



Rock Creek leader named Educator of the Year

By Tricia Caspers of the Auburn Journal

Her grandmother was a teacher, her mother was a teacher, and everyone in her family assumed she would become a teacher, too, but Suzanne Flint had other ideas as she headed off to college.

“You work too hard,” Flint told her mother when she explained why she didn’t want to have her own classroom one day. She never did become a teacher. Instead, she works

10-hour days as a principal at Rock Creek Elementary School, a job that has earned her the honor of being named Auburn’s Educator of the Year by the Auburn Union School District. She will be celebrated at an event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

“None of us go home when the bell rings,” she said. “We all kind of live here.” Flint wakes every morning, plans her daily agenda, and by the time she walks into the school, “it’s a whole different day,” Flint said. She never knows exactly from one day to the next what sort of challenges she’ll be faced with. This is evidenced by the number of children who ask Flint to talk to teachers or yard duties on their behalf or intervene in playground squabbles as she walks through the campus.

Later, a parent might want to have a conference about her child or a substitute might not show up, and Flint will step into the classroom “You have to be flexible, with little time to transition from one task to the next,” she said. “You have to be a chameleon.” She’s been a chameleon for six years at Rock Creek, a job that she loves. “I feel most comfortable in the rhythm of the school year, the school day,” Flint said.

Flint was a school counselor in Sonoma Valley for 12 years before moving to Auburn 13 years ago with her son, she said. Her local career began as assistant principal at E.V. Cain and then vice principal at Bowman Charter School before she took over the helm at Rock Creek, which has close to 300 students enrolled in transitional kindergarten through fifth grade. “There’s a perception that Rock Creek students are the most challenging,” she said. “I don’t think that’s true.”

As 70 percent of Rock Creek’s students are English language learners, their needs are different from students at other schools, but Flint loves them. Her favorite part of the day is spending time in the classroom or on the playground. “It’s easy to spend all day in the office and forget why we’re here,” she said. “I try not to do that.” One of her proudest achievements is taking up to 50 high-achieving students on field trips to visit colleges and universities throughout the year.

“I want to provide them the opportunity to say, ‘This is where I’m headed.’”...