

VR Success Story: No Debate: A Successful Return to the Workforce



IDVR Mission is to prepare individuals with disabilities for employment and career opportunities while meeting the needs of the employers.



MACK'S SUCCESS STORY

Occupation: Teacher & Director of Speech and Debate

Location: Fruitland, Idaho

Hourly Wage: \$28.75

"I was as low as you can go, but now, I'm happier with my job than I have ever been. None of this would have been possible without the help of Vocational Rehabilitation." Mack, IDVR Customer

"It has been a privilege to work with Mack and be part of his journey. He has worked hard to achieve his vocational goals and never gave up. He now has a career he loves and an employer that values him." Lorri Dale, VRC

- Mack took an early retirement from his previous career as a professor due to barriers related to his medical and mental health diagnoses that were impacting his ability to maintain employment.
- Mack came to VR in 2018 after being referred by his counselor with Health & Welfare's Behavioral Health department to gain support with his goal to return to work.
- Mack and his VRC established a goal initially of working as a Peer Support Specialist to assist him in returning to work in a part-time capacity that would meet his financial needs at the time.
- After Mack completed his Peer Support Training, he began working part-time supporting students with disabilities.
- When schools closed during COVID, Mack was furloughed which led him and his VRC to discuss his interest in returning to teaching, but in a secondary educational setting now that he had experience in this setting through his most recent employment position, as a Peer Support Specialist.
- Mack and his VRC worked together to evaluate the potential stability that teaching in secondary education would provide Mack, as well as the steps needed to be certified as a secondary educator in Idaho.
- IDVR then supported Mack to complete the online Idaho Teacher Certification course in 2020, and Mack passed his required testing in the Spring of 2021.
- Mack then began his job search for teaching positions while working in another position to meet his financial needs until permanent employment as a teacher was obtained with Fruitland High School for the 2022-2023 school year.
- Because of Mack's tenacity and willingness to work hard he has been able to return to his passion of supporting students grow skills in speech and debate.

"Mack's leap into public education at the high school level has been exciting to see. In his first year Mack has created a Speech and Debate team, after a 25+ year absence, and even took competitors to the Idaho State competition. Having someone so passionate about his subject matter and about his students is exactly the kind of jump-start education needs! We love having him here at Fruitland School District!" – Sterling Blackwell, Instructional Coach

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