

### III. Professional Biography - (two double-spaced pages)

- A. What were the factors that influenced you to become a teacher? Describe what you consider to be your greatest contributions and accomplishments in education.

Teaching is my second career. It is by no means my second priority or my “fallback” plan. Teaching is something I have been doing my entire adult life. During these last 5 years able to blend my passions and talents to do something that has made a difference in my life and, I hope, is making a difference in the lives of the next generation. I am proud to be a certified teacher in the great State of Texas.

I obtained a Bachelor’s degree in nursing while on a ROTC scholarship at Syracuse University. I entered onto Air Force (AF) active duty upon college graduation and served my country for 20 years as a nurse. While serving, I was able to take advantage of AF scholarship to obtain my Master’s degree in nursing. I continued to serve my country as an advanced practice nurse and leader for another 9 years. Much of my work in nursing has been to not only to care for the sick and injured, but to **teach** patients to how maintain their health through preventative measures and **educate** them to manage their illnesses to prevent recurrences or exacerbations. As an AF nurse officer I was involved in **teaching** not only patients, but also new health care team members. A common motto in the military is, “See one, do one, **teach** one”. This simplified tenet implies that as one learns and gains competence, it becomes a military member’s responsibility to train and educate replacements or the next generation. I believe my military service influenced and prepared me to become a more effective teacher.

When I retired from AF active duty, I experienced some life-changing events. One of those events involved a family decision to move from Upstate New York to Texas with our two children. These events caused me to evaluate my life and its purpose. During this introspection I volunteered at Hallsville ISD as a substitute nurse. I began receiving calls to substitute **teach**. One call was for a long-term substitute position for a Health Science instructor going on maternity leave. After a hesitant response, I took the teacher up on an invitation to drop in on the classroom unannounced to see what the experience would “really” be like. I found the

classroom of high-school students engaged and discussing legal and ethical issues in health care. What I witnessed that day and subsequent 3 months I substituted was exciting and infectious! The unexpected death of one of the remaining Health Science instructors and the decision of the other to not return from maternity leave also influenced my decision to pursue education. In those few months my new love of the high school classroom led to inquiries about how to become a certified Health Science instructor. I have never regretted my decision to leave clinical nursing in order to teach. I have found my purpose and new mission field.

While I am not a novice teacher, I am by no means seasoned. It would be silly of me to say that my greatest accomplishments and contributions are wide-sweeping. My greatest accomplishments to date have been at the individual level. I realize that I contribute most by being positive, prepared and excited about what I do. I use this positive attitude to influence and show each student their potential. I accomplish this through feedback and recognition of individual goal-attainment. I do my best to spark an interest in learning and showing each individual student that they have a fire within them, too. It takes a lot of energy to get to know each student, evaluate their strengths and interests and show them that I genuinely respect and care about their future. It is a serious mission.

Any contributions to education I have made stem from trying to make a difference at HHS by affecting individual students. In May I had my most proud teaching moment to date. Nick, a graduating senior with Asperger's, was a student in various health science electives over the last 4 years. We share a mutual love of everything Disney, '80's song lyrics and lines memorized from Seinfeld episodes. Nick graduated in the top 10% of his class. He selected me as a teacher that had the "Most Impact" on him to date. He stated before a banquet hall crowd, "Through 4 years of study, Mrs. Dewoody has instilled within me a higher level of determination and ethics. I am indebted to her as I can face the challenges of university studies and a professional career with increased confidence." Mission accomplished—on to my next mission!

#### **IV. Community Involvement** - (one double-spaced page)

- A. Describe your commitment to your community through service-oriented activities such as volunteer work, civic responsibilities and other group activities.

Shortly after my arrival to the district 5 years ago I was approached about honoring veterans and have subsequently been the lead coordinator of the Veteran's Day Program for HISD (4 years). We invite over 150 veterans from the Hallsville/Longview area to attend a two-hour event that includes a guest speaker, singing, theatrical reading and entertainment for our honored guests. Our junior and senior students attend this event that gives our district an opportunity to honor those who have served our great nation. It also provides HHS with the opportunity to take the learning out of the classroom for our students. I believe they learn valuable lessons about duty, civic pride and service from this program. I start planning the event a year ahead of time and spend many hours coordinating/collaborating with various agencies to ensure that our community-wide Veteran's Day Program salutes our veterans.

