

# Martha Jimenez:

# Teacher of the Year

By Kimberly Horg-Webb  
Special to {Talk

A sixth-grade teacher from Elbow Creek Elementary School is recognized for not only her teaching skills but also for her sense of humor. Martha Jimenez was nominated as Visalia Unified School District teacher of the year in 2009.

Some say laughter is good for the soul but Jimenez thinks it is also a good learning tool. Jimenez also uses movement, varying of activities, learning games, points systems, group interactions and an underlying "school behavior" expectation.

She has been a teacher for 32 years. She grew up in the Bay Area, attended San Francisco State University and got her

teaching credential from California State University, Fresno. She says ever since she was a young girl she knew she would someday be a teacher.

"Honestly, I just never wanted anything else," she says. "I loved school and especially reading."

Jimenez likes teaching third and sixth grade the best but has taught at all early grade levels, from kindergarten to eighth grade — except second grade — at different times throughout her career.

Before Elbow Creek she taught at the Orange Center in Fresno County. She has been a teacher for Visalia Unified at Goshen Elementary School, The Language Center at Hurley Elementary School (a newcomer school no longer in existence)

and was a guest teacher at Linwood Elementary School.

She is bilingual, which has allowed her to teach many bilingual classes as well as be a Second Language Curriculum Coach. She says speaking two languages has come in handy over the years when she is dealing with someone whose first language is Spanish.

According to Jimenez, teachers have a "bag of techniques." Calmness and predictability for the classroom, use of lessons that utilize many learning modalities as well as techniques that vary because of a child's strengths and needs are all rules she goes by.

"My goal is to create a calm, predictable, Please see **Teacher**, page 13



Photo/Perry Cooper

Martha Jimenez is a sixth-grade teacher from Elbow Creek Elementary School in Visalia Unified School District.



Photo/Perry Cooper

Martha Jimenez is given the teacher of the year award by Stan Carrizosa.

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safe, positive environment where children are valued and encouraged to take the risks that will move them to their next learning levels," Jimenez says. "If you enjoy them, they sense it and respond accordingly."

She likes teaching sixth graders. Their ideas are just forming and they are waking up to the world.

Jimenez wants each child to be valued by all (teacher and peers) as a unique individual with strengths and weaknesses.

"I want the classroom to function like a family, so that we are all helping each other achieve our individual goals," she says.

Area Administrator for Visalia Unified, Doug Bartsch, nominated Jimenez for the award. Bartsch first met her while he was the principal at Hurley Elementary. He says

she is respected by others because she respects people.

He has stayed in touch with her and visited her classrooms for the past 14 years. As long as he has known her she is constantly looking for more ways to be effective.

"I nominated her because she is very deserving of this honor," he says. "She has a genuine love for children, a wonderful chemistry with kids and has a gift for establishing rapport with the students."

Bartsch thinks part of the reason students like her so much is her sense of humor. She teases the students in a way that is uplifting and challenging so they believe in themselves. Jimenez says humor diffuses many situations. A day without humor, she says, is a long one for everyone.

"She is a valuable member of our team. She is a solid instructor and is a role model for excellence in this profession," Bartsch

says.

Jimenez feels she is a good representative of teachers. All the teachers she works with work hard and try to do the best for their students. She also thinks part of the reason she got the award is because she has a lot of experience behind her.

Her favorite part of teaching is the "can-do moments" when a child learns that he can do something that he never thought he could do.

Jimenez did not expect any type of award for teaching. Her biggest thrill in teaching is seeing students become productive, kind, loving human beings and having them come back to share their success.

"It came as a total surprise to me," she says. "My principal called to tell me and I didn't even know that I had been nominated, nor did I know much about the award."