

# “Helping to Build Global Citizens” A Conversation With Hale Edwards

Last fall, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) selected Hale Edwards as the NCSS Middle School Teacher of the Year. “I just do what I do because I love it,” Edwards told her local paper after receiving the award. “I just love my kids. I love my job, and I will do just about anything I can to help them become really good citizens of this planet.” Recently, *JS* asked Edwards, who teaches seventh-grade world history at Riverside Middle School in Greer, South Carolina, about her life’s work.



Hale Edwards

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**Q. Why did you become a teacher?**

**A.** That is hard to say. Some of my favorite childhood memories are of pretending to be a teacher. It is just something I’ve always done in one aspect or another. I remember my grandfather taking me to his college classroom when he was teaching and thinking that it was amazing.

**Q. What is most rewarding about your work?**

**A.** The most rewarding aspect is being with students and knowing that I am helping to build global citizens.

**Q. What are some of the challenges that today’s teachers face?**

**A.** One of the biggest challenges is motivating students and helping them learn to be responsible and accountable. I truly believe that education is a triangle with the schools [teachers], parents, and students being equally responsible. To succeed, each stakeholder needs to fully participate and be equally accountable.

**Q. What challenges will your students face in a global society?**

**A.** One of their greatest challenges will be maintaining a sense of bal-

ance in their lives. There are so many opportunities offered to students, which is wonderful. At the same time, many students are struggling with time management. Frequently, school takes a back seat. As global citizens, students must know about the world around them. What happens anywhere matters to them personally. We are all connected—whether as individuals or as nations. Each event in the past triggered the next and has brought us to today. The challenge for students is going to be realizing the importance of world history and culture in their lives. This is especially important today, when it seems that schools are cutting time for social studies in order to increase time for math and reading.

**Q. How do you engage your students in current and historical events?**

**A.** We talk frequently about what is happening in the news and how it relates to a topic we have studied. Students select newspaper articles about global events, and we discuss how the events relate to something we have studied. We talk about how history is like a “domino chain,” and how each event that happens triggers another.

**Q. What did winning the NCSS award mean to you?**

**A.** It was a huge honor. Even today I’m not sure that it has sunk in! In winning the award, recognition has come not only to me but also to my school, district, and state—and the educational standards that we have here in South Carolina. We were recognized by *Education Week* in January 2007 as No. 1 in the nation for our system of standards, assessment, and school accountability. However, our standards of excellence often are not recognized by people around the nation.

**Q. Is there a particular teacher who has made a big difference in your life?**

**A.** There have been many—from my elementary [school] teachers, to professors at Wesleyan College and Furman University, to my grandfather and my mother. All have inspired me and believed in me, and each of them pushed me to be my best—something I hope that one day my students will say about me. **JS**