

TED VIERLING

Photo by Marisa Hugonnett

Ted Vierling, principal at Seven Lakes High School, was recognized as the Texas Art Education Association's Principal of the Year

# Leading the Spartans

Principal Ted Vierling wins the Texas Art Education Association's Principal of the Year award

*Written by Shetye Cypher | Select photography courtesy of Seven Lakes High School*

As if being the principal of a Recognized school with thousands of students and more than 260 teachers and staff didn't give Ted Vierling enough to do, he also makes an extra effort to support the arts and arts education at Seven Lakes High School (SLHS).

## Homegrown Educator

"I believe in opportunities outside of the academic class. That extra activity and the teachers have such an influence on kids," Vierling says. "It's a very important part of kids' lives. Going

into that class is an escape for 47 minutes and a positive outlet for them." Vierling should know. He was involved in band from sixth grade all the way through college at Texas A&M. He also attended Katy schools and credits them as being a big influence in his life and his career path.

"I really had some great teachers at Katy High School, such as Bob Bryant, my band director. I could go through a laundry list of all the teachers that I had there who were awesome - I remember what they did for kids," he says. "I went to college

thinking I wanted to go to law school, but I realized my heart wasn't in it. I wanted to be a teacher."

### A Career in the Making

While attending college at A&M, Vierling served as a student teacher at Mayde Creek High School (MCHS) before becoming a full-time history teacher there. "I tried to get involved in a lot of stuff while I was at Mayde Creek. I like being a part of the action and solving problems," says Vierling. When he began pursuing a master's degree in counseling, mentors at MCHS told him he would make a great administrator. He took their advice.

After his stint in the classroom, Vierling became an assistant principal at MCHS. In 2004, he moved to Beckendorff Junior High, where he also served as an assistant principal. He was named building principal in 2006, where he remained until his move to Seven Lakes High School in 2011. As head principal, he realizes the decisions he makes can have far-reaching impact.

"You have to be selfless and not get caught up in the position or power. Make yourself a person of the people," Vierling advises. "There are times when you have to make decisions, but people should be able to come to you and know that you are flexible. You must be willing to serve others."

### Feels Like Family

Vierling's enthusiastic, selfless approach to leadership is one of the things that enables him to go the extra mile to promote the arts at SLHS. "The whole purpose of me being here is to make everyone else's job a little easier, to help them do what they do. Then that positively affects kids to do better as well," he says. "Whether it's art, English, UIL



Principal Vierling prefers a hands-on approach when showing support for his students

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*– Ted Vierling, Seven Lakes High School principal*

competitions, band, or the football team doing well, that's what gets me jazzed up about high school."

The community feel of Katy ISD - the only school district Vierling has ever known - makes it feel like family. "I grew up in Katy from the age of 3," says Vierling. "As big as it has gotten, and as much as it has grown, it still feels small." He adds, "No matter what leadership we've had over the years, the message is consistent - we are going to do right by the kids."

### About the Award

SLHS art teacher Madelene Buzan recognized Vierling's unique dedication to the arts, so she nominated him for the Texas Art Education Association Principal of the Year. The TAEA award is given annually to a principal of an elementary, junior high, or high school who has demonstrated significant support for art education and the visual arts. "[Buzan] and I have teamed up on different projects with her students," says Vierling. "She wanted to honor my efforts, and it really felt great." Vierling was recognized at a reception on November 22 in Dallas. **KM**



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Principal Vierling with Madelene Buzan, the instructor who nominated him for the award