

"Day in and day out, life continues almost cyclically. There are moments when time stands still and memories are formed. It is in these moments that a window of influence is created. It is what we do with these influences that measure the successfulness of our lives."

Mary Steen, Middle School Teacher

Mary Steen's decision to become a teacher was influenced by her adolescent upbringing and the genuine caring of teachers in her life. Unexpectedly becoming pregnant at the age of fifteen led to many hardships of which Mary struggled to overcome. Mary's success in facing obstacles laid the foundation in forming an intimate connection to those who struggle in today's schools.

Mary began her teaching career as a 6th Grade Recovery teacher in the East Central School district in 2007. Teaching overage 6th graders on a middle school campus who were too old to remain in 5th grade at an intermediate school presented many challenges. Accelerating the students over two years within a one year period seemed to be an insurmountable feat. However, through an engaging curriculum and a teaching style built on perseverance, confidence, self-motivation, growth and critical thinking, her students excelled far beyond expectations. Ms. Steen set the precedent in the district for overage students and accelerating the academic growth of at-risk students at all levels. Mary, concerned about their continued success, has monitored that same group of students who are currently 9th graders on the high school campus. Over the years she has served as a mentor to the students and their parents, securing additional resources and providing one-on-one tutoring assistance as needed to assure continued growth.

Now in her fourth year of teaching, Mary continues to positively impact students at all levels. From At-Risk to Pre-Advanced Placement she has set a high standard focusing on college readiness for all. She has collaboratively worked with teachers and administrators across grade levels from PreK-12 in collegial conversations.

The District, recognizing Mary's strengths and her passion for students has invested in her to become a trained Academic/Life Coach. She plays a key role in organizing and presenting our district "Design Academy" each summer. This three day Academy provides teachers the opportunity to design engaging rigorous units to enhance student achievement. Mary is highly regarded in the district by her peers serving as a mentor and coach for her colleagues.

Mary believes modeling through positive relationships is the best way to inspire students. Being a 'real' person with whom students can relate and feel a strong bond has provided the platform for her success. Mary's teaching presence is felt both in and out of the classroom. Her vision for removing barriers so more students can graduate college ready is deeply impacting programming district wide.

Mary Steen was the 2010 East Central ISD Teacher of the Year and Trinity University Prize for Excellence in Teaching Nominee. She was selected as the ESC20 Regional Teacher of the Year and received the KENS 5 EXCEL award. Also, she was recently nominated for the National Dolly Pardon "Chasing Rainbows Award" for outstanding educators who have positively impacted others while overcoming adversity.

Mary is truly deserving of the Texas ASCD T.E.A.C.H. Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Classroom for she has truly 'influenced' the lives of others.