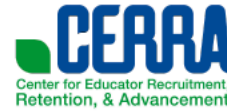


On Leadership:

Voices from Veteran South Carolina Teachers of the Year



 **TEACHER LEADERSHIP**



Greetings!

As the Interim Executive Director at the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate you for being recognized as one of South Carolina's finest teachers. This well-deserved recognition comes with a great responsibility. Your title, whether it be new or ongoing, means you serve as one example of teacher leadership in practice. Other educators see you as a role model and a guide. Luckily, the collective group of Honor Roll Teachers and SC Teachers of the Year bring diverse experiences and passion, creating a kaleidoscope of teacher leadership exemplars. At CERRA, we know that there is no one way to lead and together we demonstrate this belief.

This book is a compilation of general thoughts on teacher leadership, advice, and stories from past SC Teachers of the Year. We are honored to include some of the early leaders as well as the most recent additions to this group. Reading the responses caused me to reflect, allowed me to laugh and cry happy tears, and also created an opportunity to learn from the best. I hope you will enjoy this collection as much as I did.

I'll end by thanking everyone who contributed. I hope this book will grow in years to come and will be a source of inspiration for future teacher leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenna Hallman". The script is cursive and fluid.

Jenna Hallman, PhD, NBCT

Leadership is a journey. In spite of the many variances in our pathways as teacher leaders, there are commonalities and lessons to learn from those who have walked these steps ahead of us. What follows are words from many of the Veteran State Teachers of the Year. They are offering you their personal definition of teacher leadership based on their expertise and their experiences. They are sharing their insights and their stories. The hope is that along your journey you will also share your insight with others as they step into leadership roles.



Sarah Gams
2021 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Here is how I would define teacher leadership.

My favorite quote is from *The Energy Bus* by John Gordon. “Your positive energy and vision must be greater than anyone's and everyone's negativity. Your certainty must be greater than everyone's doubt.” I have always known that to be a teacher is to be a leader. When we embraced the responsibility of teaching students, we became public figures and community leaders. Our words, and how we speak, matter. Our actions--all that we choose to do (or not do)--those matter, too.

As teacher leaders, we have the power to create a positive vision of the future, to celebrate diversity, to help address the challenging issues in society by teaching our students to be creative, resilient, empathetic, and critical, discerning thinkers. We do all of this work in our classrooms; we create small universes where our students are empowered, emboldened, and entitled to their thoughts, opinions, hopes, and dreams. And when we open the doors to our classrooms, when we invite in the parents, the community, the business leaders, and the legislators, we expand those universes and spheres of influence.

To be a teacher leader is to embrace poet Amanda Gordon's words: “We are striving to forge a union with purpose,/To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man/ And so we lift our gaze not to what stands between us/But what stands before us.” What stands before all teacher leaders today, especially in this unprecedented health crisis, is the opportunity to leave the world a better place than we found it by focusing on our students and our communities and celebrating our classrooms. We create change by cultivating an unshakable positive vision of the future that starts in our classrooms and expands through the lives of each student we teach.

Let me offer you some advice.

This TOY experience is uniquely yours. Lean in! For Honor Roll Teachers and for our SC Teacher of the Year, this will be a year of growth and opportunity. It will get uncomfortable--and a little scary!--and that is absolutely okay. Settle in for a year of learning through experience. As so many veteran state teachers of the year advised me, take some time for reflection. It is in those quiet moments that ideas are born and that new pathways to achieve progress are revealed. It is okay to push “pause” for a moment and sit outside in the sun, or spend time with your family, or read a book. Those reflective moments matter and are often the catalyst to our greatest accomplishments.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

My absolute favorite thing about traveling the state (although much of my travel during this pandemic year was through Zoom!) was seeing first-hand the innovative and creative genius of our South Carolina teachers. I was privileged to celebrate teachers as they taught in virtual, hybrid, and F2F models (sometimes in combination of all 3!). I was inspired to hear and witness their stories of their students, of their struggles, of their incredible successes. Their stories became *my* stories, and I tried to honor those teachers and their students by posting tributes on the STOE social media platforms. I wanted everyone to see and celebrate the incredible work of our profession!

Though I didn't physically travel as much due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, I do have tales of being lost in the wilds of South Carolina, of bringing home the BMW caked in mud from a rained-out dirt road that I accidentally turned down because I was trying to participate in a conference call while driving to Hilton Head from Spartanburg. Note to Self: when you have no sense of direction, DO NOT multitask, even with Bluetooth and GPS!

Most of my stories are from Zoom, and my favorite moments came from unexpected compliments in the chat box. One Teaching Fellow wrote, "You should start a podcast!" A member of the Columbia League of Women Voters wrote that she wanted to "lock me in a room with the governor." Maybe my favorite came from University of South Carolina Upstate's Equity Conference, when after 15 minutes into my presentation about the Digital Divide in South Carolina, I jokingly said, "Much of the success of teaching depends on reading the room, of seeing the faces of our students and responding instantly to questions and body language. So, I have no idea how I'm doing right now with you. Cameras are off, and I can't see a single face." And one participant wrote, "You're doing great! We can see *you*! That matters!"

This year *you* will be **seen**. And that *does* matter. Enjoy the crown and the car, but remember that most of our *true* work as teacher leaders is much less glamorous and even more important.

As the 2021 State Teacher of the Year, I have a collection of treasured moments: from the beautiful drive-by parade put together by my friends and school colleagues down my neighborhood street the day I was named to the Top 5; to stomping through the pluff mud and learning about the ecosystem at Seabrook Island with Leadership SC; to getting to know the members of the 2021 SC State Forum through open and honest Listening Circles; to the honor of receiving a standing ovation at the South Carolina Alliance of Black School Educators Conference; to bearing witness as SC teachers spoke of the troubles and fears, successes and trauma, caused by COVID-19— and then honoring their stories by sharing them with leaders and community members and legislators; to listening to Anderson School District One DTOY Jared Fricks' music class singing "All Night, All Day" with tears in my eyes because their voices transcended the masks and the social distancing and the digital divide--these moments will forever inspire me to stay positive, to stay true to my vision, to speak truth, to help others.

I wish so many beautiful moments for you on this journey! I can't wait to cheer you on!



Chanda Jefferson
2020 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as...

- Leading with vulnerability, courage, and humility.
- Advocating for the teaching profession in a way that stays true to your passion for education.
- Empowering teachers to identify their strengths and ability to lead.
- Serving, celebrating, or encouraging teachers who cross your path
- Being a resource for the community to help forge strong relationships leading to the development of educational allies.

My advice to you is...

This year may be different, but different is not a bad thing; it is an opportunity to tap into your creativity and use innovative approaches to lead. This is the time to step out of your comfort zone! Make sure that you think outside the box because there are no limits to what you can accomplish. Remember, you control the pace this year, so sometimes you will need to slow down and take time to enjoy the moment. You are going to be in the spotlight, and you deserve it! Don't be afraid to tell people who you are, because your title is powerful and can create access and opportunities for yourself, your students, and other teachers. Self-Care is essential, so always schedule time for reflection and relaxation. Be prepared to share stories about your classroom and your students wherever you go, especially when speaking to legislators. Whenever you walk into a room (virtually or into the physical building), wear courage, walk with your head up, and speak with confidence. You are not in this alone, because you have a network of Veteran Teachers of the Year to support you, and you can call on us at any time. Stay true to yourself and never forget your Why. YOU GOT THIS!! 😊

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

This year I drove over 40,000 miles sharing my passion for teaching, and I set a goal to visit every county in the state, but COVID-19 changed those plans. Out of all my travel activities, speaking engagements with pre-service teachers and teacher cadets were my favorite. I went to various high schools and colleges to share wisdom about the teaching profession. I always left inspired by the students who answered their call to teach or decided to pursue a career in education after hearing my story. There are thousands of students in our state who are excited about teaching. Even beyond my year as State Teacher of the Year, I am committed to making the profession better for current teachers and the next generation of teachers. I hope you will join me in this commitment. This year will change your life forever; do not be afraid to take a seat at the table in your schools, school districts, or at the state level to share solutions and ideas that will positively impact our education system for years to come. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, “Our lives begin to end the day we are silent about things that matter,” so do not be silent about matters pertaining to the teaching professions or education.



Jeff Maxey
2019 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as recognizing and taking full advantage of opportunities to model what it truly means to be a teacher – in the community, in our schools, and in our classrooms. Teachers have a unique perspective on the needs and opportunities in our society as we view them from the lens of students, parents, and leaders. Teacher leadership is using our “teacher voice” to be change agents in each of these spaces – impacting the lives of not only our students but the world in which they live. Teacher leadership is not a one-size-fits-all model. Teacher leaders use their giftings in many ways and, at times, differently in different seasons. When I sat with the other district teachers of the year at the state teacher forum retreat and we first heard messages about teacher leaders, I thought those people sounded awesome – I hoped to meet one during the weekend. At some point I realized they were talking about each of us, including me. You did not become a teacher leader when you became a District Teacher of the Year, Honor Roll Teacher, or State Teacher of the Year. Instead this honor was a recognition of what you already were. Yet with this position has come both the opportunity to grow in the leadership domain and an expanded audience and platform from which to influence change. Teacher leaders are servants, pioneers, spokespeople, and examples. Your sphere of influence, which if you allow it will go much further than you ever dreamed, is a better place because of your impact. And at the core of all you do, your students will never be the same because of your teacher leadership.

