

Teacher of the Year Spring 2004

After retirement from campus administration in 1996, I finished the last eight years back in the classrooms. Two years were at Providence High School, then two years at Mark Twain Middle School, and the last four years as a teacher in my sanctuary where I had retired as an assistant principal at Highlands High School. I learned how to teach at Mark Twain. The 8th graders “ate my lunch” every day. Ninth graders were easy.

I was moved from Twain to Highlands after I offered the “new” principal a good deal. She and her four new Assistant Principals did not know any of the kids or the building. Here was the deal: I knew the building like the back of my hand. I knew where the kids hide and where they sneak in and out. I knew the traffic flow and where to move and not to move large groups. I only wanted to teach 9th-grade math, preferably not algebra. I lived 6 doors from the school and knew most of the parents. I did not need a conference period but I requested a 4th period conference. In return, I will handle the lunchroom during the 2-3 lunches. Just give me a radio to report problems.

She agreed. I rode my bicycle to school every day. The other APs asked my opinion often and I sometimes substituted for them when they were missing. The Principal received a good deal. I also knew how to set the bell schedules and manage the phone system.

I started setting my classroom with technology other teachers could not afford. I was drawing my TRS pension and top teacher salary as well. I worked through the 2003-4 summer wiring an audio-visual projector in the ceiling and setting up a table with an overhead projector, laptop, speakers, and graphic tablet including a wifi router in the back to draw my own connection. I constructed a math lessons website with PowerPoint, images, and documents. I used Photoshop on top of the images to show processes and solutions and the projected graphic calculator processes. Other teachers did not show any interest. Such was the timing and development of computer understanding.

I began making up math term lyrics to popular songs and sang them to karaoke music in class. My principal nominated me for SAISD Teacher of the Year and the Trinity prize. I won the SAISD Teacher of the Year award in the spring of 2004. Below are some of the documents, articles, and lyrics I used.

If one does not toot-th his own horn, it might never be toot-thed.

Part 2 - Episodes and Memories

From Principal

“Don Gadberry is a life-long educator whose career has taken a circuitous route, from the classroom to supervision, to computer specialist, to administration, and back to the classroom. His mathematical mind and natural enthusiasm for new innovations made him the perfect candidate to originate and establish of the Office of Computer Services in San Antonio ISD. Always the teacher, he trained the entire administrative office in word processing and database software in the early stages of computer literacy. His proficiency in maintaining Public Education Information Management System data submissions to the state agency resulted in his being an advisor to TEA regarding PEIMS. These facts are only given to substantiate his keen intellect, attention to detail, work ethic, and dedication to SAISD. As a popular administrator at Highlands High School in the mid 90’s, he was the “teacher’s” assistant principal, an instructional leader long before the term was popular. In those six years the colleagues who taught beside him from 1970-1981 lamented that he was being “wasted” in administration. Their memory was of a man who inspired and challenged teenagers in the classroom; he still does!

To observe Don teaching is a joy; he loves his subject; he loves the kids. While his original strategies are endless, his most current has been “math Karaoke.” Using a Karaoke machine, he takes math terms, sets them to music, flashes the words on the overhead, and leads the whole class in a sing along till they know the terminology. He has even taught his 9th graders how to use graphing calculators through music! More than his clever ways to get students involved, are his tireless efforts to make students know he is personally committed to their academic success. For **every** lesson, Don has individual templates where the students process their math through writing. Although he has his Advanced Placement training and G/T certification, Don requests freshmen, the most challenging group of secondary students.

As one might infer, he is a well-loved member of the Highlands High School faculty among his peers, as well as the students. Several years ago when he was an administrator, he brought down the house at the community Faculty Follies with his jitterbug routine. Outgoing and talented, he has been a positive link between the Highlands campus and the Southside. Don lives only one block from this campus and participates in this community. An active member of the Highland Hills Neighborhood Association, he has served on that organization’s Board of Trustees as well as the Southside Lions Park Committee. In addition, he and his wife Linda have hosted Rotarian foreign exchange students who attended Highlands High School.”

February 2, 2004

Part 2 – Episodes and Memories

Dear Nomination Committee Members:

From Principal

For a decade I knew Don Gadberry, a San Antonio Independent School District computer whiz, by reputation. In more recent years, I heard of his instructional and administrative expertise. One can only imagine my delight when I, a new principal, arrived at Highlands High School and immediately learned that Don wanted to return to Highlands as a freshman teacher. Since any math teacher was difficult to hire, I was thrilled to know that one of the district's best was volunteering to return to a campus where he had been a much-loved administrator.

