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CHS TEACHER JAMES STARK NAMED 2017 ILLINOIS LATIN TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Collinsville High School Latin teacher James Stark was named 2017 Farrand Baker Illinois Latin Teacher of the Year by the Illinois Classical Conference (<http://illinoisclassics.weebly.com/>) during their annual meeting at University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

CHS Principal David Snider said, "James, is a talented and dedicated educator. The faculty and students at CHS are extremely proud of him. Congratulations Magister Stark!"

Magister Stark, as he is known by his students, ("magister" is Latin for "master" or "teacher") is a third year teacher at Collinsville High School. A graduate of the University of Illinois, Stark assumed a Latin program at CHS that was historically popular even though many other high schools no longer offer it as a course.

"James Stark has been a real find for Collinsville High School. He has done an outstanding job working with his students," according to Principal Snider, "Mr. Stark conscientiously plans for instruction. He engages students in interesting learning activities and effectively utilizes technology for instruction. He spends a great deal of time tutoring students after school. James' students have excelled on the National Latin Examination as a result of his tutelage and their hard work."

Snider added, "Mr. Stark has initiated a Latin Club newsletter, taken large contingents of students to Illinois Junior Classical League activities and arranged for foreign excursions. James even volunteers his time sponsoring the CHS Video Gaming Club. He has immersed himself in the CHS learning community."

Regarding this recognition so early in his career, Stark says, "I am a product of all the support I get here in the district. The faculty, administration, and general community have been very supportive of the Latin program from the day I arrived. And I wouldn't be here without the excellent students that I've had. They constantly support me, push me and give me the feedback I need to grow as a teacher."





Stark was surprised with the announcement of his selection while attending the Illinois Classical Conference's annual meeting coincidentally at his alma mater the University of Illinois. Several of his former professors and mentors were in attendance.

HERE'S WHAT MAGISTER STARK'S COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HIM:

"When I think of Mr. Stark I think of extreme dedication and commitment. He often teaches his students during his lunch so that the students who are in combined classes can complete the Latin curriculum they need. This also means students are willing to give up their lunch to learn. This speaks volumes about Mr. Stark's teaching and care for his students."

-Shelly Romoser, Spanish teacher

"As a part of our mentoring program, I have had the privilege of observing Mr. Stark. I so enjoyed watching how he interacts with his students. He has SO much passion for his subject, and his kids are so interested in what he has to say. He even has students that stay after school daily just to discuss Latin-related things with him. He spends HOURS after school working with his Latin Club kids, doing activities such as chariot races and playing Roman conspiracy games. He also took on the responsibility of running a video game club. By doing so, he has reached out to students that normally would have avoided joining in with any school-sponsored activity. He is an incredible asset to our school!!"

-Cara Kettler, Spanish teacher and World Language Department Chairperson

I have known Mr. Stark for only a little over a year. In that short amount of time, I can clearly see why his classroom is always buzzing with students even before and after school. There is always something happening next door!! It is evident that he has a sincere interest in his students and their success, not only in Latin studies, but also in other areas. Mr. Stark is also very beneficial to the department and the other language teachers. He has tutored us multiple times concerning computer applications that will help us in our daily activities, not to mention other computer-related issues. Our department at CHS is very lucky to have a colleague like Mr. Stark!

-Kristine Blair, French Teacher

We can't read his writing, yet he still gets his point across spectacularly!

His students give him heck, but he just rolls with it and makes it work!

He knows what he's talking about...even if he has trouble saying it.

He's not just the teacher; he's almost a friend. That is, he fits in so well with his students. It's no wonder why he can teach us so well!

I'm a Latin tutor, and I couldn't have learned how to help teach any better from anyone else! Part of why I want to be a Latin teacher is because of him.

He give up A LOT of his time to help his students – staying after school, making sure his students have all gotten home before he leaves, etc., etc., etc.

He even has an "Independent Study" for his students who still want to learn Latin but couldn't fit it in their schedule.

He single-handedly revitalized our school's Latin program.

He's received at least 4 shirts his students made for him because he is so popular – and he's only been here 3 years!