My advice to you is to have fun this year. There will be moments of stress. Moments of insecurity. Moments of imposter syndrome. When possible, put the distractions aside and take in each experience. Each new relationship. Each opportunity to share your passion for teaching, the greatest profession. My favorite memories from my year of service are surprisingly not the “15 minutes of fame” moments documented through social media photos but instead are the encouraging conversations had with teachers and pre-service teachers. Even under great circumstances, teachers need words of hope, messages of praise, and reminders of the difference they are making each day in a very difficult profession. How much more so during the challenges of this school year! It was so much fun to leave a school, classroom, or conference and know that I had made an impact. Seek out opportunities to share your message. The year goes by quickly. Enjoy it. You deserve it. South Carolina and our profession need you and are very proud that you are representing us.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

Two summers ago, I experienced one of the greatest professional developments of my career – Space Camp at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. For a week I joined educators from around the country, and my inner child got to spin upside down, build and shoot rockets, meet astronauts, splash land into a lagoon, and enjoy learning science instead of simply learning about science.

The most intense group activities were simulated missions where half the team took on the roles of mission control and the other half navigated the capsule. Equipped with space suits, headsets, and instruction manuals, and surrounded by all of the sounds, lights, knobs, and rumbles, my team stressfully took on the positions of astronauts and engineers. I sat in the seat as captain for the world's first flight to Mars. Our team successfully completed the sequence of pushing buttons, entering data, and overcoming challenges with warning lights and buzzers, to safely land the rover on the Red Planet.

Before opening the hatch to set foot on the mysterious soil, we were challenged to consider our first words, the very first words to be spoken in that space. What words would be worthy of that event? Fifty years after the Apollo 11 mission to the moon, the iconic words of Neil Armstrong reverberated in our minds,

*“The Eagle has landed. That’s one small step for
man, one giant leap for mankind.”*

Words hold such power to shape each experience!

Today, as leaders we find ourselves on our own mission in impacting the world of education in South Carolina. In a year which is distinct from any which has preceded, we all walk into a place filled with some uncertainty and mystery.

I offer the challenge – what will be the impact of your words? May your words be filled with challenge and hope, encouragement and inspiration, love and grace.



Erin Fox
2018 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as...terrifying, discomfiting, motivating, exhilarating, and fulfilling! When I started my journey, from school Teacher of the Year to State Teacher of the Year, I did not see myself as a teacher leader. I believed I was a good teacher who had great rapport with students, parents, and colleagues, who could *sometimes* come up with some pretty awesome instructional strategies...but I didn't feel like a leader of *adults*. I saw teacher leaders as those who made big decisions concerning the school or the district...not lowly me sheltered within the four walls of my classroom with my door closed to guard other classes from my extremely loud teaching.

However, in the positions I suddenly found myself in and the responsibilities that were thrust upon me, I quickly realized that a teacher leader is exactly how others viewed me and were the precisely the reasons why I had been selected for these honors. Colleagues and administrators trusted that I would be willing to make myself uncomfortable—either by feeling out of place or inexperienced—so that I could enable the growth of others through my own (sometimes!) nerve-wracking and prickly experiences. They had the expectation that I could use my loud voice, literally and figuratively, to advocate for the profession, students and teachers. In teacher leadership, there are many moments of feeling inadequate; these distressing situations generate opportunities for personal growth. There are moments of enlightenment, where everything experienced instantly resonates—not just for you personally but also in your understanding of fellow teachers', students', and administrators' issues. You have the chance to see through a new lens and take on a new perspective. There are moments of empowerment when as a leader you realize that your stories have the potential to inspire positive future decisions in the lives of others. This is the true definition of teacher leadership: the willingness to face giants while bolstering the confidence of others to do the same. And it is a beautifully daunting endeavor.

My advice to you is...to accept it all as your own. When I was named the 2018 South Carolina Teacher of the Year in May 2017, I was beyond thrilled! It was everything I had been dreaming of, and I loved the attention and being in the spotlight. However, in August, when all of my teacher friends went back to their classrooms, I felt a deep sense of loss. They were excitedly sharing their room decoration plans and thematic studies and discussing innovative and creative lessons and units they would do with their students...and I mourned. I didn't have a classroom to decorate. I didn't develop a semester or year-long theme. I didn't have units to engage students in...I didn't have any students to regale with stories or colleagues with which to commiserate. So...I cried...like I ugly cried...for several days.

Then I went to present at my first three schools: Coastal Carolina University, USC Beaufort, and the University of South Carolina. I spoke to visiting Teacher Cadets from around the state who were considering entering our profession. After each presentation, scores of students would come to talk more and to ask questions, and each one was so excited in that moment because they wanted to experience my teacher life's joys and sorrows in their own future careers. But it wasn't just students who approached me; teachers also thanked me for sharing my love for teaching and for "filling [their] bucket," as one teacher told me. As the year went on, my roster of students grew more and more with every auditorium, classroom, and cafeteria I entered. My circle of colleagues transformed from one close-knit group from my school's English department to a cadre of educational professionals ranging from 4K teachers to university

professors. I didn't have one classroom; I had a place to teach in every space I occupied that year, and though I didn't have a yearly theme, I found that I had a message to deliver. What I thought I had lost, I had truly gained many times over. So accept ownership of it all. Every student in South Carolina is your student. Every teacher is your colleague. Every space is your classroom. Every opportunity to share is your voice *teaching* others exactly the message you were meant to share.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

I had tons of memorable moments as the 2018 SCTOY. Some are uplifting reminiscences that felt like being on the mountaintop. Other are scorched into my thoughts and remain there smoldering as anxiety and panic-inducing failures of the times when I mistakenly "missed my mark." However, one of the most clarifying instances from my year was the day I went sky-diving. After lamenting that I hadn't gotten to go with Superintendent Spearman and her team when they went skydiving with the US Army Golden Knights, she set up an opportunity for my husband and I to go with the skydiving team. We woke very early and drove three hours to get to our location. As we sat watching instructional videos, I was filled with trepidation and even a bit of regret. We climbed into the plane, and I worried about the choice my husband and I were making and how it might irrevocably affect us and our loved ones. As the plane climbed to its highest altitude, my supporting skydiver was beside me (ok, I was literally attached to him with grappling hooks of the STRONGEST KIND POSSIBLY MADE) and was guiding me through each step to ensure my safety and security. As we approached the open plain door, I was ecstatic and nauseous all at the same time. Then came the dive. We were in free fall for more than a mile, and my heart was pounding, and the wind was rushing all around me (and, oddly, as you smile at the cameraperson in front of you—which you must because if you don't smile the skin on your jaws wiggles in the most unbelievable way!—but as you smile, spit flies out of our mouth and is plastered to your cheeks!), and it was the most incredible ride I'd ever had in my whole life! Then my Golden Knight pulled the parachute cord. The tranquility of silence replaced the rushing winds. The young man keeping me safe began to speak, but I asked him to give me just a moment to enjoy the perfect, quiet peacefulness of drifting back to the earth.

It was then that I realized that experience was a parallel of my year. Just like skydiving, becoming a teacher of the year was a possibility that I hoped to one day attain, but I never dreamed it would truly become a reality. When it did ACTUALLY happen, and I sat with the CERRA staff learning exactly what my work would entail, I was terrified that I would do it all wrong. As I embarked upon each of my adventures, I pondered the impact I was having on others—was I doing enough? Was I everything everyone needed me to be? Along my journey, I had the best guides possible attached to me every step of the way in Jenna Hallman, Suzanne Koty, and other veteran STOYs, who supported each of my endeavors and worked to build my confidences in all ways. The dive itself—the year as the State Teacher of the Year—was a free fall, indeed. It was amazing and beautiful, yet frightening and messy all at once. I experienced some of my most profound and proudest moments; but as I grew and changed, the experience did give me bumps and bruises. Luckily, those always heal; it is all part of the growth process. The closure of the year, that moment when the parachute opened and everything took on a quietness I had never known before, signaled my transformation. The girl who loved the spotlight and who was eager to prove she could be among the best, became the woman who sought to inspire and motivate others along their own journeys. The teacher who had been confident only in one aspect of education became an advocate for all with a willingness to persevere in faith despite fear.



Jennifer Wise
2017 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as taking on roles outside of the classroom but also welcoming others into yours. There is tremendous opportunity for growth and the honing of craft that comes from both being the observer and the observee.

Leadership within education is multifaceted including instruction, communication, and policy among others, and I think it is imperative to recognize that sometimes being a teacher leader means being willing to show you are still learning and growing in each of those areas as well.

My advice to you is to ask as many questions as you can and be a sponge for information. I ask questions to a fault; if I say I just have one more, don't believe me, I really have eight. Being willing to ask questions and admit when I needed/wanted to know more about given topics made for a tremendous experience. Serving as the State Teacher of the Year or an Honor Roll Teacher can be one of the greatest professional growth experiences you will ever encounter - take every opportunity to make it be.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

I am notorious for getting lost, not because I don't follow the directions, rather because I take them very literally. I trust maps and GPSs to get me where I am going and will very seldomly question them. This can get you in trouble....