Don has exceeded his reputation. Even though his career has spanned several decades, he approaches his classes with the high expectations of a new teacher and the wisdom of a veteran. His enthusiasm is contagious which makes him a positive force on a campus of many retirement-aged teachers. Don continues his independent professional development although there are not many new strategies he has not already incorporated into his CORE Plus classes. His real talent is creating new ways to reach his 9th-grade classes, especially those students who dislike school in general and math in particular.

On his nomination form, I gave examples of his innovative teaching style but one needs to see him in action to really appreciate this man's love of teenagers and math by the high pedagogical standards of Trinity University, I nominate Don Gadberry for the prestigious Trinity Prize for Excellence in Teaching. Sincerely yours,

Lisa Contreras

Part 2 - Episodes and Memories

TO: SCREENING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

FROM: Raul E. Rodriguez , Assistant Principal , Highlands High

RE: Don L. Gadberry

DATE: February 3, 2004

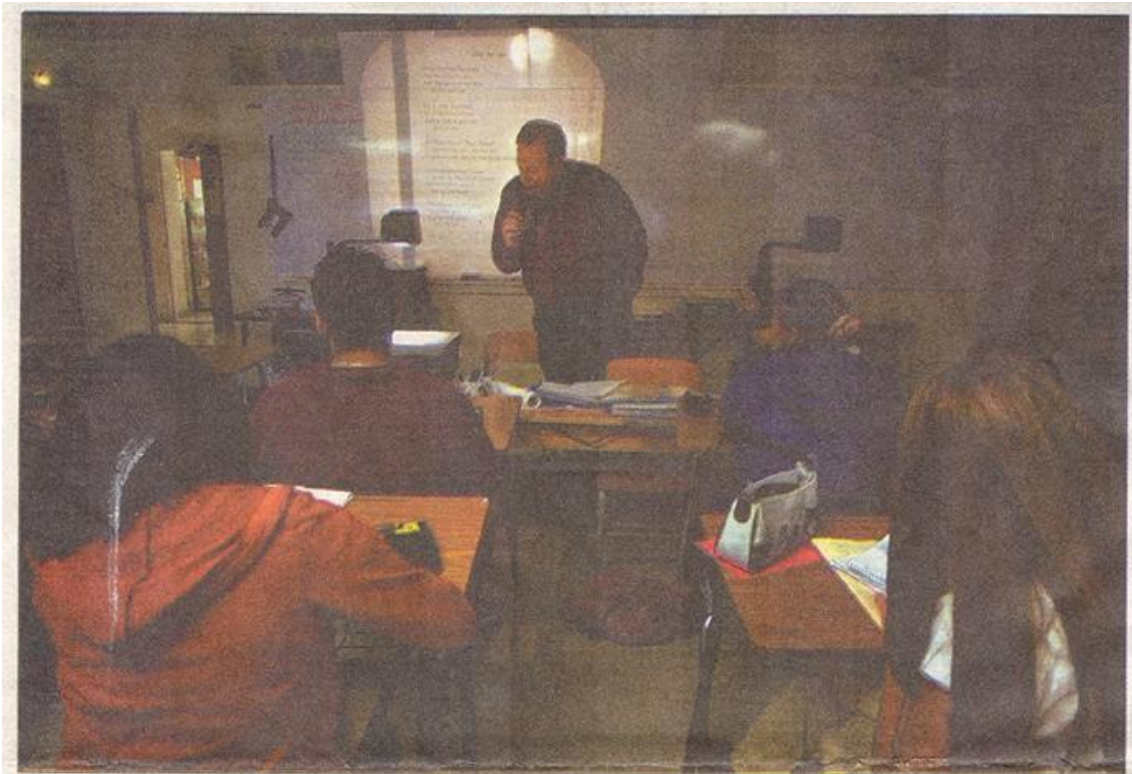
I welcome the opportunity to recommend DON L. GADBERRY as the TEACHER OF THE YEAR. Presently, Mr. Gadberry teaches five MATH CorePlus I classes and one Algebra II class during the school day. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Mr. Gadberry is our SUBSTITUTE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, DESIGNATED BELL COORDINATOR, LUNCH DUTY MONITOR and DESIGNATED WALKIE-TALKIE DISPATCHER. Furthermore, Mr. Gadberry, resides within the HIGHLANDS HIGH COMMUNITY and is a COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE.

