

# Educators inspired by past teachers

## Hotchkin comes from family of teachers

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It's not uncommon for students to be unsure of exactly what they'd like to do after they finish school. Some probably plan to pursue their passions, while others say they'll be happy as long as they make a decent salary.

For some, this indecisiveness can last until the sophomore year of college.

Twenty-two-year-old Melanie Hotchkin, who began her first-ever teaching job in August as the junior high math teacher, originally studied to be a dental hygienist before she realized her true passion was education.

"Both of my parents are teachers in Anson, and my sister teaches in Abilene," Hotchkin said. "I love teaching, and I always have. It's very much in my blood."

Hotchkin's mother, an elementary school reading teacher, originally hoped for her to break the chain of educators in her family.

"My mom didn't want me to feel forced to become a teacher because that's what everyone else in my family does, but I had to do *something*," Hotchkin said. "So when I got braces in high school, I became interested in dental hygiene, and I interned at a dentist's office in Abilene for a while."

After beginning her studies in college, Hotchkin realized that teaching was where her heart was and always had been.

"Near the end of my sophomore year, I completely changed my major," Hotchkin said. "I had been taking almost all science classes to become a dental hygienist, so when I made the switch, I had to take summer courses in order to catch up on all the math classes I needed to become a teacher, but it was worth it."

English teacher Jennifer Everitt, like Hotchkin, had not originally planned on entering the education system after college.

"I didn't want to be a teacher at first," Everitt said. "However, a college professor of mine decided that it was my calling, and she had me start giving lectures in her class. It was a big deal, since I was only a sophomore in college."

Everitt expresses that she is pleased with her career choice.

"I really enjoy teaching here," Everitt said. "The kids are great, and it's a good family atmosphere."

Hotchkin's desire to become an educator came not only from her heritage, but also from her ambition to improve the learning experience for students.

"I've always wanted to better education," Hotchkin said. "I had an awful teacher in fourth grade that scared us all. She influenced me in an opposite way, making me want to make school a more positive place."

Likewise, Jennie Bailey, now beginning her tenth year teaching at Albany High School, became a teacher in order to help improve the learning atmosphere for students, as well as to fulfill a more personal desire.

"My interest in becoming a teacher originally came from wanting to be a stay-at-home mom," Bailey said. "I think teaching itself somewhat of a

motherly job."

Bailey says she believes that to be an educator certain passions and skill sets are essential.

"I think that you need to have a love for kids and passion for your subject," Bailey said. "It's also necessary to stay organized, treat your work professionally, and be *patient*."

Everitt shared similar ideas.

"I believe a teacher should be understanding, trustworthy, and very passionate about his or her subject," Everitt said.

Ashley Terrell, now the second-youngest teacher on campus, claims she learned the key to successful teaching from and was influenced by a high school teacher of hers.

"I've wanted to be a teacher since elementary school," Terrell said, "but I would say it was my high school geometry and pre-calculus teacher who made me want to teach math. She was very strict with us and had high expectations. That was the reason we were so successful."

Hotchkin agrees that being somewhat strict is necessary in order to be a good teacher.

"I think teachers need to be optimistic about their students' abilities, very caring, and good disciplinarians," Hotchkin said. "You need to be understanding, but you can't just be mushy all the time. You need good discipline to push students to do their best."

Overall, Hotchkin says she is very pleased with her career choice and her ease finding a job in a small town.

"I'm glad I chose a small town like Albany, because everyone's been very welcoming and helpful," Hotchkin said. "I'm really enjoying my job. It's everything I thought it would be and more, and I can easily see myself doing it for the rest of my life."



Junior high math teacher, Melanie Hotchkin, assists eighth grader Gregori Mikeska with an assignment. Hotchkin, a first-year teacher, comes from a long line of educators, including her parents who both teach in Anson. PHOTO BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD