



2008 NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - SHAPING THE FUTURE



JUNE TEISAN

2008 Michigan Teacher of the Year

Harper Woods Secondary School
Harper Woods, MI

School Profile: Suburban
of students in District: 1300
of students in building: 650

Teaching area: Science
Teaching level: 7

of years in teaching: 20
of years in present position: 20

II. Educational History and Professional Development Activities

A. Colleges and Universities Attended

Doctoral Student - Educational Leadership	Oakland University	August 2004 – Present
Educational Specialist - Educational Leadership	Oakland University	May 2004
Master of Arts in Teaching - Science Education	Wayne State University	December 1991
Bachelor of Arts - Biological Science	Wayne State University	December 1986

B. Teaching Employment History

- Harper Woods Secondary School, Harper Woods, Michigan 1987 to present

Current Assignment: 7th grade science [four sections encompassing botany, astronomy, geology, taxonomy, microbiology, interactions of living things, and reproductive health] and exploratory class: Multicultural Literature Circles [one section]

leading students through books and reflective activities that explore themes of justice, friendship, conflict and prejudice. *Past*

Assignment: 1987 – 1993: 7th grade science [two sections], 8th grade science [two sections], high school Introductory Physical Science [one section].

- Detroit Country Day School, Beverly Hills, Michigan; Summer Math Enrichment Instructor, 1987

C. Professional Association Memberships

- National Association of Presidential Awardees for Excellence in Science, 2006 - present
- National Association for Research in Science Teaching, 2006 - present
- American Educational Researchers Association, 2004 - present
- The Network of Michigan Educators, 2003 - present
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002 - present
- Michigan Science Education Leaders Association, 2002 - present
- Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning, 2002 - present; Conference Volunteer 2005
- National Middle School Association, 1997 - present
- Michigan Association of Middle School Educators, 1997 - 2003
- National Education Association, 1987 - present
- Michigan Education Association, 1987 - present
- Harper Woods Education Association, 1987 - present; Treasurer (2004-present), Bond Issue Co-Chair (2004), Building Representative (1999-2002 & 1993-1996), and Secretary (1994-1996)

- Michigan Science Teachers Association, 1987 - present
- National Science Teachers Association, 1987 - present; Building a Presence for Science District Key Leader (2004 - present)

D. Staff Development Leadership and Leadership in the Training of Future Teachers

- Oakland University, Guest presenter on teacher leadership to Ed. Specialist cohorts, 2006 - present
- National Science Teachers Association, Current online teacher mentor with e-Mentoring for Student Success (eMSS) Initiative, 2006 - present
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Trained Facilitator (trained in 2003) - volunteer mentor to area teachers undertaking NBPTS certification (2003-present) and presenter of NBPTS certification process overview at Michigan Science Teachers Association State Conference (2003) and to all Harper Woods district staff (2004)
- Michigan Science Teachers Association (2003, 2004, 2007 and scheduled for March 2008), Metro-Detroit Science Teacher Association (2001 & 2002), Michigan Education Association Professional Development Conference (2003), and Michigan Association of Middle School Educators (2002); Teaching Conference Presenter on Instructional Practices and Resources including Multicultural Literature Circles, JASON Project, Cross-Curricular Strategies (Art and Science, Use of Literature in Science, Middle Schoolers as Elementary Science Educators)
- Harper Woods Education Association Peer Educator Volunteer Mentor, 1996-2001

E. Awards and Other Recognition of Teaching

- Michigan Teacher of the Year 2007-2008
- Centers for Disease Control Science Ambassador Educator 2007
- DTE-Energy RocketMath! Grant Awardee 2007
- DaimlerChrysler "Closing the Technology Gap in Education" Awardee 2006 and 2007
- GM-Lockheed Martin NASA Space Camp Scholarship Awardee 2006
- Oakland University Lougheed Educational Leader Scholarship Awardee 2006
- Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching 2005
- Wayne County Middle School Teacher of the Year 2004
- National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Certification in Early Adolescent Science 2002
- Harper Woods Schools Middle Level Teacher of the Year 2000

