President’s Newsletter Message

Warren J, DiBiase, ASTE President

“Just a Science Teacher?”

It was about 7:55 in the morning. I was standing behind the lab table in room 111, the chemistry lab at East Liverpool High School in East Liverpool, Ohio. Adorned with a white lab smock and goggles, I was busy mixing solutions for a Chemistry I lab. My teaching load included three Chemistry I and two Chemistry II classes. Chemistry was a junior and senior level course. I was oblivious to the numerous sophomores, members of my homeroom, straggling into the room and either taking their seats or returning to the hall to spend a few additional minutes with their friends. The tardy bell rang at 8:10 a.m. One of the last students to enter the room that morning was a young male. He was quiet and shy, the type of kid who rarely interacted with anyone. As he entered the room, he stopped in front of the lab table and looked at what I was doing.

He seemed intrigued. He started to walk away, stopped, turned around, and looked directly at me. In a quiet, almost inaudible voice he asked, “Are you a real scientist or just a teacher?” I was taken aback and didn’t know what to say.

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I was really troubled by my inability to respond directly to his query. The student’s simple question haunted me for a long time, especially the phrase “just a teacher.” Was I just a science teacher? Is this how I looked at myself? Is this the public perception of teachers? How did my self-perception influence that of my students? After considerable reflection, I realized that I, as many educators, when asked what they do for a living often see themselves as “just a teacher.” I share this story because in many ways, this student’s innocent question, together with my experiences over the past 33 years, provided the impetus to critically reflect on my perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about teaching, being a teacher, and more recently, being the middle, secondary science educator and a member of the faculty at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. This reflection has given me deepened insights, a greater sense of self-worth, and a sense of extreme pride.

I am in my eleventh year as a science educator here at UNC Charlotte. During this time, I have had the opportunity to work with both undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in my middle grades/secondary science methods course. Each semester I share the aforementioned story and my inability to respond to that student’s query. I use my experience to begin a discussion with the students as to how they perceive themselves. All too often, the students acknowledge that they view themselves as just a teacher. It does not take long for us to realize that our self-perceptions influence not only the learning experiences that we craft but the way our students come to view not only their perceptions of us, but their perception of science.

There is an acute shortage of science teachers in our country, especially at the secondary level. I only have a handful of undergraduate secondary preservice teachers in my methods course each semester. I work closely with colleagues in the College of Science and Liberal Arts to recruit secondary science teachers from among their majors. Only a handful of science majors opt for a career in education. When questioned, they relay that teaching is a career wrought with too many challenges. In addition, many of the science majors see a career in education as just being a teacher.

As science educators, we must strive to break the perception that a career as a science teacher is being much more than just a teacher. We can accomplish this by not only sharing the pride we have as science educators but preparing teachers who have the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities to be effective in the classroom. We must help science teachers at all levels have a positive perception of both themselves and the teaching of science. If we can turn more students on to the teaching of science, we will be able to staff our future science classrooms with teachers who will have a strong influence on their students and help end the shortage of qualified science teachers we are now experiencing.

I share with my students the belief that teaching is perhaps one of the hardest endeavors on earth. It certainly is not without its challenges and issues. However, teaching is wrought with challenges because it is, without a doubt, the most worthwhile endeavor one can undertake. Nothing worthwhile is without its challenges. The more worthwhile an endeavor, the more challenges to face. There is not a better endeavor to devote one’s life work to. Just a teacher? I think not! I am thankful to have had the opportunity to readdress that young student’s question.
ASTE: 2009 International Conference  
*What Science Educators Make*

January 8-10, 2009

**Marriott Hartford Downtown** 200 Columbus Blvd Hartford, Connecticut 06103-2807 Phone: 1-860-249-8000 Toll-free: 1-866-373-9806

Mark your calendars now!

**Conference Co-Chairs**

John Settlage, University of Connecticut, [john.settlage@uconn.edu](mailto:john.settlage@uconn.edu)

Heather Harkins, University of Connecticut, [heather.harkins@uconn.edu](mailto:heather.harkins@uconn.edu)

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To make a reservation with the ASTE room rate of $135/night, go directly to: [http://marriott.com/bdldt?groupCode=astasta&app=resvlink](http://marriott.com/bdldt?groupCode=astasta&app=resvlink) Reservations can also be arranged by calling the Marriott directly at 860-249-8000. The ASTE group rate code is **astasta**.
ASTE: Regional Conventions

**Northeast Region**

The 2008 ASTE Northeast Region meeting will be held October 15-17 at the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) in PA. The conference Web site is: [http://colfax.cortland.edu/NE-ASTE/Home.html](http://colfax.cortland.edu/NE-ASTE/Home.html)

Please see this Web site for registration and submission information. We are excited to hold the 2008 ASTE Northeast Region meeting at PEEC this year. PEEC is located within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. It is a beautiful setting that includes access to shady hemlock gorges, diverse lowland and upland forests, rushing waterfalls and streams, unique flora and fauna of boreal bogs, and ponds teeming with insects and amphibian life. The conference will begin on Wednesday evening with an opening dinner followed by a panel session and activity on the integration of environmental education into preservice science teacher education. After the session we will gather around a bonfire and make s’mores. Paper sessions will be given during Thursday morning and early afternoon. An afternoon break will follow that with optional activities available including a waterfall hike, canoeing on a pond, or environmental education interactive activities. Evening roundtable and poster sessions will occur over dessert and the evening will conclude with an optional night hike. Additional paper sessions will take place on Friday morning with the conference concluding after lunch. Session formats will include 20 minute paper sessions (15 minute presentation followed by 5 minutes of questions and discussion), roundtable discussions, and a poster session. The 2008 conference registration fee includes all meals and lodgings. Lodging options will include cabins, yurts, and a guest lodge. Please note that onsite lodging at PEEC is limited. We encourage everyone to register early.

