



Region X
Region Service Center
Secondary
Elementary or Secondary
Coppell ISD 057-922
District Name and ID number

2014 Candidate Application Form

I. General Information and signatures

Nominee: First/Last Name Kimberly N. Pope

INFORMATION REDACTED

Educator Certification Program Regular Alternative Area of Certification 4-8 Social Studies
Major Subject Area History Grade Level 7/8
Total Years of Teaching Experience 10 Years in Present Position 7

I hereby give my permission that any or all of the attached materials or photos that may be taken of me can be shared with persons interested in promoting, in a variety of media, the National and Texas Teacher of the Year Programs.
Signature of Nominee Kimberly N. Pope

Principal: First/Last Name Dr. Leanne Shivers (Dorhout)

Principal's e-mail address ldorhout@~~tdc~~Coppellisd.com Phone # (214) 496-7110

Signature of Principal [Signature]

District Superintendent: First/Last Name Dr. Jeff Turner

Superintendent's e-mail address jturner@coppellisd.com Phone # (214) 496-8002

Signature of Superintendent [Signature]

The deadline for the full application to be received at your ESC office is 5 p.m., Friday, June 14, 2013.
10 point minimum font size. Please reference nomination rules for complete instructions

ESC NOTE: The cover sheet (page one of the application) is due at the ESC by 5 p.m. on May 31, 2013. This two week lead time prior to the receipt of completed applications (June 14, 2013) allows contact time with TOY Contacts, districts, schools, and teachers that may be having problems or issues with the application process.
NOTE: For contact purposes, it would be helpful if the principal would provide a personal (at-home) e-mail address should contact need to be made during the summer months. Home E-Mail: _____

II. Educational History and Professional Development

University	Degree Earned	Field of Study	Dates Attended
Texas Tech University	Doctorate of Educational Leadership	Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction	Tentative fall 2013
University of Texas at Arlington	Principal Certification	Educational Leadership	2011- 2012
University of Phoenix	Master of Curriculum and Instruction	Curriculum and Professional Development	2006 - 2007
University of North Texas	Bachelor of Science	Education	1998 - 2003

Place of Employment	Time Period	Grade level	Subject area
Coppell Middle School North, Coppell ISD	2006 – present	7 th /8 th	Texas History United States History
Evans Middle School, McKinney ISD	2005 - 2006	6 th /7 th	World Cultures Texas History
DeWitt Perry Middle School, Carrollton Farmers Branch ISD	2004 - 2005	6 th	World Cultures
Universal Academy Charter School, Flower Mound	2003 – 2004	Pre K/K	Generalist

Professional Association Membership	Relevant Information
Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented	State Conference Presenter and Member, Research Division Member, Austin, Texas
Learning Forward Texas	Member - Dallas, Texas
National Association for Council of Social Studies	Professional Member, National Membership Washington, D.C.
Association of Texas Professional Educators	Member - Austin, Texas
Texas Girls Coaches Association	Member - Austin, Texas

Professional Development Taught	Date
Innovative Teaching Today – Using the Flipped Instructional Model with Digital Natives	Region 10 Technology Conference, May 2013
The Library and the Flipped Classroom – Panelist	Texas Library Association State Conference, April 2013
Support my 3E Flipped Out! Classroom	Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented State Leadership Conference, April 2013
Grouping and Individualizing in the 3E Classroom	Coppell ISD, February 2013
Flipping Out! How to Engage, Enrich, and Enhance Learning for the GT Student in the Flipped Instructional Model	Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented State Conference, November 2012
Technology Smack-down for the GT Learner	Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented State Conference, November 2012
Collaborative Grouping Within the Flipped Classroom	Coppell ISD, August 2012
Flipping Out! with Two History Teachers	Allen ISD Flipped Conference, July 2012
Technology Smack-down	Region 10 Technology Conference, May 2012

Professional Development Attended	Relevant Information
7 Billion and Counting: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Our Planet's Future	Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented State Conference, November 2012
iConnect: Using Mobile Devices to Build 21st Century Skills	Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented State Conference, November 2012
Innovation by Design	Learning and the Brain, Harvard University Summer 2012
Engagement, Empowerment, Enrichment in the 3E Model	Coppell ISD, Summer 2012
How to become a Flipped Classroom Teacher	Directed by Aaron Sams and Jon Bergmann Coppell ISD, January 2012
The U.S. Constitution and American History, 2009	Humanities Texas, Austin, Texas June 2009
From Disunion to Empire: The United States 1850 – 1900	Humanities Texas, Denton, Texas July 2008
The West and the Shaping of America	Humanities Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 2007

