

School Days

Oak Park teacher earns certification

Erik Amerikaner, a technology teacher at Oak Park High School, may have launched his teaching career later in life than some, but his commitment to education has landed him in a sweet spot.

Amerikaner, 60, has earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in career and technical education.

At the Dec. 6 Oak Park Unified School District board meeting, school officials honored Amerikaner for his achievement.

"We are proud of Erik attaining this prestigious level of teacher certification," said Superintendent Tony Knight. "Clearly it shows how dedicated and professional he is to put himself through this process."

Oak Park High Principal Kevin Buchanan was also impressed with Amerikaner's achievement.

"We are very proud of Erik's accomplishments and his commitment to career and technical education," Buchanan said.

The two-year journey toward earning national board certification required Amerikaner to complete university work, develop curricula and submit lesson plans.

He was also required to videotape his classroom activities.

"The videos were two 20-minute observations of my interactions with students, student engagement and lesson delivery," Amerikaner said.

He had to take a final exam of sorts, writing six essays within five hours at a testing center.

Amerikaner turned to teaching in 2001 after a decades-long career in apparel manufacturing. When the company he worked for moved its operations to China, he decided the time had come for a career change.

Teaching seemed like a natural

choice for a second career. His wife, Susan, has been an educational media writer and children's book author for 30 years, which meant the needs of students were always a topic of discussion at the Amerikaner dinner table.

He returned to school and earned his teaching credential in computer software and applications from Chapman University.

He landed his first teaching job in San Luis Obispo Coastal Unified School District, teaching computer applications, Microsoft Office and Web design at the high school as well as for adult students. Other teaching jobs followed, including a stint at Cuesta College.

After Amerikaner and his family moved to Camarillo, he was hired to teach middle school and adult computer classes in Moorpark Unified School District.

Amerikaner has been teaching classes at Oak Park High for five years.

The Microsoft Office 2010 course seems to be his most popular class, but Amerikaner says all of his computer technology courses emphasize preparing students for the 21st century workplace, which means being up-to-date on the technology that makes the business world go round.

More than 300 students have been certified in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint applications, he said.

He also teaches introduction to computer programming, a prerequisite to Advanced Placement computer science, a new course that will be offered at the school in 2012-13.

Amerikaner's e-commerce course was introduced last year. Students learned some practical applications of technology, including how to develop websites to sell

products and services.

He continues to teach adult classes through the district's adult enrichment program.

Amerikaner said his teaching style is student-centered with lessons delivered digitally in the school's computer lab. The coursework, testing and grading are a testament to the digital age.

He said students use a digital textbook that can be accessed on home computers, and all activities and assignments are submitted by email. Students take exams online, which are graded immediately and posted to an electronic grade book.

"We have a paperless classroom," Amerikaner said. "Students are responsible for completing assignments as though they were in a business environment."

Amerikaner isn't keen on answering students' questions directly.

"My teaching style has been described as 'guide-on-the-side' rather than the traditional 'sage-on-the-stage,'" he said.

Instead of telling a student what to do, he'll give them pointers so they can discover the information for themselves.

"I guide the students to seek the answers and collaborate with their peers," he said.

When students blurt out, "Never mind, Mr. Amerikaner, I found it," he knows he's done his job.



RICHARD GILLARD/Acorn Newspapers

HONORED—Oak Park High School Technology teacher Erik Amerikaner receives a certificate from the Oak Park Unified School District Board of Education at the Dec. 6 meeting.

WestlakeBaseball.com

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WELCOME

Do You Have a Student Going to College?

A free college planning workshop offers insider secrets to parents of college bound high school students during the **month of January** in Thousand Oaks, Camarillo and Simi Valley. Families from Camarillo, Ventura and other areas are encouraged to attend.

The workshops will focus on how to get maximum aid from both Federal and Institutional resources. Regardless of your income, assets, or equity, these

workshops will show you how to double or even triple your eligibility for free grant money, how to get a private education for the cost of a state school, teach you how to avoid 90% of the mistakes most parents make, and learn what the admissions office doesn't want you to know!!!

The workshop dates are **Tuesday, January 24th** at the **Thousand Oaks Library** from 7:15-8:30pm, **Thursday, January 26th** at the **Camarillo Library** from 7:15-8:30pm and **Tuesday January 31st** at

the **Simi Valley Library** from 7:30-8:45pm. The classes are being taught by a local Pepperdine Graduate.

The workshop is free, but reservations are required. To reserve your seat go to www.123ncp.com. If you don't have internet, call **805-300-5919**. Our workshops fill up fast, so don't be left out! **Call now while it's fresh in your mind.** Don't miss out on getting all the money your family is entitled to. Seating is limited, call before all the financial aid is gone.

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High School HIGHLIGHTS

Agoura Chargers

Tues., Jan. 3: School resumes
Thurs., Jan. 5: Late start day
Student-directed musical/7 p.m.

Calabasas Coyotes

Tues., Jan. 3: School resumes
Wed., Jan. 4: Habitat for Humanity/12:25 p.m.
Thurs., Jan. 5: FBLA meeting/12:30 p.m.
Murder mystery night/7 p.m.

Oak Park Eagles

Mon., Jan. 2: Deadline for submissions to Wings literary magazine
Tues., Jan. 3: School resumes
OPPAA meeting/B-2/7 p.m.

Westlake Warriors

Tues., Jan. 3: School resumes
WIT/Getty museum
Track and field interest meeting/gym/lunch
Leadership meeting/college and career center/2 p.m.
Spirit cheer booster meeting/library/7 p.m.
Wed., Jan. 4: Cap and gown ordering information distributed
Principal's reception/administration conference room/10:30 a.m.
Dance boosters/faculty cafeteria/7 p.m.

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Thurs., Jan. 5: PTSA meeting/faculty cafeteria/9 a.m.

Student senate/faculty cafeteria/11:09 a.m.

GBB boosters/faculty cafeteria/7 p.m.



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