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## 2004-2005 Sacramento City Unified School District Teachers of the Year

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### Asa Salley - John Bidwell Elementary School

*Asa was also selected as Sacramento County Teacher of the Year.*

Seven years ago, Asa Salley began his teaching career at John Bidwell. He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Multicultural Education. Salley continues to share his knowledge with other educators by presenting at conferences, and was a guest lecturer at UC Davis on "closing the achievement gap." "I try to take advantage of any opportunity to improve my teaching so I can give my students the very best of myself," he said.

"Over the years, many of my teaching strategies have changed as I've taken advantage of professional development opportunities within the district and outside the district," Salley said in his competition essay. He also assumes leadership roles in his school including advisor for the Math, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) and the Bidwell Singing Team, and serves as a Grade Level Facilitator. He believes all of these activities strengthen his abilities beyond the confines of the classroom.

He helped write a grant that secured Bidwell's Healthy Start Program, and wrote a grant to secure art instruction for his class, which was funded for two years. Salley also applied and was accepted for a Fulbright-Hayes Scholarship to Ghana, West Africa.

Building relationships with students and families is an essential element of his teaching philosophy. "I truly believe that education is a partnership between the student, family and teacher. I have always used home visits as a means of bridging the gap between home and school," he emphasized. As a dedicated teacher, Salley said that for him, home visits serve two important purposes – they establish a relationship with the students and families and compensate for the fact that he doesn't live in the community where he teaches.

"I provide my families with my home phone number and e-mail address to let them know I am accessible to them at any time," he added.

While his teaching strategies may have changed, he states that his educational philosophy surrounding teaching remains the same – that every single child is educable, deserves the very best education opportunities and that the foundation of good teaching is built on relationships with individual students and their families.

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### Carol Cleland - Isador Cohen Elementary School



Although Cleland currently teaches a 3rd grade GATE class, she's taught every level from first through fifth. In the essay she submitted for the competition, Cleland stated, "I love teaching elementary grades because I am able to re-discover all of my favorite subjects including math, science, reading, writing and history. This age group enables me to stay young at heart."

Cleland believes that the most influential teacher for any child is the parent or guardian. "It is with this in mind that I strive to form an alliance with the parents and student in order to maximize the potential of the child," she said. In doing so, she feels she has a privileged role as the teacher. "It is my role to stimulate, encourage and support the unique qualities in the children I teach," she added.

Asked about some of the memorable moments in teaching, she recalled a class of summer school students who made it clear they would rather be someplace else. "This class was punctuated with groans when told them of my plan for a writing program," she remembered, "but I worked out a system that included free writing with a structured format. Each week the enthusiasm grew. By the fourth week, they were asking for more time to continue their writing and eight students skipped recess to write."

She also recalled one student in particular who stayed after school to work on an essay until she deemed it perfect. The young lady won second place in the Old Sacramento Schoolhouse Essay Contest. "I could not have been more proud to see her with her parents as she accepted her award," Cleland said.

Magical moments happen in her class – like the morning her first graders walked into the classroom just as eggs in their incubator were hatching into chicks. "I know my children will always remember those tiny little peeps."

With every class she's taught, Cleland believes she's learned and grown from the experience. In turn, she knows she influences her students. "There is a little bit of me sprinkled on the lives of my students as we share our love of learning together."