Leadership Activity	Description	Date
GT Strategic Planning Committee	Outlining the goals and purpose for our gifted and talented program to be able to meet the needs of all learners.	May 2013-present
Algebra 1 Blended Learning Pilot – Summer School – Leader of Design	Summer school program designed to enrich the current online program for students.	June – July, 2013
District Bond and Calendar Committee Member	Committee decides how district should design and distribute the bond money; decides holidays and dates for districts next two years calendar	Sept. 2011 - present
District Cooperating Teacher	Teacher Leader for Student Teachers	Sept 2012, Jan 2011
District Mentor Teacher	Mentor Beginning Teachers	August 2009 – May 2011
STAAR Social Studies Item Review Committee Member	Question review committee for Pearson and TEA for upcoming STAAR exam	September, 2011
TaRGET American History	Developed a historical “truck” filled with primary sources of American History; in development with Region 10	Sept. 2006 – August 2007

Award/Recognition	Relevant Information/Date
Secondary Teacher of the Year	Coppell ISD, 2012 – 2013
Campus Teacher of the Year	Coppell Middle School North, Coppell ISD 2012 – 2013
SuperTeacher Award	First quarter, Coppell ISD October 2012 Awarded for an innovative and engagement filled lesson plan
Humanities Texas Teacher of the Year Nominee	Humanities Texas State Award, 2011 – 2012, 2012 - 2013 Final award given to 11 teachers in the State of Texas
Extra Mile Award	Coppell Middle School North, 2012 Awarded for professionals who go the “Extra Mile”
Great Educators Matter (GEM)	Coppell Middle School North, Coppell ISD 2009 Awarded quarterly to professionals nominated by their peers for recognition of outstanding work

III. Professional Biography

My fascination with *The Golden Girls* began in my very early teens. Was it the fashionable clothes of the late 80's that drew me in or was it the camaraderie that the women shared with each other that I so earnestly craved?. Dorothy, my favorite character by far, full of cynical lines and dry humor, was just what a 13-year-old girl needed after a long day at school. I would sit in my room, doors closed tightly, and laugh hysterically until my stomach ached over the banter back and forth. (My grandmother would later tell people that she could hear me laughing throughout the house...as if my world depended on that next joke to determine my own happiness.)

Why did I watch *The Golden Girls*? Those four women reminded me of something. Watching their love and enthusiasm for life made me notice that something was missing in my life. A mother. My mother was not involved in my life; she was like a distant relative to her own daughter. I struggled to make sense of this as it left a void in the formation of my own identity.

It was not my mother, but my coach that gave me what Oprah calls a "life defining moment." One day after track practice, she looked at me, I mean really looked at me, and said, "You don't belong here. In this town, with this life, you don't deserve it." And the funny thing was - I believed her. She pointed to a classroom door and said, "Just in case you want to know how to get out of this town, the answer is in there. And if you want to know how to pay for it, the answer is on the track." Believe it or not, before this time, I never knew I had an option to leave. But there it was, right in front of me. From that moment on, my appetite for education was insatiable. I went to summer school every summer to learn. I earned so many credits, I was able to graduate high school a year early! I was going to be my family's first high school graduate and I had done it in 3 years!

I got my first teaching job when I was 22. Boy, was I excited! I had my first group of kindergarten students and was delighted to be with them every day. Their enthusiasm for life and school was a blessing for me in that first year of teaching. It was later in the year that my desire to coach and have a relationship with students (similar to the one my coach had with me) came about. My desire to give back was endless. I wanted every student I encountered to feel the same success I felt -- the same success that gave me the drive to rise above my circumstances of poverty, family violence and drugs to achieve the things that no one else in my family had been able to achieve. This was a gift too special not to share.

