

CRITERIA FOR NOMINATING AN *OUTSTANDING TEACHER OF THE YEAR*

The Macomb County *Outstanding Teacher of the Year* awards are given annually to honor teachers who have achieved the highest standards of excellence in their profession. These awards are created out of a conviction that quality public education is essential to our community and that encouraging excellence in education is the shared responsibility of all who reap its benefits.

With national attention focused on all students meeting high standards, teacher quality is more important than ever. The most important mechanism a school has to ensure teacher quality is its evaluation system. The Macomb Intermediate School District uses Charlotte Danielson's **Framework for Teaching** theory as the cornerstone of the *Macomb County Outstanding Teacher of the Year* nominating and scoring process. We believe this system is research-based and provides a professionally meaningful system of teacher appraisal.

In Charlotte Danielson's book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*; she outlines measures relating to quality teaching organized into four domains, each with several components. These measures are:

- **Planning and Preparation** which includes comprehensive understanding of the content to be taught, knowledge of the students' backgrounds, and designing instruction and assessments.
- The **Classroom Environment** is concerned with the teacher's skill in establishing an environment conducive to learning, including both the physical and interpersonal aspects of the environment.
- **Instruction** is concerned with the teacher's skill in engaging students in learning the content, and includes the wide range of instructional strategies that enable students to learn.
- **Professional Responsibilities** includes a teacher's additional professional responsibilities, including self-assessment and reflection, communication with parents, participation in on-going professional development, and contributing to the school and district environment.

NOMINATING TESTIMONY

NOMINEE'S NAME: James D. Wagner

Please list the outstanding achievements and service demonstrated by the nominee during the last two years. In fairness to all, we ask that you limit your testimony to this assigned sheet and one additional blank sheet following.

**A. Evidence of teacher's evolving knowledge of Planning and Preparation:
*How does the nominee demonstrate his/her knowledge of content, pedagogy, students, instructional goals, and the design of coherent instruction? (25 points)***

Examples might include:

- Teacher's translation of instructional goals into meaningful learning experiences (i.e., adapting standards and benchmarks to their teaching, organizing and sequencing activities to engage students in learning and reflecting)
- Adjustment of instructional goals to accommodate the diversity represented by their students (i.e., knowledge of resources, varied approaches to learning, student interests and abilities)
- Use of assessment to inform the instructional process and plans for next steps (i.e., student feedback, reflecting on learning)
- Professional development in curriculum or in general teaching techniques

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

James Wagner has been a business teacher for Mount Clemens High School for the past eight school years. He has taught several computer classes, accounting, web design, and has taught one semester each of global studies and U.S. history. Student engagement and organized meaningful learning experiences in Mr. Wagner's classroom is a highlight in a student's life at Mount Clemens High School. Immediate feedback based on project-based learning ignites students' passion for high quality work in the real "adult world." The instructional process in James' classroom is based on respect, relationships, and rigor in academics.

James works very hard on his lesson plans each week. He makes sure each step of the learning process is met despite having multiple preparations. All of his classes involve real-world experiences bringing the textbooks to life and making the connection from the textbook and instruction to real world experiences. For example, James teaches computer applications A-word, where his students learn intermediate to advanced skills in the latest software utilized in the business world. Students master the skills, tools, and shortcuts to create professional documents throughout the semester. Near the end of the semester class, the students are assigned a career report. This report has several components, including transitional skill sets from which his students take with them after high school. The students first create a resume showcasing their achievements. He requires several revisions until it is perfect. Next, students complete an online quiz, which helps to identify their interests and possible career goals. Students then create a three-page report researching careers trends, schooling needed, colleges or training centers that offer the skills desired, income levels expected, the learning that the student can do to prepare

while in high school. Next, students need to find an existing job on the internet or newspaper and write a cover letter asking for an interview. Finally, students present their reports to the class. The entire process involves writing, researching, using the skills acquired in the computer class itself, public speaking, and editing of the project. The students will use all of these aspects after high school, either in college or locating a suitable employer. Mr. Wagner also involves real- world experiences in all of his other classes, some examples include:

- The creation of an electronic checkbook registry with formulas and graphs in excel; the students enter actual checks and balance the 12-month period to the penny!
- The use of *Monopoly* in aiding better understanding of the entire accounting process; as the students play the game, he or she must record all transactions that take place, recording and paying rent, buying land, etc. It involves the complete record keeping process and financial statements for an actual company.
- The mastery skills to create web pages and then create several different web pages in the classroom, one involving the research of a country's languages, currency, industry, holidays, teen life and other information. The completed web pages can then be seen by the public on the schools web page.

