

High-flying drive propels Bucks teacher to award

BONNIE WELLER / Staff Photographer

Joe Warwick in his classroom at Council Rock High School South. Besides teaching Advanced Placement and honors physics, he runs the Physics and Flight Summer Camp.



By Lydia Woolever Inquirer Staff Writer

Joe Warwick attributes a lot of his success to his parents, his mentors, his colleagues.

But more has to be said for the personal drive of this passionate, sprightly high school teacher who wears about him a smile that turns up to the right when he talks about things that really excite him.

Today, those things are his students, running, and his newest love, airplanes.

Warwick, in his 19th year as an Advanced Placement and honors physics teacher at Council Rock High School South in Holland, Bucks County, recently became one of 50 state winners of the 2010 Siemens Award for AP Teachers. The award includes a \$1,000 grant for science education.

"It's hard to believe because I still feel like the young guy," he said. "I occasionally have to remind myself that I'm kind of a veteran around here."

Teachers must have five years' experience in math, science, or technology before applying for the award, and often are recommended by their principals. Classroom creativity and student AP scores are taken into account as well.

"This award really represents the efforts of educators at Council Rock who work with the students over their 12-year career," Warwick said. "As Isaac Newton once stated, 'If I see further, it is due to standing on the shoulder of giants.'"

Grades did not always come easy for Warwick, and he incorporates that memory in his teaching philosophy. Because his classroom involves complicated science, he has students work together and participate in lectures instead of simply being "taught at."

"My job is to increase the probability of learning," he said. "I am a fairly serious person; however, in the classroom, humor is a strong tool for me."

Warwick, 42, earned his bachelor's degree in physics and math from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and his master's in math and science education from Lehigh University.

As an undergraduate, he also ran track, and to balance athletics with academia, he became an after-school tutor. That was his first encounter with teaching, and with a push from his parents, he decided to try it as a career.

"I've always been a people person with a passion for physics and math, and this was a way to tie the two together," said Warwick, who also coaches cross country at Council Rock South. "I'm surprised it took me so long to figure it out."

Warwick's zealous enthusiasm for his newest hobby, remote-control airplanes, has evolved into his own program at the school, the Physics and Flight Summer Camp.

A major influence on his Siemens Award nomination and now in its fifth year, the camp prides itself on "teaching the principles of flight outside the traditional classroom" by using the planes as educational tools.

"Planes are the 'gotcha' to get kids more interested," Warwick said.

He is seeking grants for more "airplane stuff," and the money from his Siemens Award will undoubtedly contribute to his newest goal: He hopes to acquire \$14,000 to build a 10-foot airplane for the school, equipped with a motorcycle engine, a \$4,000 GPS system, and an onboard camera.

"He's the most charismatic teacher I've ever had," said Nick Leighton, 17, a junior. "He is very engaged, and is this geeky type who does funny accents and cool sound effects."

Students have coined the term "Warwickisms" for the habits that best define him: voices, sound effects, body movements, movie quotes, the use of YouTube clips, and stories from his childhood.

"I hope that I inspire my students and have taught them to believe they can achieve this thing," he said. "These kids are so motivated. They're on their way, and I feel fortunate that I was able to lead and guide them."

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silverfade80

Mr. Warwick was my Physics teacher 12 years ago at (what is now) CR-North. He was a great teacher then, and its great to see that the passion and enthusiasm he showed then still remains. Congrats, Mr. Warwick!