

2017 National Teacher of the Year Finalist



CHRIS GLEASON

2017 Wisconsin State Teacher of the Year

Sun Prairie Area School District
Patrick Marsh Middle School
Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

School Profile: Suburban
District Size: 8,107
School Size: 582

Subject: Instrumental Music Education
Grade: 6-7

Years in Teaching: 19
Years in Position: 13

Application: Gleason, Chris | 058

Round: Main

Page: Candidate's Basic Information

Question	Answer
Candidate Name	Gleason, Chris
State	Wisconsin

Page: Candidate's Resume Information

Question	Answer
Education	Masters in Professional Development, University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse
Dates (MM/YY)	06/02
Education	
Dates (MM/YY)	
Education	
Dates (MM/YY)	
Certification	Bachelor of Music Education, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; General Music gr. 6-12 and Instrumental Music gr. PK12
Dates (MM/YY)	06/97
Certification	
Dates (MM/YY)	
Certification	
Dates (MM/YY)	
Experience	Patrick Marsh Middle School; Sun Prairie, WI
Dates (MM/YY)	08/04-Current

Experience	Logan Middle School; LaCrosse, WI
Dates (MM/YY)	08/99 - 08/04
Experience	East Troy Middle School; East Troy, WI
Dates (MM/YY)	08/97 - 08/99
Experience	
Dates (MM/YY)	
Leadership	Comprehensive Music through Performance (CMP) Committee; Chairman 2011-2013
Dates (MM/YY)	08/03 - Current
Leadership	Wisconsin School Music Association Middle Level Honors Project; Chair 2014-Present
Dates (MM/YY)	08/07 - Current
Leadership	Band Festival at the Kalahari, Founder and Coordinator
Dates (MM/YY)	08/08 - Current
Awards and Other Recognition	Semifinalist for 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award
Dates (MM/YY)	10/16
Awards and Other Recognition	Wisconsin Middle School Teacher of the Year
Dates (MM/YY)	09/16 - 09/17
Awards and Other Recognition	Michael G. George Distinguished Service Award, Wisconsin Music Educators Association
Dates (MM/YY)	10/16
Awards and Other Recognition	Melvin F. Pontius Creative Sparks in Music Education Award, Wisconsin Music Educators Association
Dates (MM/YY)	08/15
Additional Resume Items	04/11, Dane Arts Vi Miller Award Recipient 06/97, UW-Eau Claire Music & Theatre Arts Outstanding Senior 05/96, Eugene R. and Frances McPhee Scholarship 06/96, Vaughan-Young Scholarship
Please list the month	

and year for each additional item.

- 10/96, Music Educators National Conference Collegiate Professional Achievement Award
- 06/96, Phi Eta Sigma Senior Certificate
- 06/95 - 08/95, Tubist with the All-American College Band, Disneyland, California
- 05/95, Viennese Ball Scholarship
- 05/95, UW-Eau Claire MENC Scholarship
- 05/95, Gantner Scholarship
- 05/95, Axel and Ellen Peterson Scholarship
- 05/95, LaCrosse Educator's Association Scholarship
- 07/92, Governor's Scholar – Interlochen Arts Camp
- 06/92, LaCrosse Community Foundation Scholarship
- 06/92, Helen and D. R. (Doc) Wartinbee Scholarship
- 06/92, Rodger Vaughan Scholarship
- 06/92, Viennese Ball Endowed Scholarship

Page: Candidate's Professional Biography

Question	Answer
<p>Professional Biography</p> <p>Please complete your professional biography in 3rd person, as this will be used in promotional materials for CCSSO speaking opportunities and engagements. Maximum 250 words.</p>	<p>Chris Gleason is an instrumental music teacher and band director at Patrick Marsh Middle School in Sun Prairie, WI. He earned his bachelor's degree in Music Education at UW–Eau Claire in 1997 and his master's degree in Professional Development from UW–LaCrosse in 2002. Serving in his nineteenth year as an educator, Chris is a talented performer, director, and educational leader. Mr. Gleason's bands have performed at the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda, the "New Wisconsin Promise Conference," and the 2006 and 2009 Wisconsin State Music Conferences. Under Chris's leadership in Sun Prairie, the Patrick Marsh Middle School Band has partnered with eight nationally renowned composers to develop six pieces for band through the "ComMission Possible" project. A member of the National Band Association (NBA), the Wisconsin Music Educators Association (WMEA), and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), Chris is a frequent state and national conference presenter and leader of professional development. His honors include being named the 2016–2017 Wisconsin Middle School Teacher of the Year and, most recently, being recognized as a national semifinalist for the 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award. Chris is also the recent recipient of the Melvin F. Pontious Creative Sparks in Music Education Award (2016), the Michael G. George Distinguished Service Award (2016), and the Vi Miller Award for Excellence (2013) by Dane Arts, and had a feature interview in the March 2015 Instrumentalist magazine. Mr. Gleason is the founder and organizer of the Band Festival at the Kalahari in Wisconsin Dells.</p>