My greatest achievement and success as an educator is and always will be the relationships and connections that I build with students. From those relationships come amazing and extraordinary things. My connections with students allow me to inspire them to believe outside of the classroom. Together we strive to turn the impossible to the possible every single day. We work to solve the world's greatest problems and know there is no age requirement on changing the world. I call my students visionaries. I call them visionaries because it's true. The next Steve Jobs or Bill Gates is sitting in my classroom right now. And I am inspired just by knowing that. This year my students discussed and reviewed social reforms. They decided they wanted to take action by writing letters to their Congressmen, President, Senators, CEO's, and Superintendents. They discussed these issues with their local community and although they know they will never be able to cure poverty, unemployment, or cyber bullying immediately, they understood that there are variables within the issue that they do have the ability to change. I will

never get tired of hearing my students say, “Coach Pope, we can change that!” I am grateful to share every single one of these moments with my students.

What I emphasize in the classroom and in the gym is very similar---I teach my students and athletes to be visionaries and believe they can accomplish anything. Being a coach and a teacher affords me the opportunity to make connections with students inside the classroom and transfer that relationship to the gym. The power of words plays a significant role in coaching. You can easily make or break a student with your words. I always end practice on a positive note so that the last thing they take away with them is positive. I want to make my athletes believe they can do anything -- that they are the ones who will make the last minute basket, score the winning serve, or power past that last runner.

There was an athlete I had in 7th grade who had never played volleyball before. She was on my C team and wanted to quit every single day, but I wouldn't let her. Fast forward to her senior year -- she got a full scholarship to a Division 1 school to play volleyball and her team won the State Championship where she was named Most Valuable Player. I think back to those days when she wanted to give up, when the stress of being great was too much for her and I am thankful that I was able to help her believe so that she could achieve something she thought was impossible. Students face challenges in the classroom and so do teachers. I am committed to supporting both. I love sharing my curriculum design ideas with other teachers. I design lessons with voice and choice for students. I want all students to be able to showcase their strength and skills in the classroom. Since all students are different, lessons are laced with differentiation techniques. This creates buy-in on the learners' part and in turn empowers the learners. Meeting the needs of our learners is the most important educational goal and one of the hardest things to do. I present at several professional development sessions for teachers at the district, state, and national level to assist in that crucial design piece. I want to share these skills that I feel I have mastered and be a sounding voice for other teachers in the classroom. As the Secondary Teacher of the Year for Coppell ISD, I am humbled and excited for more opportunities to grow professionally and extend my reach to become an example for teachers in other districts. Being able to provide my colleagues with my skilled knowledge and experience is one of the greatest contributions I can make to the field of education.

I will always serve by sharing my knowledge and skills, providing a place for teachers to learn and grow. I will continually promote a classroom environment of “YES I CAN” with all students and athletes. My lesson and designs will be constructed with voice, choice, and student empowerment for the best interests of all students. The young girl who watched endless episodes of *The Golden Girls* learned the most valuable life lesson of all – giving back is its own reward and it is the connections we make with others that matter in this world.

IV. Community Involvement

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” Dr. Seuss

On my path to becoming a professional educator, I volunteered my time at the Children's Advocacy Center. The Children's Advocacy Center assisted children who were victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. During my time there, I began to see a difference in myself and in my desire to help others around me. It was a desire to serve. I bring this desire with me into the classroom. The majority of my students are from families who are financially stable and don't have worries like so many other children in this world. Many want to help, but need direction and guidance on how. What I have learned is that it is an important part of their process of learning -- to understand why we serve and how it affects others around us.

I have shown my commitment for serving in many different areas with my students in the following ways:

- For the past 7 years, my students have donated their Halloween candy to Trick or Treat for Troops. We collaborate with other classes and send large boxes of candy, handmade postcards from Art, certificates for a job well done, and other products for personal needs. The students really become involved with this service learning activity because we send out goodies to the relatives of our teachers who are overseas fighting. It's a personal connection for them and enables them to see how a selfless act can impact someone's life and family.
- In 2011, a beloved English teacher at our school was diagnosed with brain cancer. It was devastating news to our community. Although we felt helpless to fight the tumor, we wanted to organize a rally to assist in raising money for her medical bills. Our two local community fundraisers raised over \$11,000 for this special teacher. It took courage for these children to face this trial head on, and we continued to visit and assist her until her last breath a year and a half later.
- My students strive to create a better community in which they live. During a particular lesson at the beginning of the year, they collaborated with outside corporations to develop a plan of healthy eating for our school lunches. They researched state nutritional guidelines and made sure that all projected plans consisted of a balance of nutrition and good taste. This plan was presented to many members of our school board members, school administration, staff, and parents.

