

2007 CESI/CIBA Elementary Teacher
of Outstanding Science Teaching
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I want to thank CESI and Ciba Specialty Chemicals Foundation for this honor. Over the years, I have admired the incredible accomplishments and talents of the members of the Council of Elementary Science International. To be recognized with this award is truly a humbling experience. The teacher I am today is a tapestry of people who have influenced me. This influence throughout my journey of teaching has made me a better teacher. I want to thank them ALL, but there are too many to list in this article. You know who you are. Thank you for sharing your support, time and talents with me.

I do want to thank my middle school science teacher, Mr. Kovar, who used my love for art to hook me into loving science. He used his own talents in art and photography to enhance his teaching. He often drew science concepts to help us visualize what we had done in lab or illustrate our learning. He "made" us draw quite often. This served as great metacognition for me. I really remembered what I learned when I drew it. He helped us process our learning like the master thinker- Leonardo da Vinci; observing, sketching, writing, and dreaming. How fitting that I would become a science teacher much like Mr. Kovar and now teach at a school called The Da Vinci Academy. It is a place where students are encouraged to use many talents to learn their core content. Thank you Mr. Kovar!

In my journey toward becoming a teacher, I was naturally influenced by my own mother, my first teacher. Thanks MOM! She will always be my favorite teacher. She filled our home with love, learning, unique experiences, music and humor. She gave me roots of love and wings of inspiration. After she raised her 5 children, she went on to college and got her teaching degree. She then taught first grade until retiring due to cancer. I also want to thank my grandmother, a 5th grade teacher, who made teaching look so cool. Growing up, I was so honored when she asked me to help set up her classroom each fall. I was fascinated to see how much thought she put into each bulletin board, the placement of desks, and the creation of magical learning areas in each nook and cranny of her room. She often asked MY opinion. She said I knew what kids would like. She valued my opinions. In my teaching, I've carried that with me and ask children what they think to help make decisions about their own learning.

Being a mother myself gave me my greatest insights into teaching. Seeing the world of learning through my own children's eyes made me a better teacher. Being their first teacher will always be my greatest joy. I owe Kyle, Tasha, and Brianne my deepest thanks for teaching me about childhood, school, and learning. I thank them for sharing with me their ideas about learning, spending so many extra hours at school waiting for me, helping me in my classroom, attending school functions, and sharing their mommy with over 5500 other kids over my 20 years of teaching. To this day, their love, patience, insight, and support truly inspires me to be a better teacher! Thanks guys!

Finally, I want to thank those who have shared their expertise with me, supported my ideas, and inspired me along the way. And for this... I have so many to thank...many members of CESI, like Kathy Horstmeyer, Julie Taylor, Rich Hogen and Judith Lederman; NSTA leaders like Anne Tweed, Pita Martinez-McDonald, Mary Gromko, Eric Crossley, Jerry Valadez; and groups like SEPA, NSELA, PLT, Family Nature Summits, STEP-uP and EarthSeeds who

support and encourage members. All these influence me in best practices and leadership. They have empowered me to go beyond my own comfort level and push myself to do more. I want to thank my students, school colleagues, and founding principal, Lew Davis, at The Da Vinci Academy, for inspiring me to keep giving my best every day.

As teachers, most of us know the impact we have on our students. This award has taught me that we all have great influence on others. The support and encouragement of educational leaders really impacts the personal and professional growth of so many. I know these leaders have greatly impacted the teacher I have become!! The teaching "treasures" they have given me are intangible but priceless..... the pat on the back saying "great idea" or "wow, you are doing a great job"; the gentle nudge of encouragement saying "You should join CESI" or "With that teaching idea, you could be an NSTA presenter" ; and mostly, their leadership serves as a model, an example, of what we all can contribute.

Thank you CESI for recognizing elementary teachers for their contributions to science education. CESI made it possible for me to attend the 2008 NSTA conference and recognize me at their annual luncheon. And I want to thank you Ciba for supporting and financing this incredible award. I was spoiled by Beth Earnst, public relations for Ciba, who honored me at a Ciba recognition dinner, introduced me at the CESI luncheon with such kind words, presented me a plaque and award check as well as sent me a goodie bag of Ciba products. Thank you CESI and Ciba for making me feel so honored.

We all know so many amazing teachers who deserve this kind of recognition. I encourage you to nominate them for awards such as CESI/ Ciba's Exemplary Elementary Science Teacher. Let's honor those teachers for what they contribute every day.... their love of teaching. I want to encourage all of you to share your love of teaching and learning through your leadership, support, and encouragement in science education. Your influence really makes a difference in so many lives!