

Waukesha North science teacher honored by peers across Wisconsin

Hill strives to make science real, engaging for students

By Josh Perttunen
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WAUKESHA – Eric Hill's colleagues at Waukesha North High School said the second-year science teacher has hit the ground running since he was hired.

While teaching biology and land and water studies at his alma mater, the 2006 WNHS graduate has strived to develop engaging projects for his students, noted physics teacher Greta Voit.

This approach is why his recognition as one of the top new science teachers in the state comes as no surprise, Voit added.

On Friday, Hill will receive the Frank Zuerner New Teacher Scholarship from the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers. This annual award recognizes teachers who are in their first three years of teaching and are demonstrating outstanding potential, said group spokesman Jason Brazzale. Hill will be one of only two educators receiving the award this year.

Hill said he is greatly honored to be thought of as an innovator in science education – and to be nominated by Tim Gerber, who was his research adviser at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse.

"My philosophy on science education is to make the content real and engaging through real-world projects, engaging discussions, and problem-solving activities," Hill said. "Science is around us 24-7. We don't need to look for it; it is always there. My job is to get kids to take interest in it, respect it, challenge it, engage in it and explore it."



Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

Eric Hill, center, works with junior Ann Marie Croy during class Monday at Waukesha North High School.

Voit said those who've seen Hill in action can see the priority he places on students.

"He has always risen above and beyond in coming up with new, innovative ideas that allow students to become engaged in the content," she said.

Projects in his water and land studies class this year included selling water to raise money for digging wells in Africa, making a model of how the wastewater treatment plant works in Milwaukee and forming a campaign to advise dog owners of the effects that untended canine waste have on the environment.

The key is to get students thinking like scientists, Hill said.

"I am motivated by the kids and their futures," Hill said. "What can they do? How are they going to make a difference? How can I use science as a means to get them to be the innovative thinkers and problem solvers that will resolve tomorrow's problems?"

Hill's demeanor in the classroom is that of a caring intellectual, Voit said, who works very hard and is tirelessly committed.

The award-winning teacher said this is just part of the excitement teachers should have for their subject matter. The attitude is captured in a piece of advice he was given on his path toward becoming a teacher.

"If you aren't excited to



Eric Hill talks to a student during class Monday.

teach it, the kids aren't excited to learn it," he said.

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