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### Interview with Christine Chalender – Kansas Master Teacher of the Year 1987

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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE CHALENDER  
KANSAS TEACHER OF THE YEAR - 1987

Karen Baisinger

Tom Meagher

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Master Of Science Degree in  
Educational Administration

Fort Hays State University

Summer, 1988

## CHAPTER II

## THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Tom: We are here today to interview Mrs. Christine Chalender, Kansas Teacher of the Year for 1987. Mrs. Chalender is the director of the English as a Second Language program for Hays Unified School District #489. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about Mrs. Chalender's background, her thoughts on teaching, and what characteristics are shared by master teachers.

And so, Chris, we might just begin by having you give us a little bit of your background, such as where you grew up, some of your schooling, and other things.

Chris: Well, I grew up in Eastern Kansas and attended college on a scholarship. I was sixteen when I started to college so a little bit younger than most freshmen students. I graduated from college when I was twenty and started teaching. I taught at Valley Falls, Kansas, which had a large group of Indians from a reservation. Some of those students were older than I was, so that made for a real challenge. The superintendent warned me the first day of school, the teacher that they had had the year before they had run off. So that gave me a lot of confidence to begin my first teaching job. The superintendent said I must have discipline. That was good advice for me. I do think you have to have discipline. You don't have to scare the students to death, but learning cannot go on if you do not have discipline. Then I went on to Wichita and started a new course on home and society which at that time was an extremely controversial course. I brought in attorneys, ministers and general public and had them involved in the structure of the class. Then it was accepted. I also taught psychology, so I taught in the social studies department as well as the home economics department. Then I went on the family life staff, and that was a part of the Wichita Public Schools. That involved working with parents. It was most rewarding as most had small children and were most interested in being good parents. It was a most rewarding experience. It was an exciting time. Then

we moved to Manhattan. My husband was in administration and at that time an administrator's wife could not teach in the public school. So I did volunteer work and worked with foreign speaking students and tutored kids who would come to our house. I helped them with math or science. Then we went to St. Louis. That's where I really became involved with English as a Second Language. They were bringing about 5,000 Russian Jews a month into St. Louis, because they had a large Jewish population there. Most were professional people but were coming to the United States without being able to speak the language. There was a plea on television for people to come and help and to become qualified in that, so I took courses while I was working and becoming qualified in English as a Second Language. I really fell in love with that work. I then got my certification. When we moved to Hays I checked to see if there were any teaching positions open, but there were none. I was qualified in math, science, home economics and social studies, but I did tell them that I had English as a Second Language if they had any students. They said there were none, but within two months they called. So I started out working on a temporary basis, on an hourly basis. I had one student from Vietnam and then the second student was one from England. He could not understand our English, partially because of all the slang. I worked with him, and of course, it didn't take long for him to take off on his own. That's how I got started. Before we knew it the population had grown. This year we had forty-nine students from eleven countries.

Karen: How many students will you have in the program next year?

Chris: Approximately the same. The reason we go with English as a Second Language instead of bilingual education is that in our program you come in and teach them English, you don't worry about their language. You try to maintain their culture, but you don't worry about maintaining their language. It would virtually be impossible for Hays to employ a person who could speak all of those languages, because we have many different dialects. For instance in Vietnam there are many different dialects. Also in Nigeria there are many dialects.

Even though I might have been able to speak the language it wouldn't have done any good because the dialects are so different. That brings you up to date on where I am today.

Karen: When you were entering college, what choices did you have for a profession, or did you feel you had any choice?

Chris: I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. My mother was a teacher. So I think I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. So that is the route I took. While I was in college I really enjoyed taking other things, and that's how I became certified in so many things. In the summer I would go to a neighboring college and drive back and forth each day to take classes. So I have a wide base to work from.

Tom: How would you say teaching or education has changed since you started?

Chris: I think education has changed because teachers are better prepared today. That is one thing. I differ whole-heartedly with the fact that we keep reading that teachers are poorly prepared. I don't believe that is true. Teachers are very well prepared and do an excellent job. I also think that to some degree we have improved on our professionalism. At the same time I would say some teachers have slipped in their professionalism. One of those areas is dress. I still think as a professional we need to dress as a professional. It disturbed me as I travelled across the state to see some teachers in old dirty jeans and a beat up flannel shirt. I don't think that is being a professional teacher, nor are teachers who wear sweatsuits two sizes too small, male or female. I think if we want to portray ourselves as professionals we need to dress as a professionals. I'm not saying we have to wear a fancy dress or suit every day, but simply to look nice. I think that is the important thing. I think this is the biggest area where teachers have slipped.