III. Professional Biography

Factors that influenced me to become a teacher I was not one of those little girls who lined up dolls and teddy bears in tiny chairs to play school. I was the kid sprawled across the sidewalk, deeply absorbed in the comings and goings of ants around a glob of candy (little did I know at the time that I was doing scientific fieldwork!) Fast-forward to eighth-grade science class taught by the archetypal Ms. Frizzle from “The Magic Schoolbus.” Complete with unruly auburn hair and distinctive nails-on-a-chalkboard voice, this strident feminist shocked me and intrigued me and drew a shy, gangly girl deeper into the world of biology. I eagerly moved on to high school science classes, then majored in biology for my bachelor’s degree - not once considering a career in education until, degree in hand, I wondered what to do with my life. Thankfully the puzzle pieces began to fall in place as I remembered with admiration the zest and intelligence, dedication and impact of that eighth-grade teacher. When my students of all colors and hues are elbowing their way into class, anxious to dig into the business of learning I like to think I’ve come full circle, reaching out to precious middle schoolers and inviting them to study the world around them through the lens of science. When someone calls out “I wish I could spend all day in science” my reply is “What a great idea - you can be a teacher and do just that!!”

Reflecting on contributions and accomplishments As I reflect on my contributions and accomplishments in education, there is one aspect of my work that has taken a special place in my heart: the intentional efforts I’ve undertaken and the successes I’ve experienced in welcoming, educating, and celebrating my growing population of minority students. Issues of equity and tolerance are no longer mere academic dialogue in our district: today seven of every ten students in our classrooms are African-Americans, compared to 1:10 ratio less than a decade ago. To say our school has experienced growing pains doesn’t begin to address the scope of change all of us are seeking to process . . . change that I want to assimilate in ways that honor our students, that set high academic goals for our students, that send the message “I believe in you and my life is richer because I know you.” I’ve worked hard to examine my attitudes and actions, my professional practices and personal biases, and I feel I’m a better teacher, and a more complete soul, because of this mental and emotional accounting. From that basis I’ve created activities to foster dialogue about race, diversity, and understanding. With “People Paint Chips,” for example, students use 3x5 cards and dollops of red, brown, black, white, and yellow paint to custom mix a paint chip that replicates their skin tone. This sounds a lot easier than it is, and participants begin to engage in conversations about the artificial simplicity of racial labels like “black” and “white.” Of course each unique shade must then be given a creative name – what fun it is to focus on such important discussions in a low-risk, high respect activity!

I am very proud to have tackled and achieved National Board certification. I had been teaching for about twelve years

before NBPTS came across my radar, and what I perceived was an opportunity to raise the bar for myself professionally and to personally challenge the status quo notion that to “cover” the material was one’s primary responsibility as an educator. The National Board process has proven to be the preeminent professional development experience of my career and I found I couldn’t help but continue to push the envelope both in and out of my classroom. I developed a more holistic view of education, found a voice, and recognized critical needs so I just started to offer up my two cents here and there and everywhere. One of the first projects I worked toward was to initiate interdisciplinary units in our seventh grade. Our district had just adopted the middle school concept but our small staff was unaccustomed to collaborative practice and I felt that, as a result, our students were missing out on important connections between subjects. The JASON Project, a nationally-recognized program, offered a more unified approach to instruction so I volunteered to attend a Saturday training seminar, to pilot the curriculum with my science enrichment club, and to coordinate implementation across disciplines. We have implemented JASON across the curriculum for the past nine years and it has served as a springboard for improving our work with learners. I learned from educational research that there is increased student motivation and self-esteem as well as the accomplishment of more complex tasks among classes that integrate technology (The Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993) so the fact that there was a solid multimedia component in the curriculum was an added bonus. With my at-risk and minority kids in particular, this engaging, approachable method – technology-rich, varied, stimulating – has not only captured their attention but has helped them believe in themselves as capable learners, and has given them reason for college and career aspirations. To top it all off, when I submitted news of our success with JASON to the Daimler-Chrysler “Closing the Technology Gap in Education” program we were awarded a grant to fund further technology purchases. As I hold high expectations for all students in my classes and have learned to fashion multiple ‘ladders’ for them to reach those goals, I have sought to partner with colleagues in creating dynamic programs beyond my classroom. Most recently I co-authored a mathematics grant proposal, designing RocketMath!, a technology-rich math program guiding students through model rocket construction. Utilizing NASA staff connections forged at Space and Rocket Camp along with student mentors from a nearby minorities-in-engineering program, this \$22,000 homegrown initiative will be counted a success if those students typically underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers increase competency in and affinity to math. Fostering this type of peer teamwork and innovation contributes to building better educational opportunities for all students!

