

Richard Doherty – Retired Hinsdale South English Teacher



Richard Alan Doherty was a teacher of English, speech, and drama at Hinsdale South High School for 34 years (1977-2011). His entire teaching career was spent at Hinsdale South. Over those years, he taught over 5,000 students in his classroom and influenced hundreds more in activities. His influence and popularity can be seen in his very last year of teaching at South when he taught eight sections of the semester-long course he developed called Advanced Communications. This meant that he taught over half of the senior class during this year.

While students were challenged in Richard's classes, they were also active participants in one of the most innovative classrooms at South that extended far beyond the building. His students' communication skills were constantly stretched, especially when they went on his field trip each semester to Chicago to test their abilities in a communication-scavenger hunt.

At South, Richard was heavily involved in drama by directing many plays, speech team, and Gay/Straight Alliance. Outside of school, he had been involved in many theatre organizations and travel. Even after retiring, Richard continued as a teacher in many ways, even instructing other retirees how to use Apple products, such as iPhones. Richard never stopped being a teacher.

At Hinsdale South, Richard Doherty had been recognized more than once as teacher of the year by the students. In addition, he was the quintessential model of the teacher who actively worked to engage every one of his students in the classroom during each lesson of each day. In every lesson, Richard made a point of connecting with every single student by calling on each student by name, addressing the student, gathering comments and feedback from the student, and giving the student positive reinforcement. Richard's first goal of the each semester was to get to know his students before getting them to learn his other goals. Richard was the ideal teacher for developing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in his students before it was ever labeled.

As a result, he was also the best example of teaching and exhibiting the behaviors of respect and tolerance towards all. Students felt special and honored in Richard's classes. In fact, one of his students who went on to become a teacher, a graduate of South from the Class of 2006, wrote about Richard: "We . . . learned how to respect each other's differences and embrace them. . . . [he] also taught me how to be a good teacher and how to create a healthy, respecting and open learning environment."

Legacy Message

"Always remember that you are important and precious, no matter what anyone else says. Love, laugh, and know that beneath our superficial differences, we share a common bond of humanity that unites us all."