

2011 Jared Polis Foundation Teacher Recognition Awards Nomination Example

I would like to nominate* for the Jared Polis Foundation's 2010 Teacher Recognition Award. * open mind, generous heart and academic dedication and versatility make him an invaluable resource to the students and staff of Pine Creek High School.

* daily professional commitment to his students is renowned throughout the school, both by staff and students. Toria McGill, our assistant principal, says "He is great at giving extra attention to kids, and is very personable with them". To such an end, * makes a point to arrive forty-five minutes early to school, so even his athletes can get extra help, despite after-school practice. Also, to help as many kinds of his students as possible, he teaches an on-line Algebra 2 class so his students with health issues, babies of their own, or those who do not succeed in normal classroom settings can still profit from his expert teaching. * even had a boy last year who was training overseas for the Olympic handball team who kept up with his studies from Germany and Iceland.

* is highly respected and loved as the boys' soccer coach and the boys' and girls' long and triple jump track coach. As a result of the variety of involvement * has, combined with his genuinely compassionate heart, counselors and administration will often place specific kids in his class who need a positive male role model. A colleague said just this year alone she personally placed three tenth grade boys who were in need of extra attention and mentoring in *'s class. "He helps with their accountability because they WANT to be accountable and to please *, not because they will get in trouble, but because of the kind of person * is." * is so committed to his students and such an effective teacher, even when his students no longer have his class, they still come back to him for help. "Linda" comments, "I didn't have *this year, but I didn't get derivatives, so I went to him, and he helped me anyway. He explains it really well. Now I get it!" It is not unusual to walk into *'s class during lunch or before school and see friends of his students getting help from him, even though they are not his students. He had one of his seminar (it is like an advisory class) students and two of her classmates come in every week to receive help with their Functions, Statistics and Trigonometry class (FST), even though * does not have an FST class. All of them received A's, and two of them specifically asked their counselors to be in his Honors Pre-Calculus class because they knew he would teach them well.

In addition to being a dedicated and effective teacher, * presents his math classes in innovative ways, exhorting and helping the kids to find real world applications to mathematical problems. During the conics section, * has his students use higher-level thinking skills to learn conics. Each problem has a research, creativity, and application aspect. For example, a student would research to find his own satellite, and then rewrite a Harry Connick Jr. (he admits it is a poor pun off of the word conics!) song using the vocabulary from the conics section. I have seen an example of one; it is hilarious and informative. Finally each student would apply the mathematics by drawing a scale model using elliptical orbits. Using such actual mathematical situations and higher-level thinking skills greatly increased his students understanding, performance, and enjoyment of the concept. Over the past few years * has taken classes with our Literacy Coordinator, which has led to him incorporating Content Area Reading and Content Area Writing in each of his math classes. This progressive teaching not only increases students' writing skills, it has helped his less mathematically inclined students excel: it reaches students with different learning styles and reinforces their learning as they have to process the information differently than your average math class. Furthermore, * meets weekly with a colleague, the other Honors Pre-Calculus teacher, to create common assessments and discuss future planning and activities. * also collaborated with two other math teachers to

address the issues their students were having with logarithms. They devised a lesson plan to address these issues, then observed one another teaching and evaluated the students' work to fine tune the lesson plan. Since then they have seen a marked improvement on their students' logarithm test scores.

* is such a remarkable teacher; his influence is not solely limited to mathematics. He is a published children's author; therefore, each year he speaks to Phil Savage's Creative Writing class about writing and publishing work. * especially enjoys "putting on his author hat" and connecting with kids through a venue besides math. * comments, "The result is harder working students in math because they form a connection with him apart from math class. This is especially true of my kids who shine in Writing Class, but not as much in math." Besides writing, * also works with the technology department, teaching the staff technology classes during lunch. As he has attended many conferences for mathematics, on-line teaching, and technology, when * leads these technology classes, Pine Creek not only has more competent (and confident!) teachers using daily computer applications, the class time builds a rapport, such that teachers are not embarrassed to seek * out and to get help with any sort of technology. He is an invaluable and patient resource to new teachers, helping us adjust to the technology aspect of Pine Creek when moving from a less technology oriented school. I know this first-hand, as I was one of them!

Such versatility, academic commitment, and his generous, patient, and compassionate disposition make * * truly deserving of the Jared Polis Foundation's 2010 Teacher Recognition Award.