Twyla Baylor’s career didn’t begin in education — but she was a teacher by nature. Before she entered the classroom, Baylor worked in information technology (IT), teaching and training others how to install computer systems and load software. But she had a hunch that the teaching skills she had developed in IT would take on a new role in the future. In 2005, Baylor left corporate America and returned to her alma mater, Missouri Baptist University (MoBap) to pursue her master’s in education. “Although I learned a lot in IT — such as how to be more analytical — I made the decision to pursue education full time,” Baylor said. While at MoBap, Baylor was the one doing the learning — but she didn’t let that stop her from getting acclimated to her future teaching career. Baylor started working as a hall monitor for a short time at a high school in the Rockwood School District, then as a teaching assistant in one of the elementary schools. “I got a feel for the school system before I was even a teacher,” she said. Since receiving her teaching certification, Baylor has taught second, third and fourth grade and even worked in the school library. Now she teaches fourth grade at Townsend Elementary in the Hazelwood School District.

A PASSION FOR TEACHING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND READING
Although Baylor loves teaching all subjects, she has a specific passion for African American History and reading. Despite having favorite subjects, Baylor works hard to make all subjects exciting by connecting the lessons to the real world, explaining and demonstrating how each topic applies in real life. “It seems to be effective to pull [the students] into various topics that we talk about,” Baylor said.

Baylor works hard to find connections with all subjects; however, Baylor says her students would say that her favorite subject to teach is history. “I enjoy history. I really enjoy teaching African American History,” Baylor said.

Baylor said she also enjoys reading. She loves sharing the experience for a story to transfer you to a different place. “I like how stories can take you from your current setting and take you somewhere else,” she said.

CHANGES IN THE CLASSROOM
It’s no secret that this year students and teachers are experiencing some differences in the classroom — adapting to the lack of physical learning. Students and teachers alike are overcoming new challenges with virtual learning. Luckily for Baylor’s students, Baylor is leaning on her extensive IT background.

Baylor said she already integrated a lot of technology into her classroom in the past — now there is just more of it. She said her background in IT has helped make the transition easier. Although different, she said she tries to implement the same teaching methods in the virtual setting. She even tries to continue her small group work so students continue to experience the small group feel. “It’s taken some adjustments, but I can see them becoming more at ease,” Baylor said, ending with a little laughter. “They can certainly navigate their Chromebooks very well.”

Ms. Baylor received a Target gift card from Elco and a bouquet from Walter Knoll Florist in honor of her nomination.