It is important for my continual growth as an educator to give back to my community and to my students. I am always looking for opportunities to serve. The following is a summary of those endeavors:

- Writing letters of recommendation for colleagues and students
- Coaching a summer track camp for younger students
- Participating in History Fair which is a National Competition for my students to learn greater in-depth content about a history (several students have won at the National level)
- Participating in an annual Faculty/Student basketball game benefiting cancer research
- Assisting in cultivating awareness in middle school when two students at our local high school lost their lives suddenly and unexpectedly. The middle school students felt disconnected and unsettled about this situation, so I worked out a plan to assist in feeding their emotional need to be heard and continued the plan throughout the year.

V. Philosophy of Teaching

My philosophy of education boldly stands on the idea that students are unique individuals and their education should be designed to reflect and compliment their strengths and skills. From the beginning, my lessons are created to bring out the strengths in all my students. To do this, I use my experience as a teacher, differentiation techniques, and non-traditional lesson designs to implement the curriculum.

The ability to acknowledge students as individuals with unique skills and strengths and to play to those individual strengths when designing lessons is a necessity. Not only will there be student buy-in, but students will experience higher levels of personal success throughout the lesson. No longer are learners sitting in rows, reading a textbook, and turning in worksheets. Those days are long behind us.

Students need feedback. Students need freedom within the lesson design. Students need choice and voice. Students need to feel empowered. During a lesson this year about The Industrial Revolution, my students were able to critically evaluate the inventions of that time period and use that knowledge to create an invention of their own that would have had the same lasting effects. One student wrote to me, “This is one of the most unique curriculums I have ever experienced...you are giving me life changing chances to learn and display my educational proficiency.”

A big part of my classroom is using the flipped classroom instructional model. “Flipping” my classroom means that I move my lecture out of the classroom to homework and that frees up more class time to increase depth and complexity with the material.. I have never had a better connection with my students than after implementing this instructional model. We are able to investigate ideas, make critical evaluations of multiple perspectives in history, and students are able to learn and move with the curriculum at their own pace. My students no longer have to start and stop the lesson together. Teachers typically teach to the middle population of students, thereby missing the high and low students, but with the flipped instructional model, teachers can easily reach all three groups of students. I no longer have to have a general lesson to suit the majority of the class. I am able to sit with each student, gauge where his or her learning needs are, assess, and modify or increase complexity as needed. This also gives students empowerment with their learning as I have found that they self-advocate more and ask questions. One specific lesson comes to mind, which was entitled, *Could I Become a Meteorologist?* Students were able to watch flipped videos about the Galveston Hurricane and came to class with a frame of reference before even starting the lesson in class. Students were then able to plot the 10 days of the path of the hurricane, study the facts about hurricanes and their damage, and then became a “meteorologist.” They finished the assignment by broadcasting a weather report for each day of the hurricane. Students emailed actual meteorologists to get an idea of what to do and how to deliver news to a camera. After, they reflected on what they learned and explored that career path for their future. Students were engaged, empowered, and enabled to evaluate their own career readiness skills for this particular career path.

I take pride in knowing that I know the ability level of every single student in my class before they even take a formal assessment. I have developed a relationship with them that allows for this connection and knowledge. I use a variety of differentiation tools within my classroom to meet the needs of different learners. One of my most frequent current differentiation tools is formative assessment. My goal is to have a formative assessment 4 out of 5 days a week. Formative assessments not only allow me to see if my students understand the material, but also for me to

provide immediate feedback. Providing students with immediate feedback gives them a greater understanding of their learning and communicates to my students that I care if they are learning the material.

My most popular formative assessment is the traffic cups. Every student has a red, yellow, and green traffic cup stacked on his or her desk. The cups sit with the yellow on top. If the student needs help, they move the cup to red. When the student is ready to move forward, they move the cup to green. It's non-confrontational for students to use and they do not have to raise their hand to ask a question aloud for the whole class to hear. I have found this to have a very positive effect on my regular and at-risk learners. This is a way to tailor instruction, lessons, and curriculum for all students in my class.

