

Robert Hand of Mount Vernon High School Selected as 2019 Washington State Teacher of the Year

[ANACORTES, WA, September 12, 2018] – September 10, 2018, Robert Hand, a Mount Vernon High School teacher and Northwest Educational Service District 189 (NWESD) Regional Teacher of the Year, was selected as 2019 Washington State Teacher of the Year. The prestigious award was presented by Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction at an awards ceremony held at the Museum of Popular Culture (MoPOP) in Seattle. Mr. Hand was selected from a talented group of nine teacher nominees from Educational Service District across the state.



Reykdal was impressed by the balance Hand maintains. “Robert cares about his students as individuals,” Reykdal said. “He also makes sure his teaching goes beyond the classroom and relates to the community. As just one example, he led his class to display the flags and colors of 11 of the countries from which students at Mount Vernon High School come.”

After the awards ceremony NWESD Superintendent Larry Francois said, “All the regional TOY candidates were extremely impressive. Individually and collectively they demonstrated the best of the teaching profession. Robert’s passion, commitment, and ability to positively connect with all students was evident. We are honored and humbled to have Robert represent the NWESD region and the State of Washington as the 2018-19 TOY.”

The Washington State Teacher of the Year program recognizes educators for their excellence in teaching while giving them a platform to advocate for educational issues of particular interest to them. In addition to Northwest Regional Teacher of the Year duties as Washington State Teacher of the Year Mr. Hand will:

- Represent the state at all required National Teacher of the Year events including several national leadership conferences and the national recognition week in Washington, D.C.
- Serve as the Teacher-in-Residence for Washington's Teacher of the Year program January - June.
- Respond to and fulfill Teacher of the Year speaking requests, presentations, etc.
- Sit on the Washington Teacher Advisory Council (WATAC) leadership team and help plan the spring convening.
- Identify and take on at least one statewide initiative and carry out activities to support it.
- Design and carry out a personal communication plan to include a social media and web presence, traditional media strategy, and other publications.
- Network with teacher preparation programs across the state.

Earlier this year, NWESD's Assistant Superintendent of Operations, David Forsythe, helped guide the selection process of the recipient of NWESD's Regional Teacher of the Year. Forsythe said, "I had the opportunity to observe Robert teach last spring and the thing that stood out immediately is how he engaged every student throughout the class. Students came in and out of the class throughout the period, and he acknowledged every student as they came in without disrupting the flow of his instruction."

Currently serving as a Family and Consumer Services Instructor at Mount Vernon High School in Mount Vernon, Mr. Hand is described as "having the ability to challenge students, build relationships with students, and to help many students develop the skills that they need to be successful in high school and beyond," by Rodrick Merrell, former MVHS Principal.

Mr. Hand is passionate about building a positive school culture and clearly has strong feelings on equity in the classroom. In his Teacher of the Year application, Hand noted, "As a co-advisor for Social Justice Club, we talk about family backgrounds, social issues, and barriers many students face in school. We look for ways to support undocumented students and their families. We identify barriers such as difficulty pilling out school paperwork. We look to provide support for bilingual and ELL students. We provide a safe place for students to discuss their fears in school and what we can do to support them. We guide our students to recognize inequities in our school and advocate for change."

More Teacher of the Year Resources:

OSPI Press Release <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAOSPI/bulletins/20c3e22>

OSPI Teacher of the Year Info <http://www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/TOY/default.aspx>

About Robert Hand <http://www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/TOY/TOY2019.aspx>

The NWESD, located in Anacortes, is one of nine Educational Service Districts in Washington State. The NWESD serves 35 school districts in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties; providing leadership and cooperative services to the educational communities in the northwest region. For more information about the NWESD, please visit www.nwesd.org.

For more information contact:

Jessica Haag, NWESD Communications Specialist

jhaag@nwesd.org | (360) 299-4714