-Jacob Sorge, CCIICE, student

Kippy, I can't say how thankful I am to you. You're the one who brought me back to school. You completely turned my life around. When I was at rock bottom, you're the only one who reached out to me and got me out of that hole. You deserve this award so much. Sure your handwriting is somehow even worse than me. Yeah, you walked into a counter and broke it. And let's not even mention the countless stools you've assaulted (Pro tip: Look where you're walking). You're young (as much as you like to deny it, you are part of our generation, my sister is older than you!) You're "hip". And you're relatable, at least for us. You aren't ashamed of your vast Lego collection, which let's be honest, belongs in a museum. Honestly, your class is the reason I come to school. I say something stupid and you scold me even though you thought it was hilarious. As much as we make fun of you for being a nerdy weird, we all love it. 99% of teachers won't share all the embarrassing stuff that you do, and that makes us love you 10x more. You're an inspiration for all of us. You almost made me want to become a teacher. In fact, I was well on that path before I switched to therapist. To quote your main man Cicero "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others". Nothing more accurately describes this. You've not only done tremendous things for me, you've done so much all of your students and the Latin program overall. You completely turned it around. You're changing the way we even go about learning it. My Latin I class was just "here's a book, here's the vocab, translate" Now that you're here we go way indepth with examining the works. You have us analyze the rhetorical devices used, explain the grammar to us and it's effectiveness, and make sure we know what we're learning and it's purpose. You've made Latin my favorite class not just this year, but since you first started teaching here my sophomore year. Nobody deserves the ancient coke bottle as much as you do, nobody loves latin as much as you do. You've only been teaching for such a short time and you've already accomplished so much. You're going to go far Ferrous Vir.

- Kenny "Iohannes (cena) Hircus" Denson, student

Mr. James Stark, Magister Stark, Kippy, the list of nicknames goes on and on. All these names for one man. This one man though is hands down one of the greatest teachers that I have ever met. However, to me and many others he is much more than a teacher. Maybe it is because how young he is, or maybe it is his quirkiness, whatever it is, he is relatable. This one man somehow teaches noun cases like no other, while simultaneously running into his stool repeatedly throughout the day. Magister Stark beneath the ever present layers of sweaters is a man of much character. Stark is confident in what he teaches, and he's never satisfied with the current curriculum. He strives for innovation and has completely revolutionized the classroom at our school. I joined Latin my sophomore year and thoroughly enjoyed translating random English phrases or songs into Latin. Stark would aid me by saying "Iason I'm not sure what the word is but it's in this Cicero speech at this line." I always would make fun of him for that three years later I'm doing the same thing. I've put Stark through a lot, the summer between Latin I and Latin II I decided that I wanted to translate the Aeneid. I got two lines in. Once I was back in school Stark helped me fine tune what I had, and gave me the tools I needed to get farther. I've made him teach me grammar points early. He also taught me how to write in dactylic hexameter and elegiac couplets. My first year, I was apathetic at best. I didn't do homework, I barely knew my cases, but I loved the language. The reason I loved the language so much wasn't for the nuances that I would later come to love. It was because of the absolutely amazing teacher who had taught it. I looked forward to Latin everyday. Not because of the class, it was rather boring due to the Cambridge textbook, but because of the incredibly enthusiastic man who ran the class. Most of all he is an inspiration. He has made me realize that I want to be a classics teacher. No one has made me feel as excited for the Hannibal crossing the Alps, Caesar declaring "Veni, Vidi, Vici," or the death and betrayal of the tetrarchy.

 Jason Landfried, student



Magister Stark is the greatest teacher I've ever had the honor of learning under. He is a very genuine wholesome man that is able to teach the language of Latin in a way that is enticing for everyone. He is able to keep the class engaged with his goofy antics and his genuine good heart. He left his impact on me as a person on a heart to heart level and I will forever remember the little lessons Magister Stark has taught me. I know Magister Stark would give all the time he would normally have for his girlfriend and his car in his day to me just so I will better understand a declension concept (which he has done.) Along with his dedication to the language he is also very dedicated to his students. When students have personal issues I know if I ever need someone to talk to that Magister Stark is right there for me. He brings the life into a so-called "Dead Language" and that is amazing. He brings the fun into Conventions and is a great leader. I'm so happy for Magister Stark and he very much deserves this award.

-Wolfgang Bronnbauer, Latin Level II student

I was so excited when I learned that Latin was a class I could take. It represented so much; a lost language and culture with myths spun from fibres of dreams about the ancient world and people. Even walking down the foreign language hall for the first time sent a ghost of a chill down my spine, and I knew then that when I left high school, things just wouldn't be the same again. Now, as a junior, I know that Latin is so much more than what I'd dreamed of. Room 225 is a sanctuary for all who enter, whether you're in the Latin program, need help with physics homework, or are having personal problems and just need to talk. It is a room where talents are revealed and masks are discarded, and one's true self can be embraced and appreciated. Magister Stark is the only staff member that I am certain I can rely on for anything, and I trust him with

everything I have. You are so passionate about your work that it is inspiring for anyone who asks about it, or even sees you talk about it. As your student, I am so glad that you followed your dreams. You impact your students so much, and I am eternally grateful. So whether your students put back on their masks or retreat back into their shells when they leave, you are always proud of the fact they revealed themselves to you at all. Thank you for all you do for all of the students at CHS.

-Annika Cosgrove, student

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