

# McCallum meets Mac

*AVID teacher finds home at school that shares his name and values*

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Nathan McCallum didn't plan on going to college. He had bigger concerns than his education. At the age of 12, he worked nights and weekends as a busboy while simultaneously attending middle school.

"I was driving myself without a license or permit to a little Mexican restaurant," McCallum said. "We had family friends that gave me a sneak job."

As McCallum grew up, the idea of seeking an education and brighter future for himself felt more and more out of reach.

"I didn't think college was possible because of how blinded I was by the path I was going on and my home environment, coming from poverty, especially with the hardships I faced, losing people and the alcoholism that was around me all my life," McCallum said.

It wasn't until McCallum watched his high school sweetheart, and now wife, pursue her college dreams that he developed his own.

"[My high school sweetheart] was very driven," McCallum said. "She knew what she wanted to do from a very early age, what she wanted to accomplish."

Watching someone he cared about invest so much interest in a higher education turned out to be just the push that McCallum needed. He enrolled in Texas State University for a year because of its proximity to his family, but later transferred to Texas A&M University to finish his degree. To support himself, McCallum took a work-study position cleaning buses and running errands for the campus transportation department.

By the end of his college years, however, McCallum had landed an internship in his then dream field: film. While working at Frame by Frame Productions through his time at A&M, he learned the ins and outs of the cinematic industry, even having the opportunity to interview former President George W. Bush in the process.

"We did commercials, we did movies, interviews, and little video clips," McCallum said. "[Interviewing the former president] was one of the coolest jobs I ever had."

When he reached graduate school, however, McCallum changed his life plans. As he reflected on his education, he realized what a positive influence one person in particular had been during his high school years.

"I couldn't stop thinking about my coach," McCallum said. "He was one of the biggest

impacts on me in high school, and I wanted to do the same thing he did, which is help young people."

McCallum's teaching career began at the local high school in Thorndale, Texas, a town with a population of just over a thousand. McCallum recalls the charm of the students he met during his year teaching in the remote community.

"Though it was small, it was very interesting," McCallum said. "It was in the middle of nowhere; the kids were kind of extraordinary and different in a way."

Still, McCallum opted for a change of pace. He and his wife moved to the much larger Champaign, Ill., where he continued his teaching career at Franklin STEAM Academy Middle School.

Five years later, McCallum found himself back in Texas. He initially worked at Bedicheck Middle School in South Austin, but when he was offered a job at McCallum, he jumped at the opportunity. Not only did he share a name with the school, but it was closer to his home, and the position was in the AVID department, which aligned perfectly with his credentials.

"I taught AVID before in Illinois, but I had never taught it here in Texas," McCallum said. "Once I saw the AVID position pop up, I was like, 'I gotta jump on this opportunity. Wouldn't it be cool to be McCallum at McCallum?'"

AVID isn't the only thing McCallum teaches. He has already made a meaningful impression as an English teacher as well, according to department chair Diana Adamson.

"He is incredibly patient," Adamson said. "He works really hard so that the kids are able to be successful."

McCallum's commitment to each student's personal growth is also what makes him an effective AVID leader. After all, the acronym stands for Advancement Via Individual

Determination. Through the program, McCallum hopes to open young people's eyes to all of the possibilities that await them beyond high school.

"You don't have to go to college to be successful," McCallum said. "You can start your career once you graduate high school. I want to be more clear to my kids that there are multiple options." For McCallum, fulfilling the AVID mission and watching his students prepare for their futures has been the highlight of the school year thus far.

"It is just so gratifying for me to help you guys be successful," McCallum said. "That's why I love teaching AVID because we get to focus on career and

college."

Because McCallum's teen years were full of uncertainty about his future, the job hits close to home.

"You gotta have a plan," McCallum said. "I didn't have a plan, so I am just trying to help my students out as much as I can."

His first few months on the job have shown him that McCallum is just the place to nurture bright futures.

"It's a good environment for y'all," McCallum said. "These kids want to be in school. I mean, the culture here is just so welcoming. Everyone feels safe here and has a voice here."

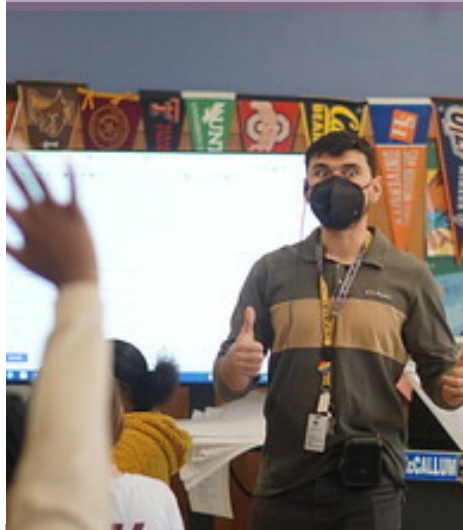
*McCallum reps his alma mater in attire and hand symbol. Photo courtesy of McCallum.*

*That's why I love teaching AVID, because we get to focus on career and college*

— Nathan McCallum



Nathan McCallum poses in front of Franklin STEAM Academy where he taught for five years in Champaign, Ill. Photo Courtesy of McCallum.



AVID sponsors events like the Custodian Coin Drive, which McCallum discusses with his sixth-period sophomore AVID Class. Photo by Gaby Esquivel.



Pictured on vacation to Ireland, McCallum spends his free time rock climbing and, when he can, traveling. Photo courtesy of McCallum.