Throughout his teaching career, James has had several different preps, yet devotes hundreds of extra hours needed to make sure each class is relevant, engaging, and meets the interests of the ever-changing high school student. While James is at school prepping for all of his classes, before and after school, he opens the lab to work with students who need additional help. He allows students to work before school, on lunch breaks, or after school; whichever is the most convenient to meet the student's needs.

While most special education students have special education classes for the core academic subjects, every student is required to have one credit of computers. This involves James to be able to teach to a variety of learning levels in the classroom, from the high-achieving student, to the one that may have difficulty reading. This does not deter him. Mr. Wagner takes the time and energy to meet with special education teachers to find out more information about his students and to create some idealistic goals for the student. Through these meetings with other staff members, James has learned to adjust class work and tests based on accommodations so all students can achieve. Furthermore, he utilizes different teaching strategies from traditional lecture, PowerPoint presentations, paired work, class discussions, and grouping students to create an effective learning community.

After a lesson, class assignment or a test, James looks over the results and makes notes and modifications for the next time the lesson is to be taught. If the results show that the concepts were not mastered, James will review and correct the areas where students were lacking either by creating a new teaching strategy or consulting other colleagues for different ideas. He always asks for student feedback to find where he can improve, even if the class mastered the content; he always wants to improve his teaching to provide the best for his classes.

James continues to always monitor what is going on in the business world through Career Technical meetings and meetings with business members in the community. If there is something that current employees are missing, James revises the business curriculum to add it. He wants to promote high levels of achievement as well as ensure that Mount Clemens' students have every possible advantage when they graduate.

B. Evidence of teacher's ability to establish a Classroom Environment:

How does the nominee build a respectful learning community where there is respect, safety, and high expectations for all students? (25 points)

Examples might include:

- Existence of relationships grounded in respect, dignity, safety, and caring
- Strong culture of learning where everyone is engaged in pursuits of value on high-quality work
- Student pride in work
- Procedures for smooth operation of the classroom and the efficient use of time (i.e., management of classroom procedures, standards of conduct)
- Enhancement of the physical environment and use as a resource for learning

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

From the first day of class, James treats the students like co-workers and lets them know they are in an office environment. Students act like they are employees of his and are expected to be on time and perform assigned tasks. What he or she would imagine to see in an office setting is the behavior and work ethic that he expects from them; he even offers extra credit to students every Wednesday for wearing business attire. He has few rules, the first and most important being respect. Students must respect themselves, each other, Mr. Wagner, and the school, itself. James models this behavior at all times, reminding students that he will treat them with respect and dignity, but it is always expected in return. To further promote a friendly atmosphere, students are encouraged to ask their “co-workers” for help during class work. At times, James will be assisting one student when another is in need of help. Instead of making the second student wait and lose instructional time, James will ask an advanced student to provide assistance. This provides aid to the student in need, yet also reinforces the material being taught by the student offering help; if you can teach something, you have mastered the skill. He lets the students know he is there for a resource, but encourages them to help each other and build a strong learning community. To further promote a friendly learning atmosphere, James allows students to talk while they work, provided they are working at a proficient pace. In the near future, the students will have a job and will need to provide their own direction.

The grading scale in James’ classes is based on very high expectations. He reinforces the need for perfection in both the business world and the classroom. He will work with students over and over again helping them through struggles, until the student has achieved the desired outcome. At this time, James compliments his students and helps them see the relationship between time on a task, the outcome and the pride of accomplishment. After the completion of an assignment or project, students work is displayed on the classroom walls to remind the individual or team of a job well done (print friendly walls tells students what is valued).

Mount Clemens High School has traditional 60-minute classes. While James will plan a lesson to effectively use all instructional time available, there are times when some students may finish early while others continue to work. Instead of assigning more work for all students, he will have the advanced students perform additional tasks that involve numerous business skills. This may involve typing a memorandum or agenda for an upcoming *Business Professional of America* meeting, researching new supplies or technology available on the internet, file paperwork for the department or assisting other staff members in the building. Since James

teaches computers and is very knowledgeable with the Microsoft Office Suite, many staff members and secretaries will ask him for help or to create documents needed for the school. This is another avenue Mr. Wagner uses to have his students see the benefits of the curriculum being taught. He will send a student to assist the person in need and create the needed documents. Over the years students have created and revised many documents that are given to parents, other students, and the athletic department. He wants for every student to feel like a viable member of the school community and makes sure his or her time at school is productive.

