CHESTNUT HILL, MA (March 2008) -- Deirdra Grode, a 1999 graduate of the Lynch School of Education now serving as a 7th and 8th grade social studies and language arts teacher at Hoboken Charter School in Hoboken, N.J., is the winner of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) 2008 Outstanding Young Educator Award. ASCD honored Grode this month at its Annual Conference and Exhibit Show in New Orleans, La.

Grode says she expects her students to "view the world with critical minds and be leaders of positive change in their communities." To this end, she regularly exposes them to different perspectives and provides them with innovative service learning and character education opportunities. Grode also "thoughtfully designs her curriculum to reflect the current world and responds to the needs and interests of each class, all while helping her students meet and exceed state standards," according to the association.

For example, when most middle school students learn about slavery, they focus on its existence in colonial America and the role it played in the Civil War. Grode addresses those aspects of slavery with her students, but she also has them examine strategies of change used by abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth to explore how they can become agents of change themselves. Her students then research examples of contemporary slavery—from child soldiers in the Burmese Army to agricultural workers in the United States who receive no pay for their work—and create informational brochures to educate the community about slavery’s existence today and how it can be stopped.

ASCD Executive Director Gene Carter recognized Grode for promoting tolerance, raising her students' awareness of social justice issues, and teaching them to be leaders of change in their communities. In doing so, "she exemplifies what it means to teach the whole child," said Carter.

Alfredo Huereca, principal of the elementary and middle school grade levels at Hoboken Charter School, nominated Grode for the award and described how her leadership extends well beyond the walls of her classroom. She mentors staff, leads professional development sessions, acts as a liaison between other teachers and the school's administration, and coordinates testing and school scheduling. She also wrote the school's 5th–8th grade social studies and language arts curriculum and worked on its charter renewal and annual report.

Grode holds a master's degree from Columbia University's Teachers College and a bachelor's degree from Boston College's Lynch School of Education. Raised in Camp Hill, Pa., she graduated from Cedar Cliff High School and upon college graduation taught in a Costa Rican village through World Teach.
ASCD, a nonprofit, international education organization, created the Outstanding Young Educator Award in 2002 to recognize creative and committed teachers and administrators under the age of 40 who are making a difference in the lives of children. A panel of diverse education professionals selected Grode as the 2008 winner from a large pool of educators nominated by ASCD members. Grode will receive a $10,000 cash award and an ASCD Institutional Membership for her school.

Founded in 1943, ASCD, a nonprofit association, is one of the largest professional development organizations for educator leaders. It provides education information services; offers cutting-edge professional development for effective learning, teaching, and leadership; and supports activities to provide educational equity for all students. ASCD's membership of more than 175,000 includes principals, teachers, superintendents, professors of education, and other educators from 119 countries. The Association also has nearly 60 affiliates throughout the world.

-- Release courtesy of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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