Edmodo is another way I am able to differentiate in my classes. Edmodo is familiar to students because it is similar to Facebook and many students are familiar with the format. It allows me to group students, without the students' knowledge, and tailor curriculum to the needs of those learners. This allows those students to move at their own pace and allows me to increase depth and complexity for those students who are ready to progress.

As a teacher of the Humanities, my goal is to integrate concepts from Language Arts as much as possible and push from a global perspective. Both classes produce unit lessons embedded with each other's content; students practice and master concepts in both areas, reuniting a spirit of a true Humanities classroom. *All the World's a Stage* was a lesson designed for this collaboration. Students were studying drama within literature and we supported this in History by creating a full production music video to *Call Me Maybe*, which included all the information we learned in History this year. We coordinated with Media classes to learn about video software and techniques for filming of the video production. It was a fantastic ending to our year!

I strive for excellence every day. I strive to make someone's day every single day. I know the educational power that is derived from allowing students to have a voice in their own learning and a choice in their products to validate the learning. Teaching to me, and as quoted by Nelson Mandela, is about being able to provide students with something that no one can ever take away from them. I am personally thankful for that. Holding on to my education during my childhood was a lifesaver and enabled me to find my place in this world. A teacher gave me that. A teacher guided me to see that my education was and is invaluable. This has created in me a desire for lifelong learning. I strive to get my Doctorate in Education. I never want to stop learning. I want my students to feel the same way.

I am one of the lucky ones. I teach the future of America and I take so much pride, love, and strength from that. There is no job more fulfilling and no job more "worth it" than being a teacher.

VI. Education Issues and Trends

According to a report on mobile learning, 50% of high school students and 40% of middle school students have a smart phone, an increase of 400% since 2007. We can't deny that students are changing. The way that they receive and process information is very different than anything most adults have experienced. We can't deny that this new way of processing information is changing the face of education. Students are more aware of their education than ever before. Students demand something more than the textbook, more than worksheets, and more than teaching to the middle of the class. It's a difficult transition to make, but it is our jobs as educators to meet these students' demands.

Education is constantly evolving, ever changing. Staying current and relevant in education is important so that we are able to reach and teach this generation of students. Educators are essentially preparing students for jobs that are not yet created-which means we need to focus on skills that will prepare students for any type of career. We are doing our students a disservice in the classroom if we allow education to be taught the same way as 20 years ago. Schools and education should mirror their students and as students change, education should too.

One of the major problems with education today is that it has a one-size-fits-all model. It's the same as buying a one-size-fits-all shirt and expecting it to fit the majority of Americans. One size never fits all-especially when talking about teaching students. This means that our classrooms have to transform from the traditional and adapt to this new generation of students. Students want to be problem solvers, critical thinkers, and visionaries. Students step into the classroom and need to be inspired, not asked to copy out of the textbook or sit and listen to an hour-long lecture. A lesson designed to bring out individualization and personality, tailored to a student's particular strength and skills, and monitored for struggles and processes of understanding is the new face of education.

It is time for us as educators to reinvent ourselves. It is time for us to take a long, hard look at education, the instructional methods being used in classrooms, the assessments and products produced by the students, and the creative process it takes to get there.

As 21st Century educator, my goal is to have three stages for curriculum design and instruction:

- Delivery of content through non-traditional methods, specific to the changing faces of our students
- Personalized, student-created information through process and as product
- Sharing newly created student creations

Teachers, like myself, are trying new, non-traditional teaching methodologies, utilizing individualization.. The following techniques and tools create a learning environment that is engaging and empowering for today's students. One of my favorites is the Flipped Instructional Model. Flipping the classroom means moving the lecture out of the classroom and moving a more personalized, student-centered experience into the classroom. This flip of the traditional work allocation allows teachers to make a better connection with their students and evaluate a student's progress every day. Many students like this because they can watch those videos on their phones and devices, at their convenience and at home. It naturally promotes differentiation. Teachers are able to work with students in ability groups and modify or increase depth and complexity right there with the learner. In my classroom, my relationships with students have never been greater and more personal. We have time for discussion, but most importantly, to just talk. I have found that just talking with my students during regular class

time takes some of the pressure off of the student, and they typically ask more questions, increasing their understanding of the material. We have a better connection. With this connection, I am able to assess my students before an exam; I know their ability level, what concepts they are struggling to understand, and their strengths and weaknesses. It has transformed my teaching, elevating it to a whole new level.