While driving to the CERRA Fall Renewal Conference in Myrtle Beach, I found myself at the end of a street being instructed to continue forward - which would have led me into the Atlantic Ocean. At this point, I knew I needed to deviate from the map to get to the hotel. I worked my way down Ocean Blvd. and eventually got to the hotel. HOWEVER, when I get there, I don't see a parking garage or lot. I think to myself, lots of these hotels have parking underneath them, and I head to find a "basement" entrance. Moments later, HOORAY, here it is! As I drive in, I see a sign, "No Deliveries," and I think to myself, "Obviously, there are no deliveries, it's a parking garage!"

As I begin my drive through the garage, I notice there aren't a lot of cars down here; there actually aren't any cars down here...strange. Then I see bedroom doors stacked up, and planters, and is that, yes, toilets! At this point I have been down in this (not a) garage for a while, and I start to see men working. I have found my way (in the BMW) into the hotel's work zone for repairing damage from Hurricane Matthew. Unfortunately, I have gone so far and been in so long, work trucks and crews are now behind me, and a large pile of furniture and equipment is in front of me keeping me from going any further. After a few minutes of sitting in the idling car trying to figure out how to get out of this without embarrassing myself even more (and avoiding the stares of the construction workers all around me), I have to roll down my window and explain my predicament. The men had to begin moving all kinds of materials and supplies to create a path for me to get back outside and eventually find a parking spot. Thankfully, they were kind and gracious with their time while helping me, but I have no doubt I was the source of much entertainment for hours, if not days, to come.



Suzanne Koty
2016 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Teacher leadership is an allusive concept. There are numerous ideas about what constitutes teacher leadership and we know it when we see it, but there is no solidified definition of teacher leadership despite years of research into the topic. What we do know about teacher leadership is that it does not have to be a formal, titled role; in fact, many teachers serve as leaders without realizing they have reached that distinction.

In their seminal research, York-Barr and Duke (2004) outlined three characteristics of all teacher leaders; they are respected as teachers, life-long learners, and in possession of leadership capacities. These individuals have to have the agency to engage others in promoting and advancing the professional work, must be committed to the educational organization, and must be courageous enough to identify and overcome obstacles (Danielson, 2006). Their peers look to them for ideas and support; they are trusted and valued by others because of their expertise and skills.

A true teacher leader does not assume the role by being appointed by an administrator. A person also doesn't become a leader by stepping up to accept a role or a title; it is a gradual process of learning and preparation in which leadership skills are developed that meet the needs of the organization (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). It is an authentic growth experience, and typically peers will recognize a teacher leader before the teacher leader self-identifies as such.

Being a teacher leader can be hard. It's work, and it is sometimes lonely when you feel like you stand alone. I believe it was Spiderman's uncle who said that "With great power, there also comes great responsibility." You have been given a title and a responsibility. You were chosen for a reason; there is a purpose to the work ahead. Your purpose is unique to you and your teaching context. Your title will open doors. You will be heard, and you will have a seat at the table. This means that you have a responsibility to truly listen to what is being said by those you represent. This is about them as much as it is about you. You have to be tolerant of others who think differently than you do, and you have to find a way to build leadership in others in meaningful, authentic ways.

As much as your title or your crown serve you, they also hinder you. Don't forget that this crown creates a division from others. While it will open some doors, it will close others. If you want people to trust you, take the crown off and stand alongside of them. You can get as much or more accomplished without the crown as you can with it. Humility will serve you well.

Finally, stay true to who you are. After all, you were chosen.

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Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year. At the start of my year, I made a pact with a few other State Teachers of the Year to say yes to anything that made us feel uncomfortable after we read *The Year of Yes*. We all firmly believed that in order to grow, we had to embrace the concept of being discomfited and take on new challenges. It was while I was in D.C. preparing to visit the Vice-President's home that I got a call I never expected. The Third Army wanted me to do a celebrity tandem jump out of a helicopter and land in the midst of our largest community event. I politely delayed my response.

I am not the type of person who has ever had a desire to jump out of a perfectly functioning aircraft. I don't have a bucket list of dangerous things I should do in my lifetime. This was the last thing I would ever want to do, but I had promised to say yes to everything for a year. I asked everyone I knew if they had jumped out of a plane or helicopter, what it felt like, why people do it, and any other question that I might help me muster the nerve. One person told me it would be the best headline of the year. I felt sick in my stomach. Every night I dreamed of the many scenarios that would lead to my death, or worse, my complete and utter humiliation. Every day I woke up with dread. I tried to think of how to make it matter. I could use my GoPro to record a lesson on the way down, but I knew that there was a strong possibility I would not have words or only have the ones I should not say in front of students. I could give a motivational speech when I landed, but I knew that I may be reduced to tears at that moment. For the life of me, I could not find a positive nor could I make peace with the idea of it being a "celebrity" jump.

Nevertheless, I set about preparing for the horror that awaited me. I delayed returning the call; the word *yes* just seemed impossible to utter. However, I put it on my to do list. I also added a few odd things: update my will and put my important documents in a safe place. I shook my head at how far I seemed to have veered off my path, but I felt obligated to say yes. It wasn't until just a few weeks before the event that one of my colleagues said to me that he was surprised I was going to say yes. He said he had never known me to do anything for a headline, that I had always said yes to opportunities that helped me grow or to facilitate growth for others but not for a photo-op. That was the moment of clarity I needed. My nightmares. My stress. It suddenly made sense. The reason I had been unable to say yes is that it was so far off from my own personal vision statement. I would have been doing this for the wrong reasons. In Shonda Rhimes's *Year of Yes*, she says that once you have said yes to the things that make you grow, you recognize the importance of saying no to anything that takes away from your ability to say yes to the right things. This was not the right thing for me, but it was the right thing for a teacher leader who followed me and heard this story; she immediately asked if she could jump out of a plane.

I share this story with you to remind you to own who you are and stay true to it. Don't try to be something you aren't. Don't do things for a headline. You are going to have the spotlight for just a moment; use that moment to advance your vision if you really want to make a difference. Jump out of a plane, or don't. While I recognize the honor in being asked, I have never regretted my decision because I am proud of the things I have done. You can only lead if you are honest about who you are and your vision.



Jennifer Ainsworth
2015 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership in this way. When someone walks into my classroom, I love the fact that they do not know who the teacher is among myself and my two paraprofessionals. We are a team and one is no greater than the other. One para loves to cook and garden and the other loves work based learning and the Beatles, so each week we dance, we sing, we garden, we eat, we work and above all we highlight each other's strengths. We all have fun and we all "pitch in" when needed. Teacher leaders pay attention and seek to learn new ideas and innovative ways to continue improvement of self. I try to heed the advice of my late principal who said, "Think, speak!" Teacher leaders listen and learn and don't talk only to hear their own voice; they want to make a difference and can admit when they are wrong. Teacher leaders invest their passion and love **even** when times get tough, but they don't give in. They keep working on themselves while supporting others in the classroom and beyond.

I often think of the advice of my classroom paraprofessional who is also our track coach and pastor of a local church when he came to an event where I was speaking and I was a bit nervous. He said, "Jennifer, what is this all about? Is it about YOU?" "This advice really hit home and I share it as often as I can. This journey you are on is about advocating for your students, your profession and for using your voice to speak for THEM. Take the time to meet people and when invited to an event, enjoy this amazing opportunity. Look them in the eyes and let them see your world. Let your love and passion always shine through and never hesitate or second guess when your words come from the heart.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

As a high school special education teacher, I was blessed to have two of my students (Ezra and Savannah) travel with me during my year of service, and I cannot put into words the impact they had on each engagement. We travelled many miles together, and I learned the words to every song on the “Frozen” soundtrack and gained a few pounds eating at the KFC buffet (their request) in Bishopville every trip home to the beach and, yes, it was worth every bite. Savannah and I would tease that we were “Thelma and Louise” and off to a new adventure. One adventure led us to what she thought was the “White House.” We met with Molly Spearman, and Savannah was asked to give an interview. Afterwards, she had to call her mom to tell her where she was and she told her we were at the White House. We were in Columbia and not Washington, but for Savannah we were at the TOP. She would say that we have important business to do, and she was right. I will never forget that moment of excitement in her voice and how each day was important. I know we changed lives that year and our mantra of “acceptance, awareness and respect” will never be forgotten by the lives we touched.



Darleen S. Sutton
2014 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

A Teacher Leader listens with the intent to learn so that when they speak, others want to hear what they have to say. Being a Teacher Leader doesn't mean that you have all the answers, but rather that you are willing to listen, to ask questions, seek out solutions, and take action to be a catalyst for positive growth within the education profession. To help you develop your leadership skills even more, join a professional teacher organization, be aware of current policy and laws impacting education and your classroom, listen to the celebrations and concerns of those around you. Then, take action and lead by example as you strive to meet the needs of those around you.

My advice to you is to be prepared to share your story and the stories of your students and colleagues. You will have many opportunities to interact and talk with business leaders, policy makers, politicians, fellow teachers, and administrators who sincerely want to know about you and your students. Share your celebrations and journeys as you and your students strive to achieve your goals. It's your stories that will linger in their minds after they leave you. It's your stories they will retell at the kitchen table and reflect upon as they drive across town. It is your stories that will prompt others to action as advocates for the education profession. You have the incredible opportunity to write the stories of your students and colleagues on the hearts of many across the state and nation. Your stories serve as a source of HOPE...that the celebrations and struggles of students and educators won't go unnoticed. Share your stories!

