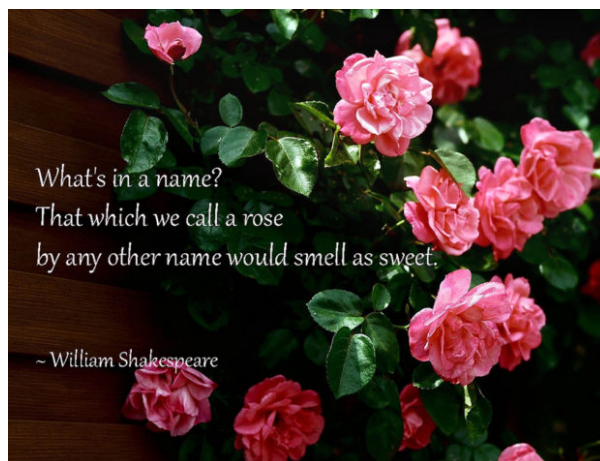


What's in a Name? – Science Teachers or Teachers of Science

by Ronald S. Hermann, Towson University; & Rommel J. Miranda, Towson University



For all the progress made towards inclusion, perhaps we, science educators, have been exclusionary from the start. The title of this journal, and its parent organization, both contain the phrase science teacher. Many of the other organizations and journals we read also contain the phrase science teacher. But, not everyone who teaches science may identify themselves as a science teacher. Some who teach science may be far from thinking of themselves as science teachers because science may be one of many subjects they teach. Others may not be formal teachers in the sense that they may not teach science to a group of students in a classroom setting. Still others involved in the work of teacher preparation who are involved with the content of science in some way, but may also have other content responsibilities beyond science.

Indeed, in our own scholarly work, we often write about teaching science at the elementary level. We often noted the awkwardness of referring to elementary teachers as science teachers. Yes, they teach science. And, yes, many are really good at teaching science. But, even those elementary teachers who are most enthusiastic about teaching science may not identify as a science teacher in favor of viewing themselves as an elementary teacher or a teacher of children.

As we focus on science teachers in our publications, conference presentations, and classrooms, are we excluding teachers who do not view themselves as science teachers? At our university for example, undergraduates enrolled in the middle school teacher education program specialize in two of four possible areas: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. So, a student who is specializing in science and social studies may view themselves as both a science teacher and a social studies teacher. Or maybe they view themselves as a middle school teacher. Our colleagues who work as science specialists and

supervisors in local school districts may no longer teach science as their focus has turned to supporting those who do. Are we alienating them when we direct our focus towards science teachers?

We are not suggesting that we must hastily change the names of organizations and journals, but we can give some thought to how we discuss who and what we teach and research. Teachers of science seems to include a wider range of people compared to science teachers. Even if one teaches science during one of eight class sections one is still a teacher of science, though they may not view themselves as a science teacher if the other sections are social studies. Can we include these educators in our teaching, research and service more effectively if we focus on teachers of science? Will these teachers feel more connected to science if we refer to them as teachers of science? We can't say for certain, but we would very much like to hear your thoughts. You can contact us directly or engage this community of science teacher educators in the discussion on our Facebook page.