Page: Application Question #1

Question	Answer
<p>Question 1</p> <p>Describe a lesson that defines you as a teacher. How did you engage all students in</p>	<p>Class began that day with a heightened sense of excitement and anticipation. Students took their seats as usual, with instruments and music, but this time they also brought unique research reports they had completed. Curtis stood up first to share his idea for the new composition. Students jotted down notes and applauded when he concluded. Then it was Sierra's turn. As she stood up to face the band, you could sense the deep reverence she had for the topic. "I believe the</p>

the learning and how did that learning influence your students? How are your beliefs about teaching demonstrated in this lesson?

composition should be based on Georgia O’Keeffe. She is one of the most important women in American history.” With a brief pause, and filled with more emotion, Sierra continued: “She is from our town and is very important to all of us. Her story shows her determination to live out a dream even when it had been ripped away. She showed that we can all achieve our goals even if we have to change the path we take.” The moment was stunning. Everyone in the room saw a bit of themselves in the story Sierra told about our Sun Prairie native. The students quickly found consensus as we submitted our idea to the composer.

Seven years ago, I posed an audacious question to my seventy-one member middle school band: “If we were to commission a composer to write a piece of music for us, what would the piece be about and why?” Sierra’s suggestion was one of many imaginative and creative ideas we considered that day. Through collaboration with nationally renowned composer Samuel R. Hazo, the class decided to create a sonic representation of O’Keeffe’s painting Blue and Green Music. My students dove into the project with zeal, researching O’Keeffe, the painting, and her connection to our city. Our mayor, who is also an O’Keeffe expert, joined the ensemble on a tour of local historic sites on our way to the Milwaukee Art Museum to see O’Keeffe paintings and a music clinic at UW–Milwaukee. The world premiere performance took place at the Wisconsin State Music Conference with the composer conducting.

Just before the performance, composer Hazo commented: “I always love coming to Patrick Marsh Middle School. They don’t chase down the notes—they chase down everything that has to do with the music. In fact, they know the piece better than I know the piece, and I wrote it.” The performance included the story of our creative journey as told by the students themselves. Making the day even more extraordinary, members of Georgia O’Keeffe’s family sat in the front row for our performance.

Through this lesson, I was able to create a climate of possibility, allowing students to act upon their curiosity and to explore their imagination while empowering them to create something with meaning that transcended their own lives. Through intentional planning, students were at the origins of creativity interacting with composers, artists, historians, and community members. This lesson was so successful that we named it “ComMission Possible”, and have replicated its success every year since 2009.

Page: Application Question #2

Question	Answer
<p>Question 2</p> <p>Describe a project or initiative you have been involved in. What was your role, and how did this contribute to the overall school culture?</p>	<p>Reflecting on how I could enhance my students’ experience throughout the school year, I discovered a need to provide an opportunity for them to perform for their peers in a non-competitive environment while receiving expert feedback. The Kalahari Band Festival is a middle school band festival I founded and continue to coordinate to fill that need, not just for my students but for hundreds of others as well. Too often in education, student work is summarized in the form of a single letter or number. I wanted to create an experience that didn’t focus on ranking and sorting bands but instead focused on the students and the music, providing authentic performance opportunities combined with expert, high-quality formative feedback and reinforcing the legitimacy of having students see themselves as musicians rather than music students.</p>

The benefits of the festival were immediately apparent, not only with my own students but also with those of the eight participating Wisconsin bands. In the years that followed, I collaborated with other directors to communicate a shared vision that elevated a student's band experience and overall middle school experience. What started as an eight-ensemble festival now includes fifty-four middle school bands covering four states. Nearly 3,500 students will participate just this year. Over 20,000 students have benefited from this festival over the past nine years.

