



CAMPUS SNAPSHOT

Sartartia Middle School

Exemplary Education Every Day

Written By Sarah Tucker

Before students at Sartartia Middle School leave for the day, principal, Sara Thurman always asks them how their day went. The Fort Bend ISD students rate their experience on a scale of one to 10. On a regular basis, many students will respond with "10." Students are happy to be at Sartartia. "Some kids won't have a good day; it's the real world," says Thurman. "But we want to know how they are and how to make it better. Our view of the student is extremely positive. These students know their teachers care about them."

Sand in an Hourglass

Thurman uses an hourglass as a metaphor for her approach to middle school education. The top half of the hourglass symbolizes early childhood and elementary education, while the bottom half of the hourglass represents adult life and high school education. The narrowest part of the hourglass symbolizes middle school. "It models what I perceive for some students as a very difficult time," she says. "They're going through so many changes and figuring out themselves for the first time. We don't want them to get stuck."

For Thurman, the hourglass model also reminds people to be gentle. "Most of us can look back at our own middle school years and not have great memories," she says. "We have to show some

grace to these kids, but we have to hold them to high expectations. I want these kids to experience successes."

Setting High Standards

Even while acknowledging the difficulties that come with educating middle schoolers, teachers at Sartartia demand a lot from their students. "We teach in a very rigorous manner," says Thurman. "We care about these kids and we hold them to the highest standards." Sartartia teachers also use integration as an educational tool, and may incorporate science in English classes and vice versa. "They are constantly looking for new ways to educate the kids - whether through new technology or teaching methods," says Asha Vaidya, president of the school's parent teacher organization and the proud parent of two students at Sartartia.

The results of these high standards and innovative teaching methods are recognizable in Sartartia students' academic and athletic achievements. The eighth-grade girls' A and B volleyball teams are undefeated division champs, and the orchestra and band programs are recognized throughout the state. Sartartia is considered an Honor Roll School by the Texas Business and Education Coalition and has received an Exemplary rating from the Texas Education Agency.



Sartartia Middle School is an Exemplary rated campus



Sartartia teachers set high standards for their students to meet



Students engage in hands-on activities that are both fun and educational



The SMS orchestra performs at a concert



Contests like the Algebra Quiz Bowl are a fun way for students to test their knowledge

An Attitude of Service

At Sartartia, the students aren't just engaged in the classroom, but in the community, as well. Art students were recently allowed the opportunity to create art for the new neonatal unit at Texas Children's Hospital and are currently working on art for Texas Children's physical therapy center. Sartartia students have also participated in Houston's annual Orange Art Car Parade for the past three years. This year, they decorated a donated army Jeep with smashed cans to represent their theme of pop art. "The kids come up with the ideas," says Thurman. "I love it when they find service projects to give back to the community."

Students have also sponsored food and book drives and art sales, and the Peer Assistance and Leadership club has sponsored a dodge ball tournament to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. "It's a happy place," says Thurman. "We have an attitude of service and we're happy. The kids are so engaged, and they want to be here." SLM

SARAH TUCKER is a freelance writer and life-long resident of Sugar Land. She plans to attend the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of Missouri this fall.

LOCATION: 8125 Homeward Way in Sugar Land

OPENED: 2001

SCHOOL COLORS: Black and gold

MASCOT: Jaguars

MOTTO: Exemplary education every day

PRINCIPAL: Dr. Sara Thurman

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS: Carl Peters and Stephanie McElroy

ENROLLMENT: Approximately 1,300 students



Choir students perform for their peers during a school event



Students learned about science with lots of hands-on activities during National Lab Day