Blended learning is other option for a non-traditional teaching method. It is a combination of online learning and face-to-face instruction in the classroom. This option provides more flexibility for learners who are advanced thinkers and struggle in a classroom where everyone moves at the same pace. It allows those students to soar and reach a level of depth and complexity with the material that suits their needs and understanding. It also allows students to explore certain career paths or interests, leaving them empowered and having more voice and choice in their lesson. This is a great design for secondary learners. Secondary learners try to identify themselves with their interests and those areas in which they are strongest. This allows for an open platform for students to perform and take their learning to a new level.

The use of Project Based Learning is another option that can be used in education right now to help meet the needs of today's learner. Project Based Learning provides a platform for students to problem solve, offering students a different setting and way to learn the material. It cultivates an environment of collaboration and team building, skills that students will need to develop and use for the rest of their lives. It naturally promotes critical thinking and places students in charge of their own learning. Empowerment is key here. Showing students that they CAN DO IT, giving them a platform to do so, and stepping back to watch students achieve that goal is what Project Based Learning looks like in my classroom.

The institution of Education is large and rooted in a traditional model, which means transformation will be a long and challenging road. Improving individualized learning plans and training professionals for innovative teaching and constant student empowerment is hard work, time consuming and takes resources. Transformation will only come with support and commitment for change from all stakeholders-businesses, parents, legislators, educational leadership, higher education, classroom teachers... Transformation demands teamwork, creative innovators and visionaries. When all educators are meeting the individual needs of students through innovative ways, the whole world will take notice of the high caliber of thinkers our education system can produce.

VII. The Teaching Profession

My efforts at strengthening the teaching profession have been one of my life's greatest passions. As a teacher I love the relationships I have with my students. As a professional educator, I love building relationships with adults and creating an environment where teachers know they can depend on me to be a service to them. I am always on the lookout for ways to make someone's day a little brighter by assisting them in various ways -- designing curriculum for their classes, being a shoulder to lean on, helping to assist their students in an endeavor, or just by recognizing the great things that are happening around me.

As a professional development leader, my main goal is strengthening the teaching profession. I enjoy stepping up and being a teacher leader. I equip myself with knowledge and information to be able to serve my peers. I am always thinking of new ways to be of service to them. I have been fortunate to be able to present at state and local conferences, and will present in my first national conference in December. My involvement and presentations in these organizations highlight the fact that teachers are creative thinkers who care about our classrooms but also consider outside elements that influence our student's performance. In building relationships with organizations and the community at large, I am able to understand and convey to the community at large what our current students' needs are. I also use my this time to recruit teachers into this wonderful profession, being a role model for people who want to come into this profession and showing the value and the meaningfulness of it all.

I value sharing with my peers. My peers are able to come and collaborate with me anytime that they need help. We share ideas, try new methods in our classrooms, and collaborate; it is a true joy and time of learning. My philosophy of being a professional educator revolves around being a resource to other teachers. We share ideas and trends, collaborate in ways to promote success and growth, and model best practices for other teachers. I will always stay current on the issues in education and be available for dialogue with other teachers. My classroom always has an open door.

As a campus leader, I was one of the first teachers to use the 3E (Engagement, Empowerment, Enrichment) lesson-planning model in conjunction with the Flipped Instructional Method of instruction. It has shown great initial success and potential for real educational transformation for students. I have had other neighboring school districts from near and far come and view my classroom. This has allowed me to highlight my teaching methods for others. Since using this model, my Humanities classroom has really taken off. I have been able to work with the language arts teacher to develop lesson plans that embody both history and language arts. We are able to create units of learning and Project Based Learning projects. One area of focus has been increasing the audience for our students. For example, we created a lesson for our students entitled: Spanish Mission: The History of Spanish Missions in Texas where we were able to transform the library into a Spanish Mission. The students rotated through stations in the library and each station had a QR code embedded with a video and instructions for that station. Stations included agriculture (seed sorting and grinding), Spanish language, mission building, weaving, pottery, and education. Students were so excited about this lesson especially since I was dressed in a nun's costume all week! We also had friars, other nuns, and workers. It was a true team effort for this lesson. Teachers were able to observe me fostering my students through this lesson and they, in turn, began to build their own lessons with increased engagement as an objective. I enjoy working with other teachers to assist them in building units designed like these to increase the

engagement in lessons for their students.

