



## Varnell Voss

Memorial Preparatory School

## Varnell Voss is a different kind of math teacher

"I'm not a mathematician," he admits. "So I can look at math from the students' point of view."

He says that many of his students at Memorial Preparatory School are scared of math, so he's trying to change that.

"I try to make it relevant to them, using their experiences as examples," he says. "You've got to hook the learning to something that's important to the students - something they know and is related to their prior knowledge."

The fact that many of Dr. Voss' students no longer view math as a threat is a sign that they've been hooked. Yet, he says, he doesn't seek awards and honors - just a positive impact.

Still, Dr. Voss admits a sense of pride at twice being named to Who's Who Among America's Teachers.

"That meant more to me than anything," he says. "The honor came from students of mine who remembered me and the experience they had in my class, and they named me as the teacher who helped them realize their potential."

Teaching at Memorial, a middle school for students needing a highly-focused reading and math curriculum, has given Dr. Voss plenty of opportunities to positively influence young lives.

"I try to build up students and encourage them - to let them be successful," he says.

"Success breeds success."

About 25 years ago, a young Varnell Voss "had a notion" that he wanted to teach - not math but English. After teaching four years at Coyle Middle School and 16 years at Spring Creek Elementary, Dr. Voss, always eager to accept a challenge, took a position at Memorial teaching 6th-grade math.

"When I taught 5th grade, I used to have children write their own books and share them with other students." Years later, former students tell him they still have their books.

To leave such an indelible mark on a student's mind is the hope of every teacher. But Dr. Voss doesn't think he's unique.

"I have an excellent team," he says. "In fact, when I was chosen as teacher of the month, I thought they could have chosen anyone at Memorial. Anyone here is worthy - some of them more so."

Garland ISD Communications Director Steve Knagg says Dr. Voss was selected because "he's good, and we wanted to let his light shine.

"And he's got a real love for that classroom."

Dr. Voss is more practical.

"I try to be encouraging," he says. "I set the expectation that the students can do what we're going to do, and I keep going over it with them to make sure they do it.

"When they see their grades coming up, they're motivated to work harder."