IV. Community Involvement

Commitment to community I've grown to love the community in which I teach and am deeply committed to serving in varied activities across the spectrum of city organizations. Perched on the northeast border of Detroit, Harper Woods possesses a small-town family feeling that invites you to join in, and my background in science has been a natural springboard into various volunteer efforts. As a certified Master Gardener I've worked as a docent at summer garden tours. I've led my students in several service projects to beautify the school grounds; planting and maintaining a bird and butterfly garden, setting in 20-30 flats of annuals around the secondary building every spring and burying thousands of bulbs over the years. Our landscape beds are colorful testimony to the botanical TLC efforts of district middle schoolers over the past two decades. And for fifteen years I've trained a cadre of seventh grade kids who have in turn instructed district second graders in a field experience about trees. To cap off the event I was awarded a grant from the National Tree Trust and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources providing 100 black walnut trees and 100 dogwood trees to beautify areas around the city. Often my ties to the classroom come to the fore when a local need arises outside of the science realm. I've become a key contact person for disseminating news and information that needs to reach student interest groups within the district. If the public library is starting a teen reading club, I'll be hanging the posters and talking it up with students. When a former board member wanted to initiate a cross-generational knitting club for pre-teen girls and senior citizens, I promoted the program and honed in on students I felt would benefit most from the opportunity. When our community's beloved social worker was battling breast cancer, I created a quilt that became a focal point of action and hope during our shared time of pain and uncertainty; the quilt was sent on a traveling raffle fundraiser to businesses throughout the community. The effort raised over \$4500 for a mobile mammography unit of the Karmanos Cancer Institute of Detroit; \$2000 from the ticket sales and an additional \$2500 from the "Yes Mamm!" Challenge from Better Homes and Gardens.

Three years ago, when our district was, for the third and final time, facing a crucial but divisive bond issue to fund renovations to existing structures and construction of a new facility, I felt it was imperative that homeowners had a chance to discuss their concerns personally with someone from the district. I initiated a door-to-door campaign involving our entire district teaching staff and many of our support personnel. This opportunity for individual contact – something that had never been accomplished before in the school system – was a key component in reframing the debate and passing the \$34.5 million bond. The recent dedication of our new facility was a community-wide celebration and as you might guess, I'm already surveying the empty flower beds with a gleam in my eye!

V. Philosophy of Teaching

Personal feelings & beliefs about teaching How do I feel about teaching? Well, to start with, I wouldn't consider doing anything else! Coming alongside a diverse group of individuals to encourage a sense of wonder in the world around them, to invite students to tap into their talents and express their unique personalities in innovative ways is a source of joy for me. Even on days when I'm wrung out from the myriad demands of the job, I make contact with a touchstone truth deep inside of me: what I just poured myself into was of great significance – to that child, to his or her family, to our community and society. It was Lee Iacocca of Chrysler Corporation who said, "In a completely rational society the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less." I sense his intent was not to disparage other vocations but to direct attention toward the deeper truths of what it means to teach. There is selflessness to this endeavor, a willingness to be other-centered in order to foster the growth of the children given into one's care. What success I have experienced as a teacher in my 20+ years can be attributed to this: I wholeheartedly believe that each child is precious and I want my actions to align with that reality. I will nurture them with respect. I will hold them accountable. I will challenge them. I will love them. I won't accept when they want to waste their time and talents. I'll build bridges with their families. I'll celebrate their successes. I'll shine the spotlight on them. I'll show up for their recitals, compliment their new outfits, ask if they've eaten a good breakfast, listen to their woes, smile at them in the halls, laugh with them and comfort them; in short, join in their lives. My reward is to know that I had a part in the "becoming." Because I teach in a secondary building (grades 7-12) in a small district, I have the pleasure of staying in touch with my young charges for five more years after they leave my classroom. There's nothing better than having a sophomore stop in for tutoring or a senior drop by for a quick visit and a chance to catch up on family, friends, and plans for the future.