As the festival grew, I worked to also involve music educators at a deeper level, establishing purposeful connections between programs, developing networks, and offering professional development for music educators. I developed a graduate level course for music educators that allowed them to view clinics, performances, and presentations by the guest music educators. This year the festival will also extend to institutions of higher education across the Midwest and involve future music educators. I am organizing a "side-by-side" experience, teaming collegiate music education majors with middle schools bands.

"I feel like my world just got bigger and richer," stated Emily, a recent participant in the band festival. "We come from a small farming town and don't get to hear other middle school bands or work with amazing guest educators very often. We learned so much and grew as a group. I think our band has a better understanding of the importance of music and the role it plays in our lives."

Going back to the origins and intent behind the very first Kalahari Band Festival, it is easy to see the alignment of my teaching philosophy and my focus on developing caring, inspired learners. This vision is integral to a middle schooler's experience and is one that I extend throughout our school and community. My teaching isn't about playing notes or learning a new skill on an instrument; rather, it is about looking at life through the lens of another human or artist and considering a new thought or different point of view. I help students make connections to the music, not only in skill sense but also through the cognitive and affective domains.

Page: Application Question #3

Question	Answer
<p>Question 3</p> <p>How do you ensure that your students are connected to the world around them? Describe the ways in which you do this.</p>	<p>I do not teach music; I teach through music. This is a core belief that I share with my students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. I teach beyond the musical notation to help students interact with some of the finest minds in history. I spend weeks analyzing and reviewing substantive music literature, seeking a perfect fit for my students' particular needs each year. Great music literature, like all great art, gives meaning to life and helps us make sense of it and better understand the world and ourselves.</p> <p>Recently, my seventh-grade bands studied "Salvation Is Created," by Pavel Chesnokov. The students learned that this work was one of Chesnokov's final sacred works. Russia mandated that he write music for his country only. Unbelievably, Chesnokov never heard Salvation Is Created performed. After listening to this utterly magnificent work in class, I softly whispered to my students: "Can you imagine writing something this beautiful and never hearing it performed? What must it have been like to be Chesnokov?" Students responded with words like hollow, empty, sad, abandoned. This was my entry point into a broader goal of teaching my students about empathy. Throughout the course of the year, we studied empathy and compassion, after which students like</p>

Quimby reflected: "I am much more aware of others. I find that I ask people more questions and try to put myself in their shoes."

During our study of composer Brian Balmages' composition, "Moscow, 1941", we learned about the power of community. As the students learned, the German army was only a few miles from Moscow when the Russian army pushed them back. When asked how this was possible, the band students suggested they did it as a team. We used that to learn the power of community to achieve results that sometimes seem insurmountable. Students were asked to form small teams and to examine our school community, identifying a problem they would like to address. Each team was to create a mission statement and an action plan to address the problem. After enacting the plan, they were to return to the full ensemble to report what happened. One group, self-named "The Sit-Down Group," made it their goal to sit with the students who sat alone during lunch.

As I observed my students doing this, my principal approached me in the lunchroom and said, "What is going on?" I smiled and said, "Band." He looked at me, a bit puzzled. "I don't understand. It's lunch time." I explained what we had learned in class and the project the students were doing, and watched his face transform with pride. The impact of that lesson carried through the remainder of the year as those students continued to reach out to make our school a friendlier, warmer place while also marching in the Memorial Day Parade and performing at nursing homes, activity centers, and community events to stay connected to their community, state, and nation.

Page: Application Question #4

Question	Answer
<p>Question 4</p> <p>What do you consider to be a major public education issue today? Describe why this is important to you, and how you are addressing this from your classroom.</p>	<p>At the beginning of our careers as teachers, I think many of us teach the way we were taught. During my first years of teaching, I struggled with motivating and engaging my students. I used the strategies and techniques I experienced as a student—mostly fear and intimidation—with little success. I turned to rewards and bribes, basically manipulating students into compliance. This just resulted in students who focused on the reward but didn't make connections and thought only superficially about the topics, eventually losing interest. All of these strategies left me concerned about how students find their passion, cultivate their curiosity, and engage in learning.</p> <p>Student motivation and engagement is a rising crisis in our schools today. There is much evidence showing that students begin their school career curious and excited about learning but after a few years begin to lose interest and disengage from learning. Most concerning are students who are disengaged but still go through the motions, performing far below their potential. Too often there is a disconnect in classrooms between classwork and meaningful work, and that lack of connection has far-reaching implications. How are we best serving our students to become independent, self-reliant, and engaged citizens, now and into the future?</p> <p>I believe that to solve this crisis we need to personalize education and focus on intrinsic motivation while de-emphasizing extrinsic motivation. It is our obligation as teachers to reflect on our curriculum, assignments, and assessments and ask if the enterprise the students are engaged in will lead to an increased love of learning, just as it is our calling to make learning purposeful, inspiring, and relevant for every learner.</p>