Let me share a story or anecdote about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

The reason I encourage you to share your stories is because I did, and it served as a catalyst for positive change for some very deserving teachers and students. I had the opportunity to participate in Leadership SC and become friends with fellow South Carolinians from diverse professions representing different regions across the state. When the time came for us to decide upon a class project, I shared stories about my first-grade students striving to learn to read, and about teachers desperately needing additional resources to support striving readers that their schools could not financially provide. I shared stories about the high illiteracy rate among children and adults across South Carolina. These stories led the 2014 Class of Leadership SC to support a project that provided literacy training to teachers and Tier 2 reading intervention resources to schools, sponsor literacy awareness campaigns across the state, and to partner with the SC Teacher Forum to run a state-wide book drive that raised 2,500 books that were placed into the hands of students in high poverty schools to begin their own home library collection. That was one of the most rewarding experiences for me, because it wasn't about me. The whole initiative was about empowering teachers to have the training and materials they needed to empower students to activate their reading skills, and for students to have books in their home with which they could develop of life-long love of reading. These rewarding outcomes took place because I was willing to stand up and tell the stories of students and teachers to remarkable people who listened and were willing to serve.

The other thing I'd like to share with you is really a bit of advice. Throughout your year serving as State Teacher of the Year and as Honor Roll Teachers, always have a "Go" bag packed with the essentials, including a suit of clothes, in the trunk of your car. I speak to you from personal experience. I had been on the road for four days straight traveling between sites and spending the night at a different hotel each night. On the morning of the fifth day, I learned that USC-Salkehatchie has two different site locations, and although I had arrived early, I was NOT at the site where the Teacher Cadets were awaiting my arrival. Gracious! I didn't realize there were two different sites. Thankfully I had arrived early enough to make it to the correct site with only a short delay. After this eventful day, I had just enough time to make one stop by home to unload, and restock before heading back out to Columbia for "Interview Day" the next morning. In my haste, I packed the car, grabbed my sweet tea and M&M's, the toiletry bag and pillow, and put the BMW in the wind, unknowingly leaving behind my entire wardrobe hanging in the front of the closet. Thankfully, I realized the error of my ways 45 minutes before Belks in Columbia closed for the evening and put my Belks card to the test. Although it was a treat to purchase a new outfit for such a special day, it was a very unexpected and stressful experience! Having learned from my mistake, I went home and packed a "Go Bag" so as to never repeat that mistake again. I advise you to do the same.



Patti J. Tate
2012 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as a way to promote our profession in a positive light. A teacher leader should demonstrate positive attitudes toward education. The power of a positive attitude goes a long way to changing how others perceive teachers. While researching the topic of effective teachers, the one common idea that I continued to see was that positive attitudes in teachers made great teachers. Many of us post an attitude poster in our rooms and constantly remind our students to be positive. Why? We do this because we subconsciously recognize the benefits of being positive. By reversing our negative attitudes to positive ones, we are renewing how others perceive us. Baltasar Gracian, a Jesuit priest said to "respect yourself if you would have others to respect you." Therefore, as teacher leaders, we must first respect and promote our profession in a positive light before others will consider it.

My advice to you is always be an advocate for your students and our profession. Also, I always keep the following quotes on hand to keep me inspired:

"Be the change that you want to see in the world."-Ghandi

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." -Nelson Mandela

"Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." -Martin Luther King



Kelly Hall Nalley
2011 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as representing the teaching profession well with your words and actions. Leaders are committed to core beliefs about their area(s) of practice. They push themselves to learn everything they can about their fields and lead by modeling and sharing best practices with others. Teacher leaders are knowledgeable about what they teach, how they teach, and whom they teach, and they model and share their practices within their schools, the larger educational community, and the communities in which they live. Teachers who lead use their words and actions to make a positive, lasting impact on those with whom they come in contact.

My advice to you is to listen and observe. As a STOY or Honor Roll Teacher, you will be part of many discussions with many different people. You will hear a myriad of grievances, and most likely, because you are a teacher and a leader, you will want to solve them or at least help to solve them. Give yourself grace. Certainly, you can help problem-solve many issues, but be realistic that you alone cannot solve everything shared with you. Rather learn all you can through this experience by listening to others and observing the climate around you. Practice listening to others in order to discern needs – sometimes, our colleagues need an encouraging or motivational word, but many times, they simply need a listening, empathetic ear.

Let me share a story or anecdote about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year. There were many fun and exciting opportunities I was privileged to experience during my year of service, but my best experiences were not about me, what I did, who I met, or where I went. The best experiences were the times I encountered students who were inspired by my words and personal experiences in the classroom. So many high school and college students sought my advice about pursuing education as their future career and a few even changed course to pursue education as the result of hearing my story. What better positive recruiting opportunity could we have than to encourage students into our profession with our stories?

Take care and be aware people are listening to you as you portray the profession and our students. Be positive, but be real in all you say and do this year. Best wishes!



Bryan Coburn
2010 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Teacher leadership reaches outside your classroom walls. It extends to colleagues within your school and beyond. It involves organizing and energizing others with the purpose of improving school performance related to teaching and learning. These are the essential objectives for our schools. Organizing and energizing are not a top-down leadership model though, so it is our responsibility to be informed and persuasive leaders for positive change. Therefore, a teacher leader must be able to engage others in the complex process of improving teaching and learning. This task requires passion and perseverance to achieve the essential and primary mission of the school, educating our students.

My advice to you is to show courage during this year as your teacher voice has been amplified. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to take action in spite of your fear.

Let me share an anecdote about my experience as SC State Teacher of the Year:

It was the next to last day of mentor training in Columbia and as lunch time approached, everyone asked to ride in the BMW I had received as Teacher of the Year. I had to decline because my vehicle was used for a storage closet for many CERRA items and my clothes. However, I assured everyone that on the last day of training I would have it emptied because I was going home for the night.

I arrived home that evening and I dutifully unloaded everything from the BMW, and I mean everything. I woke up the next morning and dressed down for the last day of training and headed toward Columbia bright and early. The day went well and as lunch approached I informed everyone that the car was completely empty and ready for travelers. We went for a fun ride in the BMW, had a lively lunch time discussion, and returned to training. As training came to a close, Jason Fulmer looked at me and said, “We will pack up, why don’t you go on to your speaking engagement in Lexington?”

My face went pale as I realized in my haste to make sure the car was emptied for the lunch crew, I had unloaded my suit and shoes and everything I needed to get ready for my speaking engagement. I knew I could not make it home in time to pick up appropriate attire and still make it to Lexington. “What are my options?” I wondered. None seemed plausible so I picked the least painful option, buy a new suit and accoutrements off the rack. In a panic I rushed to Belks. As I scurried to the men’s section I asked the clerk, “Do you have any suits or suit coats on sale?” Seeming annoyed, he pointed me towards a rack of suits with some of the most ghastly suit coats you can image, green and pink striped, neon blue...things were not looking good. Then, lo and behold, I found a black and white patterned coat that looked “ordinary” considering the options. It had no tag on it so I approached the disinterested clerk and asked for a price check. He checked the register and said, “Oh, that shouldn’t be on the rack, it is discontinued and should have been sent back.”

“So how much?” I asked.

He hemmed and hawed and then he said, “It will be five dollars.”

“Wow!” I thought to myself. I then told the clerk my situation about how I needed to put together an outfit as cheaply and as quickly as possible. Suddenly, the clerk was in full help mode, “We have pants on sale over here.” We continued to pull together the rest of the outfit... shirt, belt, socks, shoes, etc. We were putting together an unbelievable outfit for under \$100. I then went into the dressing room and emerged wearing my new “off the sales rack” outfit feeling proud and relieved.

I headed to Lexington with tragedy and embarrassment in the rear view mirror. When I arrived, I confidently stepped out of the car and was instantly greeted by the person who invited me to speak at the educational Christmas banquet. As she led me toward the venue she stopped and said, “Let me help you.” I wondered what could be wrong. She said, “You still have tags on your new suit.” So much for avoiding embarrassment.



Jenna Hallman
2009 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Teacher leadership refers to the various roles undertaken and the tasks performed by teachers inside and outside the boundaries of the classroom that impact instructional gains for students as well as educational reform related to teaching and learning. In other words, teacher leadership encompasses everything we do to ensure: **all** students feel safe and are able to grow socially, emotionally, and academically; educators support one another, collaborate, and consistently improve their practice; and the education system provides the framework and processes for this important work to occur. This is no small task. The work of teacher leaders can be daunting. Luckily, these educators are positive, creative, open to new approaches, learning, etc., and able to persevere in even the darkest moments.

Teacher leaders understand the impact of their work and are willing to do whatever is necessary. For this reason, they often operate behind the scenes and away from the spotlight. Teacher leaders, however, are courageous and willing to advocate for what is needed in education even when this leaves them feeling vulnerable. They take these calculated risks because they understand that the welfare and educational growth of students is at risk. This commitment to all students is deeply embedded within the soul of every teacher leader.

Finally, teacher leadership is about influence. No-one can be a teacher leader without first being an effective and respected teacher. It is impossible to skip this step in the process. Once an educator has proven their effectiveness and earned the respect of their colleagues they may begin to influence the work of others. This influence brings everything full-circle. Teacher leaders use their history of success as the foundation for their efforts to influence others to ensure: **all** students feel safe and are able to grow socially, emotionally, and academically; educators support one another, collaborate, and consistently improve their practice; and the education system provides the framework and processes for this important work to occur.

