

Extra Mile Award for Javier Fernandez  
Nominated by Gabriel Boortz

When I got to sophomore year, the class that should have been the hardest for me was APUSH. We had 3 homework assignments a week, difficult exams, and we were expected to learn material on our own, not to mention the looming AP exam. But surprisingly, APUSH had a strong positive impact on my academic life and better prepared me for junior year, when I will begin the IB Diploma program. It was Mr. Fernandez, my teacher who was as dedicated to his job as he was to helping his students grow as people, that made that class so much less stressful. There was always an unspoken agreement between Mr Fernandez and his class that made the environment more relaxed and enjoyable. I have never seen him raise his voice to a student because he had no reason to- there was always mutual respect between them, because my teacher's kindness and selflessness had made him seem more like a human to us than any other teacher. In my entire life I have never met a kinder teacher who was so willing to help his kids. I distinctly remember that when a student panicked in a Socratic Seminar and wouldn't speak, he spent 30 minutes in the hallway reassuring them and talking it through with them. When I confided in him that I was having problems at home, he started asking me every day after class how I was feeling and if there was anything he could do. My friend told me that he had done the same thing for her. Tenth grade is my best academic year on record, as I have all As and two Bs, and I owe a lot of that to Mr. Fernandez and his kindness. If anyone in the city of Decatur deserves to win this award, it's him.