

STEVEN MAHONEY

Steve graduated from the University of Wisconsin Whitewater in 1996 with a Bachelor's of Education Degree in Physical Education. Later, he earned his Master's of Curriculum & Instruction from UW Whitewater in 2006.

Steve's educational philosophy begins with giving all students an opportunity to succeed and achieve their personal goals within our educational environment at Fort Atkinson High School. All students bring something different to the table in the physical education world. Experiences in education need to be diverse and meaningful. Steve's classroom content is structured on standards-based learning using a mastery approach. Students are aware of the standards being assessed and the importance of achieving the standards. Life is about opportunities, and when placed with the right approach, student success will be achieved.

When asked to describe how to raise achievement for all students, Steve noted, “As an educator I feel grateful that I wake up everyday with the opportunity to inspire my students. The key for me is finding the right avenue to excite them. In order to inspire my students, I begin with simple conversations to get to know them and discover what drives each student to succeed. I utilize a variety of teaching methods, including small group activities, study guides, equipment demonstrations, and technology programs. In the small group activities, students engage in group work which not only develops relationships amongst peers, but it allows each student to spend a day in someone else’s shoes.”

When asked about innovative projects and programs, Steve noted he is most proud of his Advanced Strength and Conditioning course. When he introduced the class eight years ago, he had 23 students in one section enrolled. Eight years later, he has 275 students with a wide variety of abilities in ten sections.

Many physical education classes have the reputation of playing games and using the body to engage in learning. In Steve's Advanced Strength and Conditioning course he spends a great deal of time teaching foundation and principles of why and how we use our bodies properly to achieve maximum fitness opportunities, which proves to be just as important as the physical work. Steve has seen many students change their bodies over a semester and make changes they never thought were possible within just a semester of time.

In describing his commitment to the community, Steve spends a lot of time throughout the year running football clinics, camps, and information sessions that provide our youth football coaches the opportunity to learn the essential skills necessary to coach in our youth league.

In the spring of 2008, the Fort Atkinson area experienced the "100 year flood." "The homes in his father's neighborhood were some of the most severely damaged homes in the area. Because Steve had a four-wheeler and a duck boat, he was able to help

the flood victims remove items from their homes and bring in materials to repair the damage. Steve notes this was his first experience in helping victims of a natural disaster. It was truly an eye-opening experience and he was glad he could lend a hand in the recovery efforts.

In terms of unrealized goals that Steve would like to accomplish he notes that he would like to develop and offer a leadership class at the high school level. Leadership has been a passion of his for a long time. One of his favorite quotes from an unknown author is “Leaders are like Eagles, you rarely find them in a flock.”

When asked about positive aspects he sees in education today, Steve notes that everyday he is surrounded by people (teachers, parents, and administrators) who are invested in education and it makes him proud to be a teacher.

From Mike Hall, a colleague for the past 20 years, “The first thing that strikes anyone who meets Steve is that he does everything from the heart. As much as he is acclaimed for his

coaching accomplishments, Steve is a teacher first and always. Teaching was never a career choice for Steve; it was a calling.”

Dr. Jeff Zaspel, his high school principal shared the following story: “This past fall was the first time that Fort Atkinson hosted a cross country invitational on our campus. During the middle of a football practice, Steve stopped the practice and had his player’s line up along a path and cheer out Blackhawk runners! It was a heart warming experience for many of us and especially the cross country team. This is just one example of many that demonstrates how Steve teaches and models what it means to be a BLACKHAWK.”

Ladies and gentlemen, with great pleasure we forward the nomination of Coach Steve Mahoney for the Kohl Fellowship Award.