



# MAINE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL EAST

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## **District 207's Best for Improved Performance: Alexander Arriaga Ortega**

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Maine East High School, I am pleased to name Alexander Arriaga Ortega as one of "District 207's Best" for Improved Performance/Outstanding Growth since the start of his freshman year at Maine East.

When I requested student nominations from the staff, one of the many we received really stood out to all of us on the Executive Committee:

*Alexander Arriaga Ortega is the student who I believe would be incredibly deserving of this recognition. Alex has not only shown impeccable progress in academic skills, but has taken ownership of his learning and embraced his time at Maine East. This school year alone, Alex has overcome his personal fears by joining two clubs, advocating to be involved in Choir, trying out for the spring musical - and earning a role in the production! I could not be more proud of the young man he has developed into during his time at Maine East! (Lauren Clark, Life Skills Teacher)*

Every single one of us on Executive Committee has watched Alex grow and thrive at Maine East, making this a unanimous decision. Alex has been a student in the Educational Life Skills program since he started at Maine East four years ago. One of his teachers, Jamie Kumiega explained that when he first started, he was a very shy student who did not like to interact with teachers and peers: when he needed help or didn't understand something, he didn't ask for assistance. He was easily distracted and required frequent prompting in class to complete most tasks. Ms. Kumiega further explained that over these past four years, Alex has grown both academically and socially. He has risen as a leader in his classes - someone others look up to. His focus in classes has grown and he now completes tasks and assignments on his own; for example, now when Alex has a question he will ask staff or peers - advocating for himself. He is a responsible student and can be trusted to complete any task/job the students in class are given. Alex has become social with classmates and is always willing to help them out if needed. Ms. Kumiega further commented, "This is so exciting. I can't think of a more deserving student. Made my day!"

Personally, I first came to know Alex as a repeat winner of our frequent myON reader challenges. One of several literacy tools used at East, myON reader personalizes reading for students by recommending books based on their interests, reading level, and ratings of books they've already read. To date, Alex has read over 200 hours on myON and has participated in every school wide challenge. He has a wide range of reading interests: animals, UFOs, graphic novels, and any topic that extends what he is learning in the classroom. Academic Literacy Specialist Mecca Sadler commented, "Whenever I see Alex, there is a smile on his face and pure excitement as he tells me all about the book he is currently reading. There have been a few times when I've lapsed on school-wide challenges; Alex reminds me constantly! Somehow just a small exchange with Alex in the hall, cafeteria, or classroom is a reminder of why we do this work with and for students."

Kate Lee, Director of Choirs, shared her impression of having worked this past semester with Alex:

*I first met Alex this fall when he joined the newly formed All In Choir - a choir for students of all abilities. Alex is a student who is passionate about all things Mexico, football (and fútbol), and EDM. He started the class with virtually no singing or music background. By the end of the semester, he sang a duet (in harmony!) with a peer in front of the whole class and a solo for the All In Choir Jingle Bash. Seeing how happy he was singing and dancing in choir, I encouraged him to audition for the school musical, Newsies. He worked through his nerves to audition, and he was cast as a "Citizen of New York"! Alex has brought dedication, positivity, and a smile to every rehearsal, and we are so excited to watch him continue to grow in his last semester of high school. Thank you for choosing him and I am so excited for him and honored to be his teacher!!!*

Physical Education teacher Kim Greiwe stated, "I had the privilege of working with Alex this past semester in Dance. Alex was rather reserved at the beginning of the semester; however, by the end Alex was the one helping others, demonstrating skills (especially in Tap) - and he offered to dance in the Holiday Dance Showcase. Right after musical auditions in early December, he shared his fantastic news with his class, 'I am dancing in the MEHS Musical *Newsies*'. I admire Alex's courage to audition for the musical where he will undoubtedly be a faithful and dedicated cast member."

Dr. Susy Held, school psychologist, shared her insights:

Getting to know and working with Alex has been such a pleasure. He is a quiet, genuinely kind young man who has grown comfortable with trying new ventures such as advocating for himself and trying out for the school musical. Alex enjoys showing-off his cooking skills and speaks highly of his parents who have supported him throughout his high school journey. More recently, Alex been a helping hand to peers during small groups which is something he still required prompting with only a year ago. His love for reading has helped him learn about different people, places, and topics that have help him initiate conversations and consider the interests of others. Finally, his positive attitude, learning, and becoming comfortable with his strengths and weaknesses are strong tools Alex possesses that will continue to support his overall growth and continued improvements as he becomes an adult. (I am SO proud of him!)

Simply put, Alexander Arriaga Ortega has grown to become a committed, respectful, and hardworking student in everything he pursues at Maine East. His continued growth and enthusiasm toward learning and school is truly noteworthy and, frankly, what we would wish for all students. We are happy to salute Alex as one of 207's Best!

Sincerely,



Dr. Michael W. Pressler  
Principal



