



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mohawk Trail Regional School Middle School Teacher Brennan Tierney
Recipient of Award for Promising New Teacher
Honored by the Massachusetts Council for Social Studies

BUCKLAND, MA - Mohawk Trail Regional School (MTRS) is proud to announce that middle school teacher Brennan Tierney has been awarded recognition by the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies (MCSS) with the Richard Aieta Award for Promising New Teacher. Amid an extremely strong field of candidates, the MCSS reviewer cited that the letter and supporting materials submitted on Tierney's behalf describe a truly remarkable educator.

Tierney teaches eighth grade social studies and his work is described by his colleagues as "creative, innovative, and engaging." Colleague Catherine Glennon, high school social studies teacher, shared that Tierney jumped in with both feet at MTRS, and especially the civics work which is a central theme at Mohawk Trail Regional, especially in 8th and 10th grades. She continued, "Brennan is an enthusiastic and thoughtful collaborator and is helping us build a solid program of civic education between our middle and high school." Not only is he offering students historical background needed to meet guidelines and prepare for the new social studies MCAS, he is also creating opportunities for in depth exploration with civics projects and experiential learning related to current civics-based issues.

Tierney's colleagues recognize that, especially as a first-year teacher, he's performing at a very high level of competence, going above and beyond, and relates to his students on a human level in a way that genuinely reinforces the community identity MTRS is trying to build in MTRS students. Mohawk Trail Regional School pillars are: I am part of this community. I am accountable for my actions. I can contribute in a positive way.

Tierney has planned field trips; held panel discussions, mock trials and public hearings; and devised numerous other creative and engaging activities for his students. As an example, Tierney scheduled a panel of local town government representatives, also attended by MA State Representative Natalie Blais, for students to engage with over zines (homemade publications devoted to specific subject matter) they created ahead of time on topics important to them. Students prepared intelligent and thoughtful questions prefaced with information about themselves and their topics of interest such as climate change and housing issues. They held articulate conversations with the speakers and learned a great deal about local government, their communities, and their project topics. More recently, Tierney organized a field trip for 8th grade students to attend Franklin County Law Day at the Franklin County Justice Center on May 1.

Students toured the courtrooms and offices throughout the building and asked questions of William Mazanec, first justice for the Greenfield District Court (and Mohawk Trail Regional graduate). Students identified connections between their learnings in Civics class and the keynote address from John Bonifaz, a constitutional law scholar, and his daughter, Marisol Bonifaz, a high school student activist. They spoke about the current state of voter suppression, the importance of participating in democracy, and ways students can be more involved. Jordyn, an eighth grader at Mohawk Trail Regional School, said she “learned a lot about the justice system,” along with democracy and the court system, at the event.

Another colleague, Andrew Moffett, MTRS Learning Specialist, observes, “When not in the classroom, Brennan is often seen playing basketball with students, engaging them in conversation and demonstrating his presence as an ally. He is a fair and transparent educator. He clearly communicates classroom content, how students are being assessed and finds alternative ways for students to demonstrate their content knowledge. He is a valued team member in the 8th grade and my students are lucky to have him as their teacher.” Reporting on what 8th grade students have to say, Moffett shares, “They find him to be understanding and use humor in his teaching to help get his content across. One student reported that ‘he makes schoolwork fun.’ Another reported that ‘he always has a positive energy.’ One went even as far as to say he is the ‘G.O.A.T.’”

Tierney is inspiring his students to believe they can contribute to their communities by giving them background to consider, assigning civic action projects, and exposing them to people who can help them affect change. His work aims to create better citizens and advocates in our young people.

Tierney, who lives in Northampton, initially became familiar with Mohawk Trail Regional as a master’s degree candidate in the [University of Massachusetts’s 180 Day teacher residency program](#) in their College of Education. Following that experience, Tierney opted for employment at MTRS and has proven his mettle each day this year. Thank you, Mr. Tierney!

ABOUT MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL

26 Ashfield Road, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

The Mohawk Trail Regional School (MTRS), located in Buckland, Mass., serves grades seven through 12 a middle and high school. Located in a rural community in the Berkshire foothills, the school serves students from Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Shelburne, and beyond. MTRS is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Our distinct Trailblazer model allows students choice, flexibility, and personalization as they explore their interests and challenge themselves while being supported by a host of invested teachers and collaborative peers. To learn more, please visit www.mtrs.org, or find us on Facebook and Instagram.

ABOUT THE AIETA PROMISING TEACHER AWARD

Named in memory of Richard Aieta, Dick was an extraordinary social studies educator, whose talents enriched social studies education in the Commonwealth. In addition to working with high

school students he provided training for pre-service teachers at the college level. Dick is also recognized for his work on behalf of MCSS.

ABOUT THE MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

The Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies (MCSS) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit educational organization. It is a network of social studies educators who work at every level of schooling. They communicate with each other through conferences, publications and meetings. They broaden their communication by working with related professional associations, government, and private agencies.

[\(video to 22 News\)](#)