

OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR

Marcus Harris

For 28 years, this Germantown educator has worked to make his classroom feel like a different world, one filled with energy, belonging, and possibility.

As a high school sophomore, Marcus Harris met the teacher who would shape his future: Juan Carlos Chavez from Argentina. Spanish class was more than just vocabulary and verb charts. It was fun, welcoming, and felt like traveling abroad without ever leaving the room. Inspired by his teacher, Marcus set out to carry that energy forward.

Marcus has taught Spanish 1 through 5 and Multilingual Learners. Today, he teaches Spanish 2 and 4, bringing enthusiasm to every class period. For him, language isn't just about grammar. It's about connection.

Connection is at the heart of everything he does. Marcus attends students' band and choir concerts, theater productions, and sporting events. He has previously coached baseball and now serves as a co-mentor of the fishing club at Germantown High School and Middle School, helping students compete in statewide fishing competitions.

In class, when a student excels at a performance or qualifies for state in a sport, the entire class celebrates with applause. Marcus writes positive notes home to families, greets students in the hallways and around the community, and speaks with them in Spanish, English, or their native language. Every interaction is an opportunity to build belonging.

His creativity in the classroom is legendary. To help students master irregular Spanish verbs, he pairs grammar with music. From Green Day to Lady Gaga, he rewrites lyrics and sings verb forms, so students remember them long after the test is over. Spanish music plays regularly in the background to lift moods and spark engagement. Years later, they still tell him they remember those melodies and the verbs that went with them.

Marcus continues to grow by leaning on his colleagues, especially embracing new technology with the support of younger, tech-savvy teammates. During the challenges of COVID, collaboration and curiosity helped him adapt and strengthen his practice. He believes education is a team effort and is proud to stand alongside fellow educators, support staff, and administrators who dedicate their lives to helping young people grow.

What motivates Marcus the most is simple: students. He remembers how transformative it felt to step into a classroom that was welcoming and accepting. He strives to create that same experience every day, a place where students collaborate, think critically, solve problems, and experience those powerful "aha" moments. To him, student success means self-sufficiency, community involvement, personal growth, and the ability to work well with others.

Above all, Marcus hopes his students leave with an appreciation for cultures and people who may be different from themselves. He wants them to embrace those differences and lead by example in their daily lives.