My first piece of advice is simply to be you. It is easy to compare ourselves to others and develop a lengthy list of our own inadequacies. Instead, I challenge you to recognize your own strengths, knowledge, experiences, and positive attributes. Even those personal decisions that in hindsight were less than ideal were integral in bringing you to this point. You overcame challenges and as a result you grew and changed. You can be proud of your scars without sharing them publicly. Your strengths, knowledge, experiences, positive attributes, and even your areas of growth are what make you unique. Be proud of who you are and don't worry about being just like someone else.

My second piece of advice is to strive to be the best version of yourself. Take time for self-reflection and determine what this means. Say "yes" to adventure and seek out new opportunities, strive to learn a new skill, and interact with people who are different than you. But, give yourself permission to say "no" when what you need is rest, rejuvenation, and reflection. Grow, improve, change, and also take care of yourself. It is only by doing all of these things that you can truly be the best version of yourself.

On January 29, 2009, I attended the National Teacher of the Year Conference presented by the Council of Chief State School Officers in Dallas, Texas. The conference was packed full of information. We also interacted with past National Teachers of the Year and had a delicious dinner at The Women's Museum. I wrote in my blog, "The most exciting part of the second evening had nothing to do with the cuisine or the atmosphere, however. We were told that the National Teacher of the Year program recently partnered with the University of Phoenix and that we were being given a gift that we could not keep. The "gift" is a four-year scholarship that we can present to any student in our state!"

The selection process for my nominee began as soon as I returned home. I met with my district superintendent, Mrs. Betty Bagley, and together we created a process for selecting candidates. My goal was to select an individual who had demonstrated academic proficiency, integrity, had a documented financial need, and a drive to succeed. Mrs. Bagley and I involved the principals and head counselors from both of the district high schools in the initial process. I ultimately selected a senior from T.L. Hanna High School named Arthur. Here's the rest of the story.

I met with the school counselor from Hanna, and she shared some of Arthur's background. She told me that during his high school career he maintained an appropriate GPA, refrained from doing anything that would result in disciplinary action, and followed the attendance policy to the letter. His academic integrity was best demonstrated by the fact that he chose to take an additional English grammar course during the spring semester of his senior year even though he had all his necessary credits and could have been given an early release each day. Arthur also worked a part-time job so he could purchase his own clothes and pay his own cell phone bill. His mother was undergoing dialysis, and his father was working three jobs to support the family. Arthur's presence during this difficult time was a necessity. At the end of our conversation, his counselor asked if I would like to meet him. I jumped at the chance.

After a quick call to his classroom, a tall, lanky young man walked into the office. He knew nothing about me or the scholarship I had to offer. His counselor introduced us, and we engaged in some general conversation. I eventually asked him about his plans for college. He cast his eyes downward and his bangs fell over his face. He quietly explained that college was no longer an option. His mother's deteriorating health conditions required that he work to help support the family and live at home. My response to him was, "What if I could change that?" He raised his eyes and tossed his bangs out of his face. I told him about the \$50,000 University of Phoenix scholarship, and he started to cry. This boy that I had just met wiped his face, jumped up and hugged me.

I formally awarded Arthur with the scholarship at his senior night later that year. The district provided him with a laptop to use for all of his courses. He also had access to the computers, printers, and Internet services at the district's Adult Education Center. We worked with community leaders to raise the funds to pay for all of his textbooks and for Internet access in his home. The University of Phoenix scholarship afforded him the opportunity to reach his goals of earning a bachelors' degree in business while also allowing him to continue to help support his mother. The fact that I was given an opportunity like this still brings tears to my eyes.



Ann Marie Taylor
2008 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge. It's about serving where you are with what you have. Being a teacher leader means taking care of the educators around you, going to extra mile, standing in their place, using your voice for their voice, being dedicated to making a positive change in the system. Being a teacher leader requires you to first be a learner that will be vulnerable and real when it comes to your successes but also your failures. It means being dedicated to the work, both globally and personally.

80% of leadership in my opinion is working to show others you value and care about them.

10% of leadership is the other stuff

10% of leadership is about building other leaders

My advice for other educators - Top 10 list

1. Be nice
2. Love first, lead second
3. Look for the good
4. Realize most things are not personal
5. Be willing to learn again and again
6. Be willing to admit when you are wrong
7. Be brave enough to stand up to all those in suits
8. Forgive
9. Stand up for the underdogs
10. Take risks

The importance of the classroom teacher has been a topic of conversation and a topic of research for many years. Several researchers have conducted studies outlining this topic. According to Sanders and Rivers (1996), the quality of the classroom teacher contributes to student success more than any other factor, even class size and student background. Researchers have also found that students surveyed are able to ascertain good instruction when they experience it (Ferguson, 2012). Ferguson found that the following aspects impact a successful classroom: respectful and orderly environments, students remain busy on class work, students learn to correct their mistakes, and successful teachers explain difficult tasks with ease. Leaders in educational research, like the Alliance for Excellent Education, state that there is agreement that the most important factor in determining student success is the quality of his or her classroom teacher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005).

Teachers are the most important thing.

Until South Carolina teachers and teacher leaders work to lead differently, this teacher attrition problem will not be solved.

You can help.

We need to lead differently.

As leaders in school buildings, we need to lead like we teach. Grace and love come first. Relationships come first. Let's try to do something different so we can keep our teachers.

Alliance for Excellent Education (2008, February). *What keeps good teachers in the classroom: Understanding and reducing teacher turnover* (Issue Brief). DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. Retrieved from www.all4ed.org/publications/TeacherAttrition.pdf

Ferguson, R. F. (2012). Can student surveys measure teaching quality? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94(3), 24-28. <http://www.kappanmagazine.org/>

Sanders, W., & Rivers, J. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value- Added Research and Assessment Center. http://heartland.org/sites/all/modules/custom/heartland_migration/files/pdfs/3048.pdf



Buffy Murphy
2007 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

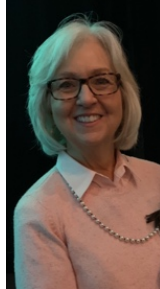
I would define teacher leadership in one word: service. Servant leadership involves listening to truly hear what is being said and what is left unsaid, seeking to understand, being aware through observation as a kid-watcher and colleague-watcher, being present and mindful in the moment, collaborating through solution focused dialogue, advocating for the right reasons, and working alongside others through the messy parts. They have a positive impact on the systems they serve because they aren't afraid to get their hands dirty, to take risks, and to potentially fail...for they know that through the work, through the adversity, through the productive struggle lasting growth and forward change occur. Teacher leaders edify others through validation to inspire courage, yet are not afraid to use their voice until those they represent find their own. Teacher leaders empower others by tapping the potential around them, seeing the strength in others and honoring it. They not only find a seat at the table where decisions are made, they invite others to pull up a chair. My definition of teacher leadership can be defined through the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:11- "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up." I fully believe that through service, a legacy of leadership is built.

My advice to you is two-fold. First, I congratulate you on this honor and I remind you that you were chosen for just a time as this. You are a blessing and you've been given an opportunity to be a blessing to others. "To whom much is given, much is expected," (Luke 12:48). Be true to yourself and your beliefs always, while soaking in the new perspectives you will be afforded through this experience. Teacher leadership is hard, and at times, very lonely. Hold tight to your own talents, passions, purpose, and strengths and claim your own challenges. You were chosen for this honor and called to this role of service for a reason, and that reason is all about you and your experience through the opportunities you have been given thus far. We need you, just as you are! Don't try to be someone you are not. I'll never forget one Sunday after church soon after I was named SC ToY, Miss Juanita turned around on her pew and handed me a travel pack of Q-Tips. Her words of advice that followed were simple, yet profound. "Quit Taking It Personally," she went on to tell me that I would be positioned in ways where I had to take a stand or share my thoughts with those who had different opinions. She reminded me if my intentions were pure and my reasons were sound, to not take it personally. Keep it about the work, keep doing it for the right reasons. Be you!

Second, don't take yourself too seriously. Enjoy this ride and all the twists and turns and peaks and valleys that come with this incredible opportunity you've been afforded. Let your heart take pictures along the way. There will be fun days and there will be scary days. There will be days you are uncomfortable, days you'll be convicted, and many days you'll be vulnerable. Purposefully find joy in all of the days. Laugh at yourself as you learn more about yourself than you ever thought you wanted to know. Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us there is a time for every purpose. In this season, you'll come to realize there are times to proudly wave that parade caliber wave and wear your "sash and crown" that come with the title of District Teacher of the Year, or State Honor Roll Teacher of the Year, or South Carolina Teacher of the Year in order to get the attention of decision makers, to have instant credibility and validation as the expert in our profession for which you have been recognized. There are times the title is necessary to

be used for good, and it won't be about pride, but about the work. And there are other times you'll be called to take off that sash and crown, get over yourself, and humbly sit beside those that need to be heard. Your presence validates them. Whether you are comfortable with it yet or not, you've been thrust into a role where you are seen by others as a leader in the field. You honor others and their contributions just by spending time with them and listening to their stories, their journey, their ideas. It's not always about you, it's not always about me, it's much bigger than both of us. Veteran SCTOY, Debra Templin's voice is always in my head, "You don't have to blow someone else's candle out for yours to burn brighter...we can all shine." You shine! Your energy sparks others'. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine," and "it only takes a spark to get a fire going..." so let's set this state of fire for the right reasons!

