

## DISTINGUISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER AWARD: 2009

The recipient of the prestigious Tennessee Academy of Science Distinguished Secondary School Teacher Award for 2009 is **Laura E. Robertson**. A 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at the University School in Johnson City, Tennessee, Ms. Robertson received the award October 30, 2009, during the annual meeting of the Tennessee Academy of Science, held in the Carolyn P. Brown University Center on the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

This award is given annually to one science teacher in Tennessee who has made significant contributions to science teaching and learning. The Tennessee Academy of Science (TAS) administers the awards program. Begun in 1997, the award recognizes outstanding science teachers. Ms. Robertson received a plaque and a \$500 cash award from TAS.

Laura has made many contributions to science education. Her service to teaching and learning is outstanding. She is widely recognized as an individual who demonstrates excellence in her science teaching. Through her efforts, hard work, and many positive attributes, Ms. Robertson has been instrumental in planning and implementing innovative programs in her school.

Ms. Robertson is a leader both in and outside of her science classroom. For example, she is currently serves as teacher leader for the University School science department. Her students consistently participate in science competition programs for which she is an active sponsor. She has participated in, as well as organized, an array of science workshops and symposia, and she actively serves as a mentor teacher for student teachers. Ms. Robertson has also served as a consultant to a variety of groups, including *Horizon Research, Inc.*, and *The Praxis Series*.

She is the author or co-author of several papers that have been published in refereed journals, including *Science Scope*

and the *International Journal of Science Education*. Laura has written book reviews for the National Council of Teachers of English, and she has made presentations at several conferences and professional meetings including the National Association of Research in Science Teaching, the American Educational Research Association, the National Science Teacher Association, and the National Middle School Association. She has conducted a number of action research projects through which she has gathered information to inform her science teaching. Ms. Robertson has received grants from North Carolina State University, Eastman Chemical Company, the American Chemical Society, and the Junior League of Johnson City which have been used to enhance and enrich science teaching and learning. In addition, she is an active member of several professional organizations, including the National Science Teachers Association and the National Association of Research in Science Teaching.

Ms. Robertson is recognized for her abilities to create learning environments for her students that allow them to become actively involved in inquiry and problem solving. She provides opportunities for her students to ask thought-provoking questions about the world and encourages her students to answer them. She incorporates the use of "hands-on/minds-on" and process-oriented activities for the benefit of students' learning.

Ms. Robertson received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology at UT Knoxville in 2000 and a Master of Science degree in Elementary Education at UT Knoxville in 2001. Currently a Ph.D. student in the science education program at North Carolina State University with an expected graduation date of 2010, she is involved in a research study in which she is examining and comparing science teaching in China and the United States.