

OSPI Press Release for Mark Ray, Teacher of the Year

Mark Ray, a teacher librarian at Skyview High School in Vancouver, was named Washington's 2012 Teacher of the Year at an awards ceremony today.

On behalf of State Superintendent Randy Dorn, Assistant Superintendent Dan Newell congratulated the nine Regional Teachers of the Year and announced the State Teacher of the Year at Experience Music Project | Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame. The event was hosted by EMP|SFM and the Charles Beresford Company.

Although unable to attend the event, Superintendent Dorn praised the group. "Mark and the 2012 Teachers of the Year represent our very best," he said. "They are highly skilled and they have high standards for their kids, but they also know that relationships count and that great teaching happens one kid at a time."

Program sponsors PEMCO Insurance, SMART Technologies, and Saxton Bradley, Inc. each donated cash awards, technology prizes and scholarships for classroom improvements for both Mark and the Regional Teachers of the Year.

For Mark, education is a family affair. Nearly 20 years into his career as a teacher librarian, he's spent most of them in the same district where his father taught and his mother served lunch.

Parents and colleagues describe Mark as transformational and credit his vision and enthusiasm for the success of projects as varied as redesigning classroom assessment to igniting an enthusiasm for research in the student body.

Mark's approach to working with students is based on a firm belief that there are many ways to say "yes" to a student and that even seemingly insignificant interactions can have an enormous impact on individual students. In addition to his work in the library and classrooms, Mark also coaches tennis at Skyview, where his nationally recognized "no cut" program welcomes students of all abilities.

Mark is an enthusiastic and creative partner. His efforts to empower teachers with technology and new communication skills are infused with a sense of urgency and possibility. Whether using Google Docs, Prezi or the pop culture phenomena of vampires, Mark is constantly reminding teachers that they have more control than they realize to dream and create new ways of engaging students.

"Every year, I can't wait to see what new techniques he has come up with to help kids understand research," said colleague Brenda McKinney. "From puppet to amazing Powerpoint skills, from in depth knowledge to saying it exactly how it is, Mark uses the stage of his media center to let kids know that research is accessible."

Mark also believes passionately that teachers must begin stepping into more leadership roles and embrace the risk of trying something new if we are to meet the educational imperative of educating a new type of student and create a truly 21st century school system.