James' classroom is a computer lab. Several years ago, he worked with the technology staff to create a more conducive learning environment. The classroom is laid out so students can hear and see all instruction-taking place. The room also provides room where James can monitor students' efforts and provide assistance when needed. The students quickly become accustomed to the setup of the room and learn where assignments are turned in, where individual work folders are, and the location of other classroom supplies. While engaging students in high-level thinking and learning activities, James also manages to enforce rules set forth by the administration and school board.

James strives to bring the latest technology and current business trends into the classroom. He has helped the staff and students become accustomed to visual projection devices, how to use the school network drives and the advanced features with the e-mail system to name a few. Mr. Wagner also visited a nearby high school and talked with teachers and became aware of another excellent teaching tool, the SMART board. After becoming familiar with the details, he arranged an in-service on the use of the SMART boards for our high school staff. Afterwards, he ordered several of them for the Career Technical Department and looks forward to their use once they are installed in the classroom.

C. Evidence of the teacher's evolving knowledge of Instruction:

How does the nominee promote student engagement in learning the content and which instructional strategies are used? (25 points)

Examples might include:

- Communication skills (i.e., vivid and expressive language, quality of oral and written communication)
- The use of questioning and discussion techniques (i.e., elicits student reflection, framing questions of high cognitive challenge, use of questions to extend learning)
- Active construction of learning (i.e., intellectual involvement with the content, participation, problem-solving activities, student choice and initiative, use of higher-order thinking skills, learning designed to be relevant, diverse grouping strategies, use of instructional materials and resources, lesson structure and pacing)
- Provision of high quality feedback
- Demonstration of flexibility and responsiveness (i.e., sense of efficacy, commitment to the learning of all students)

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

I feel that James' commitment to *Business Professionals of America (BPA)* allows students to engage in the content. This business club allows students to compete in more than 50

business- related events like accounting and web design and lets students achieve great success. The club, year after year, continues to be the largest club in the entire high school due to the involvement of Mr. Wagner who is constantly recruiting students. The current membership for 2006-2007 involves 65 members or 10% of the entire school population. Each year, Mr. Wagner and other staff members take approximately 30 regional winners to state competition for a weekend long professional business conference. For many students this is the first experience at a professional conference setting. Over the years, James has had one first-place national winner and has advised many more to compete at the national level. The drive for the best in the classroom is made more relevant when it is turned into a competitive arena for BPA. While advising this club for the past eight years, James has worked with students after school, in the evenings, and has even had the students come into school over school breaks to learn more so they could be ready for competition. In preparation for events and learning the business material, James works with the students one-on-one, as well as in small groups. To make preparation for events even more real-world, James involves members of the business community in advising and preparing students.

James involves a variety of written communication in his classes. It may be a case study in accounting where students pair up, discuss the situation, provide a written paragraph, and then present orally to the class. Or it may be an essay topic in computers where the students are asked to write a half page or more on a relevant topic and then volunteer to share with the class. His instruction frequently involves a detailed direction sheet accompanied by oral instruction during which he clarifies student questions on the task. Also, James uses class groups whenever possible. These class groups are a cross section of gender, age, race, and ability levels.

James uses all resources available to him on a daily basis. He is very experienced and comfortable using technology in all classes. Additionally, he encourages other teachers to use more technology and has assisted some over the years. He also uses projects whenever possible. He feels that projects help to greatly reinforce the benchmarks and criteria to be mastered. His favorite is the accounting simulation where students become the accountant for a company and are provided with receipts from the past month. Next students are required to determine what has transpired and then journalize the transactions accordingly. This simulation takes several weeks to complete, but it allows the students to experience what an actual accountant does. James also takes advantages of numerous field trips that will promote the curriculum and further engage the student. The most widespread is the Learn and Earn Career Expo at Macomb Community College each spring. James has taken the leadership position and has arranged for more than 100 students and staff each year to attend this experience.

The pacing of James' classes varies depending on the students' skill levels. He is quick to let the students know that learning takes place everyday and that the expectations are for the class to be moving on to the next objective the following day. While he encourages students to be involved in co- and extra-curricular activities, he does not excuse them from the assigned material. They are still expected to complete work assigned and master the skills covered. He expects students to be in class all the time although he acknowledges that unforeseen circumstances may prohibit a student from completing work. At this time, James changes from teacher to counselor. Letting the student know that he will listen to and care about his or her concerns and circumstances. He will make the accommodations he determines necessary. James will work with students outside of the classroom if someone has been sick or fallen behind, but the student will need to work hard to make up any work missed and they know that is what is expected by Mr. Wagner.