How beliefs are demonstrated in teaching style Effective science instruction at the middle school level has a certain flavor of "managed chaos," and your heart's gotta be in it as you 'go with the flow.' When I tell people that I teach seventh graders I usually get a spirited mix of awe and sympathy in response. Early adolescents seem to be notorious for monumental mood swings, puzzling behavior patterns, and questionable decision-making skills. I, however, love the off-kilter antics and mercurial personality quirks of my little darlings, and I think my students pick up on that sentiment. In the flurry and buzz of a meaningful scientific inquiry with 25 - 30 kids scurrying off in different directions, a foundational base of mutual trust and genuine interest is imperative for the learning experience to be productive. The fact that there is virtually no off-task behavior during our lab activities – that the kids are self-directed, come and go purposefully, seek help when needed, even offer aid to peers – all speaks to the tone of mutual respect, self-discipline, and fun that pervades our classroom. I model proper procedures then warn of "desk arrest" for students who choose to disrupt – sitting at one's desk all hour when peers are

monitoring mealworm activity or planting seeds from space is a dire consequence for an active adolescent! I know from past experience that kids enjoy using the equipment 'real' scientists employ (solid science pedagogy as well!); my students understand that I want them to use the time and tools wisely and they seem to savor each experience. From a solid background in science, I work to contextualize lessons – we stand on the shoulders of giants and have much to do in the global arena to meet 21st century challenges we don't yet see – but strive for a positive tone and an age-appropriate message. So, for example, what could be to some a ho-hum microbiology unit is transformed into a food safety investigation complete with several labs for my concrete-operational thinkers, short video clips for the visual learners, and in-depth sessions exploring websites like a food safety tutorial on the web. The “ick factor” grabs their attention as students of all abilities take charge of hunting sites around the school building for bacteria to culture on Petri dishes. A mini field trip to the school's kitchen hosted by our food service manager gives a behind-the-scenes look at a real government-inspected kitchen with natural comparisons to their family kitchen. Recruiting our food service manager also showcases science-related careers. Coordinating these types of experiences and varying assessments (students may choose from a range of options to show their grasp of content - creating a brochure about proper hand washing or evaluating the safety of their home kitchen) pave multiple avenues for students to make sense of core curriculum. I make up goofy songs and sing them off-key because students will stop what they're doing long enough to listen to the directions I needed to clarify (to the tune of Old MacDonald or Blue's Clues). I clown around when I present new material and kids don't know they just had a “lecture” on content. Along the way my kids see that science is an exciting and rich part of their lives. Also, throughout the year I ask for advice on how to improve the class and at the close of every year I invite all of my students to evaluate me personally – their last essay questions of the year! I let them know that I value their opinions and that if they don't share their insights I lose an opportunity to grow as a teacher and as a person (and I promise not to read the essays until I've closed my grade book, so students are very honest!!). This feedback has proven invaluable as I continue to reflect on what it means to be an educator. I think my kids see me as a caring person who brings humor, passion, and commitment to her teaching, someone who knows them, wants the best for them, and treats them with respect. I know it's often said that elementary teachers love their students and secondary teachers love their subject. I'm a middle-level educator and have one foot firmly planted in each camp – but I lean more toward the side of love for my students!

VI. Education Issues and Trends

Public education issues today Equity, relevancy, funding, and globalization are four major public education issues today, and the debates over causes, effects and resolutions rage on, not only in Washington’s political arenas but in living rooms and board rooms, barber shops and coffee shops, churches and classrooms across the nation. Beneath the surface of America’s melting pot ideal of yesteryear are divisions along deeply entrenched lines – demarcations that are starkly seen in schools throughout the country – and issues of *equity* cry out for resolution. Schools in our nation – with notable exceptions – remain largely anchored to a 20th century factory-based paradigm run on an agrarian calendar and are facing very real questions about *relevancy*. America allocates billions to fund education yet school districts in every state grapple with rising costs, and superintendents and boards reconsider every line item in their efforts to maintain key programs yet stay in the black – *funding* is indeed a key issue in education. Within this tangle of issues is woven a common thread of concern: how to prepare America’s children for life in the 21st century. In a country known for fostering innovation there is a growing chorus of voices calling on educators to prepare Americans to “rise above the gathering storm” and meet head-on the myriad challenges of *globalization*.

