



March 22, 2021

First Year Teacher of the Year

Derrick Gainsforth

Two Rivers High School

New Pathways

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Derrick Gainsforth for the First Year Teacher of the Year! Mr. Gainsforth is an incredible educator who is dedicated, passionate about his students, and teaching. He currently serves as a teacher in New Pathways at Two Rivers High School. I have been Mr. Gainsforth's principal for 2 years where he has worked as a student advocate and now as an English/Journalism teacher. During that time, I have observed that Mr. Gainsforth radiates a deep level of passion and an insatiable desire to help his students succeed.

From the first time I met Derrick, he impressed me with his enthusiasm and his genuine desire to determine the best way to meet each student's unique learning needs in his classroom. Derrick is not only a teacher in New Pathways but he oversees the entire program. New Pathways is a dropout intervention and credit recovery blended learning program serving students who are significantly deficient in graduation credits and are unlikely to make an on time graduation with their class. Some of the district's most vulnerable and fragile students are given the opportunity to find success as they continue their educational journey. Derrick has taken on this challenge as a first year teacher with a comprehensive plan and deep understanding of what this student population needs to reconnect with school in order to move forward in their education. One example where I have witnessed Derrick work his magic with a student who came to New Pathways extremely credit deficient and years of chronic absenteeism. This young man had been lost along the way and needed to find a new path. Derrick was able to help this student find meaning and purpose in his education again. Derrick was able to captivate this young man in his engaging curriculum through personal connection and finding what worked for this student. In fact, this young man is so passionate about his experience with Derrick and New Pathways he has been recruiting students who have faced some of his same challenges to enroll in New Pathways.

As a first year teacher, Mr. Gainsforth has taken on how to be a master at blended learning, meeting students where they are at, finding what works for each individual student, analyzing data, creating individualized learning plans, developing his curriculum in English and Journalism and much, much more! He has taken this on with the determination to find success for every student. His passion and love for his students is unlike any other. Derrick has not only been developing his ELA curriculum to inspire and motivate his students but has also brought Journalism to the students in New Pathways. He has used this as a tool to captivate his students and to create hands-on learning experiences, which has motivated them to find interest in school again. He has used Journalism as one of the vehicles to drive student engagement

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and learning. He and his students have created *New Pathways Press Publications* where students have recorded and produced three video publications so far this school year. His students have been so proud of their great work! You can visibly see the “light” that has turned on for his students. In order for Derrick to provide this opportunity, he had to turn to grants and fundraisers in order to have the equipment to create this experience for his students. I have watched Derrick reach students who have given up on their education or who don’t “fit the mold” of a traditional learning environment to where they begin to reconnect with school and learning. He has a special talent and ability to connect with students with various needs and backgrounds. His students display a deep level of respect for him because they know how much he cares about them.

Derrick has worked tirelessly as a first year teacher. He is always the last teacher to leave the building at the end of the day. He puts the time and effort in to be the best teacher he can be for his students and to provide them with an individualized educational plan. Due to the unique structure of the New Pathways Program, he has had to think “outside the box” to a level most of us never think possible. Derrick thrives on the personalized approach to learning with each one of his students as well as their personal interests and needs to develop their educational learning plan. He spends an incredible amount of time preparing his lesson plans, structuring and analyzing data and tracking student progress. He is at the forefront of being in the arena and is all in with his students, Two Rivers High School and the New Pathways Program.

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Derrick Gainsforth for the First Year Teacher of the Year award for Weber School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Meibos', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Nicole Meibos
Principal
Two Rivers High School
New Pathways/Horizon Academy