

CISD Teacher of the Year honored

By Lisa Magers/Cleburne ISD Community Services Aug 11, 2020



Kim Estes, the 2020 Cleburne ISD Secondary Teacher of the Year, was among the essay award honorees at the Region 11 Teacher of the Year virtual ceremony.

Courtesy photo



Cleburne ISD Secondary Teacher of the Year Kim Estes came away with special recognition at the Education Service Center Region 11 Teacher of the Year Awards Virtual Ceremony.

Estes is a freshman English teacher at Cleburne High School and was elected by the staff as the 2020 campus Teacher of the Year. She was also selected to represent the district in the Region 11 Teacher of the Year competition, along with CISD Elementary Teacher of the Year Vicki Rhoades.

A total of 71 elementary and secondary teachers representing 37 school districts in Cooke, Wise, Denton, Palo Pinto, Parker, Tarrant, Erath, Hood, Somervell and Johnson counties were contestants in the regional competition, which is the next step in the state's Teacher of the Year selection process.

As Region 11 candidates, each educator was challenged with completing a professional biography and five essay questions, from a defining lesson plan they have developed to a major issue in public education. Estes' essay on her message and platform were she to receive the National Teacher of the Year Award, was selected as the best in that category among secondary entries.

"Of the five questions, it was the easiest essay for me to write," Estes said. "I'm very passionate about the importance of a quality education for all children, and I am an advocate for teachers. It was an easy choice to talk about improving the current state of education as my platform, if I were to advance to the next level.

"As soon as they read the first sentence of my essay, I knew it was mine. I was so excited to have that particular essay chosen as it really does speak to my core beliefs about education. I was so impressed with the reading of the essay and the video they created to go with it. I think my mom has shared it with everyone she knows. She and my husband are my biggest fans."

The Region 11 award was the icing on the cake for Estes. To be chosen as the campus Teacher of the Year — in her first year as a member of the CHS faculty — was quite the honor, as was the district recognition.

Principal Ben Renner said Estes' willingness to help — in numerous ways — quickly endeared her to both staff and students.

"Kim is willing to help anyone at any time — students, staff, community members — anyone," Renner said. "She tutored students that were not in her class and she was very helpful with her technology skills. She helped teachers on the other side of the building. She would really do anything for anyone. Kim is simply amazing.

"If we paid her by the hour, it would bankrupt the district. She never quits working and she can do anything. During basketball season, Kim was picked for making a difference by five different basketball players. She is special — and she does make a difference."

Fellow English teacher India Garms also attests to the relationship inroads Estes made in her first year on the CHS team.

“If anyone was to be awarded Teacher of the Year as a newbie to the campus and district, it’s gotta be Kim,” she said. “Even as she was learning the Cleburne ropes, she was taking other newbies under her wing and insisting that we all learn together. That’s what good teachers do. Kim sees everyone as a potential student, no matter who they are.

“I was lucky enough to be her next-door classroom neighbor last year and definitely ended up in her room on more than one occasion needing help. I was always met with patience and care. I am so grateful that I was by her side during our introduction to CISD. I definitely couldn’t have survived last year without her.”

As an educator, Garms describes Estes as the embodiment of all that a teacher should strive to be.

“She wholeheartedly devotes herself to students; it’s not unusual to find Kim in her classroom before school, listening attentively to one of her students vent or helping another with classwork. In fact, anyone who needs help — student, colleague, administrator, parent — will be taken under Kim’s wing. Her empathy and compassion seem endless.”

Education runs in Estes’ family. Both of her parents worked for the Texas A&M University system and her brother is the principal of a private school.

“I have wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember, and I’ve always loved school,” she said. “I decided I wanted to be an English teacher in my senior year in high school. I had an amazing English teacher — she was the first person to tell me I could write. She was fully invested in helping students see their potential — wherever it might lead them. She was an inspiration, and while she passed away before I began my career, I hope she knows how much she influenced my life.”

Estes is beginning her 24th year in education, which has also included the Alvarado and Burluson school districts. In addition to her role of classroom teacher, she has served at the administrative level in educational technology. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Jacksonville State University.

Reflecting her love of learning, Estes also holds two master’s degrees, one in educational technology leadership from Lamar University, the second in curriculum and instruction from the University of Phoenix.

She is engaged in doctoral studies in instructional design and technology through Sam Houston State University.