

May 2004 - Teaching Success

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By Congressman Jerry Moran

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Marge Bailey, Mabel Pruter, Edgar McCauley and Carole Eisiminger. These names do not appear on a monument, but they are all important nonetheless - all are teachers who made a difference in my life. Many of us have a similar list of names. My own interest in the world outside of my Kansas hometown was sparked by my teachers, who taught me the love of books, politics and history. It is our teachers who bring the world into our classrooms.

This month we celebrated National Teacher's Week. As part of these activities, one of Kansas' finest teachers, Jesse Bernal, was recognized in ceremonies in Washington, D.C. Mr. Bernal received the prestigious Milken Family Foundation National Educators Award. Dubbed the "Oscars of Teaching," this award is given to some of the best teachers in our nation. For the past 13 years, Mr. Bernal has brought the sounds and culture of Spain and Latin America to the classrooms of Garden City High School. As a Spanish teacher, Mr. Bernal challenges his students to excel not only in his classroom, but in their personal lives as well.

Mr. Bernal, like many teachers across our state, goes to school to make a difference in the lives of his students. Every day, teachers provide an education to the next generation of students - teachers who educate not only with facts and figures, but who also instill a love for learning and a sense that there is a world out there beyond the city limits of our hometowns. No matter how lofty the goals, no matter how difficult the road, teachers have been there to show us that our dreams are possible and that we can succeed.

Because of the dedication of our teachers, our students are some of the most successful in the nation. Consistently ranking high in math and reading scores, our students are better prepared and better educated than students in many

other states. In 2002, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave Kansas a grade of 92 out of 100 for the proportion of students who go on to college - the sixth highest score in the nation.

I will continue to work to ensure that our teachers are equipped with the resources needed to help our students excel and that our schools have the assistance necessary to succeed. Too often, the federal government creates expensive mandates and fails to adequately fund the programs it requires. We need to allow teachers the opportunity to teach, not create more hurdles and bureaucracy.

I am very proud of the education system we have in Kansas. My wife and I chose to raise our family in Kansas because we value our schools and the teachers. Children are the most important resource in Kansas, and providing them with the opportunity for a quality education is vital to ensuring the viability of our state and the future of this nation.