



Todd Linse

Todd Linse teaches Social Studies at our Middle School. Todd graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 1987 with a degree in Broadfield Social Studies with a Geography emphasis. He later earned his Masters in Education and Professional Development from the University of Wisconsin Whitewater in 1994. Todd began his teaching career in Fort Atkinson at Fort Atkinson junior high in 1987 and it has been our good fortune to have in our staff for the past twenty-two years.

When asked about his personal educational philosophy, Todd stated, "Regardless of which subjects I've taught, I've always believed that if students can't make a personal connection to what is being taught they will never truly learn. When I taught history I always thought it was more important for students to know why an event happened rather than the exact date and the names of the people involved. For example, I would ask my middle school students to complete a project to compare their own desire to be more independent to the situation between the colonies and their parents (Great Britain). Making that connection helped students to better understand and remember it."

Todd further states that in terms of behavior, he shares with his students each year that he has the right to teach and they have the right to learn and it's his job to make sure each of those things happen. He explained that his cooperating teacher during his student teaching experience shared the three F's with him. All kids respond to fair, firm and friendly. This approach has served him and his students well for twenty-two years.

Todd believes that forcing curriculum on a student without options is self defeating. If a student is given ownership of his/her learning they're much more likely to excel. Checking for understanding before moving on to the next unit/topic helps to build confidence in students. Students who are successful are motivated and initiate fewer behavioral issues which is beneficial to the whole classroom.

Todd further explains that many people view the middle school age as a very difficult level to teach. He approaches the position as an opportunity to nurture their love of learning. Middle school students have an amazing amount of energy.

The goal is to guide it in the right direction. Todd prefers to use hands-on activities. Technology has also become a major player in education and he's very fortunate to have a Smartboards in his classroom to help incorporate some of the 21st century tools into his classroom.

Todd really enjoys technology using it everyday. He views himself as above average at implementing it in his classroom. Todd states, "There are so many other things I would like to do with technology in my classroom. For example, set up landmarks in Google Earth using GPS units and post them complete with pictures from my students, set up a Facebook page for my classroom, and use Twitter to announce assignments. There's so much technology and so little time."

Per community efforts, Todd is an avid cyclist and regularly takes part in bike rides organized throughout southern Wisconsin. While participating in one of the rides he began thinking about running his own event. That led to a small bike ride to benefit a local non-profit organization to help people with life limiting diseases called Tomorrow's Hope. Money raised in the totally volunteer organization stays entirely in southern Wisconsin. The event began operating out of a small gym with 35 riders participating. The ride now attracts 1,750! The total amount of money raised to date with the event is well over \$100,000.

A former student states, "Mr. Linse always has been a very easy to talk to person. I felt comfortable in his class and was never denied the extra help or time I needed. His style of teaching was different from my other classes. One activity that has really stuck in my mind is a map making activity we did with food. To help my class memorize South America's land forms, Mr. Linse had us make a map out of peanut butter and add the land forms as various types of candy. When we finished we were allowed to eat the map. This unique, hands on activity was a welcome change from the traditional book work. To this day I clearly remember the specific land forms of South America. By putting us in random groups and forcing us to work with different people helped us to grow and gain social skills."

A colleague, Jennifer Statz states, "I benefit from the fortune working with Mr. Linse on the eighth grade interdisciplinary team where he serves as "team leader." Todd facilitates student interventions, parent conferences and honor level activities. He initiated the development of an integrated science and social studies unit which has been implemented for the past two years. Working with Todd in the preparation of this unit, I have witnessed his organizational skills and drive in

creating a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience where students of varying abilities are challenged by their own inquisition and changed by his enthusiasm for finding an answer.

It is with great pleasure that we recommend Todd Linse for the Herb Kohl Teacher Fellowship Award.

.