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## Chris Gleason to represent state in National Teacher of the Year program

*Herb Kohl Educational Foundation will award \$6,000 to Wisconsin’s National Teacher of the Year nominee*

MADISON — Chris Gleason, a band director and instrumental music teacher at Patrick Marsh Middle School in the Sun Prairie Area School District, will represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program.

“Chris is a recognized leader in education, making music with his students, contributing to his community, and helping fellow educators improve their teaching practice,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “He will be a fine representative of Wisconsin’s dynamic teaching force in the National Teacher of the Year program.”

Gleason was named Wisconsin’s Middle School Teacher of the Year in a surprise ceremony at his school in early September. As part of the honor of representing Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program, Gleason will receive an additional \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation. Gleason’s total award from the foundation as a Kohl Teacher Fellow, Middle School Teacher of the Year, and representative to the National Teacher of the Year program is \$12,000.

“Teachers like Chris, who devote their lives to education, make such a valuable contribution to our children, our schools, and our communities,” said Herb Kohl, philanthropist and businessman. “I am proud to give something back to the education community through co-sponsorship of the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program.”



**Chris Gleason**  
*Band Director and Instrumental Music Teacher*  
Patrick Marsh Middle School, Sun Prairie  
**Video:** [Music Education Ideas from Chris Gleason](#)

Gleason recently received the Mel Pontious Spark Award for innovative teaching, and the Wisconsin Music Educator Association Michael G. George Distinguished Service Award. Additionally, he is among 213 quarterfinalists nationwide for the 2017 Music Educator Award presented by the Recording Academy and the Grammy Foundation. A testament to his “can-do attitude,” the Grammy folks invited Gleason to conduct a question and answer session with

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Ben Folds when he appears at Madison's Majestic Theater later this month. Gleason says it will be an honor to be on stage Sept. 30 with the nationally acclaimed writer, performer, and advocate for music education.

Gleason says his teaching "isn't about playing notes on a page or learning a new skill on an instrument. Rather, it is looking at life through the lens of another human or artist; considering the viewpoint of someone trying to convey something that could only be said using music." He inspires his students to do something many music students don't do: practice at home. "Chris's students don't practice because he chides them or humiliates those that can't keep up, or even because he is going to check their practice charts," wrote a teacher in a letter of recommendation. "Chris's students practice because they understand why it helps, how their brain actually functions and because they have a teacher that holds them in such high regard that he bothered to teach them about the latest in brain research."

Gleason raises student outcomes while working to close the achievement gap through his Band Lesson Academy, pairing students with community musicians. He also secured funds through grants and donations to finance student lessons for families who couldn't afford them.

A special project started in 2009, *ComMission Possible*, has student musicians collaborating with nationally renowned composers to write a commissioned piece of music for middle school band students. The first, based on Georgia O'Keeffe's painting *Blue and Green Music*, had students intimately involved in the creative process, generating the core idea for Samuel R. Hazo's work. The world premiere for *Blue and Green Music* was before a packed house in Sun Prairie. A later commission with Erik Morales paid homage to Apollo 11. Bringing the audience to the moon and back, the music contained audio clips of President John F. Kennedy and American Astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk the moon. Connecting music beyond the classroom and into the world, students raised funds to travel to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry to see the Apollo 8 capsule and the Apollo 11 Training Module. While there, students performed a concert, including a small piece from the commissioned music.

Gleason believes in the power of connecting music to civic pride, getting his students out into the community through smaller ensembles that perform at local events and larger performances at Sun Prairie's senior care homes, the American Family Insurance Holiday Breakfast, and in the Memorial Day parade. His middle school bands have twice been chosen to perform at the Capitol Rotunda for Music in our Schools Month.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with a bachelor's degree in Music Education and a master's degree in Professional Development from UW-La Crosse, Gleason is one of four [Teachers of the Year](#) chosen to represent Wisconsin's PK-12 teaching corps for the 2016-17 school year. The others are **Sarah Breckley**, a high school world languages (Spanish) teacher at Reedsburg Area High School in the Reedsburg School District,

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High School Teacher of the Year; **Pamela Gresser** of Hatley, a fifth-grade teacher at Rothschild Elementary School in the D.C. Everest Area School District, Elementary School Teacher of the Year; and **Barbara VanDoorn** of Tony, a 4K-12 school counselor at Lake Holcombe School in the Lake Holcombe School District, Special Services Teacher of the Year.

The National Teacher of the Year program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching. The National Teacher of the Year will be chosen by a national selection committee in the spring of the year.

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**VIDEOS:** Interviews with the four [2016-17 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year](#) and [Music Education Ideas from Chris Gleason](#).

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