I welcome any educator or concerned citizen to visit Mr. Gadberry's classroom. As you enter the classroom, you see UFO pictures and objects, STUDENT WORK DISPLAYS, STUDENT WORK SHELVES (PER CLASS PERIOD), STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHS, MATH REFERENCE BOOKS, and DAILY MATH PROBLEMS. The classroom climate is excellent. Every student is aware of his/her grade due to Mr. GADBERRY's computerized PROGRESS REPORT. Mr. Gadberry welcomes all students regardless of their academic background. He provides students with TEKS-related problems and allows them to relate math to their personal life. All students are familiar with UPDATED CALCULATORS and are allowed the opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

Mr. Gadberry is a motivator and consistently seeks new ways to stimulate student learning. On any given day, you may enter his classroom and he will be singing a popular song as well as provide students with the MATH LYRICS. He challenges students and allows them to develop inquiry skills. Students are also familiar with the latest computer technology and they have an opportunity to utilize computer resources. Students take the initiative to solve math problems. Peer learning is also allowed in his classroom. Mr. Gadberry stresses not the correct answer but the process to ensure student learning.

Mr. Gadberry is a role model for all teachers. He welcomes every school day. Mr. Gadberry is quick to dress up in a UFO outfit demonstrates to his students that humor is important during the school day. Finally, I am aware that Mr. Gadberry is a former administrator, but his top priority is to remain in the classroom because he enjoys learning with his students.

Part 2 - Episodes and Memories



PHOTOS BY NICOLE FRUGE/STAFF

Don Gadberry, a Highlands High School algebra teacher, writes his own lyrics to familiar tunes to make math lessons fun for his freshman class. He was named San Antonio School District's 2004 Teacher of the Year.

Musical mathematics

High school teacher
uses karaoke to spark
students' interest.

By EDMUNDO CONCHAS
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

Highlands High School math teacher Don Gadberry is warbling his way to the top.

Gadberry sings part of his math lessons to students by writing his own lyrics to familiar tunes. That creativity is one of the reasons why San Antonio School District officials recently selected him as Teacher of the Year.

"I was so happy just to get nominated," Gadberry said. "I had no thought or aspiration whatsoever of winning the district."

"I nominated him because of his passion for teaching and his talents," said Highlands Principal Lisa Contre-



A 1974 yearbook photo of Highlands High School algebra teacher Don Gadberry gives a past and present portrait in the computer room. His pupils affectionately call him the 'Gadster.'

ras. "Not only is he a veteran teacher, but he also has the desire of a new teacher."

"He's open to learning new ways to make his classes interesting. He targets those students who dislike math, and he loves to teach them and get them interested. That's a special gift."

Gadberry said it's not unusual to hear him and his class singing "Endless Pi," about pi squared, to the tune of "Endless Love" and "Calc For Me," about calculus, to the tune of "Stand By Me."

"At first, they sit wide-eyed," Gadberry said of his students. "But the truth is

that I have had very few kids not love this.

"I think that they appreciate the fact that I love music and that it is also variety for them. They like new and different things."

Gadberry said it's important for him to find new ways of reaching out to students.

A few years ago, he started incorporating karaoke songs into his math lessons, customizing the words to some well-known songs to help get the lessons across. He said he got the idea for karaoke in the classroom from a conference he attended about five years ago.

Once he started doing classroom karaoke, it just took off, he said.

For his innovations, Gadberry also was nominated for the Trinity Prize for Excellence in Teaching Award from Trinity University. The

See INNOVATIVE/3H

NEIGHBORS SOUTH/EAST

Innovative teacher once served as a principal at Highlands

CONTINUED FROM 1H

prize was established by Trinity in 1981 to recognize public school teachers in Bexar County.

The 2004 recipient will be announced in mid-April.

