

Greetings from Andover, Kansas

I am Dyane Smokorowski, the 2013 Kansas Teacher of the Year, and I'm here to discuss HB2378, which would replace and possibly eliminate the current Kansas Teacher of the Year Program and be a devastating loss to teacher preparation programs, schools, and communities across the state.

As Teacher of the Year I had the privilege to travel over 32,000 miles and participate in over 211 events. Among these experiences, I spoke with high school graduates at their commencement ceremonies, stood on the stage with Governor Brownback and shook hundreds of valedictorian hands, conducted over 100 teacher workshops on effective technology use and digital citizenship in both public and private schools, conducted online webinars with the US Dept. of Education about better distribution of Internet bandwidth in our rural schools, spoke with hundreds of college of education students, and even reached out to our 5 National Parks and many museums to partner and provide free distance learning opportunities with Kansas schools. All of these experiences and much more were at absolutely no cost to my school district, and none of these would have been possible without the Kansas Teacher of the Year Program.

Since my year of service, I have continued to serve the state of Kansas as a technology professional development leader and was even invited to be an ambassador of education from the United States to China where I spoke to nearly 7,000 teachers on the amazing classroom experiences happening in Kansas with the use of technology. Additionally, I now mentor teachers across my district, state, nation, and the world all because of my role as Kansas Teacher of the Year – a role that I wear with immeasurable pride.

The program does not end with the one winner of Teacher of the Year, however. Annually, 120 newly recognized teachers from all corners of the state are connected to share innovative programs, teaching strategies, build new lesson plan ideas, and grow professionally through the program. Additionally, they are invited to be in the Kansas Exemplary Education Network which consists of Teachers of the Year, Kansas Presidential Math and Science teachers, Milken Educators, National Board Certified Teachers, Horizon Winners for dynamic first year teachers, and Teachers of Promise from the teacher preparation programs. It's an incredible group of inspirational education practitioners learning and growing together, which directly and positively impacts classrooms all across the state.

To eliminate this program would prevent Kansas from participating in the National Teacher of the Year Program meaning we would be the only state not to be represented on the National Level. Kansas has been involved in this program since 1955 and even boasts the honor of having the 1962 National Teacher of the Year, Majorie French, who was from right here in Topeka. We have also had 5 National Finalists representing the communities of Emporia, Wichita, DeSoto, Shawnee

Mission, and Olathe just in the past 16 years. This is a tremendous honor for Kansas education and the state.

To create an additional award that honors teachers is a noble notion, but I would rather see our legislature further support our current program rather than eliminate it. Please reconsider how the loss of Kansas being in the Teacher of the Year program would impact districts, teachers, colleges, and students across the state.

Thank you

Dyane Smokorowski
2013 Kansas Teacher of the Year
Andover, Kansas