Let me share a story or anecdote about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year. While there were many stories I could share from every district in this great state, I'll share a story literally from the road. At the time of my service, I had a one-year-old daughter and a three year old daughter. While I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with smiling faces and in beautiful places in schools across South Carolina, I often would travel back home each evening to at least see my sleeping babies, even if I had to travel late. One evening after spending time with science teachers at a conference in Greenville, I picked up my grandmother to bring her home with me for a visit and headed back toward Irmo. My 80-year-old grandmother provided much commentary about riding in the BMW Z4 Roadster that was loaned to the SCTOY for the year. Mostly, she told me we were way too low to the ground and these cars should not be on the interstate for this very reason, in fact she was certain a big truck could just roll right over us. She also insisted I should slow myself down (even though I remained only the "free 5" miles above the speed limit). Well, about the time we hit that dark stretch on I-26 near Newberry where there are very few exits, I saw a family of deer in the median. There was an eighteen-wheeler in front of me, behind me, and to the right of me. I was stuck in the passing lane, facing an impending encounter with the white tail family, in my "low riding" sports car that I did not own. I remember saying, "Granny, hold on!" The next thing I saw were hooves, a truck sending antlered roadkill off the side of the road, and then felt the thud. Trucks kept going, unphased, Granny began praying out loud. I, a little on the shaky side, pulled over. It was pitch black, not near an exit, and I was with my 80-year-old grandmother on the side of the road, and did I mention, in the "loaner" sports car?! My grandmother is scared for me to get out "alone in the dark" and begged me not to do so. I called my husband, who ran through a list of "check this" tasks then deemed the car drivable since I was almost home. I drove slowly the rest of the way home, but as we got off the exits in Irmo and I sat through red lights in town, back to civilization, I noticed drivers of other cars looking my way. I remember thinking, "Oh no, I have totaled this car." As I pulled into my driveway, my husband was waiting and his eyes widened and then his hand covered his mouth, but there was also laughing. Come to find out, I thankfully missed daddy and momma dear, but baby Bambi? Not so much. The fawn was sucked into the grill of the car, and I drove the whole way home with a sad, accidental "hood ornament" of Bambi's four legs and pitiful face sticking out of the front of my car for onlookers to take in fully. Picture it, if you will, then make that face where you are equally shocked and horrified but want to laugh at the same time? Yeah, then imagine Granny's reactions and her retell of the night's events. Then imagine calling the BMW folks and telling them you went deer hunting with their car. Venison burgers anyone? (Yikes!!)



Cookie Winburn
2005 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as

Collaboration, action orientated, coach, empowerment, school improvement, student achievement, school culture influence, vision maker—just a few words to define teacher leadership.

Dr. Christina Melton, superintendent of Lex/Rich Five believes leadership is a frame of mind, an attitude, and a willingness to serve. I can't think of a better way to define teacher leadership.

During my time as 2005 State TOY, teacher leadership was vital to growing and thriving teachers who weren't content to shut their doors and teach and leave. Emphasis on teacher leadership was on the verge of really moving into the understanding that teachers are experts in their field and were primed and ready to move teacher leadership to the empowering place it has in our schools, districts, and state today. No more do we think that to be a teacher leader you need to move into administration. No more do we cringe at the thought that teacher leadership and teaching can go hand-in-hand.

This year, use your voice, your expertise, your position as an honor roll teacher and STOY to continue to move teacher leadership forward in a profession that is being challenged with a pandemic—a pandemic is showing the world that teachers are ready and willing to keep teaching and learning a focus for our children. This year, more than ever, your role as a teacher leader can voice to our state and country that teachers are strong, determined, and ready!

This year, your time and energy will be shared between the career that you love and your family. My advice is to guard your time with your family. Guard opportunities to rest and spend precious quality time with your family. There will always be children to teach, colleagues who need your help and leadership, papers and projects to grade, and mounds of paperwork to be completed. Remember, if you have children, that they are home for such a short time—don't short-change time with them. Your district and our state will be stronger as you keep your priorities in order. Use this thought with that first year teacher or the teacher who has been teaching for years when they tell you how tired they are or how they feel overwhelmed. Tell them to step back, go for a walk, enjoy the night air, call a friend, laugh, focus on family.

Then, tell them you are there to support them and to help them move forward in a season that seems to have no end to the pressures.

Stay positive. Stay focused. Stay firm in your commitments in and out of school, but be careful not to overcommit.

Blessings as you move through one of the most incredible years—a year that you earned because of your dedication to excellence in all you do for children, their families, and colleagues. Remember that you have been recognized as an educator for doing more than standing in a classroom delivering content—you are recognized as an educator with passion, dedication, and leadership.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

I was speaking at a Teacher Cadet College day and was sharing that before becoming a teacher that I felt that God might be calling me to be a missionary. I went on to say what a blessing it was to be an educator and that my time as an educator was strengthened each day as I met with students who hungered for knowledge and for a teacher who truly cared about them. I know that speech said so much more, but it was what a Teacher Cadet said to me afterwards that impacted my life. This young senior came up to me and said, “God may not have led you to be a missionary in another country but he led you here—this is your mission field.” I’ll never forget how this young lady helped me understand more than ever that teaching was right where I was supposed to be and that my year as State TOY was my opportunity to share and encourage others the power of your efforts and the influence of your words.

To come back to the first section above about defining teacher leadership—I would define it with YOU!

Go forth in this school year and lead and impact teachers and students in this state!



Jason Fulmer
2004 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as the ability to create pathways for student and educator success. As teacher leaders, we develop the knowledge, skills, and networks to facilitate growth and improvement. Teacher leadership is not about a title, it is about an opportunity to serve. We lead within our classroom and beyond the four walls as well. Teachers are in the dream developing business and as teacher leaders our dreams continue to evolve and expand each year as we support students and our colleagues to find their own pathways to success. I believe a mark of a successful school and system is shared leadership. Shared leadership creates the conditions for teacher leadership to flourish. Historically, school reform efforts have ignored the obvious; teachers need to be at the decision-making table. As partners with school and system leaders, teacher voices can inform and shape practice and policy in critical ways to benefit students. At a time when public education is more visible than ever before, we have an opportunity to collectively bring the significant changes in education that will make a positive difference for future generations.

My advice to you is to major on relationships, stay curious, to choose a life of growth, to surround yourself with growing people, and be a continual learner. Your growth today is an investment for tomorrow. At the end of the day, be kind, be humble and be yourself. Danny Thomas once said, "Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself, it's what you do for others." There are still worlds to change, lives to touch, powerful work to be done. Thank you for the work you are doing to make a difference in the lives of South Carolina's students.

Congratulations on your selection as an Honor Roll Teacher for South Carolina. It was a joy to watch each of you recognized for your incredible ability to inspire students and I'm excited for all your journey will bring to you as you continue to impact lives.



Debra Templin
1996 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as the ability to positively influence others that are outside of my classroom. In other words, it is the ripple effect of your ability to influence others' positivity that extends into the world. A teacher leader is seen as a trail blazer that goes the extra mile for both students and other teachers as a mentor. They are the ones that become the catalyst for change in the school. How are they able to achieve this? By becoming the model of a lifelong learner! Teacher leaders are always evolving by reading, learning, trying new strategies, interacting with their peers, and sharing what they have learned. Teacher leaders are enthusiastic and teach with a rigor that can motivate even the most reluctant learner. Constantly model for others your willingness to learn and share and you will be fine.

I am back in the classroom for my 43rd year during this 2020-2021 school year. You can say that I have seen school go from the chalkboard to teaching all students virtually! Wow! Being a lifelong learner has allowed me to survive.

My advice to you is to be yourself. You have a unique teaching style that defines you. Although you can and do learn from others, share your excellent teaching qualities that cause your students' parents to ask for you year after year! I have always shared with our new teacher of the year this quote, "You don't have to blow out my candle to make yours burn brighter." Why do I use this? You will encounter some that are not as enthusiastic about your "title" as others. They will try to catch you in errors and find fault with what your platform is. Stand tall and try to get them to catch some of your light and move forward. Invite them to help you brighten your light as well. Hopefully your enthusiasm and motivation will entice them to better themselves as teacher leaders.

On a silly note...Keep an extra set of clothes in your car that include, business and casual. Also keep an extra toiletry bag filled. You will need them! Trust me.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

One early Saturday morning, I received a phone call stating they were from the White House and that my husband and I would be invited to come to Washington, DC, to meet the President. I hung up thinking it was a prank call. (This was 1996 before caller ID.) They called back and convinced me they were legitimate and that a background check would be required to attend.

Two weeks later we were on our way to DC sitting in first class seats, thanks to a relative who worked for Delta. After a late arrival at the hotel, the only room left was the Presidential Suite at the Hilton. Wow! I felt like a celebrity!

The next day, all of the State Teachers of the Year were bused over to the White House for our Meeting with President Clinton. After being checked in by the FBI and passing by the Secret Service, we made our way to the Jefferson Room. For two hours we waited and waited and waited on the President.

