

Franks named Teacher of the Year for devotion to education

By Heath Stevens

staff writer

On Jan. 29, it was announced that Brittany Franks earned the OSD Teacher of the Year award. Franks is an English II teacher at Oxford High School and has been teaching here since 2017.

Franks' family is deeply rooted in public education, especially in Mississippi.

"My mother is a teacher. She's taught math for a very long time now. My dad served on the school board [in Pine Grove, Miss.] for most of my life, so public education and specifically public education in Mississippi is something that my family is really passionate about," Franks said. "My entire family values education, so I knew I wanted to do something that would improve and make a difference in the schools in Mississippi."

One of Franks' favorite things about teaching English is the flexibility of the subject and the different life lessons using the books they read in class.

"I can change my text to fit the group of students I'm teaching or to fit things that are going on in the world," Franks said.

One way Franks has already made an impact at Oxford High School is by teaching a double-blocked English class all year to help students that are struggling in their English class.

"One of the best aspects of her

teaching is her willingness to volunteer and help out kids," Principal Chandler Gray said. "She offered to basically double-block her classes all year long so that she could have more time with those students and help them be successful."

Amanda Witt, leader of the English Department at OHS, believes Franks excels in getting students who may not necessarily care about school or their grades to try in class and enjoy themselves while doing it.

"She's really good at picking books that her students will enjoy and connect to," Witt said. "She knows how to get her students to truly care about English."

Franks started a new club called Writer's Block where the higher achieving students help struggling students with their writing.

"She's done things like starting the Writer's Block, which is a writing lab for students to help other students with their papers and those kinds of things," Gray said.

Witt believes that though Franks may not have been teaching at Oxford very long, she has already heavily influenced the English department at OHS.

"She has added creativity, and she has brought excellent content knowledge in English and how to teach English," Witt said. "She has brought value in that she has really good content knowledge. She knows how to teach English and how to get her students to care."



Junior **Pope Mallette** sits with fellow attendees at the Rotary Youth Leadership Academy. Mallette was nominated by OHS counselors for his good grades and high involvement at school.

Leadership retreat teaches initiative

By Eve Gershon

features editor

Juniors Pope Mallette and Grace Logan were nominated for the Rotary Youth Leadership Academy, a leadership weekend in Olive Branch, Miss.

"It's a weekend leadership retreat, and the counselors from our school nominated Grace Logan and I to just go for this weekend," Mallette said. "It's kind of to strengthen your leadership abilities and just have fellowship with other people that are similar to you as far as academics are concerned, as far as leadership in their communities are concerned."

Mallette and Logan were chosen because of their strong academic standings and the work they have done to benefit the community.

"I'm the Vice President of the Key Club at Oxford, and I'm a strong member of the debate team," Mallette said. "I'm pretty active as far as sporting events and stuff go, and so I think that that kind of maybe showed people who I was, and then I think that my academics probably made up for the rest."

The program is a weekend in Olive Branch geared toward rising seniors. Counselors Kelsey Dodson and Sarah Breithaupt decided who from OHS would attend based on students they believed would best represent the school.

"That's part of why they got picked to be a part of the rotary is because they are some of the top in their class, and we try to look for leadership and who's academically capable as well as who we know is going to represent Oxford well," Dodson said.

Mallette was not at all expecting this nomination and was excited when he was told he had received it.

"I was in the middle of a Spanish test, and [the counselors] knocked on the door, and they were like 'can we see Pope Mallette for a little bit?'" Mallette said. "I mean, when authority figures come into your door it's like a little bit nerve-racking even though I didn't do anything wrong. And so they came to the door, and they were just like, 'we nominated you for this based off of your academics, leadership, stuff like that.' I was really surprised, really excited."

Mallette said that his involvement and achievement in school has a lot to do with the teachers he has had.

"I have a lot of influential teachers. Mrs. Nash being probably number one as the favorite teacher I've ever had pretty much. She's a great teacher. She really showed me how interesting science is," Mallette said. "I feel like Ms. Maples is kind of the reason I'm active in school. She's just very involved as a teacher, and she's just very active as far as the student pep rally stuff goes."

Spanish teacher Emily Maples has had Mallette as a student for two years and says she has gotten to see him grow a lot throughout this time.

"He, especially in this last year, has really matured as a student, which advanced Spanish makes you do," Maples said. "Really good students can skate by in Spanish 2 without having to try very hard outside of class, and now that the classes are requiring him to do more, he's stepping up and doing more and really has a lot of energy to learn—a strong drive to learn more Spanish and understand things."

Emily Maples
Spanish teacher

Maples believes that Mallette deserves the nomination because of the leadership work he has done at their church and the way he interacts with others on a day-to-day basis.

"He just has a lot of initiative," Maples said. "He's very confident and conformable talking to other teachers and adults, and that's a sign, I think, of confidence and leadership as well. He takes initiative to come ask you stuff and bring up stuff and even ask you about your life, which is, I think, a very special characteristic of a high school kid to show interest and concern and question somebody else about something they would do. He's someone who takes initiative in the conversation, [which] high school kids don't always have."

OXFORD
Oil SHED
INTERIOR LANDSCAPE

MON-FRI: 10AM-5:30PM
SAT: 9AM-4AM

764 NORTH LAMAR BLVD.
OXFORD, MS 38655

662-638-3828
OILSHEDOXFORD@GMAIL.COM

PLANT LOVER OF THE MONTH... RICHARD WRIGHT!