

**Austin Aeschbacher
Northlake Elementary**

- **You realize you are about to read of an extraordinary teacher when the nomination begins: *The lights dim like a concert is about to begin. The music cranks up like a young DJ artist prepares to hit the stage. The crowd lights up with 28 glow sticks ready to groove. What do all of these images have in common? Mr. Aeschbacher the 5th grade science teacher at Northlake Elementary preparing his students to learn about science vocabulary.***
- **He creates lessons that are engaging, fun and memorable- sometimes that means dressing as a pirate to teach a mixtures lab or turning one of the student's favorite songs into a lesson on energy.**
- **He is a writer; blogger and tweeter- you check follow him on his educational twitter account @PapaBacher where you can find him hosting chats with other educators from around the world.**
- **One of Mr. Aeschbacher's biggest impacts that he has made within the Richardson ISD community was the securing of the 1st Outdoor Harmony Garden. The Skyview Harmony Garden opened in the fall of 2016 and is an outdoor classroom that provides students from low socioeconomic backgrounds an opportunity to learn and engage in an outdoor space with the science and music curriculum.**
- **Mr. A was tasked to take over the "Invention Convention" competition for all of Richardson ISD and he continues to serve as a consultant.**
- **He embraces the districts mission statement that "all students can connect, learn, grow and succeed."**
- **Mr. Aeschbacher has said "Kids learn when we meet them where they are and take them where they need to be".**

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Austin Aeschbacher!

Loretta Smith
W H Gaston Middle School

- Ms. Smith is known to demonstrate instructional expertise, creativity, and innovation.
- Every year, for the first day of school, she does an inquiry based lesson with her students where they make bread as a team, not knowing what the secret recipe will be. She uses this to determine who follows directions and who will need more help and guidance.
- Ms Smith frequently interacts with community members on substantive education issues. For years she participated outside of her normal scope of duties with Altrusa International. With this group, she was able to get much needed supplies donated to students and staff.
- She participates in many home visits with her students to address their needs. Ms. Smith is always willing to tutor any student regardless of time- before, during and after school.
- Ms. Smith regularly attends extra-curricular activities of many students, to show them her support. She also is a coach for Destination Imagination, UIL Academics and Pentathlon.
- She often leads professional development for the whole staff and serves as the campus T.E.I. evaluation expert.
- She assisted in implementing a restorative practices program at our school that reaches out to all students and helps them cope with difficulties at home and academically. This program has helped in dramatically reducing suspension rates.
- **From the nomination-** “ Ms. Smith can relate in ways many others can't to our students, specifically the socioeconomically disadvantaged students, many of whom come from single parent or grandparent raised homes. She grew up with absent parents who ultimately gave up their legal rights as parents when she was three years old. Ms. Smith is able to reach students, most struggle to understand.”

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Loretta Smith!

Chris Evetts

Woodrow Wilson High School

- **I am always impressed when a student submits a nomination. Our Public High School Teacher of the Year received seven nominations from his students.**
- **Chris Evetts is the director of the Woodrow Wilson High School Band.**
- **You may think that a high school band performs at the football games and maybe a homecoming parade. Not the case with the Woodrow band. You may have seen the band marching down the street from the high school to the neighborhood Rec Center to play for Hurricane Harvey evacuees. Or maybe it was marching in the Veterans Day Parade, the Light Up Lakewood Christmas event or the Lakewood 4th of July Parade. Or performing in nursing homes, or the Swiss Avenue Mother's Day home tour. You may have seen them practicing for 2 hours before school one day? Or you may have seen them perform at UIL recently where they received 1st division rating. One nomination reads "Mr. Evetts has not only brought his students to believe in themselves individually and as a team, but he has brought to them the idea of community engagement"**
- **Pretty impressive- right? But what if I told you that when Mr. Evetts took over as band director the band consisted of about 10 students and now it is over 100 strong. From one nomination "He has transformed the once meek band into a powerhouse of well-behaved, dedicated, hard-working kids all while loving what they do."**
- **One of our nomination questions is "how does the nominee meet the criteria of Attention to Diversity?" My favorite response: "I'm a student. I don't know. He's an amazing band director that got us from the bottom to the top." I think that is what is called "cut to the chase"**
- **According to one of the nominations- "Our school is about 75% minority and over 50% economically disadvantaged. He has personally raised money so that those of lesser means are able to afford private lessons to get up to speed. He leads an annual fundraiser at the Granada Theater and recruits a famous group or musician to play with and mentor the band."**

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Chris Evetts!

