
Harvard Prize Book Award Presented to Outstanding Teacher Brownwood Student and ISD Praised for Excellence

The best selling books "**Chicken Soup of the Soul**" provided teachers these words of encouragement, ***"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, what kind of car I drove, or how big of a house I lived in, it will matter that I made a difference in the life of a child."***

Teachers have been influencing their students' lives in their classrooms for many years. The teacher-student relationship is definitely a unique bond that is built in the classroom. However, with today's technology it has become possible for a teacher and student to work together and form that unique relationship without ever meeting face to face. The Texas Virtual School Initiative (TVS) has made this opportunity possible for students in Brownwood ISD.

The Texas Virtual School is a web-based learning initiative designed to meet the needs of Texas public school students and educators. Its mission is to provide extended and flexible learning opportunities for secondary students and educators through web-based programs. TVS is a joint effort between Region 4 Education Service Center and 12 other Education Service Centers throughout Texas, including Region 15.

Brownwood ISD is a small rural school district in the Texas hill country. Courtney Mann, a student from Brownwood ISD took AP Psychology online through TVS during 2006 fall semester. TVS is the only means of her taking this AP class.

The TVS online teacher who made this opportunity possible Courtney is Alicia Rackers. For her extraordinary ability to teach online students and enable their academic success, Ms. Rackers was honored as a recipient of the Harvard Prize Book Award. This is an honor bestowed by Harvard University through a member of the Harvard alumnae community to ***“a teacher who has the attributes of a great secondary-school educator.”*** Through Ms. Rackers’ online course, Courtney excelled not only in her coursework but, was able to participate in an international collaborative project which included students from the Roskilde Business School in Denmark and Oratory Athenaeum for University Preparation in Pharr, Texas. During the ceremony, Ms. Rackers praised Ms. Mann. She declared that ***“Courtney showed a remarkable ability to communicate and work effectively with students who she never met in a face-to-face setting”***. She further added that ***“Courtney was an extraordinary student who was a delight to teach and a credit to her school, family, and community.”***

Ms. Rackers received this honor on May 11, 2007; the award was given through a video conferencing ceremony. In attendance from Brownwood ISD, located in Region 15, was Ms. Mann, Mr. Bill Faircloth, Principal, Dr. Susan Jones, Superintendent, and Jeana Moss, Assistant Superintendent.

During the ceremony, Brownwood ISD was praised for striving to bring excellence to its students by offering online Advanced Placement coursework. Mr. Faircloth stated that ***“The Texas Virtual School project has been a great addition to our course offerings. Students are able to go beyond the classrooms of a mid-sized community in Texas and interact and compete with students in a global world.”***
