Kevin Rutter, an economics teacher at Carl Schurz High School in Chicago, was named Illinois Teacher of the Year in the fall of 2009. Rutter was chosen from 10 finalists at the 35th annual Those Who Excel/Teacher of the Year banquet held in Peoria.

As Illinois Teacher of the Year, Kevin had the opportunity to share his knowledge and expertise outside the classroom, speaking at various events. He received a lifetime tuition waiver to state universities and represented Illinois at the NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., and in the Council of Chief State School Officers’ National Teacher of the Year program. Kevin also received products for his classroom from SMARTer Kids.

Kevin cited his love of learning, his high school history teacher’s intellect and wit, and his grandfather’s generosity as factors that have shaped and guided him as a teacher. Kevin said his high school history teacher first planted the notion that Kevin might be suited for teaching, and his grandfather inspired him by preaching and practicing the idea that giving of one’s self allows a person to find their true purpose.

In her nominating letter, Schurz Principal Mary Ann C. Folino called Rutter a leader at the school and a teacher who goes “well beyond the usual expectations for a teacher.” “In the classroom, Kevin ensures that his students are constantly challenged,” Folino wrote. “His lectures are dynamic and always include current events and popular culture to underline the relevance of the work to the lives and times of his students.”

Kevin uses multi-media and best-sellers such as “Freakonomics” and “The Flat World” in his daily lessons. Kevin has made many connections in the business community to provide his students with internship and job shadow opportunities and he leads frequent field trips to Chicago’s Financial District. As coach of the Debate Team, Kevin spends many hours after school and on weekends working with his students. Students have said Mr. Rutter engages them in long and useful discussions to help refine their ideas but he ensures the arguments used on the team belong strictly to the students.

Kevin earned his Bachelor of Arts from Eastern Illinois University and his Master of Arts from Loyola University Chicago.

Nearly 175 nominations were reviewed and scored three times by a selection committee comprised of administrators, teachers, school board members, representatives from educational service personnel, student support personnel and former Illinois Teachers of the Year. The finalists are interviewed and videotaped and those interviews are scored again by the selection committee before making a final recommendation. Principals, faculty, parents and students submit letters on behalf of candidates as part of the nomination process.