

BRETT NOSER - LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Nominated by Zeph Siebler - Senior, Lincoln High School

Some people argue that music isn't important. But music students find a tribe, they learn to belong, and they learn to be responsible. These are essential life skills. Mr. Brett Noser, the band/music teacher at Lincoln High, makes sure those who are struggling are involved, that they find their tribe, and that we all work together to make everyone's world a little better through music. At Lincoln High we have a very diverse student population and sometimes there is not a lot of support or means within families to support music for their students (financial barriers for instruments, time barriers for practicing and concerts). Mr. Noser makes sure everyone who wants an instrument gets an instrument. And everyone who wants to try something new has the guidance and support to do so. He is there in the evenings and on the weekends to help students. He is enthusiastic and supportive.

When I was a first year and second year student at Lincoln High, I didn't have any friends. The lunch room intimidated me and I felt like a loser eating by myself. I didn't think anyone noticed, but Mr. Noser did. One day Mr. Noser invited me to eat lunch in the band room. That was it. He just said, "Hey, Zeph. If you want, you can eat lunch in the band room." He wanted me to feel like I had a place to be who I was. He wanted me to have a place to eat. In the band room we often didn't talk much. He let me do whatever I needed or wanted during lunch: play the piano or eat or talk or read. He saw I was struggling and found a place for me to be who I was.

I am a musician and because of that I have worked with so many music teachers over the course of my K-12 education and I can say, without a doubt, Mr. Noser is the most amazing music teacher around; but even beyond that, he is a phenomenal educator and a nurturing soul to those who may be struggling to find a place. He is not only passionate about music, but he is passionate about his students and what each one of them needs or wants to achieve. When I started at Lincoln High, I wanted to try out new instruments. Mr. Noser was not only encouraging, he went out of his way to help me. Other music teachers are concerned with what the band NEEDS; Mr. Noser is concerned with what his STUDENTS need. In addition, I wanted to explore composing music. Although there was no course or venue for this, Mr. Noser spent extra time and energy to help me discover what has now become my chief musical passion. He allowed me to compose short pieces and

then would have the band or jazz group play them. Can you imagine how good that made me feel? How much that made my heart sing? Other people were playing my music! I cannot believe I have been so lucky to have such a teacher in my life.

But Mr. Noser has not just taken this individual approach with me. I see him do it all day long. He goes out of his way to make sure his students grow in the ways and areas they want or maybe can't even imagine to ask for. It boggles my mind how much energy he must have to attend to that level of individual needs with each of his students.

Mr. Noser is not just there for band students. He also is the teacher advisor for the Dungeons and Dragons after school club. You may think this is a silly club. What life skills does it foster? But DnD Club creates a space of belonging for those who may not have other places to belong; Mr. Noser makes sure we learn leadership skills and community building and communication skills in DnD club. I know this takes extra time for him, especially since he is already at school in the evenings and weekends because of band commitments. The DnD club is made up of a bunch of nerdy kids who find that getting together and playing coordinated games allows us a group of like-minded peers that have problems fitting in other places. We aren't athletic, so we can't do sports group; many of us are introverts, so we can't do debate; we may not even be the best academic performers. But Mr. Noser helps us learn to collaborate, to be leaders, to be creative story-tellers, to build community. He laughs with us and delights in the worlds we create. It is another place where those who don't always feel they belong to find a spot because of Mr. Noser.

Mr. Noser not only gives kids who are having troubles a place to belong, he looks at each of us, asks us what we want to do, what do we need to do that, and does his best to get us that. In addition, he is good at identifying what we need even if we don't see it: a place to eat lunch, music to express what we can't express in words, and a tribe to belong. When I am a teacher, I want to be the kind of teacher Mr. Noser is. By offering the world of music and a community of peers to each student, especially those at the margins, Mr. Noser genuinely enhances and saves lives. We are better humans because of his work.