

# Teachers of the Year

A look into the teaching practices and philosophies of some of the state's **Top Teachers**

**SESSION:** *Teachers of the Year* | **Presenters:** Anne Hasse, teacher, Menomonie Area School District; Richard Erickson, teacher, Bayfield School District; Lynne Kohlhepp, teacher, Wausau School District



**W**hat makes a good teacher great? **Anne Hasse** knows, and so do **Richard Erickson** and **Lynne Kohlhepp**.

The three were among four educators to receive Wisconsin's Teacher of the Year award last fall. Hasse, who teaches fifth grade in Menomonie, was named the Elementary Teacher of the Year. Erickson, who teaches chemistry, physics and alternative education at Bayfield High School, was honored as High School Teacher of the Year. Kohlhepp, who works with students with learning disabilities at Wausau West High School, was named Special Services Teacher of the Year.

Hasse, whose class is known as Mrs. Hasse's Posse, talked about five key elements in effective instruction: innovation, integration, community, teamwork and excellence. A good teacher always seeks ways to keep changing and is not afraid to try something new, she said. She finds ways to integrate curriculum or combine subjects like math and art through projects like designing a new school building.

She finds ways to build community in the classroom so students love to come to school and learn. Her class has morning meetings and works together to set classroom procedures and routines. She works closely with the other two fifth-grade teachers as an educational team. She always works hard to remember that "all data has a face" and that a good teacher is "willing to do whatever it takes" to reach students and spur them to achieve excellence.

A teacher for 30 years, Erickson discussed the challenges of working in

**Anne Hasse** (pictured above), Wisconsin Elementary Teacher of the Year, describes her innovative technology integration, hands-on learning experiences.

At the session, **Richard Erickson**, Wisconsin High School Teacher of the Year, and **Lynne Kohlhepp**, Special Services Teacher of the Year, used the opportunity to inform board members and administrators of how they motivate and inspire their students.



a district where 75 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches and 73 percent of his students are members of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He believes teachers need to use multiple methods of reaching students and encourages fellow teachers to embrace innovation even if it "may look chaotic."

He believes the most important job of a teacher is to build self-esteem in students and help them learn to master skills. To do that, he leaves the classroom and has his students work on multiple experiential learning projects. Some students helped build boardwalks on the sea caves trail at the Apostle Islands while others helped place cameras in a forest to track the number of carnivores for a partnership with the Red Cliff and National Park Service fish hatcheries. Other students Skyped with a class in Siberia and shared their experiences living near large bodies of water (Lake Superior and Lake Baikal).

Kohlhepp is one of three teachers

working with 60 high school students. The students have a variety of disabilities and one of her challenges is to figure out the most effective way for the students to learn. Another challenge is working with students whose experience with school has largely been negative and getting them excited about education.

Her students take regular subjects like chemistry and algebra and she supports them by helping them learn the material at their own pace and in their own way. She works hard to build relationships with her students so "they know I have their back." She also cultivates relationships with students' families and becomes their contact so they can understand what is happening at school and in the classroom.

She is concerned about the growing emphasis on testing since her students don't usually test well and also about cuts to special education funding. She also worries that people don't truly understand what is happening in special education. ■