Lexi McClure

St Thomas Catholic School

- **Ms. McClure is a 1st Grade Teacher at St Thomas**
- **What impressed the Ms. McClure's nominator was her professionalism and communication- making sure the parents are informed and her students are challenged without ever feeling excluded from the other students.**
- **Ms. McClure's nomination was full of great examples of what a teacher of the year looks like: Great communication with parents, teaching students to be involved in the community, professional development and being a team leader within the school, having a great eye to notice the special things in each student. So many wonderful things about Ms. McClure that would make any parent ecstatic to have her teacher their 1st grader- for me – the words "First Grade Fairy Tale Ball" jumped right off the page. This event is a celebration of the end of the Fairy Tale unit for the 1st Grade. Ms. McClure created a true ball run by the parents. The students come to school on this day dressed as their favorite fairy tale character- and they celebrate with games, food and dance.**
- **Ms. McClure says** " I look at each individual child as my own and I want nothing more than for them to be successful...We are all capable of success.....we are capable of finding it as long as the correct key is found to unlock the door in a loving, caring and safe environment."
- **From Ms. Roberts- principal of St Thomas' lower school-** "Lexi McClure's huge heart and love for her students, her bottomless toolbox of instructional strategies to help every kind of learner, her relentless commitment to each student's success, her kindness, her compassion, her integrity, her work ethic...these are just a few of her many gifts. Lexi McClure is so deserving of this recognition. We are so blessed to have her as a part of our Lower School family at St. Thomas! We are proud of her every single day and especially today as she receives this award as a Greater East Dallas Chamber of Commerce's Teacher of the Year!"

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Lexi McClure!

Ellen Kufel
Lakehill Preparatory

- **Ms. Kufel teaches math to students in grades five through eight at Lakehill. She also sponsors the middle school Math Club, serves as the Seventh Grade Class Sponsor, Calendar Committee, Math Department Chair for kindergarten through grade seven as well as having coached middle school volleyball. (Whew)**
- **From the nomination “I have had many opportunities to observe the work that Ellen does – I am consistently amazed by the skills she is able to impart in her students and her boundless enthusiasm for providing opportunities to them”.**
- **Ms. Kufel says “My main goal is to encourage students to maintain their inherent curiosity, enter my classroom excited to be in math and ask ‘Is class over already?’ when it is time to leave”**
- **How does she do this? She uses technology, manipulatives, comics, humor, stories, and collaboration, partner and group challenges.**
- **She went above and beyond to explore a new math curriculum for adoption at Lakehill. “With patience and grace she guided the team to make a solid selection that met the right criteria and support of the team”.**
- **Ms. Kufel teaches summer camps which are open to all students in the East Dallas community who want to brush up on their math skills.**
- **You see how much of an impact Ms. Kufel has had on her students when you see their notes to her: “I’ve always loved math and having a great math teacher made me love it even more”. Or- “I love you so much it’s not even funny! Thanks for a wonderful season”.**
- **Ms. Kufel began teaching 28 years ago and says that “I could not be any more satisfied with my life’s choice. I didn’t choose teaching-it was already in my DNA. It is who I am”**

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Ellen Kufel!

**Caroline Cooper
Dallas Academy**

- **You may see Ms. Cooper often in East Dallas. Ms. Cooper is a long time resident of Little Forest Hills and in addition to her teaching role at Dallas Academy she is active with her children's school Alex Sanger. She volunteers at For the Love of the Lake and will often be found biking around the lake.**
- **I first met Ms. Cooper as part of Leadership ISD- a program focused on advancing educational excellence and equity by informing and connecting leaders in our community.**
- **Ms. Cooper's passion for teaching is evident in the relationships she develops with her students and her ability to understand the unique needs of each student.**
- **She utilizes specialized and varied learning techniques such as SMART board technology, 3D visual aids and supportive videos. As a history teacher she works to make connections of history's conflicts to the challenges that her own students face in their daily lives. A colleague says "Caroline works to make history a living experience for her students." She is often off campus taking student to local museums, exhibits, The White House situation room at the Bush Library and Dallas City Hall**
- **Last year I was able to participate in Ms. Cooper's American History student's presentation of the Gettysburg Address. Each student memorized and recited the speech with the winners reciting the address at City Hall for the council and Mayor Rawlings.**
- **Ms. Cooper says "I want my students to develop a curiosity of the work around them and challenge them to be life-long learners"**

Please join me to thank and congratulate Teacher of the Year Caroline Cooper!