Additional information about PEEC is available online at: [http://www.peec.org/](http://www.peec.org/)

**Southeast Region**

We are excited to hold the 2008 ASTE Southeast Region meeting at the University of South Carolina this year. The conference theme focuses on high quality science education and social justice issues. Dr. Eileen Parsons, an engaging speaker and a recent ASTE Board member, will provide the keynote address.

Details about the conference, including proposal submission guidelines and registration information are posted at [http://www.ed.sc.edu/saste/default.asp](http://www.ed.sc.edu/saste/default.asp)

The University is located in downtown Columbia, SC and is within an 8 hour drive of half of the country's population and is an ideal setting that is very close to the state's capital, a nationally recognized zoo and gardens, home of the word's biggest child, Eddie (who is 40 feet tall sitting down), and a wide variety of social venues. Columbia is readily accessible as three major interstates (I-20, I-26, and I-77) intersect the city. Also, there is a regional metropolitan airport that is only 8 miles from campus.

You may contact me with any questions that you have about the conference via e-mail ([ncarnes@sc.edu](mailto:ncarnes@sc.edu)) or phone (803-777-4868). “Nothing can be finer than to be in the Carolinas”. So, please join us.

Nate Carnes, SASTE President and Conference Chair

**North Central Region**

Regional Conference is scheduled for Oct. 9-11 at Winona State University, Winona, MN. For more information contact Cherin Lee at [cherin.lee@uni.edu](mailto:cherin.lee@uni.edu)
Come Join Us for **Cosmic Science!**  At the Faculty Institute for NASA Earth and Space Science Education (FINESSE) at ASTE January 6-7, 2009, Hartford, Connecticut

**Discover, develop, and share inquiry-based tools about the Earth, our Solar System, and our Universe to engage future teachers in science**

**NASA scientists share current discoveries about Mars, the Moon, our Galaxy, and more**

In this free two-day participant-driven workshop for pre-service science education faculty, NASA geoscientists, space scientists, and educators (including ASTE members Rick Pomeroy and Greg Schultz) will share Earth and space science activities, data, and resources related to key science topics from the national science standards. Participants will receive a $300 stipend, lunches, and more.

- Explore standards-based concepts using authentic inquiry activities and share your thoughts on additional adaptations for various classroom grade levels and student needs
- Discuss current science research with NASA scientists
- Identify ways to address Earth and space science misconceptions
- Share your own practices, challenges, reflections, and implementation plans
- Explore collaboration plans with colleagues

Registration available online at [www.lpi.usra.edu/education/facultyInstitutes](http://www.lpi.usra.edu/education/facultyInstitutes)

For more information, contact:
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Discover the Universe with NASA during 2009, the International Year of Astronomy
International ASTE Members

In recognition of the increased number of international participants and a growing interest in issues affecting science teacher education worldwide, we are happy to announce that the Board of Directors of the Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE) has approved the creation of an International Region. This region will serve members residing outside of the United States and Canada, individuals collaborating with or working in international contexts, or any members with strong interest in issues impacting science teacher education worldwide. At present, Michael Bowen of Mount Saint Vincent University Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada) is serving as the interim chair/president, and Deborah Tippins of the University of Georgia represents the region on the ASTE Board of Directors. We encourage international members and scholars interested in global issues affecting science teacher education to participate in the activities of the International Region. Please send us your name, e-mail address and mailing address (at mailto:gmbowen.aste@gmail.com) if you are interested in activities for the International Region. We have organized two sessions representing issues of international interest for the forthcoming 2009 ASTE convention in Hartford, Connecticut and encourage you to attend whether you are a member of the region or not. If you have an interest in participating in an interactive poster session about international issues in science teacher education please let us know. We are also in the process of developing some simple operating procedures for the International Region to be discussed at the regional meeting during the 2009 conference. If you have any other suggestions for the conference, please send them to us at the above email.

Newsletter Communications

ASTE Newsletter

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This is my first edition serving as your ASTE newsletter editor. I am appreciative of this opportunity and excited about the chance to interact with the ASTE membership. Please don’t hesitate to contact me regarding the newsletter.

Sincerely,
Todd Campbell

HELP WANTED

Anyone interested in working on the 2010 Conference Planning Committee, please contact Rick Pomeroy at jrpomeroy@ucdavis.edu or Catherine Martine at cmartin7@csulb.edu

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.
Andrew Carnegie