

Webberville educator, Suzi Slater, wins MSU's Crystal Apple Award

Written by Ken Palmer, Williamston Enterprise

WEBBERVILLE - Suzi Slater was happy to learn she'd be honored for her work by leaders at Michigan State University's College of Education.

But for Slater, the Crystal Apple Award paled in comparison to the kudos she received from teachers and students at Webberville Elementary School.

"I was absolutely honored to get the award," said Slater, now in her eighth year as the school's principal. "But what was really terrific is that the students and the staff had a surprise celebration for me. You had 320 kids keeping a huge secret for a week. That was really an amazing moment for me."

Slater was among 13 educators to receive a Crystal Apple Award this year from the leadership circle at MSU's education department. Donors to the college nominate teachers, professors, administrators and counselors who have made an "enduring and powerful" impact and encouraged their students and colleagues to pursue new ways of thinking.

The recipients were honored at a Nov. 11 banquet at the University Club.

Slater has been with the district since 1974, most of that time as a teacher.

Her surprise came during the regular Student of the Month assembly on Oct. 28, when Superintendent Brian Friddle, teachers and students acknowledged her contributions to the K-5 school and the community.

Students drew colorful pictures of Slater and wrote short essays compiled into booklets.

A couple of the titles: "Mrs. Slater Rocks!!," and "The Apple of Our Eye."

One student from each class read from the booklets during the celebration.

Students noted that Slater knew their names and helped solve problems. One student noted she had "the shiniest teeth."

"It was me greeting them, helping them and caring about them that really mattered to them," she said. "They appreciated the fact that I knew their names."

At the Crystal Apple banquet last week, presenters said Slater has taught and mentored generations of children, including the children of her former first-graders.

Her work is a reason why the school was named a "Blue Ribbon Exemplary School" by the Michigan Board of Education in 2007, they said.

Slater received a big compliment last year when she was picked to be grand marshal in the annual Fireman's Field Day Parade.

Slater said the Crystal Apple award reflects the work of the entire staff. She was touched by the support from students and teachers, she said.

"It reminded me that every single moment, we have a chance to make a difference," she said. "Somebody listens to every single word that comes out of your mouth, and it's going to really impact them. So I'm going to be really careful from here on out."