



Nick Hamele

Nicholas Hamele earned his Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Zoology and History. He later earned his M.Ed. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Science Education.

Nick's educational philosophy is about doing whatever is best for the students. In every class there are twenty-five different kids with twenty-five different learning styles, twenty-five different home lives, twenty-five different hobbies, and twenty-five different ways of approaching my class and life.

Nick notes; "Keeping that in mind at all times is central to the way I teach and interact with my students. That means that I cannot be a static teacher with only one or two methods of teaching. I incorporate a multitude of teaching styles and techniques in my classroom every day. I do a lot of hands on learning, where kids explore the natural world and build their own knowledge based on their actions. My students work in cooperative groups to help each other learn. I use visuals and animations to help students internalize how life works on even the smallest scale. Lastly, how I teach and what I teach matters very little if the kids are not interested in learning, don't feel safe and cared for, or aren't looking forward to coming to my class. I work hard to get to know every single one of my kids so that I can develop a strong student relationship with them.

I try to find out what do they enjoy and hate? Who are their friends? What are their dreams, or can I help them find a dream? I am enthusiastic about what I do and I think that pulls kids into my world; a world of endless possibilities, unanswered questions waiting to be discovered, the beauty of nature and the delicate balance of life. When a student leaves my class I hope they are awed at the splendor of work around them, but at the least they know a teacher cared how they did and cared about who and what they would become."

When asked how he works to raise achievement for all students, Nick states that "Some need an understanding ear, some a firm hand, and some need accommodations on assignments to boil them down to the most essential elements for understanding. Some need extra time, some need challenges to keep them interested and engaged, some learn best by helping their peers, and others learn best by being helped by a new friend. Love of learning is infectious. There is nothing he enjoys more than showing the kids the wondrous, the cool, the weird, the amazing all around and within themselves. Keeping parents involved in their student's education is paramount to instilling a sense of the importance of education in my student's lives.

When asked what innovative projects/programs he has developed for and with students Nick notes that over the years he has developed many new programs with his students. The one commonality in all of them is that they have all been student driven. In all of his activities, the students are the ones who develop the ideas, work through the problems and do the work. His role is to provide the outlet for their energies, to advise them and to help them along the path to success. The Science Club in Fort Atkinson has been highly active. They have done many community and environmental service projects over the years including: river and road cleanup, tree planting, Relay for Life, and various environmental; awareness projects. Nick also started a thriving “Movie Making” Club. Students produce a great, high quality science themed movie for the annual Super Science Gag Show event where the department presents a show for the whole high school and many elementary kids as well. A couple of those students are now perusing a career in video production.”

When asked about the positive aspects he sees in education, Nick states; Great people! Teachers working long days, coaches giving up untold hours to mold their charges, administrators patiently working to turn a troubled child around, custodians working with little thanks to keep the buildings clean and safe. That is what is best in education today. No amount of testing, equipment, money, or reworked curriculum can make half the difference that having highly skilled, dedicated and caring people in the schools can.”

From a former student, “Time and again, I have seen Mr. Hamele’s passion for teaching manifest itself. He goes beyond normal classroom studies and utilizes almost every resource available. In the classroom, he takes care of a family of turtles as well as rabbits for students to enjoy. He also advises the science Olympiad, travels for days with participants to regional meets, and serves as a judge in the robotics competition.”

From Dr. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, “Nick is an outstanding teacher because he customizes his instruction! Nick has a personality where people are drawn to him because he is honest, calm, and rational in how to approach even the most challenging issues. Nick has such a gift of having high expectations yet making learning fun, drawing students in!

From Jeff Zaspel, Principal, “Since his arrival here at Fort Atkinson High School six years ago, Nick has had a dramatic impact on the development of a meaningful and usable Biology curriculum. His abilities to critically consider professional change and move beyond the norm is a characteristic that I believe makes him stand out among his peers.”

It is with great pleasure that we forwarded the name of Nick Hamele for the Herb Kohl Teacher Fellowship Award.