



GROSSMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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GUHSD NAMES MIKE SKOCKO EDUCATION INNOVATOR OF THE MONTH

Valhalla High School Media Arts Instructor Recognized for Innovation

(EL CAJON, CA)—The Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) has named Valhalla High School Media Arts Instructor Mike Skocko as its *Education Innovator of the Month* for February. Superintendent Terry Ryan said, “Mike Skocko has been the driving force behind creating innovative technology-based tools in the delivery of education and displays a passion for using that technology in the classroom to spur student interest and achievement.”

Although Mike never wanted to be a teacher by his own admission, today he can’t imagine doing anything else. A teacher in the District since 2002, a typical day for the educational leader means arriving before 5 a.m. to get prepared for the business of the day: learning software, planning lessons, writing and uploading tutorials, and completing the necessary paperwork.

Mike single-handedly transformed a classroom used for meeting the technology fundamentals requirement into a state of the art Mac Lab featuring Web Design, 3D Animation, Digital Art, and Multimedia. Principal Larry Martinsen said, “Through his own initiative, Mike has acquired the necessary hardware and software to create a program that gives students the advanced tools and skills to be successful in creative technology fields after high school.”

Valhalla parent Mike Joplin agrees. He said, “Mike Skocko is a jewel in the crown that is Valhalla High School. He raised well over \$70,000 in donated software directly to the Mac Lab through the Valhalla Foundation in just a matter of weeks. The technology-rich environment that Mike creates sets the stage for a lifetime of success for his students in the field of graphic arts and Web design.”

Mike has been creating online tutorials, constantly revising them and making them available to his students and the world at: <http://maclab.guhsd.net>. He has produced over 1,500 video tutorials on the Mac Lab's Website to aid students in self-paced learning, such as animating their Photoshop projects in Flash. He believes that giving kids the confidence to unlock their innate creativity and talent is key.

Many students love his classes and begin arriving at 6:00 a.m. to work on their projects. Students in Mike's classes are required to build, upload, and maintain Websites to display their work using industry-standard tools such as Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver, Painter, Cinema 4D, and Final Cut Studio.

Scores of high school and university instructors from around the world have written expressing their gratitude for the resources and asking for permission to use Mike's tutorials in their classrooms. The accolades all follow the same theme: thank you for your time and we are so impressed with your work.

Just imagine how the students of Valhalla are benefiting as their rigorous training translates into college credit for Digital Art and Multimedia classes and prestigious universities are waiving multiple classes based on their Mac Lab portfolios.

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