Karen: I think that is true. I think about when I was in school and how teachers dressed. It was

completely different than teachers now.  
What changes do you see in teachers' training  
that are improvements from when you attended  
college?

Chris: I think one of the improvements in teacher training is that they are requiring students that go into teacher training to have a decent grade point average. That screens out a lot of people who are not competent in the different areas. I think that is a vast improvement. I think the tests that teachers have to take to become professionals is a good sign. Again, that is a means to screen out. I think teacher education institutions also are offering a lot more opportunities for students to be in classrooms. If a student isn't really interested in teaching they find that out, yet they don't have to complete four years before they get in the classroom. That used to happen. People would spend four years and get out and find out they didn't really want to teach. I think that is a good sign. I think they are screening them out when they go out to do their student teaching. They find out that certain students can't relate, and so they have to remove them. That is for the student's benefit and for the teaching profession's benefit.

Tom: The question you are always asked when you go in for an interview or into a college class is what is your philosophy of education?

Chris: My philosophy is that you accept every student where they are and you take them as far as you can. I really believe you have to do as much individualization as possible. You can't put all students into the same bucket and say you're all going to learn to do this. You have to work with them individually. I think we are wrong if we don't recognize those differences. I think also we have students who are very, very capable, and it behooves every teacher to take those students and enrich their learning experiences. I really believe this is something every teacher needs to work on; to individualize teaching.

Karen: We see a lot in the news about extra-curricular activities and work taking too much of our

kids' time. Do you see that happening with the students you work with and with our other students?

Chris: I think that extra-curricular activities are tremendous. I think they add a lot to the development of children, probably in ways you could never reach those kids in academic courses. At the same time I think schools have to be continually on guard that extra-curricular activities do not become the major emphasis. That happens often. I've seen that happening as I've travelled across the state this year. I travelled over 30,000 miles this year. I've seen schools where basketball or football totally consumes that school and they spend so much time during the day in pep rallies and decorating that kids are out of class doing those things. I can say that we don't have that much of a problem with this at Hays High, because they do this after school or the night before. I do think we need to be on guard, whether it is a musical, sports, forensics or debate, that they don't become the primary function. They need to be in a secondary position.

Karen: What about kids that work?

Chris: Working is one of the biggest problems in the world. Right now I am serving on the Governor's Advisory Board, and we've been working on the children at risk. This is one of the primary reasons that young people drop out of school. They get jobs and spend so much time on that job that they cannot succeed at school. One of the things we are working on at the state level is to, hopefully, get employers to recognize this and to ask employers to not give the students so much time; to limit them to twenty hours maximum. I have students in my program that work forty hours per week. I have a little bit of trouble saying they shouldn't work forty hours a week when they are getting A's and B's. But then they do not participate in extra-curricular activities, and they need those extra-curricular activities. I think you can go overboard on anything.

Tom: Looking at society and looking at the changes in the family structure, how do you see that as affecting education?

Chris: I think this is why the challenges for education have multiplied ten-fold at least, because we have children who go home after school and have no one there--the latch-key children. We have young people who maybe will come home and fix their own meals or a bowl of cereal or eat snack foods, and do not have good nutrition. Many then go to bed and have never seen their parents because their parents are working. We have broken homes. That has had a tremendous impact on education. We often hear educators say that it's not our job to be the home, but if the school does not assume the responsibility, then we are going to have more children with problems. We all know that many of these kids end up in prison or in reform school or with major emotional problems. The cost of taking care of them is, depending on what expert you listen to, \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year. We know it doesn't cost that much to educate a child. So if the home is not taking care of the child then society must take care of it and schools are a part of society. Schools are going to have to have more funds if they must take care of this. One approach we're going to see is the preschool approach. Also there is one school in Hays that is going to run a pilot program having after school activities for kids that go home and have no one there. But we cannot do that on the money our public schools get today. We come back to the fact that it is a problem that exists in society, not a school problem. We must have additional funds to take care of it. We must pay the people who work with the children after school. It can become a learning situation, not a babysitting situation.

