

## Daniel Bergschnieder

Daniel Bergschnieder teaches Mathematics and Language Arts at Fort Atkinson Middle School. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary and Middle School Education. He earned his Master's Degree in Professional Development from UW-LaCrosse in 2007.

Dan's educational philosophy centers on building relationships with students. He believes that when students feel cared for-- they learn and achieve more. He believes teaching is not about him, but about his students. He believes students do their best when held to high expectations. He also believes that what students learn at school needs to go beyond academics.

Each fall Dan has the opportunity to work with approximately 100 new students. Each student comes to his classroom with a variety of attitudes, beliefs, likes, dislikes, and experiences. It is his job to figure out what those are and how to adjust his teaching accordingly.

The biggest challenge in Dan's philosophy since he began teaching was addressing his belief that teaching was not about him but that it was much bigger than him and always about the

students! In order to address that, he learned that his teaching needs to be flexible in all facets from planning, to making special arrangements for students who may need modifications. His pacing needs to be fast enough to keep students engaged and involved-- but not so fast that he might lose students. His delivery needs to be spirited in using his energy.

When asked about addressing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers, Dan offers the following, "I tell my students I expect them to see and experience success." He believes the more his students hear expectations of success, the more willing they will be to achieve it. In order to inspire excitement for learning, he plans his lessons with examples that are as applicable and relevant in student lives.

One project that Dan has developed is his homework plan. During his master's study he began researching homework and different homework policies. The more he studied the concept the more he likened homework to athletic practice that a team would go through prior to a game. Athletic practices are times when mistakes can be corrected and players are not penalized. Using this analogy Dan created his own homework policy where the *game is the assessment* but homework is clearly practice time where he has a chance to identify mistakes early, correct them

with his students, and allow the assessments rather than the homework to be the basis of evaluation.

From Dr. Rob Abbott, “Mr. Bergschnieder’s in-depth knowledge of quality classroom instruction, desired learning outcomes, state standards, and varied evaluation tools improves student learning. Dan has a big personality that kids respond to as their time in his classroom unfolds.”

From a parent, “If I were to sum up Dan Bergschnieder’s mission statement as an educator-I would say he is committed to helping each student in the way that best fits with that student’s needs. Dan uses humor often in his approach which has made him a favorite teacher of many Fort Atkinson middle school students.”

From another parent,” Dan’s passion for teaching manifests itself through great communication with parents, whether identifying concerns or celebrating achievements. He has a firm fair approach where expectations and consequences are clearly set forth. He works tirelessly to ensure that students grasp and master concepts.

With pleasure, we forward the nomination of Dan Bergschnieder for the Kohl Teacher Fellowship Award.

