

MICHAEL HALL

Michael Hall graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 1986 with a Bachelor of Arts in English Education. He later earned his MP-ED Learning Community for the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. He began teaching for the Fort Atkinson School District in 1991.

When asked about his personal educational philosophy, Mike states, In 25 years of teaching, I have witnessed what students can do when they are presented with all the opportunities available. Given the proper environment, students can produce the clearest, most concise, and poetic writing that astonishes parents, teachers, and themselves. In our Essay Writing Class we often free write on the computer, turning the monitor off. This alleviates the anxiety of all conventional mistakes and allows the students to focus on their ideas and the flow of their voice. Students amaze themselves with their creativity and unique structure. Watching a student last year, who had never earned a C or better in writing, read his essay submission to an applauding audience at a publication release party and welled up with tearful pride poignantly encapsulated the first two tenets of education: Inspiration and passion.”

Mike fosters a *learning community* in which students not only care about individual performances but also about the achievement of others and of the group as a whole. Since implementing the learning community concept in his classes he

has seen student assignment completion and performance and their in-class test scores increase dramatically. In the past five years he has also seen the juniors' ACT scores steadily rise.

Mike's English 11 students do a neat exercise called the Leaf Project (as in turn over a new leaf). Students pinpoint three specific aspects in their lives where they would like to improve. Over the course of six weeks, they attempt to make measurable changes and take note of them in a journal. One student's goal was to mend her relationship with her mother so she could move back into the house and amicably live together. At parent-teacher conferences her mother tearfully attributed the Leaf Project to bringing her daughter back to her

When asked to describe his commitment to the community Mike replies, "For 20 years I have been consistently involved in the youth baseball programs, specifically supervising the Junior Small Fry and Small Fry Basketball Programs. In these programs, I teach players from kindergarten to third grade basketball skills and hopefully foster enthusiasm for the game

When asked what the positive aspects are in education Mike replied, "Those of us on the front line see positive aspects in education on a daily basis. The most progressive aspect in current education is the commitment to differentiated curriculums. School districts, such as Fort Atkinson, conscientiously put all students learning first. At the core of our District's mission are three fundamental

questions: “What do we want students to learn? How will we know that they have learned it? What will we do if they have not learned it?” And the underlying question to these three is “How does each student learn best?”

Brain Yearling, a former colleague states, “Mike is notorious for being intensely passionate about his work! He constantly considers where education fits into the world as it presently exists, not as it once was!

A former student notes, “Mr. Hall commands attention, but in a way that invites dialogues to form. You want to gain his respect because he believes a one-way flow of information from teacher to student isn’t the right style.

With pleasure the School District of Fort Atkinson forwards the nomination of Mike Hall as a most worthy recipient of the Kohl Fellowship award.

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