stay-at-home mom, and her teaching career now adds up to a total of about 12 years, she says.

Ms. Sumrall earned bachelors degrees in both elementary education as well as special education, and she also earned a master’s degree in learning disabilities from East Texas State University. Cooper Elementary mainstreams students with learning differences and physical challenges, and Ms. Sumrall says her educational background has proved invaluable in dealing with challenges.

After spending those years on the “other side of the fence” as a parent, Ms. Sumrall says, “I think I’m a better teacher because I’m a parent. I understand both sides of that equation. I understand how chaotic life can be at home. As a teacher, I also understand the stresses teachers are under,” and she says she tries to balance the two sides from her unique perspective.

She says her special education background has equipped her to modify assignments as necessary to meet students’ individual needs, and “I understand the background of special needs kids so I can find new ways to approach a lesson to reach them,” she says.

“Seldom do I give homework that’s due the next day. I understand there might be a soccer game, a church activity. I think I’m a little more empathetic, since I understand the stresses and the busy-ness of life,” she says.

Ms. Sumrall is also ESL certified, an important part of her preparation for teaching second grade in Garland ISD, because she says “ESL is an inclusion program. We no longer pull out ESL kids in kindergarten, first, and second grades,” she says. About one third of her students speak Spanish.

Keeping in mind the teacher’s perspective is important too, Ms. Sumrall says. “It’s important to help kids learn to be responsible in their choices and behaviors. As a teacher, you have to respond their choices and behaviors, not determine them. If you help kids learn that, they’ll learn to make good choices. The more they learn to be responsible, the easier it is for them,” she says.

“With my ESL kids, we act out things, use pictures and visuals to make language real and bring them into our culture and our world without denying their language and their culture. We can also learn from them,” Ms. Sumrall says.

Ms. Sumrall says she learned many of those – as well as other – lessons from her grandmother when growing up in Indiana. “My grandmother loved to learn, and to teach. She had a chalkboard in her kitchen, and she would have math races for the kids, spelling tests among the cousins, that kind of thing, while she was cooking. She was a farm woman, but she could have been a college professor, but those opportunities weren’t available to her,” Ms. Sumrall says.

Second grade appears to be the proper niche for her, Ms. Sumrall says. “I love what I do. The kids are just becoming independent, but they still want to work hard and do their best for me,” she says.

“I made sure I had a chalkboard in my kitchen

“I plan to stay here, because I understand what kids need to do at this level, and I understand the curriculum, though I’m always learning new ways to approach it,” she says.

Cooper Elementary and Garland ISD are fortunate to have such a caring, dedicated professional on staff as Audrey Sumrall, making a difference every day in her students’ lives.



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