Karen: Do many of your children in your program at Washington school go home to situations like that? Are they latch-key children?

Chris: No, and that's interesting. The bilingual students, whose parents are from other cultures, really believe that the parents need to be taking care of the child. It's not necessarily the mother, but a



parent. They will juggle their schedules, if they are both students at Fort Hays, so that they are home when the children are home. This is something America has gotten away from. We just think somebody else will handle it.

Tom: What about student attitudes today? Do you think they have changed? Do you think this affects the way we teach?

Chris: Yes and no. We have two extremes in schools. We have those kids who are really dedicated and put forth as much effort as many years ago. At the same time we have those who want to be spoon fed and don't want to put forth any effort. That is something that we, as teachers, really have to work toward. We must try to bring them all together so that they all have a desire to learn. One of the reasons our kids don't have that desire to learn is that they are not given support at home. We see too many parents who, if something is wrong, immediately say the school is at fault instead of realizing that schools are really dedicated to helping those kids. They take the side of the child instead of looking at the whole situation and seeing there is not just one side. We are both interested in the welfare of the child.

Karen: What other changes have you seen since you began teaching that affect the way we teach or work with kids?

Chris: Number one, I really believe our students are better prepared than they were ten or fifteen years ago. We have kids who are extremely well educated, who can do calculus and advanced chemistry and physics. Then we have kids who are extremely talented in music, both vocal music and instrumental music. We have kids who are tremendously well qualified in forensics and debate. Those are things that in the past only one or two could do. Now we have large groups who are doing these things. The thing I find most distressing is that we hear so much about the Japanese schools and how those kids are educated. But we have to look at the fact that Japan does not educate all their students. They begin testing them on a second grade level

and then they test them approximately every two grade levels after that. By the time that child is in the sixth grade they are already tracked. We don't do that in America. A kid may be a late bloomer and it may take him until sixth grade to get a handle on education. We've seen young people who really are almost failures in the lower grades, but the teachers have all hung in there. Eventually the light will go on and the student will bloom. If we were tracking kids in America, many of those students would be tracked out and told to go to vocational school or told that they were going to have to learn to be a street sweeper. So I think we sometimes listen so much to what happens in other countries on education that we don't come back and tell the other side of the story. If we would take the top 20% of our kids, which is basically what Japan is educating, or even if we took our top 40% and compared them, they would rank as high as the Japanese students. We as educators must tell that story. I think educators are guilty of tucking their heads and accepting criticism and not countering it. We as educators must be acquainted with those facts and be able to inform the public of what is really happening.

Tom: What about the area of discipline across the years? What areas have changed?

Chris: I mentioned discipline, didn't I? I think the techniques of discipline have really changed. We really have no more corporal punishment. When I first started, corporal punishment was accepted. I never did use it because I had a problem with it. I felt that if I would hit a kid, how could I tell a child not to hit somebody else. So I had a basic difference with it. There are so many other techniques to use in discipline. I have based my discipline on being fair, firm and friendly. I remember in a college class I had a professor who said on discipline and classroom control to read. Read research and know what it says. Reason and remember what it was like when you were a child and what it was like when other children were making fun of you. Reason and use good

common horse sense. Use the three R's: read, reason, and remember, and I think if we can use that it will help. We have a lot of other things that have come out in education. We go in spells in education. We have assertive discipline. If you plug in read, reason and remember, that is assertive discipline. We are much more concerned with the child as an individual. We're more concerned with positive self-image. I think that is very, very good. I think if we can build that self-image, often our discipline problems will go away. I know that you're going to have some failures, and we have to accept that, but we must keep working on them. Maybe something will turn them around. I really think some of the new things that have come across on the assertive discipline have helped teachers a great deal to come away from the negative part of teaching and discipline. A lot of time when I walk down the hall, I hear a teacher say, "I like the way you wrote your name." Find something positive to say. I think a good teacher will find something positive to say everyday to every student.

Karen: Do you think the legal aspects of discipline that teachers have to deal with have affected discipline or made them more aware of discipline?

Chris: To some degree, but I would like to think it is because teachers are very professional.

