

[Mohawk Trail Regional School's Tierney honored as promising new teacher](#)

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BUCKLAND — In recognition of his social studies and civics instruction that aims to create better citizens and young advocates, Mohawk Trail Regional School eighth grade teacher Brennan Tierney has received the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies' Richard Aieta Award for Promising New Teacher.

Colleague Catherine Glennon, high school social studies teacher, shared that Tierney has jumped in with both feet during his first year teaching at Mohawk Trail Regional School, especially in the realm of civics. Not only does Tierney present students with the historical background needed to meet guidelines and prepare for the social studies standardized tests, he also creates opportunities for in-depth exploration with civics projects and experiential learning related to current civics-based issues.

“Brennan is an enthusiastic and thoughtful collaborator and is helping us build a solid program of civic education between our middle and high school,” Glennon said in a statement.

Tierney, who lives in Northampton, initially became familiar with Mohawk Trail Regional School as a master's degree candidate in the University of Massachusetts Amherst's 180 Day teacher residency program. After that experience, Tierney opted for employment at Mohawk Trail.

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 organized a panel of town officials, also attended by state Rep. Natalie Blais, for students to engage with. Students prepared questions on their topics of interest, such as climate change and housing issues, and learned about local government and their towns.

More recently, Tierney organized a field trip for eighth grade students to attend Law Day at the Franklin County Justice Center on May 1. Students toured the courtrooms and offices, and asked questions of William Mazanec III, first justice for Greenfield District Court and a Mohawk Trail Regional School graduate. Students also identified connections between their civics lessons and the keynote address from John Bonifaz, a constitutional law scholar, and his daughter, Marisol Bonifaz, a student activist.

Another colleague, Learning Specialist Andrew Moffett, mentioned, “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.”

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