



NEWS RELEASE

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Portland Public Schools Middle School Educator Named 2018 Oregon Teacher of the Year

Matthew Bacon-Brenes honored for focus on equity and high standards for all

(Portland, Ore.) – In a surprise assembly today, Mt. Tabor Middle School teacher Matthew Bacon-Brenes was named Oregon’s 2018 Teacher of the Year. Oregon Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Salam Noor was joined by Mt. Tabor Middle School Principal Sean Keating in honoring Bacon-Brenes for his innovative practices, passion for excellence, and unwavering commitment to student success.

“Matthew is a master teacher who weaves his value for equity into everything he does,” said Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor. “Through Matthew’s multi-perspective approach to instruction, he ensures that his students grow to be globally informed citizens that can cross cultural divides. He truly represents the best and brightest among Oregon educators, and I am honored to name him Oregon’s 2018 Teacher of the Year.”

Matthew Bacon-Brenes has been foundational in helping create and sustain the Japanese immersion K-12 program in Portland Public Schools over the past 20 years, and his vision for the program has continued to shape its success in the community. Bacon-Brenes facilitates an annual, two-week long Japanese Research Residency trip for 8th grade students and chaperones, where students engage in and research themes around Japanese culture, history, and social science using surveys, interviews and other data-gathering techniques. Following this life-changing experience, students produce a capstone research project that captures their findings.

“Matt’s instructional leadership, unwavering work ethic, and deeply held beliefs around serving all children have been pillars of Mt. Tabor Middle School’s success,” said Jennifer Patterson, senior director of Franklin K-8 Schools for Portland Public Schools. “His humility, humor, and easy going demeanor make it easy for colleagues to learn alongside him and he has a magical influence on the effectiveness of his team as a professional learning community.”

In 2010, Bacon-Brenes was asked by his principal to lead a group of Mt. Tabor staff, administrators and counselors in examining the role of race in their work with students, families and the community. Using a program called *Courageous Conversations*, the newly formed Equity Team engaged in dialogue about race, privilege, and their own implicit and explicit biases. The work encourages

educators to reflect and develop a greater sense of awareness of race and the persistent disparities that exist.

Bacon-Brenes said that his engagement with *Courageous Conversations* has transformed his work with students, parents, colleagues and curriculum. “I invite everyone to be a part of the *Courageous Conversations* protocol. While it isolates race, its idea of hearing a version of the facts different from the dominant paradigm has opened Mt. Tabor Middle School to embrace a much broader understanding of gender as well,” he added.

“Our world is changing at an ever-increasing clip. Prompting our students to think critically and creatively about how to manage those changes and participate meaningfully in community and in democracy is how we will foster citizens and leaders who can effectively take our world in a more inclusive, safe and peaceful direction,” said Bacon-Brenes.

The Oregon Teacher of the Year program is sponsored by the Oregon Department of Education in partnership with the Oregon Lottery. The Lottery provides a \$5,000 cash award to the Teacher of the Year and a matching \$5,000 award to the teacher’s school.

The Oregon Teacher of the Year is selected after an extensive application process. Nominees from schools throughout Oregon submitted packets of information that included testimonials and letters of support from their principals, superintendents, and colleagues. From the written material, applicants were assessed on leadership, instructional expertise, community involvement, understanding of educational issues, professional development, and vision.

As the 2018 Oregon Teacher of the Year, Matthew Bacon-Brenes will serve as a spokesperson and representative for all Oregon teachers. He will attend the Washington Recognition Week for Teachers of the Year in Washington, D.C. this spring, where he will meet the President and the U.S. Secretary of Education. Matthew will also be featured in a television commercial produced by the Oregon Lottery.

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