

Alumna named Teaching Ambassador Fellow

by **Tim Holdsworth - Thursday, August 25, 2011**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/13738/alumna-named-teaching-ambassador-fellow/>

Leah Lechleiter-Luke '92, a Spanish and English teacher at Mauston High School, was recently selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a national Teaching Ambassador Fellow for the 2011-12 school year.

Lechleiter-Luke, who served as 2010 Wisconsin State Teacher of the Year, was one of 16 teachers selected from a pool of almost 750 applicants.

As a fellow, Lechleiter-Luke will be learning about national policy issues in education and will be collecting feedback about educational policy from educators and educational stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally. She will share that feedback with Department of Education staff and, in turn, she shares what she learned with other teachers in their professional networks.

“It’s a truly unique opportunity to be able to share educators’ thoughts with the people who make the policies that shape our schools,” she said.

Lechleiter-Luke learned of the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program during her time as Wisconsin Teacher of the Year when she participated in a couple of conferences calls with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Teaching Ambassador Fellows were also involved in the calls, which piqued her interest in the program.

“I found it intriguing that classroom teachers were embedded at the Department of Education,” she said, “The Education Department seemed genuinely interested in gathering teachers’ authentic perspectives on educational policy. I respect that and so I applied for the fellowship.”

Within days of being announced a fellow, Lechleiter-Luke participated in a four-day conference in Washington D.C.

“My time in D.C. was a baptism by fire — I’m still processing all I learned about current educational policy as well as proposed policy changes,” Lechleiter-Luke said.

She says she is excited about proposed changes to the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The Blueprint for Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act takes care of a lot of things that practitioners in the field have been saying for years just doesn't work,” she said. “Although the full Blueprint still needs to be passed by Congress, I believe Secretary Duncan's waiver program will go a long way to help states, and teachers, focus on individual growth in students rather than one-shot standardized test scores.”

Leichtner-Luke is also impressed by the increased focus on rural education.

“The challenges we face in small, rural districts are different from those of larger urban and suburban districts. It is good to hear those unique challenges being addressed.”

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