I am also a teacher mentor and peer coach. Being a teacher mentor is near and dear to my heart. During my first year of teaching at the secondary level, I did not have a mentor and there were moments when I felt discouraged and felt like I was doing everything wrong. I did not understand what my students needed from me. It was a difficult transition for me to make. I wonder what my experience would have been if I had someone there to guide me to success. First year teachers have the challenge of balancing classroom management with engaging lessons. That is where I am able to support them. I talk with my mentees everyday, bounce ideas around so they don't feel like they are being judged or criticized. Through these conversations, we are able to make a plan of success! Being a peer coach provides that same feeling of serving others. I advise experienced teachers who may be having a difficult time transitioning to the new demands of education. Being a peer coach to teachers with more years of experience requires a different approach than with first year teachers. I approach it like I do with my students, I meet them where they are at and I am always encouraging and positive.

Three years ago, I asked my principal if I could do something that would increase the morale of teachers on campus. For the past three years, I have made popcorn for my school and teachers every single Friday-nicknamed Poptastic. Teachers will stop me in the hallway and tell me how much they look forward to Friday and the popcorn. The best part about cooking the popcorn, besides the smell, is being able to share with my fellow teachers when they come by my room to get their treat. I never knew that one small thing could cause so much joy and excitement in teachers. And it is not just teachers that come by my room. I see cafeteria workers, custodial staff, and maintenance people. Central administrations that are visiting follow the smell into my room. I love being a service to others and being able to share my ideas with my peers.

The basis of teacher accountability will always be our students. It always has been. In the past, this was marked with numbers, statistics, comparisons to other classes and districts. In the future, we must look at the lasting effects that we have on our students. The relationships that we build in order to help students grow, the creativity and innovation that we foster, and the connections that we guide them to make should all be traceable characteristics of teacher accountability. My students who come back year after year to tell me how much they loved my class and how grateful they are to have had me in history. I hear from athletes who advance to Division 1 and 2 schools who never thought that they could do it. I cherish the stories from those students who are taking AP History and AP Science when they didn't think they had what it takes to make it in any of those classes. These are significant achievements that should not be ignored. They are, after all, why we all teach.

VIII. State Teacher of the Year

As the 2014 Texas State Teacher of the Year, I stand on a platform of advocacy for all students. Education must meet the needs of the ever-changing student. Students come into the classroom every day and it is our job to cultivate their innate creativity, imagination, and belief that this current generation can solve the worlds' biggest problems. I know every student has unlimited potential and we, as educators, must change to unbridle this potential.

I believe the answer is in the development of a personalized learning path for all students. I have seen it transform learning in my classroom. From my struggling reader to one of my highest achievers, it's no longer a struggle to meet the needs of both students in my class. With the help of differentiation techniques, non-traditional teaching methodologies, formative assessments, and personal engagement and discussion, I have been able to help each student achieve a personal level of success. These are gifts and tools that all students should experience.

Personal learning needs to be partnered with strong curriculum design laced with engagement, empowerment, and student voice and choice. Educators must truly value student voice and demonstrate to students that their voice is important. When students feel empowered they become engaged and great things happen. Curriculum design is a component, I believe, is underemphasized in school and communities. Engaging lesson designs can instill the love of learning every day. If we can enhance engagement and empowerment in every lesson design, we can elevate a student's creativity and understanding of the material by cultivating an environment which students strive and achieve personal success. Students must feel invested in their own education and that is directly tied to the engagement and empowerment that a teacher uses in her lesson designs. We need to show our students that we value more than test scores, but their creativity, perseverance, strengths, and voice. I say yes to student voice and choice! I say yes to student creativity and personalized learning paths! I say yes to success for students everyday and to pushing students to new depths and levels of achievement.

Not all teachers were trained to create personalized learning paths and design lessons with engagement and empowerment. However, this is what is best for students so as a profession we must commit to elevate and support each other to implement this personal approach in all classrooms. As a leader, I also want to call other leaders to actively explore new techniques to continue to reach our ever-changing students. It is all about the students and doing anything and everything possible to push them in their unlimited potential.