Tom: Looking at education more in terms of the secondary area, do you think it should be more oriented to the liberal arts areas, toward general education, or toward more specific types such as vocational education?

Chris: If we believe in a comprehensive high school, which I do, I believe you must have everything. We know that only 10%-15% of the jobs in the United States require a college education, yet so many of our high schools are geared to the college bound students. I think we have to provide the vocational education. When a school slips away from providing that they are in trouble. Every school must provide all the opportunities. Our very brightest students may

be the most tremendous vocational students. Also, I think vocational courses allow students another outlet. I've seen many college bound students that are excellent in high academic courses, but they will take a class in woodworking or auto mechanics and that is a benefit for them. It releases tension, and they need that opportunity. The same with home economics. They have the opportunity to take a foods or clothing class, and that's an emotional outlet for them. I think we have to remember that we have to have an outlet for our kids. This is a big difference in American schools and Japanese schools. The Japanese schools have a suicide rate that is five times greater than the United States. It is one of their major concerns. So much pressure is placed on their students. They have no outlets. Forensics, debate, athletics, and music all give students outlets that they need. I don't think we can give them such a load of academics that they don't have the opportunity to be a human being.

Karen: Do you see teacher morale and self-esteem improving or not?

Chris: I think it has to some degree. I think teachers feel very professional. But any time you come to salary negotiation time, realistically, I have to say that I see a real difference when that is going on. It comes to the forefront and the teacher realizes that salaries are not where they should be and morale goes down. You can almost with clockwork see that in January of the school year. The morale goes down. This is a major problem. This is one of the items we keep talking about on the Governor's Advisory Board. Of course, this is one of the things that politicians control--the money. We keep coming back and saying that when the trash truck driver makes more than a teacher our values are messed up. This happens in Hays. It happens everywhere. We have to get teachers' salaries up so that they are professional salaries. At the same time, along with this, I believe that teachers need to go to a twelve month contract. One of the first things teachers ask is, "How can we go to school?" I think

that those opportunities can be built in for professional development. Maybe this summer you have the summer to work on professional development. I truly believe we need to work twelve months, because as long as we work nine months the public is going to say we only work nine months. I think we will see schools moving toward a twelve month school year. When you look at Hays and see the number of students attending summer school, you see we are very close to a twelve month school year here, or eleven months because you would have a month off. More schools across the state are moving toward the eleven or twelve month school. Teachers say there is so much emotional stress that they can't do twelve months, but I have taught summer school for four years in a row and I cope. You learn, and if you can't, you need to look at other things.

Tom: As you look at some of the changes through the years, how do you see the community view toward teachers changing?

Chris: Probably teachers are not held in the high esteem they once were. I can recall when I was in school I used to think the teacher was the ultimate. Having worked with students from other countries I am continually amazed that, for instance, the Saudi Arabians who have come to Fort Hays were engineers at home and they want to become teachers, because that is held in higher esteem than an engineer. I think if we could move that far it would be wonderful. I think part of our problem is of our own doing. I mentioned earlier that we have to be professional and willing to go out and really talk about the positives of education and not talk about the negatives.

Karen: When you are talking to prospective teachers what do you tell them, good and bad, about teaching and why they should teach?

Chris: I have talked to college students at every regents institution this year. That has been fun. One story at Kansas State was a student who was finishing up and said she was not

going to teach. I asked why? She said it was because she had two part time jobs and could earn more money than she could as a beginning teacher. I think as teachers we need to look at raising the beginning teacher salary so that we do not keep the beginning teacher at poverty level. This is one thing that is very difficult for senior staff members to accept. They say they have been teaching all these years and that is where the money needs to go. Well, we need to remember when the base is raised all salaries are raised. We are not going to get the professionals if the base is not raised. I can recall when I started teaching and got \$2,900 a year, it was poverty level. Even now, if we get \$15,000 to \$18,000, it is still poverty level. We need to get that base salary up so the entry level is up. If the entry level is up the others are going to automatically go up. That is a negotiated item that every teacher in the state needs to work on, not just look at where they are on the salary scale. I do tell students that progression on the salary scale is pretty good and you can get up to a decent wage. I tell them the reward is not in the pocket book, the reward is seeing a student that you helped to turn on the light. You know I have heard from students I haven't seen in years, ten to fifteen years. They wrote to me and recalled things that I had done with them when they were in school. So I think the reward is certainly not in the dollars, but hopefully that will come. I think a lot of young teachers go into teaching because they care. It's like going into social work. Caring people go into that. I think the best teacher is a caring person.