My other school-related service projects have included obtaining my food handlers certificate and helping out in the soccer concession stand (2 years); assisting athletic boosters to prepare and serve a nutritious meal to our football team prior to their games (1 year); serving on prom committee and assisting with set up, clean up and chaperone of prom (2 years); chaperoning our drill team trip to Los Angeles; serving on pep rally committee to plan, organize, set up pep rallies on a weekly basis (2 years); and for the last year I have been involved with the HS Mentor program as an assistant advisor.

As a member of Crossroads Community Church I have a number of opportunities to serve. I have shopped, planned meal and prepared 3 meals/day for our 2-3 day teen retreats (2 years); I am on a team of 5 that prepares and serves dinner at HiWay 80 Rescue Mission on the first Monday of every month (2 years); additionally I serve in Children's Ministry as a volunteer in our nursery, 2&3 yr old room and 5 yr-old room on a rotational schedule.

**V. Philosophy of Teaching** - (two double-spaced pages)

- A. Describe your personal feelings and beliefs about teaching, including your own ideas of what makes you an outstanding teacher. Describe the rewards you find in teaching.
- B. How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in your personal teaching style?

Teaching is a fun, rewarding, honorable, and important profession. I am very passionate about my job and I know that it comes with great responsibility. As a high school teacher I will walk alongside students during what can be a very turbulent time. It is challenging, energy-zapping and occasionally exasperating! More often than not it is exciting, rewarding and is often times comical! Much of my daily life is spent with students or thinking about students. I put many hours of planning and preparation into my lessons. As a Health Science teacher, I instruct courses that will prepare students to enter into the work force or to attend post-secondary programs that will further prepare them to become nurses, doctors, pharmacists, physical therapists, technicians, etc. Students may already know that this is what they want to do or “become” and I have the job of expanding their knowledge and further motivating them. Others may not have a clue to what they want to do after high school. It is my job to create a sense of curiosity and discovery for them.

I cannot do this job alone. I must collaborate with other teachers, staff and administrators. Most importantly, I must connect with each student and include their family throughout the process. I am fortunate to work in a district that is a Professional Learning Community (PLC). As a PLC we are constantly communicating, incorporating data, instituting plans, refining curriculum and evaluating each student’s response to any intervention we take. I feel very fortunate to be a part of a PLC because I believe that this is one reason I can be an effective teacher.

Another reason I believe I am effective teacher is because I had an awesome mentor, Mrs. Becky Massey. Becky was with me throughout my entire first year. She was instrumental in

any success I might have today. She guided me, corrected me, encouraged me and provided me with loving critique. She assessed my weaknesses and helped me devise a plan to strengthen these areas. She talked to me daily and helped me get a secure footing during that crucial first year. Her example of mentoring is one that I use today when I am working with new teachers. I am sad to say that Becky passed away the following year, but I strive to honor her memory in the way I teach and conduct myself in the classroom. If I can be considered outstanding it is only because I have the support of my administration and my fellow teachers.

Students today face many challenges before they even enter the doors of our high school or my classroom. I acknowledge that we live in a broken world and this brokenness finds its way into my classroom. How can a student be expected to concentrate and “perform” when they are hungry, tired, feeling unloved, insecure or worse (abandoned, neglected or abused)? While I can’t solve the problems in our society, I can reflect an attitude of acceptance, love, and respect for each of the students with which I come into contact. I not only address the curriculum of my subject matter but the unwritten or unspoken curriculum of social manners, behavior, civic duty and citizenship.

I hold my students to very high standards. I let them know they CAN do things they never thought and that I will be there to cheer them on in the process. I strive to make my classroom a safe place for students to share and problem solve. I ask a lot of questions. I make a lot of mistakes and I make sure to point them out so that we can all learn from them. I laugh a lot, usually at myself first. I adopt an attitude of gratitude and I don’t take anything for granted. I apologize. I forgive. I ask for students to do the same in return. I treat my students like young adults until their behavior demands otherwise. I try to get to know them as individuals and attempt to accommodate each student’s learning style throughout my lessons. I try to give each student personal and immediate feedback. I am not ashamed to say I hug a lot. My reward comes when I see students make gains not only in subject matter content, but when they begin to make gains in life through maturity and personal development.

## VI. Education Issues and Trends - (two double-spaced pages)

- A. What do you consider to be the major public education issues today?  
Address **one** in depth, outlining possible causes, effects and resolutions.

