

Art Educator of the Year and Secondary Art Educator of the Year

Nathan Kukla

Northview High School, Grand Rapids, MI



Nathan graduated from Michigan State University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in Art Education with a minor in Fine Arts. After graduating, he was hired by West Ottawa Public Schools as an elementary art educator, which he loved. In May of 2002, he completed his Master of Education in Teaching and Curriculum Development at Michigan State University. Also, that year, he accepted a position at the secondary level to teach art at West Ottawa High School.

As an artist and advocate for the arts, Nathan works to help students get past the fear that prevents many from expressing themselves. He encourages students to push boundaries artistically and explore the process of blending emerging trends and traditional processes in new ways.

As an active member of the MAEA and NAEA and life-long learner he continues to explore art and learn new skills, while cultivating relationships with working artists, fellow art educators, and organizations within the community.

"I have never met anyone who works harder to celebrate the creativity and visual voices of all children. For well over 20 years, Nathan has poured his life and love into building a visual arts program that focuses entirely on artistic growth and advocating for the passions of every student; his selflessness has driven him to take on any and all opportunities that support and promote the accomplishments and hard work of children." - Sara Goodrich

"I deeply admire Nathan's learner-based approach to Art education. Profoundly aware of each student's creative mode of learning, he relates delivery of content to their day-to-day life experiences through a constructivist approach. He actively addresses the emotional and social development of students by advising numerous extracurricular clubs such as the GSA and National Art Honor Society. He has developed district-wide initiatives addressing anti-bullying and stress management. He displays active concern for the welfare of all his students; making concerted efforts to prepare each of them for success. Nathan works tirelessly to implement student engagement strategies for critical thinking, collaboration, and self-management including modeling the use of emerging technologies. He advocates for the Arts through interdisciplinary collaborations with departments across the district including Theatre, Dance, English, Forensics, and Athletics, as well as via connections to professional artists and community organizations in the field. This unique blend of artistry, resourcefulness, empathy, and humor comes naturally to Nathan and his community loves him for it." - Sherry Erskine, Vice President for Education GOH Productions