Conversations focusing on America’s future in the global arena are not relaxed and neutral-toned. Stakeholders in the business world say we don’t produce enough graduates who possess 21st century skills. Research and development firms clamor for more high-caliber scientists and engineers. Headlines rouse the public with news of low-cost labor and leading-edge research just a mouse-click away on foreign shores – reports that fuel concern for upholding American economic vitality, competitiveness, and standard of living. When dialogue turns to the search for solutions, the educational system is looked to as a force to meet the challenge – and rightfully so! What to teach, why to teach it, as well as the where and how to teach are up for debate, but there is a resounding call from the federal level on down: strengthen the scope and depth of instruction in the “STEM” fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Fifty years ago a man-made satellite circled the earth for the first time. Educators across our nation examined course content and teaching methodology and chose to deepen instruction in science and math when faced with that global wake-up call. Personally, I can trace the start of my own career in science back to the legacy of Sputnik and America’s educational revitalization; my teachers wove into my middle level science and math experiences the same vigor and relevance they themselves had experienced in the 1950s and 1960s. The scope and speed of changes to today’s society ushered in by the rise of the World Wide Web are leading government and educational institutions to again raise the bar: developing programs to produce more teachers in K-12 math and science, fostering a climate in higher education that supports graduate studies in STEM subjects, forming coalitions to guide and fund critical initiatives.

Hindering today's reform effort is what some have termed an "urgency gap" among families and communities. With an attitude that, yes, technology, math and science skills are important items for our national agenda, citizens don't necessarily translate that into action toward change at a personal or local level. While the race for space was triggered by the successful launch of a single Russian rocket, America's response to globalization needs to reach a 'tipping point' to incite action. As educators we are advocates for our students – and for America – as we seek to promote a vision of 21st century schooling that will keep our nation strong. Tough choices are ahead where cherished traditions and sacred cow courses must justify their place in the school day, where online coursework, distance learning, off-campus options, and other "unconventional" innovations may need to find a place at the table. Forward-thinking educators must be willing to be a knowledgeable and active presence in this evolving debate. What do we eliminate from a burgeoning curriculum in order to make room for technological literacy and rich scientific investigations? What must be done to include underrepresented groups in the fields of science and math? If the proper tools or environment are lacking, what partnerships can be forged to build capacity for world-class learning opportunities? Troubling matters of funding, equity, and relevancy come to play in the issue of globalization, but again, the caring, creative, competent voice of educators can speak to these issues and engineer change. For example, in January 2008, seventh graders in Harper Woods Secondary School will embark on a learning adventure designed to engage and excite their interest in STEM studies. RocketMath!, funded by a grant from the local natural gas company, students will do the work of aeronautical engineers as they test straw rockets, calculate trajectories, and construct and launch their own solid-fuel rockets. A NASA scientist in California and a number of minority engineering students from a local university have joined a district team of middle level educators who are working to take math and science students beyond textbooks and into the real-world work of aeronautics. A scholarship to Space and Rocket Camp will be awarded at Launch Day, the culminating spring event where all rockets will fly to the sky with media, board members, business leaders, and family present to witness the show. Albert Einstein could have been exhorting us today with his comment, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." Educators for the new millennium face multiple challenges to public education armed with knowledge and ready to power the imagination of students!

VII. The Teaching Profession

Actions to strengthen and improve teaching My first responsibility is to work hard every day to embody powerful and pedagogically sound teaching in my interactions with students, families, colleagues, and in the community. Each time someone says “There are great things going on in June Teisan’s classroom”, I believe I’ve strengthened and improved our profession. Early in my teaching career I began stepping out of the confines of my classroom and taking on additional responsibilities to advance the teaching profession. I’ve served for many years on the Executive Board of our local teacher’s association, working to clarify professional expectations and assist fellow members in their growth as educators, confer with administration on matters of instruction, and connect with board and community members. I’ve twice served as a three-year mentor, working alongside newly-hired teachers in our district to help them with curricular questions, pedagogical issues, and classroom management concerns. As a “digital immigrant” embracing 21st century tools, I am part of an online mentoring program through the National Science Foundation and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). This rigorous initiative is investigating the impact of distance mentoring as a means to coach new science staff who may not have access to a science mentor in their building or district, with the hope that more rigorous inquiry-based science will be taught. I am working as a Science Ambassador with the Centers for Disease Control, translating current CDC research into rich, relevant lessons on public health to be made available to all educators via the World Wide Web. As an active member of several science educational organizations, I regularly present at conferences to provide affordable training opportunities for fellow educators from across the state and region. I scan education websites and volunteer to pilot new instructional programs. I serve as the Key Leader for our district in the NSTA’s Building a Presence for Science program, which disseminates science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) updates, and professional development opportunities. As the Key Leader I recruited district staff to serve as Points of Contact at each building level who in turn pass along relevant STEM news to their colleagues. After I achieved National Board certification, I was invited to train as a facilitator for NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards) and have served as both an online and face-to-face mentor to candidates as they prepare their portfolios. As a Presidential Awardee in Science and as Michigan Teacher of the Year I have served on political advisory committees at the state level and dedicated weekends and evenings to promoting the teaching profession. It’s important to me to not only continue to grow in my knowledge and skills as an educator, but to actively seek – and even engineer – opportunities to strengthen and improve the teaching profession.