I embrace the belief that teachers can build intrinsic motivation when we promote autonomy, mastery, and purpose. For example, rather than emphasizing grades, I have my students take ownership of quarterly reflections and individualized self-assessments that are based on rubrics created by the student and teacher. Parents rave over the quality and depth of the multifaceted report that includes both student and teacher comments. I engage students' distinct and diverse interests and intelligences by using authentic summative projects that are presented in a video prior to performances (or as we call them, "informances"). I educate students about their brains and myelin. Instead of demanding practice charts, I teach the value and characteristics of deep practice. I also teach the value and necessity of mistakes, something too often stigmatized in our product-focused education system. I cultivate an environment where students feel safe and connected to others and that fosters a growth mindset.

As Ken Robinson stated in his 2013 Ted Talk about the growth of the human mind, "Curiosity is the engine of achievement." We need to harness the research and strategies to create schools that spark children's imaginations. A student's educational journey to graduation should really resemble a crescendo building toward a celebratory ending, full of hope and promise for the future, rather than fading out through a gradual diminuendo and nearly silent final note.

Page: Application Question #5

Question	Answer
<p>Question 5</p> <p>As the 2017 National Teacher of the Year, you serve as a spokesperson and representative for teachers and students. What is your message? What will you communicate to your profession and to the general public?</p>	<p>As the spokesperson, I would take the opportunity to communicate and validate the reasons why we teach. I would do this to inspire my colleagues currently in the teaching profession, to rebuild the public's positive perception of teachers, and to encourage our youth to consider this noble profession.</p> <p>Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." This became clear at my father's funeral this past February. I grew up in my father's band room. I remember watching him teach and inspire students year after year. Like many teachers, he put in long hours at school and then came home to do more planning for the next day. He had an incredible gift of making you feel like you were the most important person in the room. His high expectations and persistence made it evident that he was committed to your success. At his funeral, my mother, brother, and I were greeted by a long line of former students who came to pay respects to a man who made a profound difference in their lives. As the brass ensemble consisting of former students concluded their performance of Salvation Is Created, I was reminded of the lifelong impact we all have as educators.</p> <p>As teachers, we must seize every opportunity we have to influence, shape, and uplift young people's lives. Education is so much more than just a test score or even the content of our curriculum. Who we are is just as important as what we teach or learn. Educators have the responsibility to model passion, persistence, and the love of learning. We must make connections with each and every child, proving to them that they are unconditionally important to us.</p> <p>To accomplish this, we must continue to better ourselves and our students. As Ken Robinson so aptly stated, "Farmers know you cannot make a plant grow...the plant grows itself. Like farmers, great teachers know what the conditions for growth are and bad ones don't." I believe this begins</p>

with knowing each child and asking ourselves, “What does this child need?” As educators it is our job to know our children and ourselves, to create the conditions for growth. The seeds of potential lie within each person. Cultivating an environment of possibility will ensure that students and teachers not only succeed but also find their passion.

It is imperative that we recognize the difficult and complex work of the educator. During the past decade, we have learned more about how diverse and distinct intelligence is. Excellent teachers navigate not only different learning styles but also emotional, social, physical, economic, and ethnic differences among students. As educators, our work is never complete. We constantly contemplate and wrestle with ways to better reach and inspire all students. Great educators hear the truth ring out in Ken Robinson’s words when he says: “What you do for yourself dies with you when you leave this world. What you do for others lives on forever.”

Page: Supporting Evidence

Question	Answer
Letter 1	Download File
Letter 2	Download File
Letter 3	Download File

Page: Complete

Question	Answer
Text 929ac3c0-6a17-48b2-a979-444a43a5bf5b	