

## MULTI-TASKING 'A MATTER OF SURVIVAL'

### Tatum principals pulling double duty

VANGE PERRYMAN  
NEWS-SUN

Usually the only time students see their principal is in the hall, at lunch duty or in the principal's office. But in Tatum, students could have their principal for a teacher.

Both Tatum Elementary and High School principals Jay Nelson and Lisa Medlin, respectively, serve double duty for the district.

While Nelson can be found in the elementary hallways in the morning, when his students take lunch he tosses on his teaching cap and heads to the high school.

Nelson is responsible for a seventh-grade life science class and a freshman physical science class.

"You have to work on time management," said Nelson, who has been with the district for 14 years. "You have to spend extra time getting prepared."

The double duty is "a matter of survival" since the district's budget only has enough funds for one full-time principal position or two half-time positions, according to Tatum Superintendent T.J. Parks.

"With all of the governor's initiatives, we've had to scale back," Parks said. "I would rather have two half-time positions because it never fails wherever you are, they need you at the other end."

For whatever the reason for the two hats, neither principal seems to mind the additional role.

"I really enjoy interacting with the students," said Nelson, 43, who has been the elementary principal for three years. "We have good kids, and the staff know when I am in the office and in class. They either send students to me later



or the next morning."

Things at the high school run smooth as well, according to Medlin, who teaches three class of English. She gives credit to the staff for the success in the routine.

"The staff here is great. While it is a challenge," said Medlin, 40, "I have a lot of help here from the staff."

While both Nelson and Medlin are quick to pass along some of the glory, according to Parks, both deserve a pat on the back.

"These people are professionals," Parks said. "I think because they are so professional they are able to do a good job. We still have the same number of programs they have to deal with even though our numbers are lower."

For Tatum student Reahannon Lizardo, 17, having Medlin for both a principal and a teacher has helped bridge the gap between the students and their principal.

"We can approach her as a friend," Lizardo said. "We're not afraid to talk to her. She's done a really good job."



Above, Tatum Elementary principal Jay Nelson answers Michael Garcia's question during ninth-grade physical science class. Nelson doubles as teacher in seventh-grade life science class and a freshman physical science class.

Left, Nelson catches up on his paper work before heading across the street to teach a freshman physical science class.

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