

2006 HONOREE

Rafael Crespo

Miami Lakes Middle School, Miami Lakes, FL
Middle School Math Education • 6th and 7th Grade



Years Teaching: 3

Average Class Size: 23

Classes Taught Per Day: 3

School's % of ESL Students: 8%

School Type: Public, Large City

Type of Class: Self-contained

“Appropriate hands-on activities are key to my success as a teacher. To encourage students to think critically, I challenge them to make puzzles and games of their own. This allows them to demonstrate that they thoroughly understand the concept or skill being taught. Many of my lessons involve role-playing in various career positions using math at work. One of these lessons, on rate, involves students dressing up in scrubs as nurses or doctors to measure their peer group’s heartbeats. I also encourage my students to look ahead through the text and come up with activities to convey the objectives that their peers would find interesting and entertaining. This strategy has motivated many of my students to read ahead through the text and assimilate the material in order to develop an activity they enjoy. Empowering students to become part of the lesson planning process motivates them and gives them a sense of ownership. This leads to a heightened level of self-esteem, interest, and participation, which in turn makes for a better learning experience for all. Former students constantly come back to see me about their success in math, and how I changed how they view mathematics. Rather than repetitive lectures and obscure exercises, the experiences my students get in the classroom will endure a lifetime.”

“The lessons in my classroom are customized for the learner’s needs and experiences, and most importantly, tailored to the student’s interests. To accomplish this task, I administer a personal inventory/



survey that helps me get to know my students at the beginning of the year. One question asks, ‘How do you feel about math?’ Generally eight out of ten students reply: ‘Math is too difficult.’ This is because they do not fully understand it and have become frustrated and turned off by it. Changing their mindset and helping them discover that math can be fun is one of the challenges that I have to overcome.”

“Whether he is wearing a pirate’s outfit as he takes his students on a scavenger hunt for theorems and postulates, or is in front of the class performing a magic trick, Mr. Crespo’s students become immersed in the lesson for that day. He is all giving, caring, and above all, an extremely competent individual. What his students think about him, how they perform, and the amount of time that they are willing to spend before and after school to discuss one postulate or another, speaks immensely about this man’s gift in reaching young minds.”

— *Joaquin P. Hernandez, principal,
Miami Lakes Middle School*

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Rookie Teacher of the Year - Miami-Dade County (2004-05)