



Colorado Department of Education – Communications Office
201 East Colfax Ave.
Room 103
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303-866-3898
Fax: 303-866-6938

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News Release

***Bryant-Webster K-8 Science Teacher Justin Darnell
Named 2010 Colorado Teacher Of The Year***

Growing up in a small town outside of Albuquerque, Justin Darnell witnessed the divide between his classmates' needs and what the educational system provided. The experience prompted Darnell to want to change the way teachers interact with at-risk learners.

Darnell pursued that personal goal and for the last seven years has worked as a science teacher, including the last five at Bryant-Webster K-8 School, where 95 percent of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunch and 96 percent of the students are Hispanic, including many English Language Learners.

For his dedication, leadership and for bringing research-based best practices to the classroom, Justin Darnell today was named 2010 Colorado Teacher of the Year in an event held in lower downtown Denver. The announcement was made by Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter.

"Congratulations to all the superb finalists, who are outstanding representatives of the many thousands of wonderful and dedicated teachers across this state," said Gov. Ritter. "I don't know of a profession that matters more to the future of our state and our country."

In her letter of recommendation on behalf of Justin Darnell, Bryant-Webster principal Pamela Liñan wrote: "Mr. Darnell is respectful to students from cultures different than his own and has learned strategies in working with English language learners and applies them

in his content area. He promotes oral language development within his science classroom. I truly believe that he is helping to foster great change and direction in the teaching of science for our student population.”

Darnell thanked his family and school staff for support. “I have unbelievable students...and I work at a great, great school,” he said.

Darnell received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in biology from the University of Northern Colorado. He is currently working on his Ed.D. from the School of Education & Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver.

Gov. Ritter, Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones, Colorado State Board of Education member Angelika Schroeder and 2009 Teacher of the Year Susan Elliott attended the event today at the Oxford Hotel.

Darnell was chosen by a five-member committee from a list of nominees of exemplary classroom teachers.

Darnell becomes the Colorado nominee for National Teacher of the Year honors and serves as a teaching ambassador to communities and organizations around the state and nation. The Colorado Teacher of the Year represents the entire teaching profession in Colorado.

The Teacher of the Year selection process includes a written application, letters of recommendation, classroom visits, endorsements from the teacher’s district and personal interviews.

Nominees are judged on their ability to inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities. They are expected to play an active role in the community and to have earned the respect and admiration of students, parents and colleagues.

The Colorado Department of Education received generous support and sponsorship of the event from the Colorado Education Association, the Oxford Hotel, Adams State College, SMARTer Kids Foundation, Colorado Masons, Zack Neumeyer of Sage Hospitality and the Lazof Family Foundation.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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