

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Spring Branch Middle's Troy Mann named state recipient of H-E-B's Excellence in Education Award

Spring Branch Middle Gifted/Talented teacher Troy Mann thought it couldn't get much better when he was named as one of 30 finalists for an H-E-B Excellence in Education Award in early April. He was wrong.

Mann was named one of the very elite educators in Texas when he was selected from a group of five statewide finalists in his category at a celebratory ceremony at Austin's Barton Creek Resort and Spa.

Mann's victory in the secondary-level "Leadership" category, which honors teachers with 10 to 20 years experience in the classroom, means he will receive a \$10,000 check for himself and a \$10,000 grant for his school.

"It's amazing," Spring Branch Middle principal Jo Beth Jamison said. "Troy is such an awesome teacher and it's great he's getting this kind of recognition.

"It's great for the school too. We haven't talked about what we're going to do with the grant money, but I'm sure we'll make very good use of it."

Mann, who along with Smithson Valley High English teacher Cricket Ingraham was a finalist for the H-E-B Excellence in Education Award, was surprised when his name was called at the May 7 ceremony.

"When you sit in a room like that and hear all the different stories about teachers coming from many different situations and sometimes difficult environments, it's a great honor to be picked," Mann said. "I was absolutely surprised. To be picked out of everybody in that room, and really out of a lot of other teachers around the state that deserve this kind of recognition too, I guess I was just lucky that it was my year."

Mann's students disagree that luck played a major factor.

“I’m so happy for him,” said SMBS eighth grader Andi Hamrick. “The way he teaches is so unique, and he treats us like equals which makes for a great learning environment.”

The feeling of elation was apparent as Mann’s eighth-grade students shared cake during a celebration at the school May 9.

“It’s very exciting,” Trent Sconiers said. “I’m glad he’s getting some statewide recognition for something we already knew, that he’s one of the best teachers around.”

Mann’s students recently raised \$5,000 for Heifer International, a unique group whose goal is to help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance & sustainability.

Some other projects Mann’s classes have taken on over the years include building a half-scale model of Christopher Columbus’ ship the Pinta, which still sits behind the school, and the “Bones Project.”

During the “Bones Project” students were asked to literally create a made-up extinct creature by making its skeleton out of different bones. They then had to explain what the creature ate, what its ecosystem was like, all about its life, how it lived and why it became extinct.

SBMS parent Nancy Pappas, whose daughter attends Mann’s class, said she sees first hand the affect he has on the students.

“Mr. Mann’s so much more than a teacher,” Pappas said. “He’s a mentor, he can be a friend, and they all look up to him as a role model.”

As for the school’s newfound grant money, Mann said he hopes part of it will go to a space showing off the creative side of the SBMS student population.

“I hope we can build a multi-case space that will allow teachers to inspire their students to create things we can display,” Mann said. “We need to show off the creative ability that our students possess and we just don’t have the room for that now.”

Despite being an avid world traveler during the summer, Mann said he’ll use the personal money he earned on something to keep him cool during Texas’ hot summers.

“I’ve been living in a house with no air conditioning for the past four years, so that’s first on my list,” Mann said. “After that, I’m going to try and finish the interior of the house, so I’m pretty excited about getting started knowing I won’t be as hot this summer.”