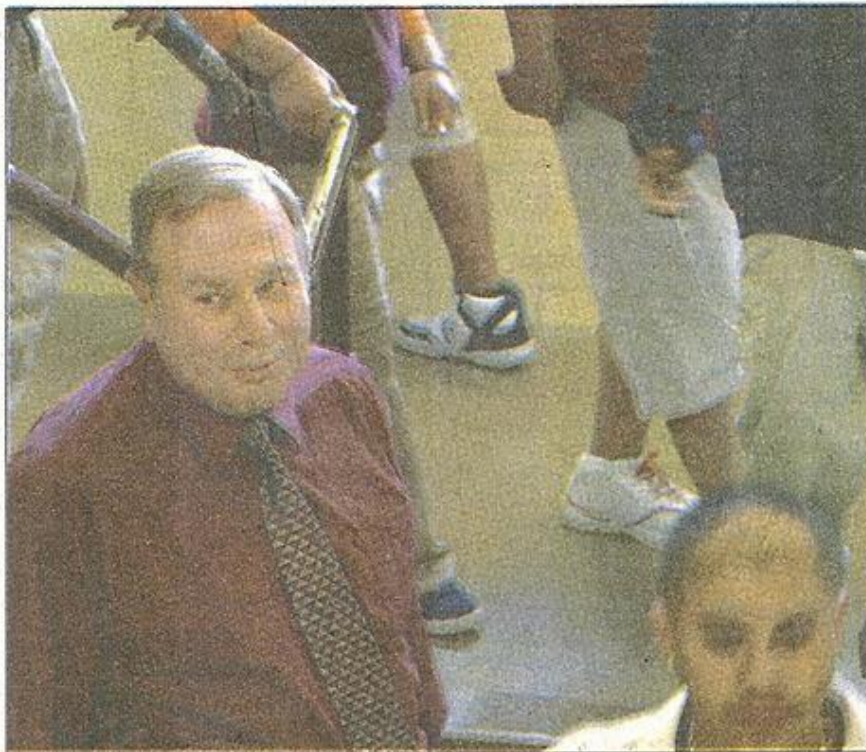
Gadberry, a native of New Mexico, said he always has had a special relationship with the Southeast Side high school.

For starters, he lives just across the street from Highlands and now is in his third stint as a member of the Highlands faculty.

He first began teaching at Highlands in 1970 and was there for 11 years as an algebra teacher.

He then left the school for 10 years and worked in the SASD central office in several positions.

In 1991, he returned to Highlands as an assistant principal and served in that capacity for five years. He left to teach math at Providence High School and Mark Twain Middle School before returning three years ago to Highlands to teach algebra again.



NICOLE FRUGÉ/STAFF

Don Gadberry, Highlands High School algebra teacher, escorts his students from the computer room. He was nominated for the Trinity Prize for Excellence in Teaching Award from Trinity University.

"I love this school and I love the community," he said. "There are great vibrations in these buildings. I know these build-

ings like the back of my hand. I feel like I was born to teach."

econchas@express-news.net

Part 2 - Episodes and Memories



SIXTEEN TONS

Some people go to work just to make the dough,
A teacher goes to work so that students will know,
good from bad, right from wrong, To build a mind that's
sharp and a will that's strong.

You wrap sixteen jobs, all into one, Lots of
time cost just to get it all done. Dr. O, Don't
you call me 'cause I can't go, I owe my dough
to the OfficeMax store.

I was born one morning when the bell didn't ring. ?
Picked up my grade book and I started to sing. Entered six
full classes and wrote down my goals, And the Principal
said, Well, bless my soul!.

You roll sixteen jobs all into one,
Stacks of paper, second to none., Special Ed. Don't
you call me 'cause I won't go, Those A.R.D s are
more than slow?..

I was teachin' one morning, it was nearly TAKs time.
My kids couldn't tell, a nickel from a dime.'
The CIC said, "Here's your sequence and scope." I just
took a deep breath and hoped to cope.

You do sixteen jobs and get paid for one,
Another day of gradin' and not near done, Saint Principal
don't observe me cause it's too soon,' The copier s broke and
tonight s a full moon. ?

I was trying one morning to read my e-mail.
My 'puter was old and as slow as a snail.
Word 97 playing on Windows 98,
Last century's software just ain't that great!

You do sixteen jobs and whatta you get,
A summer to inservice and 10 months of sweat, Dr. T
don't you call me cause I'm not through, My kids still
need me and I need them too.

1123
To the most
handsome, most
successful
teacher in
the world
Rossy Hely

Endless Pi

Pi, Love

You're never ending or dull; You're just irrational.
The Circle..... Unlocks your secrets so sweet.
Your digits don't repeat.

Mark Off...the whole circle's length around...
Di-vide by the distance across.....
And you'll see...No matter the circle size.
Oh, Yes, You will constant be
My Endless Pi.

Two Lengths....Two lengths dividing like none.
Their quotient's never done.
Forever, I'll seek a few digits more,
Than ever known before.

Though Pi, Oh, Pi, You'll be exact for me.
I'm sure, just approximate's fine.
And someday, When memory's increased for me,
I know I'll see more of you.
My Endless Pi.

Bum, Bum.....

Oh PI, Oh Pi, You'll be exact for me, I'm sure,
Just approximate's fine. And though I can see
Just a part of you....

Three point - 1-4-1.....5-9-2-6-5-4...You'll be enough for me...
My Pi, Oh Pi, Oh Pi...
My Endless Pi.

https://youtu.be/yYgFs1_BUV0