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## Martin Named Lafayette's Teacher of the Year

By Cathy Tyson



Teacher of the Year (on left) Carroll Martin with indispensable aide/student teacher Gail Nugent  
Photo Cathy Tyson

Carroll Martin gives a new level of meaning to the word multi-tasking. With not one but two busy classrooms to accommodate her 26 students in the Fourth-Fifth grade Alternative Instruction Magnet (AIM) split class at Burton Valley Elementary School, there is clearly never a dull moment for this veteran teacher of 39 years. She seems to take the constant whirlwind of activity in stride, seamlessly shepherding all of her students through social studies, spelling, math stations, reading, writing, language arts and science lab. Keep in mind that at times the group is broken up by grade and ability with an integrated curriculum that runs on a two-year cycle.

Martin is this year's Teacher of the Year for the Lafayette School District. Teaching since 1972, fresh out college with a Bachelor of Science in Education from University of the Pacific in Stockton, she came to Lafayette and never left. Although she initially worked at Lafayette Elementary School, she's been teaching at Burton Valley Elementary School since 1979.

Students from across Lafayette who score exceptionally well on the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test, more commonly known as the OLSAT, are invited to participate in AIM class. Rachel Zinn, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, explains it best, "AIM is for cognitively able students. Carroll does a great job and her students thrive on project based learning."

Her students clearly love her, describing her as very enthusiastic about everything, a great imitator and enjoy her nearly unlimited supply of funny stories. One young man comments, "She figures out everyone's learning style," another chimes in "She's not strict, but won't let you get away with anything." Out of the blue from across the room Martin responds, "I have eyes in the back of my head."

Martin has developed a number of positive strategies that keep the group on task, from the "refocusing area" to the very popular "SPD" or student planned day - earned via points for 100% of the kids turning in homework - or points earned by receiving a compliment from another teacher. Daily P.E., simulations and her "no surprises" policy are also highlights from the kids' point of view.

"My all-embracing philosophy about teaching is, we are here as teachers for the success of students in their education and not their failure. My students need to be met where they are academically, they need to be challenged, and they need to be prepared for their future. To do this, their learning needs to be experiential, hands-on, and full of student engagement," says Martin.

"Teaching has been a lifetime commitment that has brought me joy, satisfaction, and challenges. Each morning I get up and do what I want to as a career, and I have always told myself that the day I do not want to go to work is the day I should quit. So far, after 39 years that hasn't happened. I feel extremely fortunate to have found my calling and to be able to live out my dream," said Martin.

She generously gives credit to full-time aide and student teacher Gail Nugent, "I couldn't do it without her." The pair has developed an organizational rhythm and keen understanding of the students. Also offering assistance are regular parent volunteers in the classroom to help manage paperwork and assist with projects.

"Carroll is an excellent teacher and takes pride in knowing each of her students and teaching them individually to their strengths," said Burton Valley Principal Sue Rusk. "Her extensive knowledge of the curriculum, organizational skills, ability to challenge her students along with her instructional strategies provides our students with a winning program for success. We are so very fortunate to have Carroll at Burton Valley School and proud of her nomination as Teacher of the Year for the Lafayette School District."

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