



PRESENTS THE TEACHER OF THE MONTH



Cheryl Taylor Teaching was Garland ISD instructor's destiny

Sometimes
mother really
does know
best.

Just ask Cheryl Taylor, who was selected Teacher of the Month for the Garland Independent School District. When she was a student at the University of Oklahoma, she was unsure of the career path she would pursue. She liked science, and considered pharmacy as one option. But then one day on the phone with her mother, she said, "Mom, I know what I'm going to do - I'm going to be a teacher." Her mother's response was, "I knew you would be. I was just waiting for you to figure it out."

Mrs. Taylor's teaching career began in Dallas in 1996, but as a resident of Rowlett, she found the commute was a burden, and landed a position at Seville Elementary in GISD.

After the birth of her daughter in 2001, Mrs. Taylor took a hiatus from teaching to care for her. She returned to teaching in 2003 when she found a job at the Classical Center at Brandenburg Middle School, where she became a seventh-grade math teacher.

This classical arts magnet school attracts a wide variety of students who appreciate the school's commitment to the arts, Mrs. Taylor says. The school features studies in dance, gymnastics, Latin, sculpture, drawing, painting and the piano.

Students who participate in the school's arts program are required to complete the same math program as students in the remainder of the district, whether honors or regular classes.

"I love teaching math. I just wish I had majored or minored in it in college. I like the logic of it. Math is very concrete, very reasoning-oriented. Teaching it is exciting, because once

you've set a foundation and built in the necessary thinking skills, a student can take math as far as they want to," Mrs. Taylor says.

She sees math education as an integral part of the learning process. "Teaching math allows me to teach the thinking process, and students can pull those same processes into other areas," she says.

To get those ideas across in an engaging way, Mrs. Taylor uses a combination of activities, including manipulatives, or hands-on learning aids. In preparation for the math TAKS test in the spring, she organizes students into teams to entertain them while they learn.

"I also use silly examples, or make up crazy illustrations to keep the kids engaged," she says.

During her career, she has found that teaching math does have its challenges. "We know what the expectations are, we know what kids need to learn, but we don't always have the provisions we need to meet all our objectives," Mrs. Taylor says.

One example she cites is obtaining workbooks with word problems written at a simplified reading level. "This is especially necessary for our special education and English as a second language students," she says. To obtain this objective, Mrs. Taylor and others in her department have been working with district decision-makers.

"It's also time-consuming to teach everything that needs to be covered, help those who are struggling, and complete all the paperwork that's required of us," Mrs. Taylor says.

Overcoming those challenges while maintaining a fun, educational classroom is all in a day's work for a teacher like Mrs. Taylor.



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