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Educator gets citizenship teacher award

Mark Oberst brings life into his classroom

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

NEWPORT - In a world of iPods and Game Boys, it can be a challenge to get children thinking about social studies. But that's what Mark Oberst has done at Newport Middle School since 1971. This year, he was recognized for his efforts by winning the VFW's National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, fourth through sixth grades for Kentucky.

Oberst was nominated by seventh-grader Kelsey Taylor.

"He's what a typical teacher should be," wrote Taylor in her nomination. "He involves his classes by utilizing a broad variety of technology, resources and activities. He has skill in applying his lessons to things that relate to his students and current events."

ADVERTISEMENT Oberst will be recognized at the VFW State Convention in Louisville in June.

The award began in 1999 to recognize teachers for promoting citizenship education with their students.

Oberst taught at Newport Middle School for 15 years, took five years off to run a remodeling business, but returned to teaching at Newport for the last 15 years.

A reading specialist who earned his bachelor's in Christian education from Cincinnati Bible College and a master's in education from Xavier, Oberst has had a variety of assignments.

"I started several reading programs, taught in day treatment - juveniles in trouble with the law -through the department of human resources. For six years I taught a dropout prevention program year-round for eighth graders," Oberst said.

"Every assignment I've had I always felt like I've had to scramble to get their attention. If I can't find something that interests them, I use my own excitement and my own enthusiasm. I sometimes share things that I just learned that day," Oberst said.

Oberst said he is seeing the long-term effects he has had on students. Frequently, former students will approach him to thank him for the help he gave them decades ago.

"I do a lot carpentry work and you're either done or not done. You



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Newport Middle School geography teacher Mark Oberst (right) talks with former students Kelsey Taylor (from left), Jordan Jasper, Kristen Everson and Cody Collins. He has been awarded a state VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher award.

did a good job or you didn't. In teaching, many times it's a long wait to see the results of students but some of the things you were trying to achieve seem to take place the next year. I always say, don't kill their spirit because it may click some time," Oberst said.

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