**AWARDS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SCOT KAYE**

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and distinguished guests, teachers, administrators, principals, and of course, honorees, I want to thank you all for being here as we acknowledge and celebrate some of the “hardest working folks in the business....” our dedicated group of winners of this year’s Teacher of the Year Award.

 This award is prestigious, special, and very meaningful.... and it seems... rightfully so... that with each year that passes, the importance and meaning of this honor grows geometrically. With every subsequent year, it’s apparent that the bar gets raised... the challenge to perform with excellence becomes that much more intense, the conditions we are faced with, as educators, provide “endless opportunities...” whether we like them or not, to creatively problem solve while focusing on the necessity of building strong foundations for our most precious resources... the students.... our **future**.

Today we acknowledge our profession’s “**ROCK STARS**.”... Yes. You heard that right. I recently read a quote that said that being a teacher is very much like being a rock star... “You work hard to keep the attention of a distracted audience, your fans... okay... your **students**... those same fans **freak out** when they see you in public... groupies line up to follow you everywhere... okay... these are your students too.... and you hear your name being called out... incessantly... **all the time**...maybe even in your sleep...” (**Wait for the laugh**).... Today you’ll hear your name called out... for all the **RIGHT** reasons...

for your dedication to the mission of providing quality education to all those in your charge... for creatively engaging your students in understanding the joy and finding the passion in learning... and to pique the curiosity of all of your students as you encourage them to continuously ask the questions that will provide the keys to a fulfilled and informed life... as one rock star informs us... this one’s **real**, folks... (**Wait for the laugh**)... I’m referring to Frank Zappa who said, “A mind is like a parachute. It doesn’t work if it’s not open.” In the world in which we find ourselves, frequently experiencing that feeling that we are often out there, “flying without a net,” we need to do whatever we can to open the minds, hearts, and collective conscience of those we have the gift to teach. We have seen, all too frequently, how ignorance... lack of compassion... inability to adapt... all contribute to negative stimulus in our contemporary culture. To paraphrase a now often used quote, “Enlightenment dies in darkness.” We cannot let that happen to our students. It is more important than ever to be vigilant in expressing appreciation for, and advancing the true **art** of, “**TEACHING**.” This year’s honorees have forged paths that we can all take as examples as we fulfill the missions we have accepted individually and as a group of educators.

What is true about all of this year’s winners is the common thread that encourages each one to learn as they teach... open mindedness and understanding are two way streets... as is the willingness to learn and grow and bend to the shifting times, demands, and conditions in which we live. It’s also essential to forge ahead with

optimism, principles, and humor. Now, more than ever, we must leverage our capacity to empathize, and it must be a constant companion to our dedication to expressing and enforcing integrity. That’s not so easy.... as we all know from our daily experiences.... but it must be done. It’s so important for us to honor this year’s awardees and to learn from them... to “borrow” their “game...” and to build our own personal and professional arsenals of positivity and encouragement... because of... and thanks to... the times in which we live. To paraphrase the Israeli psychologist and educator, Dr. Haim Ginott, “Children are like wet plaster. Whatever falls on them makes an impression.”

Ultimately, in celebration of these exemplary educators, we find the opportunity to celebrate each one of us. Each year, as we bestow these awards, we remember that they are **US**. ...That the situations... challenges... and opportunities that they face and turn to “lemonade” are the same relatable events each one of us face... in every aspect of our lives. As we acknowledge, I invite us to find the correlation... the lesson... the opportunity in our everyday lives to find the “in” and make a difference. In the end, all we have is each other... to teach... to learn from.... and to collectively grow into a more understanding, tolerant, empathetic community.... to see the world from different but no less valid perspectives. I think Jacob Nordby summed it up when he said, “Blessed are the weird people: the poets, misfits, dreamers, mystics, painters, troubadours, ... for they teach us to see the world through different eyes.” As educators, we teach those unique shining, young lives to express themselves in order that they discover their capacity to build a more interesting, diverse, and “well rounded” world... and that’s a very positive professional and personal mission. Thank you all!!