The Secret Service came to get our cameras, purses, and personal items. Nothing extra was allowed into the Oval Office. Somehow, my purse was not taken. Well, I was not leaving it behind. I lined up at the Oval Office door waiting for my photograph to be taken with the President. Terry Dozier, a former SC TOY, was now the advisor to Dick Riley, our former Governor and now the Secretary of Education for the nation. She told me to slide my purse across the floor to her so it would not be in the picture. Well, adrenaline kicked in! That purse flew across the Oval Office's eagle rug with lightning speed.

President Clinton said, "Wow! What an arm! You must be a PE teacher!"

"No!" I quickly replied. "Mother of four boys. I have had a lot of practice using this arm!" I left it to his imagination to determine if I meant from playing ball or the laying on of hands. (Truthfully it was a little of both.)

President Clinton, Secretary Riley, and Terry Dozier all roared!

By nightfall, word had gotten around Washington that some teacher had thrown her purse at the President! You know how politics go...

Dodie Burns Magill Rogers
1993 and 1994 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership in the following way.

Identifying a need, developing a plan to address that need, recruiting your fellow educators to join you in making a positive step forward towards that change, and not giving up!

My advice to you is to use this year to capitalize on your credibility as a well-respected educator. The “title” of South Carolina Teacher of the Year can open many doors which may not have been as easily accessible prior to your selection. Legislators, in particular, will respond to you more quickly and your words will have more impact. Now, more than ever, teachers need to be supported and you have a unique opportunity to do that. Stand up for what you believe. Don’t underestimate what you can do to support teachers and help make our classrooms – even our virtual classrooms – a positive, engaging educational experience for all of our state’s children.

Let me share a story or anecdote about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

As the 1993 South Carolina Teacher of the Year and a kindergarten teacher, I worked with teachers across our state and with legislators to bring about all-day kindergarten for South Carolina. What started as an opportunity to shine the light on what five-year-olds needed in our state, the push for all-day kindergarten involved multiple failed bills. However, the discussion had begun, and with persistence, lawmakers passed a budget to fund full-day kindergarten for all five-year-olds in 1998. The moral of the story: Never give up on what you believe!



Beverly Bratton Varnado
1987 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as the core transformative work of advancing the profession. It is a multi-faceted system of learning, acting, and sharing. I want to focus for this moment on empowering teachers one teacher at a time.

It was through the National Writing Project that I learned the best teacher of a teacher is another teacher. I've taught in schools where no one shared strategies or materials or talked openly about their small victories or challenging days—even if we taught the same grade level or course or textbook. And I've taught in schools where all of us shared freely without being concerned with who contributed what. And I know the latter environment is where we thrive.

We all know that teaching is not for the faint of heart. It tests our skills and tries our patience daily, which is why we have to empower each other. Teacher leadership is a calling, passed from one to another by way of giving a quiet word of encouragement, sharing materials, modeling a lesson, mentoring a colleague, speaking or writing about teaching, serving on a committee, or standing with a strong voice on a public position. Accepting the role of a teacher leader is a matter of embracing opportunities to listen and learn, to shape and influence.

Leadership is personal. It is putting yourself out there for the benefit of others, growing them and growing yourself along the journey. I once gave a presentation to a group of English teachers from across the State. One teacher in the audience stared at me throughout the session with such an intensity that I worried she might be a nay-sayer. She was one of several who approached me at the end and stayed back until she was the last one left. She told me that she had decided to quit teaching, but she had come to the session because she was already scheduled to do so. After hearing about new strategies and new ways of thinking about teaching, she felt revitalized and wanted to share with me that she had decided not to quit. Several years later, I met her again when she was honored as a new SC Teacher of the Year.

You never know why you are placed in just the right spot to bring light to someone who is looking for it. As the saying goes, it costs a candle nothing to light another candle. Both spread more light for all to share.

Congratulations! My advice to you is to be yourself as you accept this mantle that represents both honor and responsibility. All five of you, separately and in collaboration, have a unique gift to bestow. You will expand your reach beyond what you have previously imagined. Those of us who have stood where you stand now know that we did not reach this point alone but with the help and encouragement of the many who have preceded us. And in your own special way you will reach countless others as you do the important work of establishing relationships and empowering professionalism. Build and share your legacy as only you can. It is your turn. Welcome to the club.

Let me share an anecdote about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

Things were different in 1987. Before Teacher Forum. Before the sabbatical with the Center. Before the videos. Before the formal gala and the surprise announcement. Before the car.

When we five went to the Department of Education for our interviews, we were told we would know the Teacher of the Year before the end of the day. The four honor roll teachers would receive a call from the Director of Public Relations, and the one selected would receive a call from Superintendent Charlie Williams. Secrecy was emphatically conveyed so the Superintendent and his entourage could make the announcement at the winner's school with all the appropriate hoopla. My drive home to Charleston was filled with both excitement and tension.

Almost as soon as my husband and I got home, the phone rang: "Mrs. Varnado, please hold for Dr. Williams."

Amazingly, I was able to go to school the next day with a straight face. In homeroom the principal began the announcements. "Students, you know that Mrs. Varnado is our Wando High School Teacher of the Year. Yesterday afternoon our Superintendent notified me that she is now the South Carolina Teacher of the Year." I stared dumbfounded at the PA box on the wall as the kids exploded. So much for secrecy. Apparently he did not get the memo.

I learned later that the public relations representative for our school went immediately to call the District Office. "Do y'all know we have the State Teacher of the Year over here at Wando?" "Noooooooooooooooooooo," came the reply. "That news is embargoed." A quick call from the District Office to the Principal resulted in a second PA announcement. "Now students, I know I said that Mrs. Varnado is the State Teacher of the Year and she is, but that information is supposed to be secret for a few days, so do not tell anybody."

Teenagers keep a secret? This cannot be good. I later heard that students (unknown to me) left classes to call radio and TV stations. (This was also before cell phones.) By lunchtime I had a schedule of media appearances and interviews, and reporters were in my classroom.

Many of us refer to our year as a wild ride. I hadn't even been officially named yet, and the roller coaster was gathering speed before I could lock down the safety bar!



Chuck Long
1985 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as an educator simultaneously having the ability to teach in their classroom and to serve outside the classroom in their school with administrative opportunities or serve outside their school benefitting the entire school system. Some of the qualities that a teacher leader would need to possess would be integrity, passion, generosity, courage, a positive attitude, ability to inspire others, and responsibility. I also believe they need to be a team player.

Teacher leaders must believe that all students can learn. To that end, they must be willing to grow intellectually and set personal goals of improvement. Finally, to be effective one must understand data and how to apply it to programs, organization of a school environment and how to allocate resources, funding, as well as setting high expectations for yourself and others.

My advice to you is to remember that as God has placed in a tiny acorn all the ingredients to become a large, beautiful oak tree, so too has he placed in you the ability to do whatever you imagine as long as you work hard, set achievable goals, and be determined to succeed. You would not have been chosen as a potential candidate to represent all the teachers of South Carolina by your peers unless they saw your passion for teaching, your generosity for helping others, your ability to inspire learners and fellow teachers to be better, your ability to be a team player, and the positive attitude you show every day. Be the person who sees the glass half full. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel if you are willing to work together for the benefit of all. There is a time to be bold and speak up and a time to listen, process, and then speak. Never lose sight that all the work you are doing is to make learning more special to every child. After 28 years in the classroom, 6 years as a Headmaster, and 41 years simultaneously starting a non-profit performing arts after-school company, I have learned it is not the student that you thought you did the most for, but the student who you complimented or spoke a kind word to that remembers you years later. You may not remember them, but they will remember what those words meant to them later in life.

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year. If truth be told back in 1985 when I was selected as my school district's teacher of the year, I had never heard of the program. So when I was "crowned" at a district PTA program one night standing between two of my former teachers, let's just say I was in shock. Terry Dozier, the current SC TOY, had recently been named the National TOY and all of a sudden, the teacher of the year was someone special. The next thing I knew was that I had to create a scrapbook including my philosophy for teaching, filled with pictures of fun things I had done in my 12 years in the classroom. Before I continue with this story, let me tell you that I finished college with a degree in business administration and a minor in economics. Teaching was not on my radar! I literally fell into the profession when I finished college in December but couldn't graduate until the following May. While interviewing for business jobs, I decided to substitute teach. My cousin was the principal at the high school where I graduated, so he called me to do some long-term fills as did several other friends of his. That was all it took for me to fall in love with teaching! With no education courses under my belt, the headmaster of a private school offered me a teaching job in his school. I taught Biology, Chemistry, Physical Science, Algebra 1, Music Appreciation, and later I even taught Journalism and Spanish 1. Three years later the principal of the K-8 school died, and I became principal and 2 years later became Headmaster of K-12. During this time, I had started my masters in Secondary School Administration. I hired staff and teachers, fired those who were incompetent, attended every football, baseball, basketball game, and everything in between. Three years later I resigned to be a teacher again at a public school 2 blocks from my house. That move came with a seven thousand dollar increase in salary, and I returned to what I loved to do – teach! During this time, I had also started the beginnings of my non-profit performing arts company that is 42 years old today! I never taught music as a career, but I loved teaching children how to sing and act. I hire choreographers because everyone will tell you I beat to a different drum!

