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Taylor's teacher urges Congress to fund program
Presidential award winner testifies for National Science Foundation

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WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- Eastside High teacher Judy Snyder urged a congressional committee to keep funding the National Science Foundation's work and programs that helped her become an outstanding high school math teacher and a recent winner of the presidential award for math and science teaching excellence.

A foundation program at Furman University "made me realize that high school students are capable of doing research at a level beyond what I considered possible and allowed me to experience firsthand how exciting hands-on learning can be," said Snyder.

She was among 100 teachers in town Wednesday to receive certificates from President Bush at a White House ceremony. They also will get \$10,000 educational grants for their schools. They will be in town until Saturday as guests of the National Science Foundation, which administers the awards program. Snyder learned she was a winner about 10 days ago.

The teachers submitted applications and other materials that demonstrated their skill at teaching or leadership in the field. A panel of scientists, educators and mathematicians reviewed the applications and selected winners.

Advertisement She was the only presidential winner who appeared as an official witness before the congressional panel trying to determine whether things like greater investment in training and development of science, math, technology and engineering teachers will help the United States graduate students able to compete with their foreign counterparts.

The Bush administration, as part of its American Competitiveness Initiative, is proposing that the emphasis and the money be placed on developing a math curriculum for students. The Education Department would take on a larger role under the Bush proposal.

Snyder, who was on a witness list with the chemistry department chairman at the University of Kansas, an executive board member of the National Education Association and the executive director of San Francisco's science museum, praised the National Science Foundation's work on subject content and teaching skills.

The witnesses agreed the foundation should have a major role in any effort to strengthen U.S. math and science education. But Snyder suggested a division of labor between the foundation and the education department.

"NSF is best suited to the development of new programs that take advantage of the creativity of the scientific community," Snyder told the committee. "The Department of Education should take those programs that have proved successful and provide funding for their continuation and for the publication of resulting materials."

Rep. Bob Inglis, R-Travelers Rest, said Snyder had used her skills well. His son, now a college junior, was one of her "adoring students" when she taught at Travelers Rest High School.



Inglis, subbing for chairman Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., gave other teachers a chance to speak

"I am in competition with the basic needs of busy children," said Julie Owens, an Oklahoma math teacher. "I have to have every resource available to compete with iPods, cell phones, cameras and technology -- all the fast, cool things they'd rather spend their time and money on than math and science."

Science teacher Susan Brown of Edgewater, Md., said lawmakers should stick to the basics when considering how to improve science and math education.

"All the research that you have (shows) the greatest impact on achievement in classrooms in this country is the teacher," she said. "You can give them great curriculum material. You can give them great administration. If the teacher is not good, achievement goes down."