**D. Evidence of the teacher's evolving knowledge of Professional Responsibilities:
*How does the nominee reflect on his/her teaching and foster relationships with colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community? (25 points)***

Examples might include:

- Reflection (i.e., sensitivity to the engagement of students, accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness, use of reflections in practice)
- Maintaining accurate records (i.e., records of competencies, portfolios)
- Communicating with families
- Contributing to the school and district (i.e., collegiality, leadership, volunteering)
- Growing and developing professionally (i.e., professional organizations, conferences, local and state educational agencies, conducting research, supervising teachers, mentoring teachers)
- Showing professionalism (i.e., professional standards, advocacy)

Use only the space provided on this sheet and one additional blank sheet following

James continuously critiques his teaching styles and lesson plans through self-assessment and student responses. Furthermore, he continues to evaluate his teaching while assisting other colleagues in the school. In the past three years, James has been the mentor teacher for two other business teachers. He continues to work with them on a daily basis and offer insight and teaching strategies for them to consider. James shares lesson plans that have been highly successful and also shares with his colleagues previous lessons that did not work out well (lessons learned – both positive and negative). This past semester he supervised a student teacher for 16 weeks and helped to critique her lessons and strategies on an on-going basis. The entire process was a very rewarding experience for both student and mentor teacher. Also a former student who has decided to pursue business education spent a day shadowing Mr. Wagner. The student took notes and asked questions about teaching and also inquired about the ups and downs of teaching. All of these experiences further demonstrate James' love for teaching and his desire to help all students and staff.

Again with a strong sense of technology, James keeps accurate student records with Excel and is able to show each student his or her grade on a weekly basis through a grade-keeping file that he created and has shared with other staff members. It is an exceptional tool that allows the student to see his or her exact percentage and what needs to be completed to raise the grade. He also uses technology to communicate with families through email on a weekly basis; some parents receive numerous emails in one week. He also makes phone calls about attendance and performance in the classroom. While the majority of James' home contacts are for discipline, he also is quick to provide parents with feedback for their student's positive efforts while engaged in the home-school conversation. This past semester, after several reminders to a student about a missing assignment, James contacted the family to apprise them of the situation. Needless to say, an hour after school the student returned with the assignment, avoiding any late penalties.

James works with all staff whenever possible. He was the Chair for the School Improvement Team (S.I.T.) for several years working with other staff members to develop new school strategies and to maintain the school's NCA accreditation. One of the outstanding strategies developed by the S.I.T. team was the implementation of "Test Talks." This process

required all high school students to meet with a faculty member, one-on-one, to discuss student achievement and standardized test scores. The reaction of the staff and students were powerfully positive. The process is a continuing strategy. He currently is co-chair of the data analysis committee and helps to move the agenda along and make sure everyone has an active and vital role in the group's efforts. He also has been a building union representative and has communicated staff and building concerns to the administration. He was co-class sponsor for the graduating class of 2004 for all four years. He works with students, parents, and staff on fundraising, annual float building, prom, student elections and the All-Night Party where he volunteered to sit in the dunk tank and let students make him swim in the cold water!

James continues to be an advisor of *Business Professionals of America (BPA)* and he also served as the Regional Advisor for 2004 and 2005. He continues to offer support and insight to other business teachers all throughout Region 4. Through BPA he attends the regional, state, and most years, the national leadership conferences. Furthermore, he is involved in the *Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants (M.A.C.P.A)*, an organization that works to promote the accounting field with annual conferences.

James also is a vital member and volunteer at the community, county, nation and world levels. This past year, warm clothes for students at the high school were requested for the upcoming winter. After he received the email on Friday, he immediately forwarded it to his friends and family asking if any could help. He proceeded to pick up eight bags of clothes over the coming weeks and delivered them to the school. James has been a *People to People* Student Ambassador Leader for the past seven years, during his summer breaks. He has worked with students from Macomb, St. Clair, and Oakland counties helping to learn about other cultures and completing service projects overseas. He also assists with training in preparation for students' home-stay visits in other countries where they experience life in the host country. Following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, James spent his Spring Break helping to rebuild houses in New Orleans, Louisiana. He also was able to spend one day at an after-school program working with students from the community. After the experience, he shared his pictures of the devastation with his classes to help them better understand the need for human compassion.

Through all of his endeavors, James promotes and utilizes the highest level of professionalism when working with students, staff, administration, parents and community members. He is always working to help all students master relevant skill sets while teaching business. He is up-to-date and very knowledgeable about current business trends curriculum, and government issues that affect his students and school.

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