Accountability in teaching When the seismic “No Child Left Behind” reauthorization of the ESEA legislation shook America’s educational landscape, conversations about accountability took on a new intensity. However, the vehement

cacophony of voices that engage in dialogue about educational accountability do agree on this foundational truth: education must be about engineering quality learning environments that yield high levels of student achievement. On that same base I have, over the years, built a picture of authentic accountability from which I operate, a model of concentric rings that begins with the student firmly ensconced in the center. As resources of time and effort are poured into a child during years of schooling, that child is responsible for actively engaging in the educational process, thus the first level of accountability. Family members and teaching staff, those in the next concentric ring, are privileged to work directly with children and are charged with carefully crafting lessons for growth and enrichment; hence the second ring of accountability. Moving outward yet again are found the local school and community leaders who set the climate for learning and comprise the third ring of accountability. Professional organizations, teaching universities, and think tanks constitute the fourth ring in this mental model, and leaders in business and government serve to encapsulate the model, constructing the overarching accountability mechanisms that impact all inner layers. Each “circle of influence” sends resources toward the child and in return receives feedback to monitor progress and adjust services. The more complete the picture of a child’s growth, the more strategic can be the package of services offered. Quantitative data alone does not provide a full representation of educational outcomes; unwrapping and incorporating the qualitative component, which may entail measuring more subjective aspects of the educational picture offers a more holistic view of student learning that more closely align with the goals of 21st century learning. These nuanced pieces of the puzzle can be used to construct a more cohesive description of student progress – thereby serving as an effective, more holistic accountability tool at the state, local, and national levels.

Teaching is art and science, method and material, heart and head. A spectrum of rich, interrelated accountability efforts can and should guide improvement efforts, building educational experiences that foster student creativity, innovation, cooperation, ingenuity, vision and resourcefulness . . . all traits vital for success in our global community!

VIII. National Teacher of the Year

Message as National Teacher of the Year What an awesome responsibility and privilege it would be to serve as the national spokesperson and representative for the teaching profession, and I would strive to convey the foundational truth: quality teaching plays a vital role in a child's educational development. I'd tell it to the public - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. I'd repeat it to parents - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. I'd stress it in conversations with novice teachers and veteran educators - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. I'd share it with D.C. politicians and small town mayors - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. If I'm standing at a podium or if I'm sitting at a sports arena, I'm going to share the truth - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. If I'm in a cafeteria of school children or I'm at a Rotary dinner of business professionals, I will communicate - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children*. Study after study confirms that "the most salient influences on students' cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral outcomes of schooling is the quality of teaching – regardless of gender or backgrounds and the schools in which they are enrolled . . . '**what matters most**' in 'making school better' is *quality teaching*." (Kenneth J. Rowe, PhD, emphasis from the author). Wow!!!

From this central message a discourse about 'quality teaching' itself can naturally unfold – rich territory to explore with diverse stakeholders across our country and around the world. As the saying goes, everyone is an expert on education because of his or her own K-12 years; I have yet to meet someone who doesn't have a "teacher story" and most people will readily share in great detail of the good, bad or indifferent. But, unlike the old days, our 'world is flat' and the classroom of yesteryear must morph into an environment that prepares all children for life in a 21st century global community. What a terrific opportunity this presents to build on 'prior knowledge' – the "I remember when" stories – and cultivate in citizens across our country a deeper understanding of and appreciation for what it takes to be a talented, effective educator in *today's* world. Every day in America talented educators are fostering student creativity and imagination, making a difference in the lives of children, and in our world. Cultural historian Jacques Barzun wrote, "Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition." I hope that my message as National Teacher of the Year - - *quality teaching makes a difference in the lives of children* - - might help revive that tradition and inspire many to join the ranks of those whose efforts make a difference - - teachers.