Tom: Looking at our students, do you think we are getting too reward heavy? Do students learn because they want to learn or do they learn for the rewards?

Chris: Maybe in elementary there is more rewarding than in secondary. However, I think most elementary schools have moved away from a lot of reward systems. I think rewards are good in a way. Even we as adults appreciate a reward, whether it is a pat on the back by the principal or by a parent. So I am not sure rewards are all bad, but I think they have to be kept in perspective. It's like anything else; don't go overboard with it. Some children, because

they come out of a home situation where that is the way their life is geared, have to be rewarded. I worked with one little guy from another country and I absolutely could not get through to him. After I started rewarding him with M & M's we made tremendous progress. I never thought I would see the day when I would reward with M & M's, but he loved them. Once I got him excited and able to read, then we moved away from the candy. So I think it's like anything. Never throw out any techniques, because they may work with one child. You have to look at their background and if it contains the reward system you probably have to go with it. Hopefully, after you get them so they realize the joy of learning, then you can move away from that.

Karen: Do you think our parents today want their kids to learn, or do they send them to school so we will take care of them?

Chris: Well, we have that group, whose parents really look at the schools as a babysitting agency. They are the ones that after Christmas vacation will say, "Man, I wish school wasn't out for two weeks," not because they are eager for them to learn, but so they can get them out of the house. So we have that group of students. Then we have the parents who are actively involved in the learning process.

Karen: Do you see more parents involved now than when you started teaching?

Chris: No, I think that is a problem. There are less parents involved now.

Karen: What about your English as Second Language students' parents?

Chris: Many of many ESL students are unaccompanied refugees and have no parents here. They live with foster families. They have all the incentive they need. Anybody who goes through the trauma of escaping from a country

has to have a lot of initiative and desire. They escape to make something of themselves, and so they are going to make something of themselves. Their desire to learn is great. The ones that are here with parents are here to learn, and so they want their children to learn. So I am an exception in a school situation because I have a group of students who all really want to learn.

Tom: How does a teacher deal with students that don't want to learn and whose parents don't care? What is the best method for a teacher to use to deal with this?

Chris: In the bilingual program we bring in other students, especially in the elementary, for the interaction. The students we often bring in are students who need some help and this is one way to give them help. We must keep the majority ESL students and then we do not get in trouble with the federal guidelines. A lot of the students we bring in are not motivated. We find if we place them with the non-English speaking students that are highly motivated that this is a technique that helps. This is a method that could be used in the regular classroom. Place the less motivated students with highly motivated students for help and maybe some of the motivation will rub off. I really believe that when schools started going to building the self-esteem in the individual, they started to do more to help kids that really didn't want to learn. Then they know if they are going to succeed they have to really care about their work. I think the building of self-esteem is a key to any type of learning.

Karen: Is it a teacher's job to motivate?

Chris: Well, if we don't motivate they are not going to learn. One of the most discouraging things I saw this year was a teacher's lessons plans that were so yellowed, indicating that she had used them for twenty or twenty-five years. I thought there was no way the same lesson plans should be being used today, that she had used twenty years ago. Our kids are different. Also, one of the ladies who



was one of the top five teachers in the state said that she never used the same lessons plans for two classes. Now the same basic ideas were being taught, but she said every class is different. I thought about that and I decided that's why she was a top teacher. She cares enough to develop new ideas for each class. That's not saying you're not going to be teaching pretty much the same, but our kids are all different in every class. It's easier to teach the second year and third year because you have the basic outline, but that outline should be changed each and every year for the students in your classroom. I sometimes think the best teaching goes on in the first five years of our teaching career, because you really want to do a good job then. If we could somehow bottle that enthusiasm and keep it and take a dose every year we could have that enthusiasm forever.

Karen: What about administrators' responsibilities to their teachers and staff? What should they be doing to motivate their staff to make education better in the schools?

