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Sent: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 8:29:48 PM
To: Swenson, Ryan <rswenson@helenaschools.org>
Subject: Endorsement Letter Request

After a suggestion to apply, I think I am going to apply for the NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence that Jane sent an email about yesterday.

One of the aspects asks for an endorsement letter from a colleague and you would obviously be the one who knows the most about what I do since our teaching is inherently tied together.

Looking over the application, I think the criteria points you would be best suited to speak directly to from experience would be:

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: The awardee demonstrates expertise, creativity, and innovation in his/her field. The awardee uses a variety of strategies to effectively address students' different learning styles and needs. The awardee is a leader at the local, state, and/or national level.

and

LEADERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: The awardee continually engages in experiences to improve his or her practice and to gain new skills and knowledge. The awardee shares this new learning with colleagues in a variety of venues.

In addressing these, to provide some examples of things that came to mind that you could use if it helped would be:

-Desmos classroom activities: using them often in my classroom, presenting these to our department, and encouraging others to use them

-Standards referenced grading (for everything except final assessments) so students can track their understanding and have a growth mindset since they can always go back and improve their understanding (and score)

-Individual student check-in questions to do multiple formative checks per lesson

-Bungee lab, rocket lab, exponential bean/zombie/virus spread lab, the college-style quest to encourage open thinking and applying their knowledge instead of just regurgitating, coding unit in Tech Math, circuit unit in Tech Math, flipped classroom in Stats

-Introducing Math Colloquium

-Restructuring our quadratics unit to help students sequence the topics in a way that makes more sense to them and isn't just what the book has

-Factoring with fractions technique with the visual component to help students with different learning styles and then publishing it to share with teachers throughout the nation who may find it helpful

-Note packets to help students stay organized and conceptualize the topics as we go through a lesson

-Posting resources on our class websites even pre-pandemic to support absent students and students who did not get it the first time in class so they can watch it at their own pace later with lesson recordings and PDFs of the class notes

-Cohosting the math website design PIR and getting our department colleagues to 1) have websites and 2) put more resources online even before the pandemic

These are what came to mind right off the bat, but obviously feel free to write what you see fit for an endorsement letter. The directions state it can be between 1-2 pages double spaced and should be addressed to "The Selection Panel for The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence."

The application is due by April 1, so I recognize that is a tight deadline. However, if you are able, I'd say just throw something together quick in one sitting and that would work great/be immensely appreciated by me.

Thanks for your help with this if you are willing and able!