There are many issues that affect public education today. Among those are subjects such as common core standards, student learning, technology, politics, high stakes testing, leadership, and poverty to name a few off the top of my head. However, from my viewpoint one of the major issues in public schools today is the **social climate** that exists within a school. This critical issue is not just about bullying, but about creating an inclusive school climate where all students can achieve their maximum potential.

I previously alluded to how what is happening in society as a whole is affecting what happens within the school walls. The social issues of the day are affecting our students and that is, in turn, affecting overall individual and school performance and the climate of our schools. A teacher's job is tough enough without having to worry about violence, racism, hunger, abuse and disintegrating families. Our students' attention is hard enough to maintain during this day in age when the distractions of social media and technology are ever present. How can the seemingly boring and outdated lessons possibly keep up with what the Kardashians are doing? How can I convince students to use their words wisely and write neatly when social media lures them to believe that every thought that enters their brains or that every mundane task is worth expressing in a tweet or blog? How can the pursuit of knowledge, the scientific process, humility and self-sacrifice survive in a world where "do unto others before they do unto you" and the "boys with the most toys" are seen as winners and heroes?

What are the causes of the aforementioned issues and the poor social climates that exist in our schools? I think they can be linked to the decline of importance of faith and family. Families are the building block of society and when they begin unravel or disintegrate, over time we can begin to see the effect this has on society. It is no longer the norm for our students to reside in a

home with both parents who provide not only the necessities of food and shelter, but the framework of faith and its importance to the formation of our moral values. It seems to this writer that the morality of our students is more heavily influenced by the movie and TV industry than by a faith-based family unit. The effect is that people are less likely to see the value of getting married and staying married, let alone being monogamous. The effect is that we have people that are more self-absorbed than ever. Why worry about someone else? Let me get mine first. Who cares about rules and deadlines? If I can make enough fuss in Walmart then I will get what I want. The value of responsible individual behavior definitely seems passé in today's society. Gone are the days of chivalry and when a person's word was their bond.

Students from every time period in history have faced obstacles. I don't think anyone would disagree that our society is experiencing a decline in social values, rising violence, disintegrating families, increased anxiety and other behavioral problems. So it is incumbent upon every teacher and administrator to create a healthy environment for our students. We must augment the lessons started in the home environment or be the source of instruction. We must create safe and secure environments for our students and mitigate the effects of distrust, violence, anger, irresponsibility and apathy.

The way that I impact this personally is by developing rules and guidelines for my classroom. I enforce the school code of conduct in a fair and equitable manner. I remain alert and make referrals to counselors and principals as needed. The most important thing I do in this area is to be a part of the HHS mentor program. Along with another teacher, we head up a team of 70+ upperclassmen who have been selected from a pool of applicants to mentor incoming freshmen. We stress the importance of making HHS a "No Place for Hate" environment. This is accomplished by assigning each freshman to a mentor and making weekly contact with them. From the very first day of High school, each freshman is welcomed personally and undergoes an orientation and is given information the various clubs and organizations offered. The Mentor Program won't resolve society's ills, but it's made a difference at HHS.

**VII. The Teaching Profession** - (two double-spaced pages)

- A. What do you do to strengthen and improve the teaching profession?
- B. What is and/or what should be the basis for accountability in the teaching profession?

As a relatively young educator, the way I strengthen and improve my profession is to take individual responsibility and ensure that I continue to educate myself and use all of my resources wisely. I continue to read and attend continuing education seminars to stay fresh and informed. Each year I set new goals for myself and strive to meet those goals. I am not content to keep things the same and make changes whenever possible to incorporate the new tools and information. I remain engaged in a team and volunteer my time to participate in assessment and improvement of policies and curriculum. I ask questions and “pick the brains” of veteran teachers on our campus. At HHS we are part of a PLC and use this collaborative team approach to strengthen and improve all that we do.

I do not know what the standard of accountability should be for other teachers or district. I know that I am regularly observed by administrators and that they perform unannounced walk-throughs and observations of my classroom. I then receive feedback and analysis of my strengths and weaknesses. I receive immediate feedback and find this helpful to my continual improvement.



**VIII. Texas Teacher of the Year** - (one double-spaced page)

- A. As the 2016 Texas Teacher of the Year, you would serve as a spokesperson and representative for the entire teaching profession. What would be your message? What would you communicate to your profession and to the general public?

My message would be simple: Teachers impact all individuals—sometimes in a life-changing way. Individuals impact our communities, our state and our nation. If you care about your future and that of your community, state and nation, support teachers! It will make a difference to us all!