Chris: I really believe that administrators need to do more. They need to find something good to say to every teacher. They probably can't do it everyday like teachers should do for their students, but I think they have to care about their staff the way teachers care about their students. I think they also need to keep up on the various fields. When we say that, we are talking about music, science, math, and everything else taught. If they are not aware of what is going on, how can they really care? Administrators really need to keep up on things.

Karen: What kind of teacher attitudes did you see in the schools you visited last year?

Chris: I am blessed because of the positive attitude that is exhibited in the elementary school I work in. When you walk in that door you feel it. The principal has really worked on positive and of course people who come into that school feel it. It is different and it is unique. I walked into some schools and have been amazed.

You walk in and you feel the negativism. You hear the teacher talking about the teacher next door and you hear about the teachers not caring. It's in the lounge. They talk about the kids and all the negativism in the school. You cannot do that because you go out of that lounge feeling negative.

Tom: Is there any way we can be more positive in our lounges?

Chris: I don't know. I think a few teachers can really turn it around by putting a few sayings up on the wall, such as, "If you have anything to say today make it positive." I think it can be a grass roots thing. A few can say, "That is negative," and then people will back off. It can be done in fun and can cause a changing of attitude. I think one or two teachers can change that in a building.

Karen: What about the attitudes of a community? Have you been able to feel that as you travel?

Chris: It's been interesting to see that the communities that have the negative attitudes toward schools are the schools that are negative. It's a catching thing. If the school is negative, the community is often negative. That's an over generalization, but generally speaking, that is true.

Tom: What about the attitudes of our state officials? You have been working with several committees and have had a chance to observe their attitudes.

Chris: Oh my, do we have an education process to do. Our legislators know so very little about education and schools. I spent two days in the capitol lobbying and boy was that an education. They had no idea. They thought that bilingual education was for Hispanics and English. I said that in Hays we only have one Hispanic student, and all the rest are other nationalities. They were shocked to hear that. I tell that to emphasize that that is the kind of thing I found. They seem to remember schools like they were when they attended school. I think every teacher has a

moral obligation to make an effort to become acquainted with their state legislators and to invite them into schools. If they can't come, give them materials. Write up and show them something you are doing that is unique and different, so that they know there is a lot of excitement out there. One of the things that kept coming back to us over and over again was that teachers only teach nine months. If you figure that salary out on a nine month basis that is a good salary. I think we have got to change that attitude. I think we are doing it, but there is nobody that can change it like teachers and we have to be the ones to do it.

Karen: Do you think it is beneficial and improves schools to pay attention to criticism, like "Nation at Risk", or does it put schools down too much?

Chris: I think that "Nation at Risk" in some ways spurred local legislators on to fund education a little bit, but it also gave them a crutch to lean on to not do it. It has mixed blessings. It does in some cases. Teachers take it as negativism and they think there is nothing they can do so they back off. I wanted to, and had an opportunity to meet with the core of the committee that worked on "Nation at Risk" when I was in Florida. One of the things we said was you did not hit on the positives and you distorted facts. If you look at our top students we do have good students. If you look at our students leaving our high schools, they are better prepared than any of us ever were. So we really pounded home the fact that they need to try in those reports to give all the facts. I had an opportunity to write a critique on the "Nation at Risk". Those were some of the things I told them.

Tom: Is there any other way to attract top people to education and keep them?

Chris: Well, I think the best selling point for teachers is teachers. It's a little disturbing to hear teachers tell students to not go into teaching.

I really believe that one way we can attract people is the testing, to say that we only accept good people into teaching. I think that because of the fact that teachers have to go through a national test, even if it's not the best test, we are saying we have a professional test, and we must meet these standards. Attorneys have that. Almost all professions have it. Accountants have it. We are moving toward that direction. I think that is helping to improve our image. We still have to get our teachers to talk positive about teaching.

Karen: What do you think teachers need to do to police their profession?