Let's return to where I left off with my story. Terry Dozier had opened the door on teachers being important people. They needed to take an active role in education policy and how children learned and how teachers teach. As I moved into the final interviews for the SCTOY contest, I seemed to possess the ability to speak out about education with a passion. During my year as SCTOY, I traveled 2 to 3 days a week giving speeches, meeting with the governor and other state representatives on passing the 1 cent tax for education. I was blessed with a substitute for my 5th grade students who was amazing. Along with planning, grading, and preparing work for them, I was also in rehearsal 1 or 2 nights a week with my afterschool performing arts program. My wife, also a teacher, managed the household with our two children. Teaching has been the story of my life!

Today, after being retired now for 13 or so years, I look back on my life and recognize that I made a difference in the lives of many teachers, students, and parents by listening, inspiring, and being a team player to help them achieve their goals. Look at where the Teacher of the Year program is today! It plays a significant role in everything done in school systems across the country. Teachers now have a voice! I am thrilled to have been a part of its development! It's your turn now...



Fanya Couchell Paouris
1984 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as having and further developing qualities that demonstrate one's ability to work with colleagues in a manner that helps give professional direction and assistance. Colleagues must recognize that you are knowledgeable in the topic you are leading. Your involvement needs to demonstrate your ability to provide guidance, feedback and support. I always feel the need to be prepared, dedicated and willing to listen. Also, remember -be enthusiastic.

My advice to you as an Ambassador of our teaching profession is to be yourself regardless of your audience, i.e. your administrators, parents, students, community members, and others. Be honest and share your ideas and experiences with all. Be a positive voice for teachers and make it your responsibility to know the present day issues.

If you elect to stay in the classroom, my advice is to continue to be the dynamic teacher you have been. Care, create, show enthusiasm, listen and be well-prepared. Treat each student as an individual. Create lessons that generate interest, curiosity and stimulate learning. Most important, you must love what you are teaching. Students are very perceptive and know if you love your job and subject matter and if you care. Keep up the great work!

Let me tell you a story about my experience. My story demonstrates the impact my field opportunities had on one of many students. This was a 7th grade Life Science student with many behavioral and academic problems. His previous school year record indicated he had spent more time in ISS than the regular classroom. At the beginning of the school year, I met with this student, Bobby, to review the requirements of him to be able to participate in the Barrier Island field trip later in the school year. Bobby really wanted to go and vowed that he would work hard to be eligible to go on the trip and have less than three referrals for the year. From day one, Bobby made a great effort to improve his academics, show respect for authority, and improve his behavior. He did it! Bobby was able to go with his classmates on the annual trip.

This was definite proof that my efforts were worth the time I put into planning the trip, fund raisers, relevant lesson plans, and the slide presentations for parents and students before and after the experience. But how did I really know this was worth it? One afternoon while we were on the trip, I found Bobby in tears sitting at the Cross by our camp fire. Of course, I put my arm on his shoulder and asked him, "Why are you crying?" Bobby said that he had never seen the ocean before and had never seen anything so beautiful. He loved his experiences at Barrier Island Environmental Center. His interactions with classmates, teachers, counselors and staff were amazing. He became a friend of all and later that summer applied to be a counselor there. Bobby continued as a leader there for two years. Unfortunately, I lost contact after he graduated from high school.

This is only one of many stories I have to share. Bobby was one of the many students who had the opportunity to travel with me to the Atlantic Coast. Other participants have traveled to the Florida Keys, swam with manatees, snorkeled and seen sharks, sea turtles and stingrays. Some have traveled to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, while my last group of students traveled with me to Belize for a two week experience in marine studies. My students always walked away with their journals in which they may reflect upon later in life. With each opportunity, the students were able to learn not only about marine life and its natural environment, but also they are able to personally grow and develop as young adults.



Mary Ann Blaskowitz
1982 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

I would define teacher leadership as going beyond the four walls of your classroom. All good teachers seek to positively impact the students and culture within their classrooms, but great teachers realize that their influence and knowledge should travel beyond these classroom walls. Teacher leaders are those who accept a sense of responsibility not only for their students, but also for their team, their school, their district, their community, and their profession. Teacher leaders enthusiastically seek to be a positive force of improvement in all these areas. What does this require of a teacher leader? Frankly, leadership takes time, passion, hard work, empathy, perseverance, diplomacy, creativity, and going beyond what you really HAVE to do. Teacher leaders realize they are part of a whole and seek ways they can contribute to the success of all.

My advice to you is to build relationships during this experience as an Honor Roll teacher and throughout your career. Your leadership opportunities will be many in the years ahead, and what you will remember most will be the relationships you built during those times. You have reached a career pinnacle, but always remember to remain humble. You are blessed, but do not ever forget there are many, many other teachers who deserve similar blessings but won't experience the accolades you have. Feel really good about where you are in your career. This time will be a great memory as you advance through the years. Enjoy this ride but learn from this old saying: "What you need to remember as you go through life is your rearview mirror is a lot smaller than your windshield." Where are you going next? Will you "rest on your laurels" or increase efforts to become an even more effective leader in your profession? Start now thinking about your "windshield". Where are you heading in the years ahead?

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

When I was named 1982 South Carolina Teacher of the Year, things were quite different...there was no year out of classroom, no \$25,000, no car. Of course, I understood about the car because they did not have cars that long ago.... Okay, okay, that was a joke.

I did get a really nice luncheon and a set of encyclopedias(!) But anyway, the title meant more than any monetary reward, but it came with absolutely NO direction as to what I was supposed to do. In those days, you turned in a portfolio and wrote some essays and either you got a call from the State Superintendent telling you that you won, or you didn't. There was no Teacher Forum at that time at the local or state level.

When a student came to my 6th period class and told me the principal wanted to see me in the office, I thought something dreadful had happened. When he handed me the phone and the State Superintendent told me I was SC Teacher of the Year, I was stunned and, frankly, scared. I was the youngest teacher at that time to ever be chosen. Before me had come literally icons of the teaching profession. I felt sure they had made a mistake with me, but figured I better play along until they discovered it. It was a pretty sleepless night in the Blaskowitz house that night as we tried to adjust to this news. What would be expected of me? What should I do? How would I handle things?

Okay... I'm getting to the funny part now. The very next morning I get a call from a lady who says her community wants me to appear in the **Elgin Catfish Stomp** parade. Here is what you would have heard from my end of the conversation:

The Elgin Catfish stomp parade? Well...um...yes...um..., yes, ma'am, I'd be honored. You want me to find a car?? A driver? And make a sign?...um...well. um..., yes ma'am....thank you.

WHAT? Here's the reality of my life then. My girls were 5 and 11 months at the time. My husband and I had just finished two masters' degrees on teachers' salaries. Can you picture the cars we drove?!? Plus, I am so not the sit in a convertible and wave to the crowd type. What was I going to do?

In short, this is the first example of what I learned during my year as TOY. Just be creative, be appreciative, and do the best you can. You WILL be all right, and people will help you.

Here's the end of the story. One of my students let us use her big old red convertible, my husband drove, my 5 year-old daughter rode on the seat beside me because she thought parades were a grand idea, and the sign said "South Carolina Teacher of the Year and family."

Moral of the story: Don't worry. Things will work out. Enjoy the ride!



J. Grady Locklear
1977 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

You are already a teacher leader; you are a finalist. As a leader, you are consistent in your work with colleagues, with students, with the administration. You are tolerant of others' opinions whether you agree with them or not. You are current with ideas and trends; you set the pace for others to follow. You accept the importance of your job, of the jobs of others, and of your role in your community. You have a sense of humor; you act of your own volition, your own logical thinking, not react to the actions of others.. As a leader you are aware of the Principles of the Master Teacher, Christ, and strive to make His yours. Teacher Leadership is all of this and more: moreso, it is being human.

My advice to you is...

Adopt some practical principles: 1. I admit that I made a mistake. "To err is human." And foremost teachers are human. 2. I do not know; let's look it up together. 3. What is your opinion? We do not know it all; we must rely on the knowledge of students. 4. You did a good job. Positive reinforcement we all need. 5. Finally, the most important word in the English Language is "We." The least important word is "I." To continue the success you have achieved, remove "Ego." And the most important advice I could give you is not who is right, but what is right?

Let me share a story about my experience as a state Teacher of the Year.

As State Teacher of the Year, much travel is required. Remember in 1977, there were no computers, no power point presentations, no cell phones. When one traveled, one brought along all that was needed; in my case, magazines, layout sheets, handouts, hard copies of Benchmark designs and pieces of writing. I had the occasion to give the keynote address and a series of presentations on magazine design, on writing, and on advisor problems at Columbia University, New York City. I was in a hurry to catch the flight in Columbia; I hurriedly left my home in Sumter, SC, and remembered to take my clothes, but forgot my suitcase of teaching supplies. When I checked into my hotel room, I remembered where I had left the bag. What was I to do; there was not time for panic. I jotted down some crude notes on the subway to the Columbia Campus. Once in the classroom, packed with students, I ditched the notes. I stood up and began: I want to tell you a story. So I narrated the story of founding SIGNATURE Magazine on August 22, 1967 with three very bright students. I told of early successes and mistakes, one of which made the magazine; it was packed with human anecdotes. It was one of the best presentations I have ever made; there was human interaction; the dialogue was exciting and focused; the response was overwhelming. I learned a very valuable lesson: as a teacher leader rely on human experiences and dialogue, not loads of surplus stuff.

"We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours."

--John of Salisbury