Chris: That's a hard one. This is the subcommittee I chaired on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Accountability. We have really hit this because we do have some incompetence in the profession. One of the persons on the committee was the state president of the Kansas National Education Association. We said to her that if an administrator tries to relieve a teacher, the first thing KNEA does is go to bat and fight and fight and fight. We felt this was wrong. KNEA needs to protect teachers' rights, but there comes a point when they need to recognize that the teacher is incompetent. They need to say, "I'm sorry, you are not doing your job and we can't go to bat for you." We really talked to KNEA about this and they are going to take it back to the UniServe areas and talk about it. You really get into a touchy area, but KNEA is extremely strong. I truly believe we need to protect teachers' rights. KNEA has to realize that there are incompetent teachers, and we simply cannot keep them in the profession. I do think administrators need to work on this, and they need to know that teachers do agree with them. Maybe on an individual basis we need to go to the administrator and say we support you, you are right, and whatever you need to do has to be done. Hopefully down the line we'll see a higher degree of professionalism coming in.

Tom: Do you see evaluation as a way that might help turn around the incompetent teacher?

Chris: I'd like to see teachers sit down with the administrative team and say, "This is an area this teacher needs to work on." Also there needs to be a coach or model for that teacher. This is part of the effective teaching model. If we work with that teacher, maybe we can avoid having the incompetence. When you see a teacher beginning to slip, the peer modeling can come in and help that teacher get back on the right track. I think a lot of times this happens to teachers who have been teaching a number of years. They slip into a track and they need to be pulled up by their boot straps and get back on track. Maybe this can happen if teachers get more involved. Many teachers will back off because they don't want to hurt anybody's feelings. The point is they are not hurting feelings, they may be saving that person's job.

Karen: Do you think the new internships will help that problem?

Chris: The internships are for the first year teacher. It has had a lot of bugs in it. It has caused a lot of dissension across the state. One of the problems is that the teacher who works with the intern receives \$1000. The teacher who has a student teacher only gets \$50. Let's be realistic. There is quite a discrepancy there and that has caused some problems. Some of the things were not really geared up to help that tutor/teacher. Many felt the tutor/teacher should be in the intern's field, but in many schools there would not be another teacher in that field. But I don't feel you necessarily have to have a teacher in the same field. You need a good teacher who has good techniques. That way anybody can serve as a master teacher for that person. Something we have worked on many long hours is how to change the internships to improve them. I think the internship is a good idea.

Tom: What should we do to help boards of education do a better job for schools?

Chris: Well, I would like to see the boards have advisory boards. Superintendents have advisory boards, but I think teacher advisory boards would help educate board members. I think they need to know what we are faced with everyday with latch-key kids, alcohol, and drug abuse. They need to know that. There is no way for them to know without hearing it from teachers who are out on the front lines. There is such a wealth of knowledge within the teaching staffs, that if the teachers could go, not to gripe, but to tell what is really happening, they would help the boards to become tuned in.

Karen: What qualities do you think award winners have in common?

Chris: I like to believe that I am not much different from most teachers, but they have to choose one to represent us. The process of selection is quite a process. When I was nominated by the Hays High School staff I was floored, because I was a part-time staff member. When I went on and was named the Kansas Teacher it really came home to me as to the responsibility I had that year, which did not end with the beginning of 1988. The responsibility I had was to be a representative and go out across the state. I've talked to a lot of service clubs, too. When you come right down to it, I really think the thing that sets good teachers apart is that they have to be caring individuals. They have to be competent at their level. They have to really want to improve, everyday. I never go home a day that I haven't learned something from teaching. When teachers get to the point where they think they know everything and are not learning, they are going to lose that spark. I am fortunate that I get to tutor in all math areas, clear up to calculus. I used to say when I took my math book home at night that I had a lot of homework to do. So that was an added benefit. You can do that in any subject. There is so much out there that you do not know. Everyday you need to try to learn something. If you are learning you will keep your enthusiasm for teaching.

Tom: What do award committees look for when they

are making their selection?

Chris: Well, I got to sit in on the selection committee for the 1988 Kansas Teacher of the Year. The things they line out are, of course, the teaching experiences, and if there is anything a little different or unique that has been done. They also want their selection to be involved in community activities. They like for the teacher to be involved in professional organizations. Then, I suppose, they base part of it on the teacher's philosophy, that you are asked to write. By the way, that was the hardest part of getting the book together, writing that philosophy. Writing the philosophy helped me to grow as a person because I had to sit down and think about what I really believed.

Karen: Tell us about your trip that Burger King awarded you as a state winner.

Chris: Oh yes, it was a tremendous experience. It was a beautiful, beautiful place. It was Captiva Island which is off Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It's a very, very expensive place. The rooms were \$275 a day. I have never stayed in a \$275 a day room. Burger King absolutely spared no expense. I thought it was for the winners to go down and share, but the thing I found out was that what they were doing was to educate the fifty winners to go home and be ambassadors. You get a wealth of information. The training sessions started at eight o'clock in the morning and usually went until ten o'clock at night. The meals were tremendous and we put on pounds. They did provide things. They took us on a dinner cruise at night, but it wasn't just to relax. They had us divided up to move around in groups so that you got to talk to everybody. The whole time was a tremendous learning experience. There was never one person ever late to a meeting, there was never one person who got up and left. That's a little different than we see in teacher organizations. During inservice meetings we always have fifteen to twenty people coming in late. So it shows these people had the dedication to be there on time and

wanted to discuss as much as possible. They brought in a large number of speakers from business and industry. They drove home a lot of good points. Some of us wondered why they should tell us what to do. But it didn't take us long to realize that they use our products and we have to listen to them. If we are not turning out the products they need then we are not really meeting the needs of the public schools. The president of Burger King was there and the president of Pillsbury was also there. We had all kinds of top notch business people and many top educators, too. It was a mixture of everything. An interesting thing was that all these people they brought in stayed the entire week with us. During meal time they would be scattered throughout the room, so we had the opportunity to visit with them. After I came home and talked to our superintendent, I said I will never be the same person. There is no way I can ever be the same person I was because it was a tremendous learning experience. I thought my duties as Kansas Teacher would pretty much end when 1988 rolled around, but they seem to continue, which is probably good because of the amount of money Burger King spent. If they are going to invest that kind of money then we need to give up our time to represent education. It takes a lot of time. I have to give up a lot of weekends and evenings to go give talks, but that is the least I can do for the profession.

Tom: Let us move into the future for a bit. What do you see in the future for education.

Chris: Well, I don't think education is going to be the same. I think we are going to see things changing. They already are. I see a great deal more use of the computer in public schools. This summer I have had my students on the computer for two hours every day. They use it for writing and for learning. It is a tremendous tool and teachers should not be afraid of it. I think we are going to see more mechanization. I think we are going to see the use of telenet. In a school that cannot have a French teacher there will be a French class beamed out from a regent institution to that school



so that they can teach French in the classroom. It will not be as good as having a teacher in the classroom, but it's better than not having French or Spanish or whatever foreign language they need. So I think we're going to see it used more and more. We are not going to see in Kansas much more centralization except within districts. I think schools are going to be asked to be accountable for the money, and we can't be accountable if we are running attendance centers that have fifteen to twenty kids in them when they could be bused to an attendance center that can handle them. I'm not speaking just of Hays. This is true of many cities in the state. When unification took place, promises were made to some of the small districts that they would keep attendance centers open, but we know this is not being responsible financially. When we look at the cost of a school when you take the supplementary staff out to those schools, it costs a lot of money. The cost of educating those children skyrockets. I think we must have accountability on the district level. Now we move out into this area and it would do away with schools under 100. This was a proposal to the governor, but in western Kansas that is not realistic. Some children would have to ride the bus for over an hour each way. So I don't think that is feasible. We have to find another way. Yet, they cannot have the offerings the larger schools can have. We have to take advantage of the mechanization. We may see telenet in some of the larger schools where they can offer more classes, but there would be a teacher available to help individually. I think we have to be willing to change our techniques. If we don't, we are going to be left behind.

Tom: Do you have any other general thoughts that you would like to share with us?

Chris: Well, talking is not one of my problems.

Tom: You've done an excellent job of sharing a lot of information with us today.

Chris: I really believe that teaching is fun and exciting, and if it becomes anything but that,

you must do something else. Teachers must be flexible and not get all upset when their schedule must be changed slightly. Flexibility is so important, yet we all see teachers that just go off the deep end when their schedule is changed. Maybe what changed the schedule is more important than what you were going to do. Now those changes that are made should not be for all the extra things. But I think education is exciting, and I look forward to what is going to be happening five or ten years from now. I think there is going to be a lot of good things tried. Maybe some will be thrown out, but you never know unless you try.

Tom: Thank-you for allowing this interview, and we congratulate you for your honor and wish you well. Thank-you.